

Candidate Bios for URV Board of Directors

You are electing two new Board members



Mardi Belfiore

My name is Mardi Belfiore, and I was introduced to Unity of Roanoke Valley in the late 1980's. I was feeling lost, struggling with defining the God of my understanding and was brought to a Sunday service by some dear friends. The warmth and unconditional love I experienced was life changing for me. I attended counseling with Rev. Kathryn Rowbotham and eventually became a member of the congregation. I began to leave behind the religious teachings of my childhood, to surrender my feelings of resentment, lack and guilt and to embrace the Unity teachings of abundance and acceptance of myself and others. Of course, this is an endless process, but one

of the many blessings I received was marrying my husband Paul Brooks at URV in 1995 surrounded by family and friends.

In 2018, I retired from my career in Senior living, which began in 1989. At the time, I was Administrator of a 90-unit Retirement Community offering Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care. In that position, I was ultimately responsible for all operations including meeting budgetary requirements, human resources management, marketing/admissions, nursing administration, food service, resident activities and maintaining compliance with Virginia Standards and Regulations for Assisted Living Facilities. I attempted to practice Servant Leadership wherever possible, giving the needs of our residents and their families top priority, and empowering staff members to flourish in their positions.

I served on the Board of Unity of Roanoke Valley for 2 years while Rev. Diane Scribner Clevenger was our senior minister and was also on the search committee to hire Rev. Alec Evason as Associate Minister.

Since retiring, I have enjoyed volunteering for URV in a variety of ways. I have also indulged one of my special interests by serving 6 years on the Roanoke Valley SPCA Board of Directors and adopting 2 dogs in the process! I stepped away from that board this year but continue as a volunteer and supporter of their mission. Adult Care Center of Roanoke recently invited me to join their Board of Directors. It is a non-profit organization which supports the needs of those who require a safe space to spend their days while their caregivers are at work.

I am honored to be nominated to join the URV Board of Directors and am excited by this opportunity to give back. If elected, I will do my best to mindfully practice Unity principles and support Rev. Luz as well as the rest of the Board.



Laurie Bradley

I am Laurie Bradley and my wife, Susan and I came to Unity of Roanoke Valley in the summer of 2017. I have told the story of how we “found” Unity to some people and will share with you as well. We had decided that we would like to find a church; however, we were both hesitant due to previous experiences in our youth. We were invited to a church through a co-worker of Susan, and one Sunday we got ready and headed out for the 11am Service. We arrived in the parking lot to find it empty, and we were not able to immediately figure out why. We determined that with it being summer, the service times had changed, and we had missed it. While sitting in the parking lot and looking online, we decided we were dressed and had taken time to put on makeup, so we were going to go somewhere. I saw “Unity” and attended a service at a Unity church in Louisiana while I was there briefly. We decided to take a chance and headed to Unity of Roanoke Valley. From the moment we stepped through those beautiful purple doors, we were greeted warmly by everyone with no judgement (few minutes late) and immediately felt at “home.” We quickly became involved in several of the activities and came to know Rev Linda through our membership classes. We made a commitment to Unity and have felt it is the place for us since that time. When COVID hit, we struggled with the parking

lot services and we did not feel as connected, and as a result our attendance faltered. We attempted to come back a few times, and finally this past summer we made another commitment to “come back.” We attended the “welcome lunch” for Rev Luz and were immediately feeling the same “warm and fuzzy” feeling we had when we first stepped through the front doors that Sunday. We have attended and started hosting several of the Unity Spirit Groups and through this we have been able to meet more people and come to know them through this small group setting.

I am a Mental Healthy Counselor who has been working with children and families who are at substantial risk for over 30 years. I was one of the first to be invited to try the “in home” counseling while I was working on my Master’s degree in Florida and since that time have found my best work and most progress comes through spending time in the homes and environments with those I work with to allow myself to be in “their shoes” even for a short time to help them move forward. This is not always a clean or safe environment and I have had my challenges and placed in situations that have been dangerous and threatening at times. I believe that I have been placed in some of these situations to test myself and my faith and have managed to come out on the “positive side.” I earned my Master’s in Counseling and Human Development and two Bachelor’s in Psychology and Elementary Education. I also have an Associate’s in Commercial Art. I enjoy spending time in my yard and garden, and I also enjoy creating art through several mediums in my small basement workshop. I am an avid reader and love to sit out on our deck and read or watch the birds when the weather permits. I also am the Head Swim Coach for Northside High School. I am presently working to get my License in Counseling here in VA (Licensed in FL and GA) as well as obtaining my teaching certificate in Physical Education. I do not have a lot of spare time; however, I always try to make the most of the time I find to do the things I enjoy. Susan and I have a wonderful group of friends whom we spend a lot of time with, and we also enjoy spending time with our granddaughter (age 3) who resides in Cleveland, NC.

Unity Of Roanoke Valley has provided me with a sense of feeling more grounded and the positive energy and compassion from the Unity Community is simply phenomenal. I continue to work on my own personal journey and each time I enter the church I find that I take a few steps forward along that journey. I try to focus on taking what is offered to me in all areas of life and finding something to work with positively. I have struggled with some loss in the last 5 years including my mother in 2018 and recently my beloved Wimblee in June 2023. The Unity Community has been so caring and thoughtful through these events, and it is amazing how much I enjoy just being present and involved in this community. I have tried to give back as I am able and I have volunteered a few times to pressure wash the church, front to back to parking lot and beyond as well as spreading a new “layer” of concrete on the bricks outside the bookstore to “freshen up the look.” When doing this each time, I feel a sense of peace and I enjoy the process, despite the hard work. I love to give back and through this community I have been able to do more of that and have spread this to my “real job.”

I have volunteered in the children’s church and been able to work with the children to build a wood bird house and this has always been one of my favorite activities. It is fun to watch the kids build these bird houses and share some information about the birds they hope to attract. This is something I created and shared with Jane several years ago and have tried to do this at least once a year when possible.

My job has taught me to think on my feet, create solutions when it appears there are none to be had, be flexible and creative to allow the positivity to flow through. I had not considered being nominated to apply for the Board, but when approached by my wife, she stated she believes in me and for that I will give this opportunity my best in all that I am able to do. I struggle with my own self-confidence and possibly this opportunity will also present the next step for that growth to begin. I want to thank you for the vote to apply and if there is any additional information I may be able to provide, please ask. Thank you again, and I look forward to the next step in this journey if that is what is meant to be.



Stephanie Robinson

Hello my name is Stephanie Robinson.

My spiritual development with Unity of Roanoke Valley began in the 1980's. It was just about the time I started working for the Roanoke City Schools as a teacher. There was a rare inclination by which I exerted myself on a path to explore further spiritual understanding and growth. Prior to being affiliated with Unity my spiritual impression began in Washington D.C. with the Oblate Sisters at St. Augustine's Catholic Elementary School. There were many spiritual practices and beliefs that impacted my spiritual development in the Catholic Church. For myself I tended to lean toward the mystical perception of spirituality. I was engaged on hearing of the transformative lives, miracles and mystical experiences of individuals. For myself I innately felt or saw days as feelings of energy in the forms of colors being cool or warm.

As I stated something was exerting a change by which I would grow deeper. So I opened up the yellow pages one Sunday morning. Put my finger on Unity and called a really friendly secretary. The church wasn't far from my home and I arrived in time for the meditation. A gentleman named Rev. Alan Robotham was doing the meditation. The meditation made me feel like I was being showered with a healing balm. I knew that this was where I needed to be. So I started coming to Unity to listen and learn more. Unity focused best on practicing practical Christianity. So I began to read books such as your Hope of Glory, learned about the Filmore's and their healings, started using the Revealing Word and using the Metaphysical Dictionary. Learned through studies of books by Emmet Fox and James Dillet Freeman.

Unity of Roanoke has offered many opportunities for spiritual growth through there study groups that have been personally beneficial such as : Edgar Cayce's Study Group, The Course In Miracles, Yoga and Qui Gong etc. When walking the grounds of Unity one innately senses an air of peacefulness through the Flower Gardens, Vegetable Gardens and the Labyrinth Circle Experience. Learning to practice the benefits of Meditation through gently relaxing with where you are with understanding and kindness to yourself is a big positive. Learning to be aware of wornout habits and gently transforming them with affirmative thinking as a prayer.

For myself a spiritual practice that I also embrace is Buddhism. In Buddhism there are the Three Jewels of Buddhism. It is a type of Trinity. Within our Christian culture we are familiar with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Buddhism the Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The historic Buddha is considered the example or the role model. The Dharma is refers to Buddha's teachings. The Sangha is the monastic practitioners spiritual place to gather to meditate, listen and support each other. In that light I'd like to think of Unity as an extended Sangha. A place where practitioners can gather to be refreshed and renewed on their spiritual path in everyday life.

Namaste



David Sink

Hello URV community. My name is David Sink. My wife, Jen and I started attending services at Unity in September of 2022. Living in North Lakes, we had passed by the entrance many times. We both had been looking for a new church and after visiting the churches websites we decided to attend a service.

To say we felt welcomed at our first service would be an understatement. Everyone was friendly, open and accepting. The more we visited, the closer we felt to the church and those that we met. When the opportunity to join the church came up, we wasted no time signing up for the new members' class.

Jen and I have been involved in many aspects of the church through volunteering for different events. Jen is part of the Youth and Family Ministries and when I was approached about joining the Board I was very surprised and humbled. Although I have only been coming to Unity for about a year and a half and I am still learning, I saw this as a good opportunity to give back to this amazing place.

My education and background are in Information Technology and for the past 17 years I have worked for a local law firm as their Network Administrator. Working in this position, I have learned many skills that would be useful as a Board member. Teamwork has taught me to work with others to achieve a common goal.

Open-mindedness allows me to seek out and embrace others' ideas and points of view. While problem-solving gives me the ability to analyze a situation, identify challenges, and develop effective solutions.

I also have a group of seniors that I provide IT support to when they need it. It started many years ago with a close friend of mine sharing my contact information with one of them. After my visit, she asked if I would mind if she told others about my services, and it grew from there. I have truly enjoyed helping and giving them an honest truthful place to turn for computer help. This experience has also taught me a sense of community, the joys of helping others and given me many wonderful friendships.

As a Board member, I would love to explore new ideas and ways to introduce more people to URV so others can experience what Jen and I have. My desire to help grow URV comes from the very first experience I had coming here. A church should not only be a place of worship, but also a place of community where everyone is made to feel welcome, despite their differences and that is what Unity of Roanoke does.