



ITHACA

UU Connections

2023/2024 Issue No. 1

September 1-30, 2023

Our Spiritual Journey

Here you are welcome. Here you belong.

These phrases are spoken often in our sanctuary. Like a litany to which our heart responds each time with a sigh, or a gentle easing of tension that we didn't realize we were holding.

Here you are welcome. Here you belong.

When I returned to this community as an adult, with family in tow, not quite sure what to expect, just knowing that it was my heart's home when I was a youth, these were some of the first words that spoke to me.

Here you are welcome. Here you belong.

As we begin our year together I keep coming back to this phrase. It tugs at my heart and brings forth that desire that lives within each of us to find a true home. A place where we are welcomed and celebrated for every part of ourselves. A place where we belong with such completeness that we never feel awkward or out of place. And I keep wondering, if this is what we yearn for, what we aspire to be, what are we willing to give to make this a reality?

Here you are welcome. Here you belong.

The divine happens in those moments when the ideal becomes the reality. If our ideal is a community where everyone feels welcome, where everyone feels a sense of belonging, then that means we have the ability to create that which is holy and sacred with every action and word. We can create a community where we all feel loved and appreciated. A place where when we speak these words, we speak divine truth.

Here you are welcome. Here you belong.

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

In-Person Sunday Services 10:30 am in the Sanctuary

*Services will also be
live-streamed on our YouTube channel.*

Masking is optional.

**Nursery childcare is open
September 10 and Religious
Exploration classes for children
will begin on September 17.**

Reminder: Water Communion

Please don't forget to collect a sample of water from a special place this summer, which you can share with the congregation at the Water Communion to be held during the service on Sunday, **September 10**.

Sundae Sunday

In the parking lot
next to the Parish House.
Following Sunday service on
September 10.
All are welcome!

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the DRE

Welcome to a new year of Religious Exploration (RE). This year we will be exploring The Gifts of Our Faith, starting with the Gifts of Welcome. We want our community to be a place where everyone feels welcome and we encourage you to invite people to join us, which is one way that we can be welcoming.

This fall we are excited about our plans to shift back to a model of offering Religious Exploration programming three Sundays a month, with two Classroom Sundays, and one all-age Creative Sunday. This programming will better meet the needs of our children and youth by offering lessons and activities that are more precisely geared toward each age group.

Our PreK-1st and 2nd-5th classrooms will be focusing on our monthly themes, starting with Welcome, through stories, activities, crafts, and games. The youth will have an exciting opportunity to explore world religions through the Crossing Paths curriculum, which will include the chance to visit other faith communities.

Please register your children below for the 2023-2024 Religious Exploration program! This information helps us to plan for the upcoming year. [First Unitarian Society of Ithaca RE Registration Form 2023-2024](#)

We have so much appreciation for all of the community members who have volunteered to enrich our community through participating in our Religious Exploration programming. Volunteering for the RE program is a gift of welcome that we all have to give and I hope you will consider joining our amazing team of volunteers. This important programming can only happen with the support of the entire community.

[FUSIT 2023-2024 RE Volunteer Sign Up](#)

Please join our FUSIT Parents Facebook Group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/fusitparents>

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

Religious Exploration Schedule for September

September 10th - Multi-Generational Service and Water Communion

September 17th - All Ages Creative Sunday

September 24th - All Ages Creative Sunday

The Nursery will be open every Sunday from 10am-12pm for young children between the ages of 0 and 4.

Back to School Blessing. Sunday, **September 17th**

Bring your backpack, purse, laptop, device, pencil case and more to receive a special blessing celebrating the start of the new school (and work) year and the joy of Welcome to a beloved community.

Sundae Sunday

Sunday, **September 10th** 12 pm-1 pm. Free ice cream and activities in the parking lot next to the Parish House! All are welcome.

Adult RE

Pub Theology

Thursday, **September 21st**, 6:00 pm

Hopshire Brewery - 1771 Dryden Road, Freeville, NY 13068

Join us for an evening of good fellowship and conversation at one of our favorite local breweries. We will gather at 6:00 and reflect together on the monthly theme of Welcome. Non-beer and non-alcoholic drinks options available! Bring the kids! Bring your friends! Hope to see you there! Food is not offered on site but outside food is welcome. Pub Theology takes place on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Time and location may vary.



A Theology of Welcome *by Rev. Dr. David Breeden*

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
open hearts,
arms outstretched.

Let's embody
radical welcome,
unquestioning love.

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
deeply hearing
voices and hearts.

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
enriching,
understanding.

Let us embody
the community
we crave.

Joys and Sorrows

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.

—Our condolences go out to Rod Howe and his family upon the passing of his son, Veasna Howe Pedersen, who died after a short illness of natural causes on July 25. A memorial service was held in the Parlor of First Unitarian on Sunday, August 13.

—Our condolences go out to Nancy, Rich, Chris and Trevor Dolge who are mourning the death of Nancy's dad, William Francis Jones, in Lenox, MA. He passed away August 4 at 97 years old.

—Our condolences go out to Mary Paul Kirkpatrick and family on the passing of her sister on August 17, after a steady decline due to heart failure. She was very grateful for the care received in her last few months at Hospicare.

Appreciations

Thank you to the summer services team, Jens Wennberg and Preston Wilson! (With help from Magdalen Lindeberg and Sue Roenke).

Thank you to Nancy Dolge and Rita Rosenberg for their excellent organization of the many memorial services that have taken place at FUSIT thus far this year.

As we nurture a culture of appreciation at FUSIT, let's sing praises to the many people who help make our community the wonderful place it is. Who here at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca have you noticed doing something above and beyond, who has been a quiet unsung hero, or who is doing an exceptional job? It can be a member or staff or friend to our community. Send your submissions to joysandsorrows@uuithaca.org.

Our Mission

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



September Worship Services

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

Sunday, September 10 Water Communion and Ingathering

Emily Richards, Rev. Janet Shortall

Our Water Communion marks the traditional start of the church year, it is a time of ingathering, of coming back together after the summer. Everyone is encouraged to bring a small amount of water from a source that has significance to you. Together we will combine our waters, which symbolize both what we each bring and, maybe more importantly, how we are changed by our commitment to journeying together.

Sunday, September 17 "Our Yearning to Belong"

Rev. Janet Shortall

Envisioning a community where all feel a profound sense of belonging—where all feel welcomed.

Sunday, September 24 "Our Commitment to Welcoming"

Emily Richards

As Unitarian Universalists we are committed to creating communities that honor every part of our identities, backgrounds, and experiences. What do we need to do to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary, and the like feel fully welcomed, centered, and embraced in our congregation? How can we widen our circle to include us all, truly embracing radical love as the center of this faith?

Moving Forward

At the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca we lift up the expertise and guidance of the scientific community. As such we encourage community members to stay up to date with vaccinations, be proactive by wearing high-quality masks when indoors, and consider personal risk when gathering with others.

Director of Congregational Life and Religious Exploration
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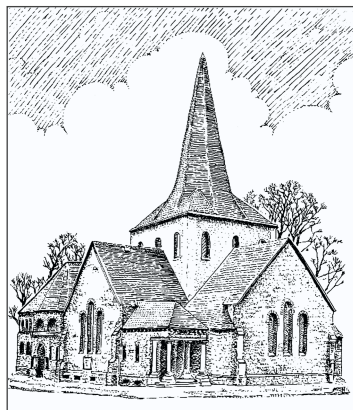
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for September is The Gift of Welcome

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

September 1-9: What one change in your UU community would increase your sense of belonging?

September 10-16: Are you being tempted or pressured to sacrifice your integrity for belonging?

September 17-23: If someone asked you, "How do you belong to the land?", what would you answer?

September 24-30: What has life taught you about disconnecting your belonging from your belongings?

Women's Circle, Monday, September 25

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday evening, **September 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, September 25

The Men's Group will meet once a month on the 4th Monday of the month. The September meeting is scheduled for **September 25** at 7:00 pm in the Parlor. All who identify as male are invited to join us.



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/>

Spiritual Practices Offerings

Do you engage in a spiritual practice that you would love to share with our community? We are looking for community members to offer opportunities for spiritual connection and deepening. This could include meditation, yoga, dance, journaling, drumming, chant, painting or drawing, breath work, poetry, or any other spiritual practice that you engage in. Offer a single session, or a series. Please contact Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org if you are interested.

Soul Matters Material for September - The Gift of Welcome

The Soul Matters theme for September is The Gift of Welcome. 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/SoulMattersSept2023>

Anti Racism Ministry Team (ARMT)

ARMT had a few meetings this summer to increase our awareness of bias and problem solve ways to make a difference about them in our personal lives and communities. It's hoped there will be a meeting to reorganize and refresh ourselves in September so please join in! Contact Matt at mfs@twcnj.rr.com for details.

Social Justice Leadership Team (SJLT)

Social Justice Leadership Team has continued to meet over the summer and is planning a series of supports, discussions and activities with and for the Social Justice member groups. If you want to get involved please contact Matt Franke-Singer at mfs@twcnj.rr.com, Mary Clabby at Maryeclabby23@gmail.com or Marty Hiller at hiller@alum.mit.edu.

Environmental Interest Circle

The Environmental Interest Circle has begun meeting again! We are exploring the possibilities for money-saving and climate-saving improvements to the heating/cooling systems in our three FUSIT-owned buildings. Also we have begun to discuss a variety of ways to help congregants be better informed about climate action, make personal changes and join us in collective action steps. Meetings are the second Tuesday of the month. Contact Matt Franke-Singer at mfs@twcnj.rr.com for further information.

***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!***



AIDS RIDE FOR LIFE

—Saturday, September 9th, 2023—

This year's Southern Tier AIDS Program's (STAP) Ride for Life will be Saturday, **September 9, 2023**, www.aidsrideforlife.org. Since 2006, FUSIT has coordinated the first pit stop (our involvement actually started prior to that) and there have always been FUSIT member riders!

This year the first pit stop is at a **new location: Genoa Historical Association** which is located right on 34B before you get to the four corners in King Ferry. Our pit stop theme will focus on kindness once again.

So, what do the pit stop volunteers do? Well, we encourage and cheer on the riders and make sure that the food and beverages which are provided are accessible so that the riders will be well nourished and hydrated for their trek. We also make sure they enter and leave the stop safely and see the nurse if needed. Often, we have provided music. We have a reputation as the most welcoming stop.

The good news, if you're an early bird, is that the pit stop "opens" for the first riders between 7:15 and 7:30 am (which means being set up by then). Typically, we are cleaned up and driving back to Ithaca by 10:30 am so it's a quick day!

Here is where you register: [AIDS Ride for Life Volunteer Form](#).

Feel free to email Rod Howe, rlh13@cornell.edu, with any questions you may have.

Buildings and Grounds Team

Join us for our annual Restoration Day from 9 am-12 pm on Saturday **September 9**! Gardening, painting and sorting tasks are all likely. If you have a stickered vehicle for Solid Waste or can take a carload of items to donate to ReUse, please let me know!

We are also looking for new volunteers to join our contact list to be notified of all the opportunities that come up through the year -- weeding, painting, hauling, light carpentry. Meetings optional! If you're interested, or have questions, contact Sara Catterall sara.catterall@gmail.com.

FUSIT Choir begins September 7



Choir rehearsals are resuming!
Thursdays from 7-8:30 pm in the FUSIT annex

First rehearsal is Thursday, **September 7**. We will sing for the Sunday, **September 24**, service.

Our September Soul Matters Theme is: ***The Gift of Welcome***
Everyone is WELCOME to join choir. No auditions. We are all at once fun, serious about being excellent, user-friendly, and inclusive of all singing abilities. For more information contact Choir Director Jayne Demakos at choir@uuithaca.org.

September Side with Love

Donations will be collected during each Sunday service in September for Southside Community Center. They are so appreciative of ANYTHING but would LOVE children's school and art supplies :

- Markers
- Crayons
- Paints
- Paper
- Brushes
- Clay

Shared Plate Collection on September 24

Village of Ithaca will be the recipient of our Shared Plate collection on Sunday, **September 24**. The Shared Plate is the last Sunday of each month.

Area Congregations Together (ACT)

Mary Clabby will become FUSIT's representative to ACT (Area Congregations Together) for the coming year. Many thanks to Barbara Shew, who had served in that capacity for the past two years.



LGBTQ+ Group
Wednesday, September 20
from 7:00-8:30 pm

This Small Group is especially for FUSIT's LGBTQ+ community. Meetings typically follow the same general format and structure as other Small Group Ministries at FUSIT. Gatherings take place on the third Wednesday of each month, from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. **All who identify on the LGBTQ+ continuum are welcome.**

Come enjoy this opportunity for fellowship and community within our larger FUSIT community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment. For more information, please contact Ely at eleanorwillard97@gmail.com.

Nametags

If you would like a nametag, please fill out your name on the **nametag request form** at the Welcome Table or contact membership@uuithaca.org and we'll make one for you. Then look for your new nametag at the Welcome Table after the Sunday service.

Emergency Pastoral Care

In case of pastoral need, call Kathy Hopkins at 607-592-3025. She will direct pastoral needs for weddings, memorial services and emergency pastoral care to Rev. Janet Shortall.



The FUSIT Healthcare Team has been active this summer. We have organized a campaign, Rise Together, to raise the funds needed to erase some medical debts for those in our larger Upstate and Western NY community who are less fortunate. For a \$20 donation to RIP (debt consolidators) at, bit.ly/RiseTogether-2023, or via check to "RIP Medical Debt" with "Rise Together" on the memo line given or mailed to the office, concerned members can erase a typical debt of \$2000. Research data has shown that majority BIPOC communities own a disproportionate amount of this medical debt, so that this campaign becomes part of our antiracist work. Contact Judy Jones jwj2@cornell.edu or Matt Franke-Singer mfs@twcny.rr.com with questions.

Parking

The church does not have a parking lot, but there is free parking on the nearby city streets on Sundays and the Town of Ithaca allows us to use their lot on Sundays (on the corner of Aurora and Buffalo, directly across from the church). Please do not park in the lot next to the church on Aurora St.

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 Unitarian Universalist faith can offer.

Sundae Sunday

Sunday, September 10th 12 pm-1 pm

Bring the entire family for fun, music, and ice cream sundaes! First Unitarian Society of Ithaca has a crucial role in the creation of the ice cream sundae. According to VisitIthaca.com, the Ice Cream Sundae was invented by FUSIT treasurer Chester C. Platt and first eaten by FUSIT's Rev. John Scott on April 3, 1892. This adds to our rich history of connectedness with Ithaca and the Tompkins County community.



We are excited to celebrate our annual Sundae Sunday following the first service of the church year on September 10th. Our event will take place from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm in the parking lot between the Parish House and the office building at 310 N. Aurora Street. Not only will we be serving delicious sundaes with Purity ice cream and plenty of toppings, including vegan options, we will also have some fun activities set up.

**First Unitarian is a
UUA-recognized LGBTQ+ Welcoming
Congregation**

About Small Group Ministry and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy's 2023 Advisory

In May 2023, Surgeon General Murthy issued an advisory about the epidemic of isolation and loneliness in the US and how we can heal. Here's a link to the advisory: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

In a letter (I highly recommend that you read it) accompanying the advisory, Dr. Murthy calls on us to strengthen our own connections and to help others and our communities to do so also.

Small Group Ministry fosters the development of significant connections within FUSIT for both new and long-time members and friends. Group members meet to talk about topics important to their lives, to listen deeply and support each other, and to perform a service project of their choice each year to benefit FUSIT or the greater Ithaca community. I hope many of us will consider joining SGM soon whether you yourself feel the need for more connection, or whether you feel you have something to offer others in a small group to build connections as Surgeon General Murthy recommends. There are two new small groups forming in September, and some openings in others:

Robin Cisne and Sue Roenke both plan to start groups that will be welcoming to all ages and genders, a source of interesting dialogue, intellectual and spiritual exploration, and friendly support. Robin and Sue are both long time UUs with meaningful and rewarding experience in SGM. Robin's group will meet twice a month at the church, times TBD by member consensus. Sue's group will meet on zoom for one church year on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at 7 pm.

Contact me at 272-6582 or 592-2520 or mfkardon@gmail.com if you'd like to join a group or have any questions about SGM.

Marsha Kardon, SGM Team Leader

From the Office

We are looking forward to another church year! The church office is generally open Sundays from 8 am - 3 pm and Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 am - 4 pm. Any changes to this schedule will be noted in the Weekly Announce email.

Just a reminder that we installed a new intercom system on the Parish House door. If you are visiting the church during office hours, please press the intercom button on the porch in order to be buzzed in. You are welcome to stop by any time the church is open, though we do recommend making an appointment if you need to meet with Michelle.

And if you need any assistance learning how to navigate Breeze, setting up recurring pledge payments, or need to reserve a church room for your FUSIT group, just email Michelle at office@uuithaca.org.

Please See Important Office Deadlines below:

- Weekly Announce Email Submissions: to Michelle by Mondays at noon
- Order of Service Submissions: to Michelle by Mondays at noon
- Tables in the parlor for Sunday's coffee hour: request from Michelle by Thursdays at noon

Please note: Michelle will be on vacation from **September 7 - 12** and will not have access to email.

Help Needed to Provide Lunches for the Homeless Shelter

As a member of Area Congregations Together (ACT), FUSIT finds four volunteers to provide fifteen lunches apiece to the Ithaca homeless shelter on the first Tuesday of each month.

For this fall, we are seeking volunteers for **October 3rd** and **November 7th**. Can you be one of them? You would buy supplies, make the lunches within 24 hours of delivery, and deliver them between 9:30 and 11:30 am to SJCS Day Center at 618 W. State Street. Deliveries are made through a window on State Street.

Each lunch should include a sandwich, a piece of soft fruit, and a cookie or other small dessert. Social Justice Council can reimburse your expenses, at your request. To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.



From the Music Team:

Beacon on Aurora, our new monthly concert series, has a great line up for our new year! Join us on Sunday, **September 17** for an evening with **Ordinary Elephant**.

Doors open at 6:30 and the concert starts at 7 pm. International Folk Music Awards 2017 Artist of the Year Ordinary Elephant captivates audiences with their emotionally powerful and vulnerable songs, letting the listener know that they are not alone in this world. The collaboration of husband and wife Pete and Crystal Damore, their connection, and their influences (such as Gillian Welch, Guy Clark, Anais Mitchell) all meet on stage.

For more information and to reserve your ticket, go to <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/beacon-on-aurora/>.

Contact Music Director, Stephanie Ortolano, at music@uuithaca.org

if you are interested in helping make this series a success! Bakers, coffee makers, and ushers needed!



Message from the Board of Trustees

Welcome back to all members of our community as we move into the Society year 2023-24. At the July Board meeting, the Board welcomed two new trustees: Tom Coakley and Megan McCormick. And we welcomed two trustees who had joined mid-year and were formally elected at the May 2023 annual meeting: Fred Balfour (me) and Rene Rogers. And we newbies joined our three seasoned trustees in their 3rd board year: Don Barber, Valerie Graves, and Margaret Nichols.

“Dream Catcher” was a word we used at our Board Retreat earlier this month. You may recall seeing and hearing that word three years ago in late 2019 and early 2020. Angela Zhang organized a group of “Catchers”. And you, dear reader, were asked to “Dream” and articulate your Dreams. Articulate and describe your Dreams for the “Catchers”.

The Dream Catcher team gathered them all up in early 2020 and got ready to ... what? To distill and combine and mold the combined Dreams and Aspirations of our Society. And to build our Dreams and Aspirations into a doable plan, an achievable plan, a plan to work towards our Dreams over the next five years. (Shssh. Business school types would call this a strategic plan - but we know that it is our Dreams and Aspirations.) And then ... we encountered the pandemic. But the Dreams and Aspirations that we caught were, and are, still waiting. We could call this a “Pandemic Pause”.

You can expect to hear of the Dream Catcher soon. We need to dust them off and check back with you to make sure that the collection is still current. And then build that great plan! The plan of Dreams and Aspirations that we can accomplish. (Well... maybe we call it a Strategic Plan, we need an easy abbreviation...) But remember and look forward to Dreams and Aspirations.

Fred Balfour, President of the Board of Trustees

Welcome to Our New Engagement and Outreach Coordinator



Miranda J. Bianchi (she/they) is a local teaching artist and mental health advocate. She has taught at many local Ithaca institutions, and is passionate about the healing and transformative power of Community. Her theatre work focuses on ensemble-building and devised work, and developing confidence through play.

Recently, her mental health advocacy has drawn her to therapeutic tabletop role-playing games, and she is studying to become a certified therapeutic TTRPG Game-Master.

They are excited to join the community at First Unitarian, and spend their time here connecting people.

Election of Board Officers

In July the Board of Trustees elected its officers for 23-24. They are Fred Balfour-President, Margaret Nichols-Vice President, Valerie Graves-Clerk, and Walt Peck-Treasurer. Don Barber is remaining on the Board and will also be serving on OAT.

September Board of Trustees Meeting

The September meeting will be held Tuesday, **September 19**, at 6:30 pm. The board meeting is a hybrid format, taking place in the church parlor and through Zoom. Monthly board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month. All FUSIT members are invited to attend this meeting. Ten minutes are set aside at the beginning of the meeting for congregation feedback. Email office@uuithaca.org or check the Weekly Announce email for the Zoom link.

Report from the Ministry Visioning Team (MVT)

The Ministry Visioning Team met for a final time in the '22 - '23 year on the afternoon of July 5. The group feels that they largely accomplished their goals for the year and have established a set of priorities for the new church year.

Submitted by Don Rakow