



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2021 / 2022 Issue No. 8

April 1-30, 2022

Getting to Know Our Team Leaders

Nominating Committee

Shared leadership among members: Fred Balfour, Amber Harris, Sue Roenke and Beth Howard

The Nominating Committee (affectionately referred to as Nom Com), is a formal committee under our Board of Trustees (BoT), as provided by our bylaws. The Nom Com's charge is to ensure that the Society has "effective and diverse leadership to guide [its] future operations." In particular, that means providing slates of candidates for the Board and for the Nominating Committee to be elected at each year's Annual Meeting. (These are the only two positions in our Society's operations that are elected by the congregation's members.) In recent years, the Nom Com has expanded its work beyond just finding candidates for the Board and Nom Com to more of a "leadership development" model, in which every member and attender in the congregation may be considered a potential leader in one way or another. Nom Com members make an annual outreach to many individuals to discuss ways their skills, experience and interests might help our community thrive. These are informal and rewarding conversations that are intended to help keep us all connected and involved. We just might be calling you soon!

Contact person: Fred Balfour at fred.balfour@gmail.com



Communication Policy Committee **Margaret Nichols, Chair**

As we all know, the pandemic has made it hard to stay in touch with each other. During the months when we couldn't gather in person on Sunday mornings, it may have felt as if FUSIT had gone underground and little was happening. To help address this situation, the Board of Trustees created the ad hoc Communication Policy Committee (CPC) for this year. Its job is to help ensure better communication in and among all the different parts of our First Unitarian Society: the Board, the minister, the staff, the many teams and committees, and the congregation. The Committee consists of two Board members, Margaret Nichols, chair, and Nancy Miller; two staff members, Michelle Waffner, Administrator, and Loretta Heimbuch, Administrative Assistant; and one member of the Engagement and Outreach Team, Marie Benedetti. *(continued on page 6)*

Our Mission

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

We invite you to In-Person Sunday Services in April!

Pre-Registration no longer required.

RE activities after services.

No childcare offered during services.

Services will also be live streamed.

Masks and social distancing are required.

Temperature taken at door.



Adult Religious Education Team

Preston Wilson, Chair

The Adult Religious Exploration (ARE) has a long history of adding to UUs' search for intellectual, spiritual and

practical meanings among a variety of topics. Relevant discussion and lecture-based programs are planned by the ARE Team and reflective of congregational interests. We will soon be in the process of preparing our first offerings for the remainder of this celebration year. Presenting these programs will help the Society grow back from what it was before the pandemic closed us off from one another. If you would like to join the team or have a topic you would like to suggest, contact Preston Wilson, the team chair, at presbev1@gmail.com.



Personnel Committee **Jenna Rosenberg, Chair**

The Personnel Committee is comprised of 5 members who are confirmed annually by the Board of Trustees. We are committed to

reviewing, monitoring and evolving the human resources practices for FUSIT staff. We strive to ensure all employment practices position us as a fair and engaging employer for team members. We oversee and review compensation and benefit matters and assist the board in developing and carrying out personnel policies. We also serve as a liaison and resource to the Board and to other committees and staff regarding human resources matters and questions. The Personnel Committee meets biweekly for an hour.

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the DRE

It is with great joy that we welcomed our children and youth back into our building last month. It felt like waking up after a long slumber. We are in a time now of Awakening, of blinking our eyes as we greet the light once more after the long winter. A time to shake off the lassitude and invite in the energy and life of spring.

We are also in a time of change. The last two years have brought with them, along with many other things, fear, uncertainty, and separation. A desire to hibernate, safe from the world outside. And the rapidly changing information and expectations may feel overwhelming. Whether you feel ready to gather in groups of all sizes, freeing your face to smile upon those around you, or whether you feel hesitant still, not quite ready for the shifts that others seem to embrace, we are here with you.

Just like waking up from sleep can be quick for some, for others it can be slow. This time of coming back to ourselves and our communities may feel a little bit like rousing ourselves out of bed in the morning. It may even come with the inconsistencies of everyday life. Some days it feels easy, the sun bright as you bounce out of bed ready to start the day. And other days you roll over, ignoring the alarm, lacking the enthusiasm to face the tasks ahead. Be gentle with yourself. Allow yourself to Awaken at your own pace. Lay there and bask in the sunlight when you need to and welcome the vibrancy and zest of life when it allows.

Know that in this time of Awakening, you are enough. The speed at which you blossom and grow is exactly right for you. Change happens for each of us at its own pace. We are here, Awakening together, growing together, transforming together.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

RE Plans for April

In-Person RE for Children and Youth

Nature Walk at Taughannock Falls

Sunday, **April 3rd** from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm

Meet us at Taughannock Falls for a stroll up the Gorge Trail to the waterfall. All are welcome.

**In case of inclement weather we will meet in the Arch Room for indoor activities.*

RE in the Arch Room + Parents Group

Sunday, **April 10th** from 11:45 am-12:30 pm

Kids of all ages are invited to join us for an opportunity to reconnect with one another and our space. We will focus on the joy of being together and engaging in collaborative creation. Pre-registration is not necessary but all children must be signed in and out by a parent or guardian.

Parents will be invited to stay and have an opportunity to meet in a separate space for group discussion and support.

Spring Celebration at Stewart Park

Sunday, **April 17th** from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm

Please join us for activities and snacks at the Small Pavilion at Stewart Park as we come together in community and celebrate the many holidays that are observed this time of year such as Easter, Ostara, Earth Day, Ramadan, and Passover.

RE in the Arch Room + Parents Group

Sunday, **April 24th** from 11:45 am-12:30 pm

Kids of all ages are invited to join us for an opportunity to reconnect with one another and our space. We will focus on the joy of being together and engaging in collaborative creation. Pre-registration is not necessary but all children must be signed in and out by a parent or guardian.

Parents will be invited to stay and have an opportunity to meet in a separate space for group discussion and support. (continued on page 5)

Awaken to this Gift

by Rev. Gretchen Haley

Open the door of your hesitant heart
Let the light shine
on all the sleeping shadows
Awaken to this day
That offers itself to you
And to all
with a great extravagance.
Awaken to this gift,
this beauty, this chance
That we might still begin again, and anew
That we might be changed by the in
and out
of breath
That we might still burst forth
Like the crocuses
That we might still surprise
this earth with a new song
Sung together
Calling us all in,
And then sending us back out
And know it all
As a blessing.

Religious Exploration is Seeking Team Members and Volunteers

The RE program is now offering in-person gatherings in our buildings. That means we need volunteers to lead and assist with these weekly activities. **The RE Team** needs new enthusiastic members to help guide our programming. If you have been looking for a way to make a huge impact on this community please consider the RE Team. **Volunteers** to be mentors to our children and young people, as well as leading adult programming for parents is needed. Commitment can be as little as a single one hour program up to weekly regular meetings for youth.

Joys and Sorrows

Our condolences go out to Earl Rose and his family upon the sudden death of his sister, Claudia, who died on March 4, of cardiac arrest.

Our condolences go out to Joanne Farbman, whose father, age 97, passed away on March 14th. If you'd like to send your condolences to Joanne, please email her at jsfarbman@gmail.com.

Please keep Jim and Susan Murphy in your hearts as Jim works to recover from surgery he had at Memorial Sloan Kettering on March 15.

Happy 100th birthday wishes to Ruth Schwartz who recently celebrated her very special day on March 21 at Kendal in Ithaca.



Thank you to Kathy Hopkins, Whitney Wiggins, Betsy East and Elizabeth Bixler for setting up the rainbow flamingos outside Ruth Schwartz's window to celebrate her 100th birthday. And thank you to everyone who sent cards!

Joys and Sorrows are now shared during Sunday Service. Please send notices to the team at joysandsorrows@uuithaca.org. When considering what is shared in Joys and Sorrows, please note, these services are live streamed and available to the public on our YouTube Channel.



April Worship Services

The theme for April is "Awakening" and the Celebrations Team is looking forward to speakers whose voices can help us to explore this theme as individuals and as a community:

April 3, *Living the Pledge participants will reflect on their experience with the program.*

April 10, "Lessons Learned: Reflections on Life, Learning and Beloved Community"
Speaker Lexa Liepe, FUSIT member

April 17, Reflections on Awakening: Earth Day, and the arrival of spring
Speaker Magdalen Lindeberg and other FUSIT members

April 24, "The Music of Cat Stevens"
Speaker Jack Roscoe, FUSIT member

Sign ups are no longer required in order to attend Sunday service. And everyone is invited to stream the services on our YouTube channel!

Soul Matters Material for April - Awakening

The Soul Matters theme for April is Awakening. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. The material can be found at

<https://tinyurl.com/SoulMattersApril2022>

Thanks to Your Generosity

Through the Shared Plate Offering on February 27, we donated \$342 to the *Coalition for Healthy School Food*.

The *Coalition for Healthy School Food* (CHSF) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit that introduces plant-based foods and nutrition education in schools to educate the whole school community about the health, environmental, and social justice issues of our food choices. Financial support helps them provide most of their services to schools at no cost.

May Book Discussion Group

On **May 6th** the book discussed will be *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo. Looking ahead, on **June 3rd** *Unorthodox* by Deborah Feldman. All meetings are at 12:30 pm on Zoom. For further information contact Jennifer at streidmull@gmail.com.

**Join the
FUSIT
(internal)**

Facebook Page:

**[https://
www.facebook.com/
groups/
171869686459/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/)**

*Religious Exploration
Emily Richards, Director
dre@uuithaca.org*

*Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
music@uuithaca.org*

*President, Board of Trustees
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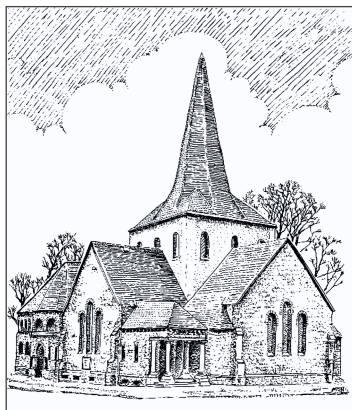
*Sexton
Rachel Seymour
sexton@uuithaca.org*

*Bookkeeper
Lauren Ponzoni
office@uuithaca.org*

Emergency Pastoral Care

In case of pastoral need, call Madonna Stallman 607-216-5083. She will direct pastoral needs for weddings, memorial services and emergency pastoral care to Rev. Janet Shortall.

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 April is Awakening.

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

April 1-2: Are you the type that believes awakening most often arises slowly from dedication and discipline or the type that believes it is something that sneaks up on us and hits us like a ton of bricks?

April 3-9: Have you ever read a book or seen a movie that “woke you up”?

April 10-16: Are awakenings easier when you are younger or older?

April 17-23: Has pain or loss ever led you to the door of awakening?

April 24-30: What if the path to awakening is simply “wanting what you have”?

Women's Circle - Monday, April 25

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday evening, **April 25**, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. We are now generally meeting on 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 Meeting ID: 819 4014 1421
Passcode: 874536

Men's Group - Monday, April 25

The Men's Group will meet once a month on the 4th Monday of the month. The February meeting is scheduled for **April 25** at 7:00 pm in the Parlor. All who identify as male are invited to join us. For further information please contact Carsten Hess at carsten@hess.net or Fred Balfour at fred.balfour@gmail.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.

Social Justice Council Upcoming Meetings

The Social Justice Council will meet on **April 11, May 9, and June 13**. Meetings are held from 5-6:30 pm on Zoom.

The Social Justice Council exists to inform the congregation about important social and humanitarian needs and issues and to provide avenues for constructive service and action.

SJC selects each month's Sharing Sundays recipient and gets reports or proposals from SJC Action Teams. For more information, contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.

Joyful News From Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance!

By Madonna Stallmann

Drucila and her 4 year old daughter Jessie, who have been living in the First Congregational Church sanctuary apartment since July of 2020, are now safe from deportation! Our congregation helped make that happen through our membership and support of The Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance (ISA)!

ISA is asking for our continued support as we help get Drucila and Jessie established in Ithaca. Drucila has applied for a green card and a work permit. While the green card will take longer to arrive, her work permit could be in hand within the next 2-3 months. When her work permit comes through, she will need to secure a job, housing for her and Jessie, and childcare. A transition team is working with her on life skills so that she can move out of the sanctuary apartment as soon as she is financially stable.

HERE'S WHAT IS NEEDED FROM THE FUSIT COMMUNITY:

1) Be on the lookout for job opportunities. Drucila has some good job leads, but suggestions are always welcome, especially for daytime positions with benefits.

2) Keep us informed of any affordable housing situations you might be aware of for our guests. Housing options could include a small apartment (rent in the \$700-\$800/month range), shared space in someone's home, or sharing an apartment with someone trustworthy who understands the needs of an energetic 4-year old. It is important that housing be accessible to a TCAT bus line.

3) Suggestions for reliable, childcare providers are also appreciated.

Please contact: Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com or Madonna Stallmann at madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com with your ideas or suggestions.

For more information about the Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance and/or to make a donation:

<https://fccithaca.org/justice/sanctuary-church/>



RE Plans for May (continued from page 2)

Mystery BUUddies

This May we are excited to offer a Mystery BUUddies program for our children, youth and adults to get to know one another in a fun and exciting way. Children and youth will be paired with an adult whom they will write letters back and forth with each week for the **month of May**. A mailbox will be set up in the Parlor where letters will be dropped off and picked up each Sunday.

Possible questions or conversation starters will be provided and we will have a Reveal Party after services on **May 29th**. This outdoor get together at the end of the month will be an opportunity for participants to meet their mystery buddy in person.

All letters must remain unsealed, parents will be expected to monitor all conversations that are happening with their children, and all adults who wish to participate must go through a background check.

Please fill out this form if you are interested in participating.

**All children and youth who sign up will receive an adult buddy, some adults may be paired with other adults depending on numbers.*

FUSIT Mystery BUUddies

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

The Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality education program is one that parents have been asking for us to return to offering since we had to make the move to virtual

programming two years ago. In partnership with FCC (First Congregational Church) we are now looking at offering a facilitator training this spring so that we can return to OWL programming for our middle school and high school youth in the fall.

If you have a young person currently in middle school or high school, or if you are interested in learning more about the possibility of becoming a facilitator, please fill out this OWL Survey.

OWL Availability Survey

Volunteers Needed for RE Programming

RE volunteers are needed to help lead youth and children's activities as well as to help with events. Please consider this opportunity as a way to reconnect with our community, give back, and make a profound difference in the lives of our young people and families.

RE Volunteer Sign Up

Expanding Community

For many this pandemic has brought increased feelings of isolation and being cut off from others. We always welcome new members to our community and faith and hope to provide a safe space of connection and learning for all during this time of physical distancing. Please continue to invite any and all people that you know that you believe could find meaning by exploring what the FUSIT community and Unitarian Universalist faith can offer.



Spring Annual Fundraiser Community-Wide Online Auction

***3-Day Weekend, April 29, 30, May 1
9:00 am – 9:00 pm daily***

Goal: \$12,000

Throughout the month of March, many vendors in our community have given generously to our cause.

Up for bid will be:

- *theatre tickets,
- *airport travel vouchers,
- *baskets of goodies,
- *museum memberships,
- *fine wines,
- and much, much more!

Now it's time for our FUSIT community members and friends to add their own treasures and services to the pile. We are combining all that you donated in the past for both the recycle sale and service auction. So let's think about Spring cleaning out all the wonderful items and services that we are eager to share with others. Your donations, having a minimum \$20 value, will be accepted over the next few weeks, **April 1-22**. Donation instructions are given on the welcome page of our Bidding Owl auction website which you can simply access by searching: fusit bidding owl.

So mark your calendars, let your donations come rolling in, and enjoy the fun of participating in our first annual, community-wide online auction!

Auction Co-Chairs,
Marie Benedetti and Simon Catterall



From the Antiracism Ministry Team

Proposed 8th Principle

Over 150 congregations across the country have adopted a proposed 8th Principle which reads:

“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.”

The 8th Principle group of the Antiracism Ministry Team is working to educate the congregation about the proposed 8th Principle through written communications, the February 13 workshop, and upcoming discussion groups. Please join us for one of these small discussion groups on zoom (Sunday **April 10** at 12:30 pm, Tuesday **April 19** at 7:00 pm) to learn more. After an opportunity to address any questions, we will practice a listening circle approach to hear each person's position and concerns about the proposal.

Join us if you do not feel well informed about the 8th Principle and issues surrounding it (we will provide a strong pre-read and address questions), join us if you are feeling supportive of the 8th, join us if you have doubts about adoption of the 8th by FUSIT. All are welcome for this opportunity to share and listen to others on the question of adopting the 8th Principle as a statement of our, FUSIT's, commitment to fight racism and other oppressions.

Contact members of the 8th Principle Team if you have questions (Jennifer Streid-Mullen, Joann Kowalski, Beth Howard, Madonna Stallmann, Barbara Shew, Robert Park, Arthur Woll).

UU Reads for Social Justice

The UU Reads For Social Justice Book Group will meet on Tuesday, **May 10** at 7:00 p.m. to discuss, “Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry”, edited by Mitra Rahnema. It was one of two titles selected for the UU Common Read in 2017/18.

This was a joint project of the Committee for Antiracism, Anti-Oppression and Multiculturalism of the UU Minister's Association and Skinner House Books. “Centering” is the first book to center the stories, analysis, and insight of UU's of color offering their religious leadership.

It is available to order through inSpirit (UU Book and Gift Shop), uua.org/bookstore, 800-215-9076. Also available as an eBook in the Amazon Kindle store and on Google Play. There are two copies available in the FUSIT Library to share. If you have questions, contact JoAnn Kowalski or Barbara Shew.

We invite all to join us for this discussion.

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

Important Reminder for Committee/Team Leaders

The deadline for Committee/Team annual reports is **May 1, 2022**. Please be brief without losing any important information and if you have “measurable” facts (i.e. “We housed 57 homeless families in 2021”), 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! Please send your annual report to Loretta at adminasst@uuithaca.org by **May 1st**, so this report can be ready for the FUSIT Annual Report for the Annual Meeting on **May 25th**.

Introducing the Communication Policy Committee (continued from cover)

Besides making suggestions to the Board about ways to keep the congregation informed and consulted about what it is doing or what issues it is grappling with, the CPC also works to come up with policies that will foster good communication on an ongoing basis. For instance, what do we do if a visitor comes in and has questions, or needs help, just before or during the service on Sunday morning? What do we do if somebody says something inflammatory that leads to a dispute in the congregation? How can we make it easier for people to tell what our different teams and committees are doing, and how to join in? How can we encourage people to appreciate all the good work being done, and to appreciate each other?

These are some of the issues we have focused on so far. If there's a pressing long-term communication issue that you think needs attention, feel free to contact us. You can find most of us on the FUSIT website (at <http://uuithaca.org>, click on About/Our Staff, or About/Our Leadership/Board of Trustees).

***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)***



***Mark your calendar!
Antiracism Monthly Movie
Tuesday, April 12
6-9:00 pm
More info to come in
mid-week announcements***

2022-23 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN UPDATE - PLEDGING OPENS POSSIBILITIES *By Matt Hare, representing the Stewardship Team*



Part of this year's theme is "Cherishing our Past." When I look back at the history of giving at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, I'm impressed that in many of the twenty-teens the annual proportion of increased pledges, relative to the previous year, was 50 to 70 percent. This isn't just a reflection of a strong economy. It demonstrates a growing commitment to our faith community.

The other part of this year's theme is "Building Tomorrow Together." The 75 early bird households who sent in their pledges by newsletter press time have given us great momentum - THANK YOU! Not only that, but 59% of these early birds increased their pledges this year. This statistic shows a positive, can-do attitude about what is possible in this congregation. These pledges reflect the generous giving that is necessary to align our resources with our mission aspirations.

At press time the total dollars pledged was \$125,521—a great start—and slightly more than a third of the way if we use last year's goal of \$330,000 as a benchmark. But we really need to do better than last year. We want to come out of this pandemic strong, and we want to show unanimous solidarity with our mission by having everybody pledge something.

When we search for a minister this year (details of the search to be determined by the new Ministry Fulfillment Search Committee), one of the very meaningful statistics that candidates want to see is the proportion of member households pledging. What do you suppose that proportion is here at FUSIT? We have a lot of active non-member friends who give generously, but out of 287 signed-the-book members, what proportion do you think pledges?

At a recent meeting of Stewardship chairs from many UU congregations, I was hearing that 100 percent participation is not unusual. For us, in the recent past it has been between 60 and 70 percent. I know we can do better than that. We have to do better than that to fulfill our mission and be successful with a minister search.

So here's our message: try to be as generous as you can—but most importantly, everybody pledge something to show your support for our beloved community. Pledging is easy. It is just a promise, not a payment (unless you want to ☺). You can use the pledge card that came in the mail, make your 2022-2023 pledge today at the FUSIT website, [Click here](#) or call or email Michelle in the office at 607-273-7521 or office@uuithaca.org.

I'll end with two small numbers that have BIG meaning. So far we have four new pledgers—WELCOME!—and three returning pledgers who did not pledge last year—WELCOME HOME! Last year was tough in a lot of ways. This pledge campaign is the opportunity we have to show that we are resilient, that we are resourceful, and that we are ready to Build Tomorrow Together!!

Your Board is Listening: Winter and Spring Open Questions - From John Gaines

You provided almost 100 responses to the Winter Open Question - **"Given our history and our hopes for the future, for what purpose does our religious community exist in 2022 and beyond? In other words, what is and should be our true Mission?"** What an interesting and engaging set of responses! We discussed them at the March 16th Board meeting and you will be hearing more from Valerie Graves, Margaret Nichols, and Nancy Miller on the three major response themes that have emerged. Stay tuned for that! Now it is time for the final Open Question for this church year. The Spring Open Question is **"In living out our Second Principle, promoting justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, how can we do the vital work of dismantling systems of oppression while promoting and supporting kindness, trust, and gratitude within our community?"** How do YOU respond to this question?

Please send your response(s) to jagivjagiv@gmail.com by **May 1**. Please try to limit each response to one concise sentence. If you would like to see the Google sheet with all responses, please email me.

Thank you for your assistance in this vital work!

Spring/Easter Flowers

Honor someone's memory with spring flowers for our **April 17** (Easter) Service. Each pot will contain Tulips or Easter Lillies and cost \$10 per plant. These flowers will decorate the sanctuary during the **April 17** service. After service is over, you can take your plant home or it can be distributed to someone who would appreciate it.

A list of individuals honored in this way will be listed in the order of service.

Orders will be accepted until **April 14** or until we sell out. Use the form at <https://tinyurl.com/FUSITFlowers> or call the office at 607-273-7521.

