



ITHACA

UU Connections

2023/2024 Issue No. 5

January 1-31, 2024

Our Spiritual Journey

Liberating Love is our January monthly theme. As I think of this theme, I am reminded of what I learned from Grief therapist Miriam Greenspan. Miriam writes of how her family survived the Holocaust and displacement camps before arriving in the US. Miriam remembers an abiding, unacknowledged sadness permeating her family life. After experiencing a perfectly healthy pregnancy, Miriam's first child died in infancy of a severe brain injury. She would also give birth to a daughter who lived with a life-threatening disability in which a fall of any kind could prove fatal. Miriam writes of this transformational moment in which she forced herself to stare directly into her feelings of terror and grief that consumed her interactions with her daughter and, in doing so, could then and only then connect with the deep love she felt for her child and to have her child experience her love. Experiencing suffering is part of our birthright, but to live well and to love well, we must be willing to experience what Miriam calls "emotional alchemy," a process by which fear can be transformed into joy, grief into gratitude, and despair into a resilient faith in life.[1] Liberating love of self and others requires each of us to embrace mindfully (read: embodied) what we typically want to discard as unwanted negative emotions. (fear, disgust, jealousy, worry, anxiety, depression).

This wise woman persuades me that our ability to support each other in staying present to our suffering and that of others is the key to experiencing authentic compassion. Many of us come to our faith community for companionship that would deepen our connection to others, our world, and within our hearts. Many of us also seek support to reconstruct our sense of self when our world has left us shaken and disoriented. Let us all be of gentle heart as we tend to this much shared sacred work. Blessed Be.

Rev. Janet Shortall, Director of Pastoral Care

Somody, C. (2008). Healing through the dark emotions: The wisdom of grief, fear, and despair. Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 3(2), 194-198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401380802219492>

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.

In-Person Sunday Services

10:30 am in the Sanctuary

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

Nursery childcare and Religious Exploration classes for children are open.



As we begin the new year, an expression of gratitude goes out to everyone in this beloved community who has contributed to make First Unitarian Society of Ithaca the exceptional spiritual home that it is.

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!

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the DRE

Welcome to the New Year! And welcome to you. You are the heart of this community and we exist only because of your presence. And we are so grateful that you are here.

This month we are going to be exploring the gifts of Liberating Love. We hope that together we can feel the pull toward love's liberating power. A force which draws us inward so we can feel that ever-present love that will not let us go, and draws us outward to mend all that divides us.

We know that love can show up in many different ways. It is present in quiet moments, in passion, in heartbreak, and in the love of community. Love has the power to bind us, and to set us free. Love is the center of this Unitarian Universalist faith. A radical love that believes that all are worthy, that all are sacred, and that all belong.

Our love encompasses all, and that includes you. It includes you when you are at your best, and it includes you when you are not at your best. This love that we share doesn't diminish when, surprisingly loud, small feet thump up the aisle, or emotions are overwhelming and come out as tears and wails, or when we struggle to keep our hands and feet to ourselves. No. This is not a fair weather love, but one that will be there through the storms. Welcoming you. Holding you. Setting you free.

Emily Richards CRE, Director of Religious Exploration

Classroom Sundays

Elementary: This past month the elementary aged children explored the Gifts of Mystery, celebrating the miracles of the holiday season through stories, games, and activities. This month they will continue to explore our faith through the Gifts of Liberating Love.

Middle School and High School: The youth will be continuing their Crossing Paths journey by exploring the teachings of Islam this month with a visit to Al-Huda Islamic Center. It is very important that all youth who are participating in these visits are also attending on Sunday mornings so that they have the foundation of understanding necessary to make this a meaningful experience. Please register your youth at the link below if they plan to attend.

[Permission Form Al-Huda Islamic Center](#)

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. With special thanks to our classroom teachers for the first half of our year: Rev. Janet Shortall, Juliana Garcia, Jessica Brown, Lora Timonin, Elisa Collins Zinda, and Julianne Schulte.

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>

In the end it won't matter

By John C. Morgan

In the end it won't matter how much we have,
but how generously we have given.

It won't matter how much we know,
but rather how well we live.

And it won't matter how much we believe,
but how deeply we love.

(RE News continued from page 2)

Religious Exploration Schedule for January

January 7th - Classroom Sunday

January 14th - Creative Sunday

January 21st - Classroom Sunday

January 28th - Multigenerational Service

Nursery

The Nursery will be open every Sunday from 10am-12pm for young children between the ages of 0 and 4. Volunteers are needed to help fill in for the Nursery. You can 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 to get your name on the list!

Religious Exploration Events for January

StUuffy Sleepover

Saturday, **January 27th through Sunday, January 28th**

It's that time of year again, time for our Annual FUSIT Stuffy Sleepover! Whether you call them a stuffy, plushie, stuffed animal or just by their given names, we are thrilled to be able to invite them to FUSIT for a night of fun and imagination.

Stuffies may be dropped off in the bin on the porch at any time on Friday, January 26th or before 12pm on Saturday. Please make sure all stuffies are clearly marked with their name as well as the name of the special child to whom they belong. Additional information, such as favorite foods or activities, are also encouraged. This year we will celebrate with our stuffies during our Multigenerational Worship Service on the 28th, so expect to find your friends waiting for you in the pews.

Music for Little People

First and Third Tuesday from 1 pm-1:45 pm

January 9th and 23rd, Arch Room

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 Tuesday in January. Sing, play, dance, explore instruments, and connect through music.

MUUSIC for You and Me

Sunday, January 7th

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.



January 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, January 7

"Love is the Answer"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

In this new year let the words that fall from our lips speak only love. Whenever a question arises let love be the answer. A love that begins with ourselves and sets us free. How will you begin again, in love?

Special music by Charlotte Greenspan, Carrie Regenstem

Sunday, January 14

"Liberating Love"

Rev. Peaches Gillette

The idea of liberating love seems antithetical to the concept of love itself. Is love not naturally liberated? Perhaps what we need is the liberation of ourselves in order to set free how we love.

We will explore a deeper understanding of love in a way that fully releases its qualities.

Special music by Rachel Liao

Sunday, January 21

"Never Too Old"

Branwen Drew

It is never too late to come out. Providing support for those coming out later in life.

Special music TBD

Saturday, January 28

"Choosing Love"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

Every day we face choices in our lives, both big and small. What if we decided to choose love, each and every time? How can we allow love, which is the center of this Unitarian Universalist faith, to change ourselves and the world? Please join us for this all-ages exploration of the liberating power of love.

Special music by FUSIT Choir

Pub Theology, Tuesday, **January 23rd**, 6:30pm

Liquid State Brewing

Join us at Liquid State Brewing for an evening of good fellowship and conversation at our favorite local brewery (owned by FUSIT members!). We will gather at 6:30 pm and reflect together on our monthly theme of The Gift of Liberating Love. Non-beer and non-alcoholic drinks options available! 21 and over please. Bring your friends! Hope to see you there! Pub Theology takes place on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 620 West Green Street, Ithaca.



Director of Congregational Life and Religious Exploration

Emily Richards

dre@uuithaca.org

Director of Pastoral Care

Rev. Janet Shortall

pastoralcare@uuithaca.org

Preacher and Program Associate

Rev. Peaches Gillette

assocdcl@uuithaca.org

Religious Exploration Assistant

Madeline Natale

reasst@uuithaca.org

Music Director

Stephanie Ortolano

music@uuithaca.org

Choir Director

Jayne Demakos

choir@uuithaca.org

President, Board of Trustees

Fred Balfour

fred.balfour@gmail.com

Congregational Administrator

Michelle Waffner

office@uuithaca.org

Administrative Assistant

Loretta Heimbuch

adminasst@uuithaca.org

Engagement and Outreach Coordinator

Miranda Bianchi

membership@uuithaca.org

Sexton

Rachel Seymour

sexton@uuithaca.org

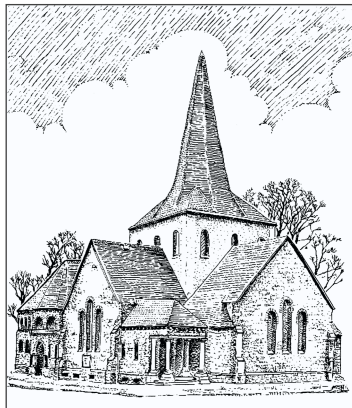
Bookkeeper

Lauren Ponzoni

office@uuithaca.org

Newsletter deadline for the next issue will be 9 am, January 17, 2024 and will cover February 1-29, 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



Possible Ponderings

The theme for January is The Gift of Liberating Love

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 Liberating Love shows up in your life.

January 1-6: How has love changed as you've gotten older? Is it softer? Quieter? Tougher? More painful? More universal? More ordinary? More mysterious? More demanding?

January 7-13: Whose love has companioned you the longest?

January 14-20: Some say the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. Others say its opposite is fear. What do you say?

January 21-27: In what new way are you being called to use your personal/social/cultural/economic power in the service of love?

January 28-31: If Love could speak, what do you think it would want to say to you?



LGBTQ+ Group

Wednesday, January 17, 7:00-8:30 pm

This Small Group is especially for FUSIT's LGBTQ+ community. We are meeting on the third Wednesday of the month. *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.

LGBTQ+ Welcoming Renewal Identity Survey

As a part of our Welcoming Congregation Renewal process, we are reaching out to better understand our congregation, and our many held identities.

Please fill out our Identity Survey and help us to better serve this community.

[Identity Survey](#)



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/> and Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacaauus



Social Justice Leadership Team (SJLT) Activities and Opportunities

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.

Shared Plate

The Shared Plate for January will support FUSIT's Human Needs Fund. See page 6 for more details.

Side with Love

For the month of January we'll be collecting liquid hand soap 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) meets every fourth Wednesday, so they will meet via Zoom at 7 pm on **January 24**. They will be continuing educational efforts so that we may as a congregation "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Environmental Interest Circle (EIC)

The Environmental Interest Circle will meet on Wednesday, **January 3** from 7-9 pm via Zoom. We will review our brainstorm and organize next steps for each of us and the congregation to keep saving money and taking actions to improve the sustainability of our lives. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month. Contact Matt Franke-Singer at mfs@twcny.rr.com for further information. These meetings are usually held in the church parlor and can also be attended through Zoom, although the January meeting will be solely attended via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqaTN5eIM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09)
[pwd=SDBqaTN5eIM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqaTN5eIM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09)

Meeting ID: 816 4475 3524

Passcode: 894885

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 **February 6**. 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 can reimburse your expenses, at your request. To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.



Office Closing

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

Care Cafe

We are very pleased to report that our first FUSIT Care Cafe, held on December 10th in the intimacy of our lovely library, proved to be a success.

Several of us gathered and immediately felt the warmth and comfort of being together in a space of mutual regard and loving fellowship.

Our conversation during this first session was a journey, exploring our spirituality as part of a faith community, and sharing our experiences of joys and sorrows as we traverse the paths of this life.

One of the most rewarding, poetic outcomes of our discussion, came about as each of us answered the following question:

"How do you personally define spirituality?"

I share these beautiful answers with all of you:

The courage to be complete.

The motivator in doing all that we can for others.

The quest to find something more.

A state of duality.

The actions of the heart.

The feeling of oneness and the integration of all things.

The ceaseless outpouring of God's qualities; love, forgiveness, compassion, and on from there.

Christine and I look forward to the next Care Cafe gatherings on **January 14th and 28th**.

Peace always,

Rev. Peaches Gillette and Christine Kapral

Sing In the New Year!

First Unitarian Choir rehearsals resume Thursday, January 11, at 7 pm in the Annex. Come sing with us!!! For more information, contact Choir Director, Jayne Demakos, choir@uuithaca.org.



StUuffy Sleepover 2023
Coming this January!

Saturday, January 27 through Sunday, January 28

See page 3 for details

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, January 7

The Healing Power of Song

In this talk and group singing experience, Elisa S. Keeler highlights the therapeutic and uplifting aspects of community singing. Together we'll learn simple, soulful songs as we create harmony, connection and joy.

Elisa S. Keeler MA Transpersonal Psychology is an Interfaith Minister, retreat facilitator, song leader and composer. She moved to Ithaca 25 years ago to pursue degrees in Music Education and Vocal Performance from Ithaca College.

Elisa is a teacher of the [Hidden Treasure Program](#) at Light on the Hill Retreat Center. She is the founder of [Freeing Your Voice](#), a singing class for adults that meets in the Arch Room at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca. Her next 6-session class begins on Tuesday, **January 23rd** at 5:30 pm. Visit www.elisamusic.com to access her music and additional offerings.

Sunday, January 14th

LGBTQ+ Allyship Workshop, 11:45 am in the Annex

Dr. Cortney Johnson, Cornell University Interim Co-Director, Centers for Student Equity, Empowerment, and Belonging and the Associate Dean of Students and Director of the LGBT Resource Center
Please join Dr. Cortney Johnson (she/they) for a discussion about LGBTQ+ allyship. This conversation will focus on introductory information about gender, sex, sexuality, and romantic orientation and we will discuss terminology as well as best practices for supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

Sunday, January 21

“Walking the Land”

Rev. Peaches Gillette and Tommy Beers

Both in awe of family farms and fields, Tommy Beers and Rev. Peaches Gillette, have been deliberately coupling their art in a way that has gained significant recognition on social media. Tommy posted his watercolor paintings of farmland and Peaches wrote poetic reflections for his paintings, and the outcome has proven to be invaluable. Ultimately they decided to create a book combining their "art."

“Walking the Land” is a tribute to four family farms throughout Tompkins County; but more importantly, it is a documentation, a reminder of the timeless, countless farm families throughout history who have worked and toiled to provide food for themselves and for others. It is a poetic and visual reflection of a world that deserves to be honored and dearly remembered.

Come walk with us on Sunday, **January 21st**, during this Adult Exploration presentation.

Poetry by Peaches Gillette,

Watercolors by Tommy Beers,

Featuring the brilliant poetry of Lucy Woll

Joys and Sorrows

Joys and Sorrows are now shared during Sunday Service. Please send notices to the team at joysandsorrows@uuitbaca.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.

-A Joy! Babies First was visited by the sisters of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc - Xi Phi Chapter at Cornell who held a "Baby Shower" on Cornell's campus the month of November to benefit Babies First in honor of Premature Baby Month. This is the 2nd annual baby shower they have done for us. We received a beautiful new bassinet, some infant bottles, burp clothes, pacifiers and assorted other gifts. We are so grateful to the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority for working to help us serve the babies of Tompkins County who are in need.

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@uuitbaca.org.

Appreciation of our Sexton, Rachel Seymour: "We can see by Rachel's action and expressions of joy on her face that she is quite at home with our church facility and community. I appreciate the initiative she shows, her anticipation of what comes next and getting things set up, and her gentle presence. We are blessed to have found each other." submitted by Don Barber

Help Replenish the FUSIT Human Needs Fund

The FUSIT Care Team needs your help to replenish the FUSIT Human Needs Fund (HNF). This is a separate FUSIT checking account administered by the Care Team.

Sometimes a fellow UU needs an emergency financial boost. A person might get sick or injured and can't work their hourly job. Sometimes an individual loses their job suddenly. The requesting party breaks his glasses and can't afford to buy a new pair. Perhaps rent is coming due after a personal financial crisis. The Human Needs Fund was established in 2015, by the FUSIT board, to provide the minister with a way to discreetly release a small amount of the fund to a congregant in financial distress. Since we don't have a settled, full-time minister, the FUSIT Care Team administers the funds at present.

How does this work? Often a staff member or congregant alerts Nancy Dolge, the Care Team HNF contact, to the need. She usually speaks directly with the person in need, keeping the recipient's identity confidential. Our treasurer, Walt Peck, then writes a check directly to the landlord/business the recipient owes. Only one payment per household per year is allowed.

We have not replenished this fund since 2020. Click here to donate. <https://fusit.breezechms.com/give/online>. Choose "Human Needs Fund" from the first drop down menu. Or checks can be made out to FUSIT with "Human Needs Fund" written in the memo and sent to FUSIT Office, PO Box 6, Ithaca, NY 14851. Thank you for generously helping our friends in need!

Office Schedule

During the winter, the office will be open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 am - 4 pm. In cases of inclement weather, Michelle will work remotely.

Important Office Deadlines:

- 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

Women's Circle on January 22

Women's Circle usually meets via Zoom on the 4th Monday of the month from 7-8:30 pm. 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: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82169260621?pwd=ZDKyanRKMmo2czhqSWgtSVhmbGFqdzo9>

Meeting ID: 821 6926 0621. Passcode: 015515

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.



From the Music Team

Beacon on Aurora, our monthly concert series, continues on Sunday, **January 21**, for an evening with **Cold Chocolate**

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

Cold Chocolate is a genre-bending Americana band that fuses folk, funk, and bluegrass to create a unique sound all their own. Featuring Ethan Robbins on guitar and Ariel Bernstein on percussion, this power duo from Boston is impressing audiences throughout New England and beyond. Punctuated by tight harmonies and skillful musicianship, and with a focus on songwriting, Cold Chocolate has quickly gained recognition for their original music and high-energy shows.

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/>

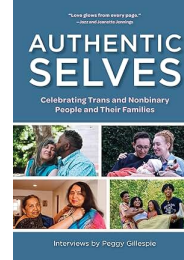
Contact Music Director, Stephanie Ortolano, at music@uuithaca.org if you are interested in helping make this series a success! Bakers, coffee makers, and ushers needed!

Soul Matters Material for January - The Gift of Liberating Love

The Soul Matters theme for January is *The Gift of Liberating Love*. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider.

The material can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/SoulMattersJan2024>



LGBTQ+ Book Discussion Group

Beginning 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.

"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.

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 nametag at the Welcome Table after the Sunday service.

Welcome New Member

Please give a warm welcome to Mike Daniels who recently signed the membership book.



From the Board of Trustees

Our ancestors spent their long winter nights commiserating and planning around a fire. At First UU we don't have fire per se, but we do have a beloved community to warm our souls. And we can use those gatherings to plan.

You have probably heard that while pledging is still the foundation revenue source at First UU, it is shrinking slightly, while inflation is causing expenses to increase. This presents a planning discussion topic.

We have assets: our building, programming, and human energy to expand and create diverse revenue sources. This winter is the perfect time to plan what First UU will look like going forward. This discussion is a continuation of the strategic planning work the Dream Catchers led us in, but stopped due to the pandemic.

My guess is we all want our church to be an even stronger beacon for social justice and liberal religion in our community. It is warming to envision how enlarging our beacon and expanding diverse revenue sources could be mutually beneficial.

Don Barber, for the Board of Trustees

Our Mission

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

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

January Trustees Meeting

The January meeting will be held Tuesday, **January 16**, 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://uso2web.zoom.us/j/88258776990?pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUFQzQndSVFRraFlPdzo9>

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990

Passcode: 602445

Ministry Visioning Team Update

The Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) continues to meet twice a month to work to guide and coordinate the work of the ministry at FUSIT. The team consists of two Ministry Staff: Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life and Religious Exploration and Rev. Janet Shortall, Director of Pastoral Care, as well as three members of the congregation: joAnn kowalski, Nancy Miller and Don Rakow.

To create opportunities for engagement within the congregation, a successful Chili and Cornbread Lunch was offered on Sunday, November 19th. Over 90 people attended. The Social Justice Leadership Team helped support the effort as did the Hospitality Team who assisted with set-up and clean-up. The partnership of the teams as well as staff support helped make it a successful event.

Monthly Team Leader Council (TLC) meetings are coordinated by MVT and are a good opportunity for leaders of the many teams at FUSIT to share ideas and plans. TLC meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month. MVT continues to support the work of the various teams in carrying out the '23-'24 Vision of Ministry.

MVT will continue their work with the Board of Trustees to review responses to the Open Questions which were presented to the congregation in the fall. This effort helps in formulating the Vision of Ministry for each year.

Moving into the new year, MVT will become involved in examining budget projections and making recommendations to support the work of the ministry at FUSIT.

You can reach MVT at mvt@uuithaca.org with any questions.