

## Potomac Partnership Group FAQs

### **What is the PPG? How did it come into existence? Who is a member of the PPG?**

- The PPG, or Potomac Partnership Group, was convened by the senior ministers of the Fairfax, River Road and Cedar Lane UU congregations. Having already had dialog about the changing landscape of organized religion in the 21st Century, Revs. Abhi, David and Nancy discerned that the pandemic was not manifesting brand new challenges for congregations and Unitarian Universalism, so much as revealing the depth of the challenges. And they saw that this unique moment could provide opportunities for shared learning and growth.
- The senior ministers solicited lay volunteers to join this working/thought group, which began meeting via Zoom in June 2020. By late summer, the group began to articulate next steps, the sources of which are detailed below.

### **As members of the UU faith, what are the spiritual and practical dimensions of the pandemic and its impacts on our faith communities?**

- Amidst this upheaval in our lives, spiritual and societal connections have been upended and cannot be met in the previous modalities we have become accustomed to.
- People within our communities have suffered from COVID-19, but many more are affected by other mental and physical health challenges, and many people face isolation that is linked to depression, substance abuse and other manifestations of the stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic.
- Group gatherings - close contact with our fellow congregants through worship, social justice, religious education and fellowship events - have been limited by social distancing requirements and health protocols.
- Our congregations face financial challenges as our members and friends have suffered losses of income and our congregants are limited in our ability to engage each other in deep relational interventions.

### **Have we observed any unexpected benefits of the impacts of the pandemic?**

- Through online, virtual meetings and worship services, we have found that some shortcomings of our previous practices can also be ameliorated. Reductions in the time and cost of commuting to events and the relative ease of participating in services, meetings and social networks have allowed some congregants to continue with their involvement in worship, social justice and even social events in the Zoom paradigm.

- Connections among members and friends who might not normally interact with one another have helped to erode some of the ingrained silos that have tended to keep people mostly within separate groups that might not interact with others.