



ITHACA

UU Connections

2023/2024 Issue No. 4

December 1-31, 2023

Our Spiritual Journey

As we move towards the longest night of the year, as the encroaching darkness seems to creep, day by day, stealing the light, there is a mystery that comes with the tenebrous shroud of winter. With the blanket of darkness upon the land it is no wonder that so many of the ancient and sacred stories and traditions of this season are filled with light.

Light from a star in the heavens that marked the birth of a child whose teachings would change the world. Light from a flame that lasted eight nights when it should only have lasted for one. The inner light that comes with enlightenment, such as that found by the Buddha. The light of a candle, or log, kindled to keep the dark at bay while awaiting the return of the sun.

These mysteries of the dark, and the ancient tales of illumination, continue to reverberate through time, their questions spoken but unanswered. Whether we believe in the miracles that occurred or not, there is a power in these stories. A power in the not knowing.

What would happen if we allow ourselves to surrender to the awe and wonder of the season? To let go of the need for rational explanations, the need to scrutinize every detail? What if, instead, we yield to that which is unexplainable, and concede that not all mysteries are meant to be solved. Some are simply meant to be marveled at.

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life



Winter Solstice and Yule Celebration

Thursday, December 21st at 5:30 pm

Mullestein Winter Garden at Cornell Botanic Gardens

Please join us for a celebration of the longest night and the return of the sun with ritual, light, and song.

Dress warmly and bring an LED candle if you have one. All ages welcome. With gratitude to our co-sponsor, Cornell Botanic Gardens.

In-Person Sunday Services

10:30 am in the Sanctuary

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

Nursery childcare is open and Religious Exploration classes for children have begun.

Community Christmas Candlelight Service



Saturday, December 23

Sage Chapel, Cornell University

Musical prelude 5:00 pm

Service 5:30 pm

Music. Story. Candlelight. Mystery.

Featuring Emily Richards, CRE, First Unitarian Christmas Choir and guest musicians

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)

The shift into the holiday season, for me, is always filled with both joyful anticipation and dread. There is something magical and mysterious about this time of year. A time when the world recedes into hushed darkness and yet also comes alive with lights, decorations, and song.

At the same time the holidays bring increased obligations and a whirlwind of busyness that seems to be unrivaled. There are gifts to buy, and wrap, meals to make, people to see, a seemingly endless parade of forced holiday fun.

If we're not careful we can miss the holy moments. The joy on our children's faces. The wonder as the lights on the tree or menorah are lit. The glow of the candles reflected in eyes that are full of awe at the mysteries of the season.

And so, I invite you to pause whenever you are able, and allow yourself to fully experience the joy and wonder of the season. Let the mystery of ancient stories, holy and sacred stories, awaken your own connection to the divine, whatever that means to you. Give yourself permission to be fully present to the mystery and awe of the season, for your family, but also for yourself.

Emily Richards CRE, Director of Religious Exploration

Classroom Sundays

Elementary: This past month the elementary aged children explored the Gifts of Generosity through stories, games, and activities. This month they will continue to explore our faith through the Gifts of Mystery.

Middle School and High School: The youth will be continuing their Crossing Paths journey by exploring both the teachings of Judaism this month with a visit to the Jewish Reform Temple Tikkun v'Or on Friday, **December 8th**. All youth (and families) are also invited to attend our Winter Solstice Ritual and our Candlelight Christams service. If you have a young person who plans on attending the trip to Tikkun v'Or, please fill out our [Tikkun v'Or Permission Form](#).

If you are interested in driving youth and attending some of these trips to learn more about the diversity of faith traditions in our communities please email Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org.

RE Registration

If you haven't already done so, 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](#)

Religious Exploration Wishlist

If you are looking to support the RE program and would like to purchase a gift, here is a list of items that would be useful and deeply appreciated.

[RE Wishlist](#)

RE Volunteer Opportunities

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.

We are still in need of substitutes and one volunteer to join our PreK-1st classroom and one volunteer to join our 2nd-5th grade classroom this spring. We also have multiple opportunities to lead or help out with our Creative Sundays.

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

Please join our FUSIT Parents Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/fusitparents>

A Prayer Among Friends

John Daniel

Among other wonders of our
lives, we are alive
with one another, we live
here
in the light of this unlikely
world
that isn't ours for long.
May we spend generously
the time we are given.
May we enact our
responsibilities
as thoroughly as we enjoy
our pleasures. May we see
with clarity,
may we seek a vision
that serves all beings, may we
honor
the mystery surpassing our
sight,
and may we hold in our hands
the gift of good work
and bear it forth whole, as we
were borne forth by a power
we praise
to this one Earth, this
homeland of all we love.

(RE News continued from page 2)

Religious Exploration Schedule

December 3rd - Classroom Sunday

December 10th - Classroom Sunday

December 17th - No-Rehearsal Holiday Pageant

December 23rd - Candlelight Christmas Service at Sage Chapel, Cornell campus

Nursery

Open every Sunday from 10 am-12 pm for young children between the ages of 0 and 4.

Volunteers are needed to help fill in for the Nursery. Volunteer as little as once or twice a year, or as much as once a month! Please contact our Childcare Coordinator, Melissa Heslop at childcare@uuithaca.org.

The nursery is looking for donations of good condition toys, games, and activities such as Little People sets, building toys, and board/sensory books.

Religious Exploration Events

Holiday Decorating Party

Friday, **December 1st**, 6 pm-8 pm
FUSIT Parlor

Help us decorate our spaces for the holidays! Decorations provided and welcomed, or make some of your own. Cider and donuts and all are welcome to bring a dish to share.

Holiday Cookie Decorating

Sunday, **December 17th**
11:30 am-12:30 pm, FUSIT Parlor

All are welcome to stay after our annual No-Rehearsal Holiday pageant for holiday cookie decorating. Bakers needed to provide cookies and icing, gluten free, vegan, and allergen friendly varieties appreciated.

[Holiday Cookie Decorating Sign Up](#)

Music for Little People

First and Third Thursday from 12:30 pm-1:15 pm
December 7th and 21st
First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

Share in the joy of music in this bi-weekly class which is free and open to the public. Children 0-5 and their caregivers are welcome to meet us in the Arch Room the first and third Thursday in December. Sing, play, dance, explore instruments, and connect through music.

MUUsic for You and Me

Sunday, **December 3rd**
12:00 pm-12:45 pm, Arch Room

Explore our UU values through the joy and connection that music can bring in this monthly class for parents, caregivers, and young people of all ages.



December Worship Services

The theme for December is "The Gift of Mystery" 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, December 3

"A Living Wage Future and Beloved Community"

Michael Ramos, President, Tompkins County United Way
The concept of a living wage goes beyond a number that an employee needs to make per hour for self-sufficiency. It also has to do with values at the heart of a just economy, toward the vision of Beloved Community. If the saying, "It takes a village," is taken seriously, then how can we be that village as Ithaca and Tompkins County in the face of growing community needs? We will explore how to expand the notion of living wage so that we can contribute to a broader prosperity for all.

Special music by VOICES Multicultural Chorus

Sunday, December 10

Title TBD

Speaker Karim Beers, Campaign Coordinator for Get Your GreenBack Tompkins and Regional Clean Energy Hub Director with Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County

Karim will reflect on his journey as a Ba'hai
Special music by Ana Florencia

Sunday, December 17

"No Rehearsal Holiday Pageant"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life
This all-ages service is filled with the wonder of the holidays. Come and take on the role of a child born, the star above, a menorah, yule log, a sheep or donkey, one of our choir of angels, or even one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa,. Together we will create a joyful tale of the miracles of the season. Costumes are provided and cookie decorating to follow.
Special music by Family Holiday Choir

Saturday, December 23 (please note date)

5:15 pm, Sage Chapel, Cornell campus Community Candlelight Christmas Service

"Embracing the Mysteries"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life
We joyfully continue our Christmas tradition of a holiday worship service for everyone in the Ithaca community at Sage Chapel on Cornell's campus. A Christmas celebration with music, story, and candlelight, where we delve together into the mystery of ancient stories and the holiness that is every night a child is born.
Special music by FUSIT Choir

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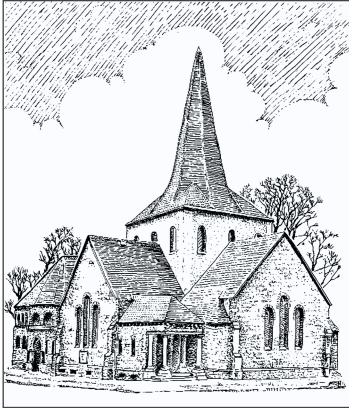
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Newsletter deadline for the next issue will be 9 am, December 13, 2022 and will cover January 1-31, 2024. Please email articles to Loretta Heimbuch at adminasst@uuithaca.org.

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

Honor Someone's Memory with a Poinsettia

These flowers will decorate the sanctuary during December and will be available to take home or gift others after the **December 17** service. Individuals honored this way will be included in the order of service on the 17th. \$12 per plant. To order please [fill out this form](#) by December 11 or call the office, 607-273-7521.

Possible Ponderings

The theme for December is The Gift of Mystery

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 Mystery shows up in your life.

December 1-9: As you've grown older, has life seemed to have more or less mystery in it?

December 10-16: What has been your most successful means of encountering or staying open to mystery?

December 17-23: Has mysterious coincidence (synchronicity) ever pointed you in the direction you needed to go, right when you were not sure of your way?

December 24-31: Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, or a mystery to be lived?



LGBTQ+ Group

Wednesday, December 13, 7:00-8:30 pm

This Small Group is especially for FUSIT's LGBTQ+ community. Our gathering this month will take place a week earlier and may include dinner. Check with Ely for specific plans. ***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.

Women's Circle in December

Women's Circle usually meets via Zoom on the 4th Monday of the month but due to Christmas falling on that day, the December date is yet to be determined. Check the Weekly Announce for updates. 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



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/>



Social Justice Leadership Team (SJLT) Activities and Opportunities

Holiday Message from Jess Brock, Village at Ithaca

Hi Friends,

My name is Jess Brock and I am the Development Coordinator with the Village at Ithaca. While I have only worked with the Village for less than a year, I have been greatly appreciative of the support that this community has given to our kids and participants.

Since the summer of 2020, during the height of Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement, you have continuously shown up and shown out. Ensuring our community has a consistent flow of household essentials and delivering fresh produce to those in need. We thank you for everything you have done for us.

Now that the holidays are coming around the corner, we are very excited to announce our collaboration once more! During the holidays, many of our teens and tweens are overlooked by the holiday giveaways geared towards young children. We want our teens to know they are loved and not forgotten about during these times of celebrating love, joy, peace and prosperity within our Village family.

*So FUSIT and the Village at Ithaca are collaborating on a ... **HOLIDAY TREE!** During the last two weeks of November, the kids have been filling out holiday tags for what they would like to receive during this time. There will be tags with their initials and gift ideas hanging from the holiday tree. Feel free to grab a tag from the tree and stop at your local store to share the love with them this holiday season. Thank you for your generosity and support this year! Happy holidays!*

The Village at Ithaca Teens and Tweens Giving Tree

December 1 - Tags are hung on our holiday tree

December 1-17 - FUSIT members choose a tag and shop for the item. When you take a tag, please sign up on the sheet next to the tree with your contact information and your tag number.

December 17 - Final day to bring in wrapped gifts and place in box marked "Village/Holiday Tree Gifts" in parlor. Gifts will be delivered to The Village and students will open at a Village/FUSIT holiday gathering TBA.

A wonderful opportunity to support youth in our community!



Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance

Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance is sponsoring a fundraising dinner at First Congregational Church of Ithaca (FCCI) on Saturday, **December 2 at 5:30 pm** to support a family of four from Peru who are residing in an apartment there while awaiting their asylum hearing. They are receiving help from area congregations and from FUSIT members.

Please join us for a delicious dinner with two Peruvian soups (one a vegan option), bread, and arroz con leche for dessert. The dinner will be followed by a program of music, a reflection on the challenges current U.S. immigration policy poses for migrants by Cornell Law professor Jaclyn Kelley-Widmer, poetry, and testimonials from sanctuary guests. There will be an at-will donation during the program. To help with head count, please RSVP to fccisanctuary@gmail.com.

Liaisons to Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance are Loretta Heimbuch adminasst@uuithaca.org and Mary Clabby maryecabby23@gmail.com.

Shared Plate

The Shared Plate for December will support Ithaca Mobile Pack, sponsor of the annual event for **Feed My Starving Children**. See page 6 for more details.

Side with Love

For the month of December we'll be collecting small liquid laundry detergent (\$1.25 at Dollar Store) and toilet paper (4 pack) for Village at Ithaca. Please leave your donations in the basket in the parlor, which is marked "Village of Ithaca".

8th Principle Action Ministry

The 8th Principle Action Ministry (formerly the Antiracism Ministry Team) is planning a series of programs in the next several months to continue the educational efforts so that we may as a congregation "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions." Look for announcements for the upcoming programs in the Weekly Announcements.

Environmental Interest Circle (EIC)

The Environmental Interest Circle will meet on Wednesday, **December 6** from 7 -9 pm in the parlor. This group is 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 first Wednesday of the month. Contact Matt Franke-Singer at mfs@twcny.rr.com for further information. This meeting is held in the church parlor and can also be attended through Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82995290979?](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82995290979?pwd=NkZDS2V3MWJvd1JVTURmcTNSWFZnZz09)
[pwd=NkZDS2V3MWJvd1JVTURmcTNSWFZnZz09](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82995290979?pwd=NkZDS2V3MWJvd1JVTURmcTNSWFZnZz09)

Meeting ID: 829 9529 0979 Passcode: 750261

Help Needed to Provide Lunches for the Homeless

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.

We are now seeking four volunteers for **January 2**. 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.

Social Justice Leadership Team Meeting will be held on Saturday, December 9, from 10-11:30 am in Room 122.

We hope you will consider joining us in our social justice efforts and encourage you to reach out and learn more about how you can get involved. Email sjlt@uuithaca.org for more information.

Adult Religious Exploration (ARE) Programs

PLEASE NOTE. Based on recent survey results, **Adult Religious Exploration (ARE) programs are now scheduled for NOON IN THE ANNEX after the close of the Sunday services.** This offers enough time in the parlor to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, a snack, and a bit of socializing before heading up to the annex for continued friendly learning and discussion. All are welcome.

Sunday, December 3

Planetary System Formation and the Search for Life

Jonathan Lunine, David C. Duncan Professor in the Physical Sciences, and Chair of the Department of Astronomy, Cornell University

As a planetary scientist and physicist, Dr. Lunine studies how planets form and evolve, what processes maintain and establish habitability, and what kinds of exotic environments (methane lakes, etc.) might host a kind of chemistry sophisticated enough to be called "life". Over the years, he has helped to develop and analyze data from planetary missions and space telescopes first at the University of Arizona, and for the past 12 years, at Cornell.

Many of us may remember Jonathan from a sermon he gave at FUSIT about his intellectual development as a scientist and his religious transition from Judaism to Catholicism. Now, we will hear about his work in greater detail and how it continues to connect to his spiritual life. He is a founding member of the Society of Catholic Scientists and has given much thought to the relationship between science and faith.

Care Cafe

Rev. Peaches Gillette

I am happy to announce the launching of the FUSIT Care Cafe, scheduled for every other Sunday beginning **December 10** from 12:15 - 1:45 pm. It will be held in the FUSIT library on the second floor of the parish house.

The purpose of the "cafe" is to provide an intimate, loving space for members to come together and share their thoughts and feelings, and their joys and sorrows as they navigate along their spiritual paths, both as individuals and as part of a community.

The Care Cafe will be facilitated by Rev. Peaches Gillette and Christine Kapral, both professionals trained in counseling, pastoral care and spiritual directions.

Each gathering will focus on a loosely structured theme around spirituality, encouraging participants to freely explore all aspects of their spiritual journeys.

Please contact either Christine or me with any questions.

There will be a sign-up sheet in the parlor on each scheduled day during coffee hour for those who plan to attend.

Rev. Peaches Gillette assocdcl@uuithaca.org
Christine Kapral christinekapral@yahoo.com

Dates: 2023 and 2024

**December 10th, January 14th and 28th,
February 11th and 25th, March 10th and 24th,
April 14th and 28th, May 12th and 26th**

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.

Appreciations

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.

From Preston Wilson:

"I would like to send my appreciation to our music director Stephanie Ortolano for the masterful way she is able to provide us each Sunday with inspirational live music with her professional singing, organ and piano performances, and her spirited leading us in communal song. Also, her clever way of bartering our sanctuary space for musicians to play at our Sunday services, and her introduction of FUSIT'S open-to-the-public Beacon on Aurora musical performances in the evenings all give us good reason to applaud the love she shows the church through her joy of music. Thank you, Stephanie!"

Shared Plate for December

The shared plate for December will support Ithaca Mobile Pack, sponsor of the annual event for **Feed My Starving Children**. This international organization provides life-saving meals worldwide to people who need it the most. The local Ithaca Mobile Pack is sponsored by ACT (Area Congregations Together), of which we are a member. In September the group exceeded their 2023 goal of raising \$66,000 to pay for the food that Ithaca volunteers packed—over 240,000 meals to be distributed. Many of those were folks from FUSIT who worked together with hundreds of other volunteers at the National Guard Armory on Hanshaw Road, to fill those food pouches that would feed people in need.

This is a good time to thank those who served: Kate Armao, Sue Brower, Liz Einstein, Robin Cisne, Mary Clabby, Jane Cogger, Brenda Golden, Loretta Heimbuch, Steve Maybee, Kathy Hopkins, Linda Liddle, Margaret Nichols, Sue Rakow, Sue Roenke, Phyllis Smith-Hansen, Joanne Trutko, Wren Tuatha and Carol Whitlow. The December plate offering will be donated to buy food for the 2024 local packing event, so Ithaca can, once again, support **Feed My Starving Children**.

With the horrendous upheaval currently playing out in the world, this mission becomes more important than ever. Please be generous with your gift.

*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!*

Office Closing

Please note that the office will be closed from **December 22 - January 2**.

"Babies First" Needs Your Help

Babies First provides new car seats and used baby equipment such as strollers, high chairs, and pack and plays to families who request them, without cost and without question. The demand for what Babies First provides is skyrocketing, as are the costs. We are appealing to the congregation to support us, both financially and through donations of lightly used equipment. (Sorry, we cannot accept used car seats.) There is a link on the homepage of the church's website, or you can send a check to the church office made out to Babies First. Thank you.

Expanding Community

For many the pandemic and our increasingly busy, digital world bring about heightened 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.

Welcome New Members

Please give a warm welcome to Susan Salton, Ginger and Bob Melfi, and Lisa Hoyte who recently signed the membership book.



From the Music Team

Beacon on Aurora, our monthly concert series, continues on Sunday, **December 10**, for an evening with **Spencer LaJoye**

The December Beacon on Aurora concert will be held in the Sanctuary of First Unitarian, 306 N. Aurora St., Ithaca

Spencer LaJoye is a folk/pop singer songwriter, violinist, and vocal loop artist in Boston, MA, who believes everyone is made of the good stuff. A 2021 Kerrville New Folk Songwriting Competition winner, LaJoye (luh-JOY) makes music to tell the truth and return to their body as a queer person in recovery from American Christian evangelicalism. Delivering Broadway-esque melodies accompanied by a weathered dreadnought, their performances are equal parts confident quirk and elegant storytelling.

Doors open at 6:30 and the concert starts at 7 pm.
\$20 suggested donation at the door. Cash preferred.

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!



Holiday Decorating Party

Friday, December 1st

6 pm-8 pm in the FUSIT Parlor

It's time to deck the halls for the holidays! Decorations both provided and welcomed, plus options to make some of your own. There will be cider, donuts and popcorn provided. All are welcome to bring a dish to share.

Soul Matters Material for December - *The Gift of Mystery*

The Soul Matters theme for December is *The Gift of Mystery*. 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/SoulMattersDec2023>

LGBTQ+ Book Discussion Group

Starting on **January 8th** and continuing each month for February, March and April, there will be a discussion group forming for the book *"Authentic Selves, Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families"*. The group will meet on the second Monday of the month, from 7-8:00 pm via Zoom. All are encouraged to attend.

The compelling 35 stories provide a glimpse into the real lives, both the challenges and triumphs, of these remarkable people and their families.

Each month we'll discuss 9 of these stories, so no need to read the entire book before the first meeting. Our church library will have several copies available for loan. Loretta Heimbuch (adminasst@uuithaca.org) and Barb Shew (barbrandys1@gmail.com) will co-lead the discussions. This program is part of FUSIT's commitment to renewing our status as an LGBTQ+ Welcoming Congregation.

Nametags

If you would like a nametag, please fill out 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 name-tag 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.



From the Board of Trustees

Fall Open Question Summary

There were around 70 participants who responded to the Open Question posed to the congregation by the Board this fall, and the value of opportunities for service and connection were the main themes through almost all of the answers!

The question was: ***What types of opportunities for involvement bring you a sense of meaning and purpose, and what barriers exist to you becoming more deeply involved?*** 44% of people felt that service, whether to our congregation through activities, teams, and committees, or to the greater Ithaca community through social justice and activism, brings a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives. An even greater percentage: 67% of respondents found that activities such as small groups, social events, and partnerships outside of FUSIT that offer opportunities for connection with the community were the source of meaning and purpose for them. Many people expressed their desire to connect with others and their need for opportunities to be social. This rings true with much of what the Board hears from the Ministry about a need to heal after the pandemic and combat loneliness and isolation.

The second part of the question focused on barriers to involvement and an overwhelming majority of those who responded to this section of the question said that limited time, and other commitments or obligations were the greatest barrier to further engagement. Other barriers included actively parenting, health limitations that come with aging, and accessibility of parking.

The Board greatly values the input of the congregation and will review the responses carefully, and keep them in mind as they work! Thank you to all those who responded. More responses are always welcome – the Board is listening!

Valerie Graves, for the Board of Trustees

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

December Trustees Meeting

The December meeting will be held Tuesday, **December 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. Please join us!

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88258776990?
pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUQZQZQndSVFRaFIPdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88258776990?pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUQZQZQndSVFRaFIPdz09)

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990

Passcode: 602445

Ministry Visioning Team Update

The Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) coordinated a Congregational Conversation on October 2 with the Operations Administration Team (OAT). Several members of each team presented information about the governance structure that's been in place over the last year which is guided by the charge from the Board of Trustees.

MVT continues to support the Ministry staff members as well as the congregation - wide teams in carrying out the Vision of Ministry. Each month Emily Richards, representing MVT, meets with team leaders to lend support for continued engagement and to provide a forum for sharing. A Ministry Team Fair was held on October 22 for teams to be represented and encourage engagement from the congregation. The event was a joint effort of the staff and MVT.

The MVT will be considering members' responses to the Fall Open Question. It is with this input that the Vision of Ministry is created each year.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about the work of the Ministry Visioning Team you can email mvt@uuithaca.org.