



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2020 / 2021 Issue No. 9

May 1-31, 2021

Ministerial Musings

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

*"Story, as it turns out, was crucial to our evolution — more so than opposable thumbs.
Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to."
- Lisa Cron, Wired for Story*

Human beings are wired for story. We are hardwired to tell about our experiences, make and seek out meaning in all of the things we encounter - both good and bad (and everything in between). All too often, we try to simplify those stories and boil them down to a single moral or lesson. Sometimes that can work well, but often we learn that our lived experiences are more complicated than a single story. This is part of why being in community with one another is so interesting and multifaceted. Each of us brings our own narrative, story, and interpretation to the equation. And, each of us takes from the experience something unique and different.

When I think about the part FUSIT has played in my story, I am overcome with gratitude. What I will hang on to and carry forward with me from this place and this people is gratitude, joy, and deep respect. This is a congregation that has done remarkable things, and I am honored to have shared those things with you. Together we have been through immense loss, vandalism to our building, growth in young families, transitions in staff and members, a worldwide pandemic, and more. In our time of shared ministry, we have found resilience, and reminded ourselves to remain true to the mission and vision set forth by those who came before us.

They say that the only constant in life is change, and I think this is true. Indeed, as human beings, we are wired to adapt and to shift in order to live well. As we prepare for this change and the emotions that come with it, I want you to know that I love you - each and every one of you. I know that this congregation will find its way forward.

Some of you may be aware that, in accordance with my professional standards and covenants with colleagues, I will need to make space for the next minister at FUSIT. In part, this means that I cannot be in contact with you (individually or as a congregation) for a period of two years after my departure. I know this is hard to read and it is also incredibly important. This is a promise I have made to my colleagues within the UU Ministers Association, and it is necessary for all of us to find some space to heal and to form new relationships. This will include social media, phone, email, and other communications. If any of you have questions about this, please reach out.

In the time we have together, it is my fervent hope that we can continue to do good things, and to be a source of goodness in the world.

*Sending light and love to you all,
Rev. Margaret*

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,

The weather is warming, the trees and flowers are blooming, and I invite you to throw open the windows and let the light into those places that need it most, both inside your home and inside your self. The church year is rapidly coming to a close and we are ending a chapter in the story of our own lives, the story of this faith community, and hopefully, the story of how this pandemic has shaped this year and a half. And those endings, while they can feel challenging, also allow us a new beginning. An opportunity to choose how the next part will be written.

Helpers are needed this 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, Jan Pfeiderer, Kim Wilkinson, and Molly Ingram for volunteering their time to help get the April packets out to our families that were unable to pick up their packets. The more volunteers we have the less work for each person so please consider generously giving back to the community in this way.

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*

Story

This month as we reflect on being a “people of Story,” it seems clear to me that we don’t just tell stories; stories also tell us. Our character and journeys unfold into the shapes they make. This month, we hope you encounter stories that remind you not only who you are, but who you can be!

UU Crate for May

May will be our final UU Crate for this church year. Inside you will find our final activities on our theme of Story. May packages will be available for pick up on the FUSIT porch during the following time:

Saturday, May 1st from 11:00am-12:00pm

Six Sources Storytelling Scavenger Hunt

This month we are excited to offer an opportunity to explore the Six Sources of Our Living Tradition through an outdoor scavenger hunt that explores the stories that make up our faith.

The scavenger hunt will take place at Cass Park on the weekend of **May 22nd and 23rd** and more details will follow about the specifics and how to participate.

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. Joining the RE Team is another wonderful opportunity to get involved and give back to the FUSIT Community.

Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering for the RE program or joining the RE Team, contact information is provided above.

Joys and Sorrows

Margy Nelson is at home recovering from a craniotomy after a fall, and is grateful and appreciative of all the love and support she has received. She is on the mend and in good spirits, with her great sense of humor!

We share the joy of Mike Mann's daughter in Florida who recently had a baby girl, Sienna Rose. The family is doing well and it's his first grandchild!

Just a reminder that Joys and Sorrows will continue to be shared during our Zoom coffee hour while our services are virtual. Please send notices to the team at joysandsorrows@uuithaca.org by 9 am on Sunday before the service. Notices written in the chat during the meditation portion of the service will also be included.

Soul Matters Material for May on Story

Our May worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Story. 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-sm-story>



Green Tip From the Environmental Interests Circle

Earth911 is a hub of information on recycling and other ways to reduce waste, offering detailed guidance on recycling, reusing, or safely disposing of many diverse products and a database of drop-off sites where you can search for local sites which accept specific products. The website also offers guidance and information on products made of recycled materials, developments in recycling, and other aspects of lower-impact living.

Church-related Events

If you are considering planning a church-related event or have a question about what is safe and/or allowed, please check out the latest communication from the Way Forward Team (see attached insert).

May Worship Services

—**Sunday, May 2: *Chronicles of Community***,
Rev. Margaret Weis

As we reflect on our monthly theme of story, we will explore what it means to have a shared story with others. How does our personal experience intermingle with the personal experiences of others? How are our decisions, our understandings, and our paths impacted by our fellow travelers?

—**Sunday, May 9: *Arise! Arise!***
Rev. Margaret Weis

Mother's Day is rooted in the fierce love of those who have nurtured us and fought for justice for everyone's children. Today we will celebrate the stories of those who have bent the arc of the universe toward justice and who have done so from a place of fierce love.

—**Sunday, May 16: *One Day at a Time***,
Rev. Margaret Weis

Mental health and addiction are issues that impact all of us, either directly or indirectly. For some of us, these challenges are present in our own lives and the lives of those we love. As Unitarian Universalists, how can we gain understanding of issues of mental health and addiction within the framework of faith, love, compassion, and our shared story as individuals and a community?

—**Sunday, May 23: *Guide My Feet, Guide My Heart***, Rev. Margaret Weis

If a story involves a series of motions forward, then the opposite of story is remaining still and stagnant. Together we will explore how we are shaped by our stories of moving forward, and how we are shaped by the times we've felt stuck and unwilling to move.

—**Sunday, May 30: *Reflections on Memorial Day***, Magdalen Lindeburg

Consideration of this holiday, the loss of those who have served in the military, and how we are shaped by the experience of loss.

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.

Vunteer for the RE UU crate delivery on Saturday, **May 1**, at noon at the church.

Leave a message for FUSIT staff by calling the Google voicemail number at (607) 218-2088

Minister
Rev. Margaret Weis
minister@uuithaca.org

Religious Exploration
Emily Richards, Director
dre@uuithaca.org

Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
music@uuithaca.org

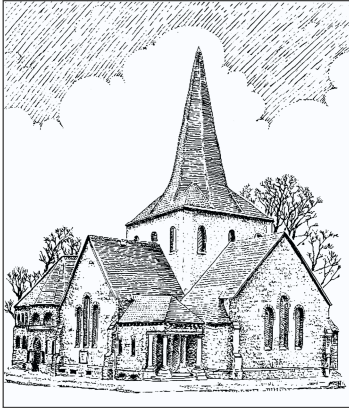
President, Board of Trustees
Andy Turner
ast4@cornell.edu

Congregational Administrator
Michelle Waffner
office@uuithaca.org

Administrative Assistant
Loretta Heimbuch
adminasst@uuithaca.org

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

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 May is Story

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

May 2 - 8: How has your story been shaped by your fellow travelers?

May 9 - 15: Who has nurtured you into crafting your life's story?

May 16 - 22: What are the stories you've been told about mental health and addiction? How have they been helpful or harmful?

May 23 - 29: Which stories are helpful to you? Which stories or narratives are holding you back?

Women's Circle Monday, April 26, at 7 pm

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday, **May 24**, 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, **May 10** and Monday, **May 24**. 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.



Moving Forward Love Will Guide Us

First, Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

We are deeply grateful to the 101 members and friends who have already pledged their support to our 2021-22 campaign. As we go to press, those pledges total \$247,165. We are on track to fund all that our beloved First Unitarian Society of Ithaca plans to do in the year ahead.

We have high hopes for reopening our beautifully refurbished sanctuary in the fall, but we need a very generous response to this year's campaign if we are to return to full strength. If you have not made your pledge yet, do it today.

More Frequently Asked Questions

Do you really need my pledge?

Yes. It takes all of us together to create a beloved community that welcomes everyone. Our pledge is our commitment to do what we can.

When do you need my pledge?

Now. The board of trustees needs to know how much income there will be for the budget we will be voting on at the annual meeting in late May.

When do I pay my pledge?

Any time between July 2021 and June 2022. You can pay it weekly, monthly or all at once.

How important is the pledge campaign?

Very. More than 70 percent of our church's income comes from annual pledges. Even when the pews were full, the collection plate only brought in 4 percent.

How do I pledge?

Mail your pledge card, pledge online at <http://uuithaca.org>, email your pledge to office@uuithaca.org, or call 607-273-7521.

Let love be your guide as you decide how much to pledge. If you have more questions about pledging, contact any member of the Stewardship Team: Jens Wennberg, Sam Weeks, Terry Starr, David Salomon, Wendy Schaerer, Jack Roscoe, Margaret Nichols, Jeanette Knapp.

May Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **May 7**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *The Truths We Hold* by Kamala Harris. For information contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

Need help getting an appointment for a COVID Vaccine?

If you are a not-computer-savvy FUSIT community member and would like assistance in making an appointment online, Keith Perry is willing to volunteer his time. Contact: email is preferred KLP3@cornell.edu. Or call 607-280-9705.

Mark Your Calendars for the AIDS Ride for Life!

The 2021 annual AIDS Ride for Life will be held on Saturday, **September 11th**. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, this year's event will be a hybrid version, allowing the rider to choose the manner in which they would like to participate. More details to come.

***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!***

Upcoming Events



FUSIT Leadership Summit - Saturday, May 8th, 10 am -4 pm

Pub Theology - Wednesday, May 19, at 6:30-8:00 pm

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

FUSIT Annual Meeting - Wednesday, May 26, 6 pm

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

Social Justice Council

Social Justice Council needs four volunteers to make and deliver lunches to the Ithaca homeless shelter on Tuesday, **May 4th**. You would buy supplies, make the lunches within 24 hours of delivery, and deliver them between 9:30 and 11:30 am to 618 W. State Street. Each lunch will include a sandwich, a piece of soft fruit, and a cookie or other small dessert. Deliveries are now made through a window on State Street, so there's no need to go inside.

Our congregation provides 60 lunches (usually four volunteers making 15 lunches each) on the first Tuesday of every month. SJC can reimburse your expenses, at your request.

To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.

Coming Book!

A Liberal Church: The Early History of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca (1865-1945)

Five years ago, on the occasion of our 150th anniversary, Mark Pedersen asked our Ithaca historian Carol Kammen if she could write a book on the history of our church. A meeting was called for those interested in the project, and many enthusiastic participants responded; committees were formed, and we proceeded on several fronts. But one thing after another has intervened, with pandemic closures being the final straw. However, we finally can announce that the first part, up to World War II, is "in press"! Copies of this little illustrated book will be available at our Farewell to Rev. Margaret in June – details to come when the date is finalized.

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

Update from the FUSIT Board of Trustees

The FUSIT Board of Trustees will provide a brief "Sense of the Board Meeting" report after each Board of Trustees meeting. The full meeting minutes will continue to be made available after approval at the subsequent board meeting.

Here is the "Sense of the Meeting" from the April 14 Board meeting.

Vision of Ministry: The Board has approved the addition of environmental responsibility to the 2021 Vision of Ministry. The revised text will be posted on the FUSIT website and in the May newsletter.

Congregational Communication: The meeting was attended by several FUSIT members in addition to the Board and staff. We welcome anyone interested in attending Board meetings, and thank Jens Wennberg for his continuing updates on Stewardship efforts.

Congregational Administrator Search: Rev. Margaret and the search committee have interviewed four candidates and offered the position to Michelle Waffner. (See bio and photo on page 7.)

Ministerial Transition, Part 1: The Interim Search Committee members are Elton Hall, Therese O'Connor, Elisa Collins Zinda, Walt Peck, and Magdalen Lindeberg. Thank you to all for agreeing to serve! The committee will soon meet with Rev. Keith Kron, Director of the Transitions Office for the UUA, and is putting together our application packet.

Ministerial Transition, Part 2: Discussions are underway with the [Rev. Darcey Laine](#) to provide emergency pastoral care to FUSIT members over the summer. Thank you to Rev. Margaret for arranging this!

Summer Services: The Board affirms that some combination of virtual and/or outdoor summer services is important for congregational life and wellbeing. Due to continuing concerns about Covid-19, and the difficulty of providing equitable access to indoor facilities, summer services will not be held in the parlor or the sanctuary. Recognizing that venue uncertainty made planning difficult to initiate, and with no persons currently identified who are willing to help organize summer services, the Board strongly encourages members and friends of the congregation to step forward to begin planning as soon as possible – potentially with the aid of the Celebrations Committee. In this unusual year we need to think outside the box of our recent traditions in order to create some space for summer gatherings. Be creative!

Volunteers for a Summer Service committee should contact Diana Nier at diana.nier@gmail.com for coordination.

Financial Update: The budget process is underway. Watch this space for more information as we move toward the annual meeting on **May 26!**

Leadership Development, Part 1: The Nominating Committee has found candidates for some of the open Board positions and Nominating Committee positions, and is working to develop programs for creating a diverse and sustainable leadership culture within FUSIT. Thank you to Arthur Woll, Beth Howard, and Fred Balfour for their hard work!

Leadership Development, Part 2: The Leadership Development Summit will be held via Zoom on Saturday, **May 8**, and is open to all. Members of FUSIT will present five workshops (Covenant, Resources, Self-Care, Partnership Governance, and Living the Pledge) between 10 am and 4 pm. Sign up via this form: [Leadership Development Summit Registration!](#)

The next regular Board meeting will take place on **May 12, 2021, from 6:30-8:00 pm** on Zoom.

FUSIT Vision of Ministry 2021

Approved by Board of Trustees January 13, 2021

Revised by Board of Trustees April 14, 2021, motivated by congregant requests.

In the year 2021-2022, the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca will project our mission of creating connections, finding inspiration, and engaging the world in the following ways:

Connection: We will work together to support the physical and emotional needs of our community as we continue to convene remotely, and also to re-connect and recover from the strains of the pandemic when the church doors reopen. We will create space for healing and building a congregational culture that reinforces our vision, mission and adheres to the principles of our covenant.

Inspiration: We will continue to advance opportunities for congregational faith formation by creating spaces for dialogue and reflection that help members of our community grow their Unitarian Universalist spiritual identities, strengthen community, and embody our values and principles in their daily lives. We will embrace ideas and opportunities to support a culture of innovation and creativity that allows us to re-imagine what it means to be part of FUSIT in a rapidly changing and uncertain world.

Engage: We will strengthen and extend our collective commitment to service, social justice, and environmental responsibility based on our UU principles; projecting our UU voice and values in Ithaca and beyond. This year, our engagement efforts will focus on our congregational commitment to anti-racism, including our embrace of the UU Living the Pledge program and exploration of the proposed UU Eighth Principle, building our personal and congregational commitment and capacity so we can be more effective within our own walls, and in the broader community.

Goodbye to Jessica

We are so grateful to Jessica English for her time as our Congregational Administrator. Jessica provided significant and essential presence in our office through the transition to Breeze, our time as a congregation in a worldwide pandemic, and the shift in our fundraising efforts. She has been a valued and caring part of our staff team, and we are sad to see her leave. We wish her the best in her new work at Yoga Farm in Lansing!



Hello to Michelle

***Meet New Congregational Administrator,
Michelle Waffner***

Michelle Waffner grew up in Cortland, NY, received a B.S. in Biology from Binghamton University and is currently working on a Masters in Consciousness Studies. She spent the last 20 years running the visitor program at a farm animal sanctuary where she oversaw tours, events and an onsite Bed and Breakfast program. Spirituality and spiritual

connection are important to her and she looks forward to using her skills and experience to support the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca.

FUSIT Leadership Summit

Saturday, May 8th

One of the ways we encourage spiritual growth in each other and our congregation is through opportunities for deepening and leadership development. Each of us has unique gifts to offer our communities and this congregation. Sometimes, we just need a little encouragement and an opportunity to hone our skills.

Ever considered taking on a leadership role at church, your work, or an organization that is important to you? Curious about what skills might be helpful for those positions? Wondering how FUSIT functions and where your skills might be needed?

Check out the first ever FUSIT Virtual Leadership Development Summit on **Saturday, May 8th!**

Workshops will include:

10:00-11:00 am: Resources at FUSIT, the UUA, and beyond with Elton Hall

11:00-12:00 pm: What is Partnership Governance and Why Do We Use It? with Laura Free

12:00-1:00 pm: Lunch break

1:00-2:00 pm: What is Covenant and Why Is It Important? with Emily Richards

2:00-3:00 pm: Living the Pledge to End Racism Info Session and Q&A with the LtP Leadership Team

3:00-4:00 pm: Leadership, Balance, and the Importance of Self Care with Corirose Benitez Anjali

To register, please complete the form linked in the weekly announce.

Thanks to You

Thanks to your generosity for the March Shared Offering, we donated \$305 to Mayor Potencial, which helps a remote rural village in Honduras. For more information visit their website and social media pages. www.mayorpotencial.org.

General Assembly 2021 - Circle 'Round for Justice - Healing - Courage

If you haven't registered for Virtual GA 2021 already, there is no better time than right now! Registered attendees are among the first to hear program announcements, such as the Ware Lecturer and featured speakers, and only registered attendees will have access to the NEW! GA app. So register early to join online discussions, familiarize yourself with the GA schedule, and find your place in our community of communities. www.uua.org

The Covenant of First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

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.

Important Reminder!

It's Annual Report Time for All Team and Department Leaders!

Please send your annual report by **May 1st** to adminasst@uuithaca.org if you would like to be included in the FUSIT Annual Report which will be presented at the Annual Meeting on **May 26**.

Our goal is to have it ready by **May 15**, which means there's a lot of work to do in terms of editing, organizing and layout.

Please be brief without losing any important information and if you have "measurable" facts (i.e. "We housed 57 homeless families in 2020-21") feel free to point those out since it makes for interesting reading....and that is the goal, for people to actually read what we write!

If you'd like to see a sample of a previous year's report, please contact Loretta at the email above.

Nominating Committee Seeking FUSIT Leaders

Dear FUSIT Friends,

We all know we are in difficult times, with big hurdles facing us immediately and in the near future. In particular, Rev. Margaret's resignation presents challenges in the coming months and years. But, our congregation is enduring and robust. To keep us moving in the many positive directions begun with Rev. Margaret's guidance and support, we need strong, diverse, and committed lay leadership. The Nominating Committee is currently considering candidates for new terms on both the Board of Trustees and the Nominating Committee. (These are the only two leadership groups whose members are elected by the congregation as a whole). Our bylaws specify that we have a nine-member board with staggered three-year terms. Typically this results in three or four Trustees elected at Annual Meeting in **late May**. New trustees begin **July 1**. Nominating Committee consists of up to five members serving two-year terms.

This year we have five board seats to fill, and three seats to fill on the Nominating Committee. Are there individuals you would like to see leading us into the future? People who you would trust to steward us and help us thrive? Perhaps you see yourself as a potential Board member? If you have names to propose (including your own) as either a Trustee or a Nominating Committee member, or if you simply have any questions, please send an email, call or text to any of us. We'd love to talk with you.

Respectfully,

Your FUSIT Nominating Committee

Arthur Woll arthurwoll@gmail.com

Fred Balfour fred.balfour@gmail.com

Beth Howard beth4boward@gmail.com