



ITHACA

UU Connections

2020 / 2021 Issue No. 7

March 1-31, 2021

Ministerial Musings

Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am
View Sunday worship at www.uuithaca.org

Can you believe it has been a year since we have worshipped together in our beautiful sanctuary? A whole year of masking, and handwashing (well, hopefully you washed your hands before that, too!), and social distancing, and zooming! As we mark this milestone in our pandemic time together, I am finding myself grateful, impressed, and appreciative for this congregation.

I am in awe at how we have transitioned from what life was to what it is now.

I am in awe at the ability of so many of our folks to learn new things, move out of your comfort zones, and find connection in new ways.

I am in awe of our FUSIT staff and the ways they have pivoted and found new gifts and talents we didn't know they had.

I am in awe at the patience and collaboration I have witnessed among our lay leadership.

I am in awe at the ways that we have continued to thrive as a community in the face of challenging and heart-wrenching times.

And, I am tired. I know you are too. I am tired of being apart. I am tired of screen time. I am tired of back-to-back-to-back meetings and the smell of hand sanitizer.

I want to be back with you all, singing and hugging and clapping and crying and laughing.

If you are feeling an array of feelings at this one-year mark, know that you are not alone.

If you are feeling nostalgic for what used to be, know that others are, too.

If you are feeling worried about next steps, so are we.

And, know that we continue to be with you – cheering you on, welcoming you virtually, planning new and exciting programming, and trying new things.

You are doing great.

You are enough.

You are loved, just as you are.

*We can do hard things,
Rev. Margaret*

Looking for a meeting with Rev. Margaret?

Please visit this link to see availability and set up a time.

<https://calendly.com/weis-rev>

Reminder:

**Daylight Saving Time starts
on March 14th. Don't forget to set
your clocks ahead one hour.**



Our Mission

Our mission is to create connection, find
inspiration, and engage the world.
Connect, Inspire, Engage.

Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org.

Greetings from the DRE

Dear FUSIT Community,

As we find our way out of the depths of winter, and see spring on the horizon, I am excited to share with you, this beloved community, our focus this month on commitment. Even as we are now nearing a year since the last time we gathered in person I am continually inspired and humbled by the commitment I see to this community as we all work together to help FUSIT, and each other, continue to thrive, grow, and support one another.

Helpers will be needed each month to assist with delivering the UU Crate packages to families who are unable to pick them up. Please let me know if this is something you can commit a small amount of your time to helping with.

A special thank you to Brian Heltsley and Jan Pfeleiderer for volunteering their time to help get the February packets out to our families that were unable to pick up their packets. It is not an exaggeration to say that this would not have been possible without their help this month.

If you have a child or youth you would like to be added to our Religious Exploration program to receive weekly emails and monthly activity boxes, you can contact me at the email address provided above.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

Commitment

This month we're exploring the many ways our UU faith invites us to become "A People of Commitment." As we share lessons that clarify our UU commitments, may you see them not only as sacred responsibilities we take on, but also sacred bonds that bind us together. What we strive for, brings us closer. May that unity and closeness come to you as a blessing this month!

UU Crate for March

March is here and with it new activities and stories on our Soul Matters theme of Commitment. I hope that you were able to learn more about one another, leave some messages of love and community around town, and track the sun with the activities provided in February.

March packages will be available for pick up on the FUSIT porch during the following time:

Saturday, March 6th from 11:00am-12:00pm

Commitment to the 8 Principles Photo Challenge

This month we are offering all RE participants, parents, children, and youth, as well as any other community members who are interested, a chance to participate, and even win a prize, in our Commitment to the 8 Principles Photo Challenge.

Specific challenges will be posted and emailed out throughout the month based on committing ourselves to the 8 Principles of our UU faith. Complete all eight challenges to be entered to win a \$50 gift card to Buffalo Street Books at the end of the month.

All children and youth who complete all eight challenges will also receive a special thank you gift in their April UU Crate, regardless of whether they are chosen in the drawing at the end of the month.

Facebook Story Time

Weekly story time with Audrey is continuing live on our Facebook page! Please join us **each Tuesday at 7:00 pm** for an opportunity to gather together virtually and enjoy a story that touches on our theme for the month.

Ways to Help

Volunteers are needed to drop off the monthly UU Crate packages to participating families. This typically happens on the last or first Saturday of each month (depending on when the first Sunday service falls) and only requires an hour or so of time. Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering for the RE program or joining the RE Team, contact information is provided above.

*Find out more
about the 8th Principle of Unitarian
Universalism here: [The 8th Principle of
Unitarian Universalism](http://The8thPrincipleofUnitarianUniversalism.org)
(8thprincipleuu.org)*

Joys and Sorrows

We send healing thoughts to Joann Farbman as she recovers from recent surgery.

Thanks to Your Generosity

Thanks to your generosity, the Al-Huda Islamic Center in Ithaca received \$605 from the Shared Offering on January 31st.

**Did you know
you can text in your donations to
the offering plate on Sundays? Simply
text 607-260-6616 with the amount +
offering (eg: \$5 offering) to
donate by phone.
It's super easy!**

Soul Matters Material for March on Commitment

Our March worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Commitment. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. Here is the link: <https://tinyurl.com/fusit-commitment>



Green Tip From the Environmental Interests Circle

A variety of de-icing chemicals have lower environmental impacts than rock salt, but each has pros and cons. One de-icer company offers a guide to the options. Whichever product you choose to keep underfoot surfaces free of winter ice, using no more of it than necessary is the most important way to minimize its impact.

Pastoral Emergencies

In case of pastoral need, the Rev. Margaret Weis can be reached at 607-218-4281 (cell) if you need to speak with her.

March Worship Services

Sunday, March 7: *Keep On Moving Forward*, The Rev. Margaret Weis

A commitment is not a one-time thing, but often a series of decisions we make every day to live the lives we want to live. As we explore the idea of commitment together, we will reflect on the ways we are called to keep on moving forward, one step at a time, doing the next right thing.

Sunday, March 14: *Never Turning Back*, The Rev. Margaret Weis

As we acknowledge one year of our FUSIT community gathering solely online, we are invited to consider how we will move forward in this new way. What have we learned this year? How can we let those learnings guide our energies as a congregation as we look toward the future?

Sunday, March 21: *Keep on Loving Boldly*, The Rev. Margaret Weis

To make a promise to another in the form of covenant is a form of love that can transform the world. As we reflect on how we will move forward together, we will explore the role of covenant and promises in the creation and maintenance of the beloved community.

Sunday, March 28: *Reach Across Our Borders*, Living the Pledge Workshop participants

We will hear from recent Living the Pledge Workshop participants about their commitments to live the pledge in their daily lives. Together we will reflect on how we can reach across the borders created by our society, and live into our covenant in an authentic way.

Mark Your Calendars! AIDS Ride for Life!

The annual AIDS Ride for Life (hybrid version) will be held on **September 11th, 2021**. More details to come.

**First Unitarian is a UUA-recognized
(LGBTQ) Welcoming Congregation**

Vunteer for the RE UU crate delivery on Saturday, **March 6**, at noon at the church.

Leave a message for Jessica or other FUSIT staff by calling the Google voicemail number at (607) 218-2088 and she will pass any information along or call you back.

Minister
Rev. Margaret Weis
minister@uuihaca.org

Religious Exploration
Emily Richards, Director
dre@uuihaca.org

Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
music@uuihaca.org

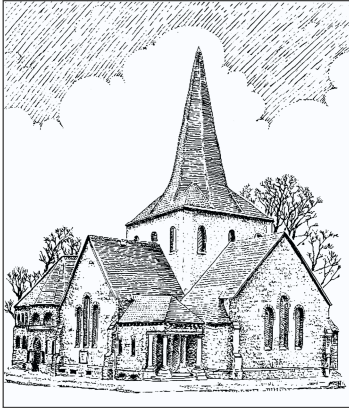
President, Board of Trustees
Andy Turner
ast4@cornell.edu

Congregational Administrator
Jessica English
office@uuihaca.org

Administrative Assistant
Loretta Heimbuch
adminasst@uuihaca.org

**Join the FUSIT
(internal) Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/>**

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 North Aurora Street
P.O. Box 6
Ithaca, NY 14851-0006



Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for March is Commitment

Possible Ponderings is an offering of ways you might consider engaging more deeply with the theme or reflecting on the ways the idea of Commitment shows up in your life.

March 1 - 6: What helps you move forward in your commitments? What supports help you stay committed?

March 7 - 13: What are the ways that looking back can serve us? What are the ways it can hold us back?

March 14 - 20: What is a commitment you make everyday? What does that commitment look like in practice?

March 21 - 28: What could it look like to commit to moving outside your comfort zone? When have you done this well?

Women's Circle Monday, March 22, at 7 pm

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday, **March 22**, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. We are now generally meeting the 4th Monday of the month. All who identify as women are welcome. This is a drop-in group, so no need to sign up; just come. Anyone is welcome to bring a poem or a reading. For information or questions contact Nancy Miller at ananda7733@gmail.com or 607 539 7733.

Zoom link is: Meeting ID: 819 4014 1421
Passcode: 874536

Men's Group Meets Twice Monthly

The Men's Group meetings for March will be held on Monday, **March 8** and Monday, **March 22**. All who identify as male are invited to join us from 7:00-8:30 pm. For information or questions contact Carsten Hess at carsten@hess.net or Kevin Moss at kevinm607@hotmail.com.

Social Media Connections

You can find out about events happening in our congregation, see pictures of past events and connect with other UUs. Like and follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/FUSofI/> Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacaus and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

News from the Stewardship Team

Moving Forward - Love Will Guide Us



Moving Forward

Yes, it is March, almost spring, and Pledge Season! The Stewardship team has been meeting for weeks, buoyed by the hope that perhaps by fall we will be able to move beyond virtual services.

Our beloved First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is truly moving forward. Our sanctuary is undergoing a much-needed sprucing up, and soon the organ will be repaired. Our teams are hard at work on racial justice and environmental issues, as well as caring for those in need and planning inspiring celebrations. Like you, we are doing what we can to create connections, find inspiration and engage the world.

More than 70 per cent of First Unitarian's revenue comes from our annual gifts. Your annual pledge is especially important this year, when other fundraising has been difficult. In March we will ask you to pledge how much you plan to give in the coming year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.) To move forward, the board needs to know how much income there will be to plan the year's budget.

Love Will Guide Us

Like everything else, pledge season will be different this year. Our plan is to call first, before we send out pledge cards. Stewardship means caring. We want to hear how things are going for you, so don't be afraid to answer the phone when we call. If you have questions, we will try to answer them and look forward to talking with you.

There will be a pledge Sunday in March. We are working on a fun way to pledge virtually. Stay tuned.

David Salomon and the Stewardship Team

March's Side With Love Collection

This month's collection will be going to St. John's Community Services, which provides emergency housing to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Currently, many of their clients are living in hotels and need reusable microwave-safe plastic (not glass) dishware, ceramic coffee mugs, and hand-operated (not electric) can openers. Items such as socks and underwear for all ages and sizes, and women's sports bras of all sizes are also needed.

Collections take place on Sunday mornings, at your home, or you may drop them off in the container on the Parish House porch any time during the week. If you'd like to have your contributed items picked up at your home on Sunday morning, please let Madonna Stallmann know at 607-216-5083, or email madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com. Also, if anyone would like to help Madonna with pick ups please contact her directly.

March Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **March 5**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

Upcoming book for April is:

April 2: *Life of a Klansman* by Edward Ball

Contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

Antiracism Ministry Team

Our first FUSIT Living the Pledge workshop is nearing its end, and the second 6-week workshop, which is full, will run through April. Contact the office to register for the next late spring session.

In late January, our Team met with Rev. Margaret, board members, and staff for a retreat facilitated by Rev. Sunshine Wolfe from the UUA. This group is creating a mission statement for our leadership to foster an anti-racist culture at FUSIT.

We are planning a virtual lecture and film series to begin in March. If there is a race-related lecture or film that you'd like to see considered, let us know. Stay tuned for more details. One good way to become better informed about many race-related issues is to subscribe to the daily email from antiracismdaily.com.

The Antiracism Ministry Team is meeting twice monthly; contact Beth Howard (beth4howard@gmail.com) for more information.

Upcoming Events



Newcomers Inspired, Connected, and Engaged (NICE) Cohort - Sundays, March 7, 14, 21 at 12:30 pm
(see page 6 for further information)

General Assembly Info (<https://www.uua.org/ga>)

Living the Pledge Workshop - Spring Cohort, Saturdays, March 13, 20, 27 and April 3, 10, 17 @9:30-11:30

This workshop is currently at capacity, but we are hoping to offer another cohort in late spring/early summer. If you are interested in participating in upcoming Living the Pledge Workshops, please email office@uuithaca.org to be placed on the list. For more information about the Living the Pledge workshop, please visit richmondpledge.org

Pub Theology - Wednesday, March 17th, at 6:30-8:00 pm

Join us for an evening of good fellowship and conversation. We will gather at 6:30 on Zoom and reflect together on the monthly theme of COMMITMENT. Invite your friends! Pub Theology takes place the **3rd Wednesday of the month**.

Newcomers Inspired Connected and Engaged (NICE)

Do you want to learn more about UU? Do you want to discuss the history of UU, questions about FUSIT, or what it means to be a member? Are you a newcomer or returning member looking for connection? Then N.I.C.E. is the place for you! We will be running a session this spring, meeting on **March 7th, 14th and 21st** at 12:30 pm. Please RSVP via email at office@uuithaca.com if you would like to request to join. If you're considering becoming a member, this is a required step in the process. We hope to see you there!

Do You Love to Sing?

Do you love to sing but were never able to be a part of choir? Do you miss singing hymns with other people? Would you like to be a part of our "virtual choir" on Sunday mornings? Have you been practicing your instrument and would like to share a song with the FUSIT community? Email Music Director Stephanie Ortolano at music@uuithaca.org and she will help you get connected! You can choose how and when you want to be involved. Record audio or video in the comfort of your own home and Stephanie will help make the magic happen to get it ready for a Sunday morning service. All ages welcome!

Update on Sanctuary Renovation

The Sanctuary renovation is going well! The plaster repair work is now down to the floor level and by the time you read this it should be complete, and the painting underway. Despite losing three days to bad travel weather, the crew worked through a weekend and we are still on schedule to be done by the end of the month. After they leave, the organ company will arrive to dismantle, repair, clean, and reassemble our organ.



Update from the FUSIT Board of Trustees

The FUSIT Board of Trustees will be providing a brief "Sense of the Board Meeting" report and sharing it through the newsletter the week after a Board of Trustees meeting. The full meeting minutes will continue to be made available, but this brief meeting summary is intended to keep the congregation tuned in to the activities and priorities of the Board.

Here is the "Sense of the Meeting" from the February 10th meeting, held on Zoom from 6:34-8:05 pm.

President Andy Turner opened the meeting by reading a brief selection. Rev. Margaret Weis lit a chalice.

Living the Pledge: The next Living the Pledge cohort will start in March and run for 6 weeks of Saturday morning sessions. Email Rev. Margaret (minister@uuithaca.org) or Jessica English (office@uuithaca.org) to sign up for future cohorts!

Communication with the Board: The Board has added a 10-minute congregational input section to the monthly Board meeting agenda. This will be a trial until in-person meetings resume. The congregational input section will take place at approximately 6:45 pm during each meeting. Please feel free to attend and share your concerns about policy and governance.

Treasurer Succession Update: Walt Peck has volunteered to be our next treasurer, with a soft start in March 2021. Thank you to Walt!

Leadership Opportunities: At least two Board members will step down this June. The Board is preparing a more detailed description of what serving on the Board involves. Check with the Nominating Committee to see if a Board term might be a good fit for you, and help shape our congregation's future!

Racial Justice and Accountability: On January 30th, the Board, staff, and some other FUSIT members attended a Zoom retreat with Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, to discuss the next steps in creating an anti-racist culture within FUSIT. As part of this work, a subcommittee is preparing a mission statement. Rev. Sunshine Wolfe is also helping us find a consultant to help the Board and Ministry review and revise our policies through an anti-racist lens.

Additionally, the Board received input from a member of the congregation who expressed continued concerns regarding the departure of two staff members last summer and what they perceive as a lack of transparency regarding follow-up from the Board and Minister. The Board is planning an executive session to discuss continuing efforts to learn from this experience and the exploration of our policies and culture within the framework of our anti-racism work. The Board and Minister will continue to update the congregation on these efforts, the work of the newly establish Anti-Racism Ministry Team, and the next steps in the Living the Pledge workshops.

The next Board meeting will take place on **March 10, 2021**, from 6:30-8:00 pm on Zoom.



The Covenant of First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

*It's been a while since we have been together in person - a whole year for some of us!
That is a long time to be apart. Sometimes we need a reminder of the promises we've made to each other and ourselves, about how we will behave, and how we will treat each other.
We invite you to print out this covenant and place it somewhere you will see it on a regular basis. Maybe that is on your bulletin board, your mirror, or your refrigerator.
Maybe that is on the wall behind your computer.*

Let us commit ourselves, again and again, to upholding our covenant together.

A Covenant is a set of sacred promises that Unitarian Universalists make with each other to guide and support their communities. First Unitarian Society of Ithaca adopts this covenant to sustain our commitment to each other, affirm our connections when we struggle, and form the foundation of our respectful relationships with each other and the world.

We covenant to:

Be together in community, guided by love and respect.

Be open, friendly, and welcoming to all.

Be engaged in congregational life.

Communicate compassionately, directly, and honestly.

Listen deeply and kindly to each other.

Believe in others' best intentions.

Support and inspire each other's quest for truth and meaning

Acknowledge, respect, and value our differences.

Work to serve our community's shared goals.



The 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”
