



ITHACA

UU Connections

2023/2024 Issue No. 7

March 1-31, 2024

Our Spiritual Journey

Sometimes I think that second children are created to teach us humility.

Becoming a parent has been the greatest change that I have yet to experience. Regardless of what you think you know, or acknowledge that you don't know, the reality of creating a new life, and being responsible for caring for that tiny person, is life-changing. More so than getting married or getting a degree or changing a career, becoming a parent completely transforms who you are.

And that first year is hard. I doubt that anyone who has ever had an infant can forget that time: the sleepless nights, the aching body, the monumental shift in priorities, the loss of self. But it is also a time filled with wonder. A time when you discover a love unlike anything experienced before it. A love so all-encompassing that sometimes it feels hard to breathe.

Within this crucible of parenthood a new you is created. And I wonder, does the caterpillar fear the chrysalis? Or does it know, somehow, that once it is beyond that time of darkness, that it will take to the skies?

It may sound a little bit overly-dramatic to compare the two, after all, there is some understanding of what you are getting yourself into when you become a parent. You are, perhaps more than you wish, conscious for the process of becoming. And, regardless of how spectacular it would be, no person, to my knowledge, has ever sprouted wings after becoming a parent.

Then you have another one, and you think to yourself, I've got this. I know what I'm doing this time around. I am practiced and prepared. I have obviously done this before.

But baby number two seems to defy your expectations. Tricks and tactics that work with the first fall flat. Everything you thought that you had figured out going through this experience the first time is turned on its head because this child, this second miraculous child, is nothing like the first. And you find yourself learning all over again, with them.

And that love, that all-encompassing love, that you thought you understood, brings you to your knees. It humbles you in its ability to change you once again. To change your family, your life, your whole world.

Change can be challenging. It can be scary, even when we choose it. But change is also life. Without it there is no possibility of better things to come. No chance of a love so great that it overwhelms us. Like the butterfly, we have to brave the dark and unknown, if we hope one day to fly.

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

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.



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

This is my favorite time of the year, or at least by the end of the month it is. We are finally back to the half of the year with the most daylight, the air begins to warm, and everything starts to bloom. This is the season of transformation. We are going through our own season of transformation here at the First Unitarian Society, and in no place is it more apparent than with our programming for children, youth, and families. We are unfolding, expanding, and stretching towards the light of a new beginning.

We have successfully transitioned to a new model of serving our children and families which includes time in the classrooms, time for all ages to explore together, and multi-generational worship. Every Sunday our Nursery welcomes our youngest members. We are offering opportunities each month to meet and connect in addition to our Sunday morning worship time through events, music classes, and small group ministry for parents. We are learning about and connecting with different faith communities with our youth. We are working to make the changes needed to become a truly welcoming community.

And this would not be possible without you. You are the catalyst for transformation. You are the reason for expansion. You are the heart of this community. Together we can be the change we want to see in the world.

Emily Richards CRE, Director of Religious Exploration

Classroom Sundays

Elementary: This past month the elementary aged children explored the Gifts of Justice and Equity which included helping our friends in the Nursery, making food for Coffee Hour, exploring the beauty of the many shades and hues of skin, and a special Creative Sunday! This month they will continue to explore our faith through the Gifts of Transformation.

Middle School and High School: The youth will be continuing their Crossing Paths journey by exploring the teachings of Hinduism this month with a visit to BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in North Syracuse. 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.

[Crossing Paths Hindu Temple 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 and we are looking forward to continuing to get to know our spring RE teachers this month.

We are still in need of a volunteer for the 2nd-5th grade classroom this spring so please reach out if working with our young people brings you joy and fulfillment. 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>

Religious Exploration Schedule for March

March 3rd, Creative Sunday, Take Apart Party. **March 10th**, Classroom Sunday. **March 17th**, Multigenerational Service. **March 24th**, Classroom Sunday. **March 31st**, Creative Sunday, Easter Celebration.

Nursery

The Nursery will be 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. 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 in March

Take Apart Party! Sunday, March 3rd

During our Creative Sunday on **March 3rd** children and youth will be participating in a Take Apart Party. We will explore the innards of computers, electronics and machines as a part of our monthly theme of Transformation. And we need your help!

Maya Angelou

*We delight in the beauty of the
butterfly, but rarely admit the changes
it has gone through to achieve
that beauty.*

(RE News continued from page 2)

If you have any broken or obsolete electronics (hair dryer, keyboard, telephone) that you are happy to part with in the name of exploration please bring them to First UU by **March 1st** and contact Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org. Are you an engineer or just really knowledgeable of the innards of technology? Please let us know if you'd like to help us learn about the things we take apart.

March Movie Night

Friday, **March 8th**, 5:30 pm-8 pm, Arch Room
Drop your kids off, or stay and join us, for a movie night, complete with dinner and snacks!
[Movie Night Registration](#)

Spring Celebration

Saturday, **March 30th**, 12 pm-2 pm, Parlor
Please join us for a celebration of the spring holidays including Easter, Passover, Ramadan, Ostara, Earth Day and more. There will be egg dyeing, crafts, games, snacks, and an opportunity for pictures with the Easter Bunny. This event is free and open to the public. All are welcome.

NEW Small Group Ministry for Parents - Childcare Provided

Sunday, **March 17th**, 12 pm-1 pm, Library
Beginning this March a new Small Group Ministry is forming, especially for individuals who are actively parenting. The group will follow the Soul Matters themes with a focus on how they are related to the journey and experience of being a parent. Gatherings will take place monthly on the third Sunday of the month from 12 pm-1 pm, with childcare available. Join us for fellowship and community within our larger First UU community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment.

Music for Little People

Every Other Tuesday from 1 pm-1:45 pm
March 5th and 19th, 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 on two Tuesdays in March. Sing, play, dance, explore instruments, and connect through music.

MUUsic for You and Me

Sunday, **March 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.

March Worship Services

The theme for March is "The Gifts of Transformation" 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, March 3

"Transformation" Rev. Peaches Gillette

I think of transformation from a personal perspective and note that it is not a single stop on our movement through life, but a series of stops as we grow from one stage of consciousness into another.

Personal transformation can occur because of a deep, individual experience or from a collective experience as a family, a community or a nation.
Special music by Stephanie Ortolano

Sunday, March 10

"Opening Up to Change"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

As human beings we thrive on routine and familiarity, too much change too fast can feel overwhelming, or even frightening. And yet, change is necessary to grow to flourish. How do we allow ourselves to open up to the transformation we need to undergo in order to prosper, both as individuals, and as a community? How do we openly embrace, and even actively seek, change, instead of closing ourselves off to the possibilities that it offers?

Special music by Will Tobin, piano

Sunday, March 17

"The Joy of Transformation"

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

Just as seeds become flowers, eggs hatch into chicks, and caterpillars transform into butterflies, change can bring wonder and new beginnings. Join us for a multigenerational, interactive, and engaging exploration of the many gifts that transformation brings.

Special music by Stephanie Ortolano

Sunday, March 24

"Transformation" Rev. Peaches Gillette

Throughout time, even ordinary people have helped transform history in order to create a safer, more just and equitable present. Together, let us remember them, but let us also remember that we too are ordinary people who can transform our world and the world of those around us.

Special music by FUSIT Choir

Sunday, March 31

"Death and Renewal"

Magdalen Lindeberg

Thoughts on the transformative significance of Easter

Special music by Stephanie Ortolano



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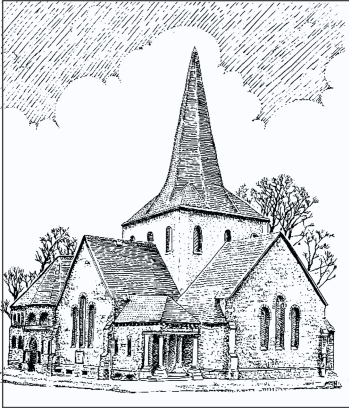
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**First Unitarian is a
UUA-recognized LGBTQ+
Welcoming Congregation**

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 North Aurora Street
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for March is The Gifts of Transformation

*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 Gifts of Transformation shows up in your life.*

March 1-9: What have you learned about the relationship between transformation and joy? What have you learned about the relationship between transformation and pain?

March 10-16: Is your armor in the way of your growth? Is it time to thank your armor for the way it protected and saved you back when things were tough?

March 17-23: How do you think your future self might transform its relationship with doubt and distrust?

March 24-31: Is believing "I don't deserve it" standing in your way? What if your transformation lies in asking for what you need?

Pub Theology

Tuesday, **March 26**, 6:30 pm

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 Gifts of Transformation*. 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.

March Board of Trustees Meeting

The March meeting will be held Tuesday, **March 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://uso2web.zoom.us/j/88258776990pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUFAQzQndSVFRraFlPdz09>

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990

Passcode: 602445



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 - Two Sundays in March

The Shared Plate for **March 3** will support Ithaca Mobile Pack, sponsors 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. The next Ithaca Mobile Pack is scheduled for September 27-29, 2024 at the NY Army National Guard Armory, 1765 Hanshaw Road in Ithaca. There will be 11 packing sessions where 1,100 volunteers will be needed to pack food, with the goal of packing 225,000 meals. \$66,000 will need to be raised to cover the cost of the food packed. info@ithacamobilepack.org. For more information, contact Liz Einstein at eaestepkid@msn.com.

The Shared Plate for **March 31** will support Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. It includes five health centers and is committed to providing quality reproductive health care and sexuality education for all people in our community regardless of age, race, ethnicity, physical ability or attributes, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability to pay. PPSFL was created in 2004 by the merger of Planned Parenthood of the Southern Tier and Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County, both founded in 1968.

Side with Love for March - TBD

Please check the mid-week announcements for the organization that will be the recipient of our Side with Love donations in March.

8th Principle Action Ministry

The 8th Principle Action Ministry (formerly the Antiracism Ministry Team) meets every fourth Wednesday of the month, so they will meet via Zoom at 7 pm on **March 27**.

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) - March 6 at 7 pm

We will organize next steps for each of us and the congregation to keep saving money and improve the sustainability of our lives. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month. All are welcome. Please join us.

Contact Matt Franke-Singer at mfs@twcnny.rr.com for further information. Meetings are held over Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqQTN5eIM3ejltbGdlcGhPa3QxQT09)
[pwd=SDBqQTN5eIM3ejltbGdlcGhPa3QxQT09](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqQTN5eIM3ejltbGdlcGhPa3QxQT09)

Meeting ID: 816 4475 3524

Passcode: 894885



Soul Matters Material for March - The Gifts of Transformation

The Soul Matters theme for March is *The Gifts of Transformation*. 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/SoulMattersMar24>

Thursday Choir Rehearsals

First Unitarian Choir rehearsals are every Thursday at 7 pm in the Annex and the choir performs on the last Sunday service of each month. Come sing with us! For more information, contact Choir Director, Jayne Demakos, choir@uuithaca.org.

Care Cafes

Sunday, March 10 and Sunday, March 24

12:15 - 1:45 pm in the FUSIT library

The Care Cafes 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 Christine or Rev. Peaches 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 assocdc1@uuithaca.org

Christine Kapral christinekapral@yahoo.com

Save The Date for Unirondack!

September, 2nd-5th 2024

More information to come and registration will be opened to the community some time in **April**.



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/FUSoft/> and Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacaus

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, March 3

"Thinking About Children in the Israel-Hamas War"

James Garbarino

James Garbarino is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Cornell University. He has traveled in the Middle East and written about war, political violence and children, dealt with it in his 1991 book *No Place To be Child: Growing Up in a War Zone* and his 2008 book *Children and the Dark Side of Human Experience*.

Jim's talk will offer an analysis of how the human rights of children figure into adult calculations about war - and how they often do not. His presentation is based upon his academic and field experience as a developmental psychologist dealing with the decades of conflict and political violence in the saga of Israel/Palestine relations. The program will include an opportunity for questions/answers and discussion."

Sunday, March 17

Environmental Interest Group

Marie McRae and friends will present information on the Ithaca Green New Deal - what it is, who it affects, why it was passed in 2019, where and how it is being rolled out.

Breeze "How To"

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca uses the Breeze Content Management System for our database. Breeze can be a useful tool for congregants in many ways, including accessing the event calendar, checking your giving history, finding out the members of the various teams and committees and more! [Click here](#) for some basic information on how to use Breeze.

Winter Open Question

The Board would like to hear from you!

Each year the Board engages the congregation through a series of Open Questions. The responses to these questions help inform the decisions of the Board and the Ministry, and serve to guide the development of the Vision of Ministry for the future.

The Open Question for this Winter is: ***How could FUSIT evolve and transform to continue to meet the needs of the community and also prepare for the future?***

Please take a moment today to write down an answer and drop it in the basket on the table just outside the door to the sanctuary or email a response to board@UUithaca.org.

Please send responses by
March 15th.

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.

- Please keep Benjamin Salomon and the rest of the Salomon family in your thoughts and prayers in the coming weeks as Ben begins a new clinical trial at Sloan Kettering this Wednesday.

- Deanna Ward has just been readmitted to the hospital due to an infection. Please keep her and her family in your thoughts.

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.

Blue Zones - Movie Showing and Discussion

Sunday, **March 10, March 24, and April 7**

9:00-10:00 am in the Annex

Would you like to live a long, vibrant life? There are places around the world where a large population has lived active, vital lives past 100 years. These are called Blue Zones. Author Dan Buettner travelled around the world and discovered five unique communities where people live extraordinarily long and energetic lives. He documented what he has learned in a series called *"Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones."*

This is a 4-part series that began on February 25 and continues for three more Sunday mornings.

We invite you to join us to learn what these individuals, but more importantly their communities are doing to support their elders to remain vibrant centenarians. Each session begins with approximately half an hour video of one of the series episodes, then we discuss what we've observed. The ultimate goal of this experience is to create awareness and intentional community around the secrets to long, vital lives.

If you missed the first session or can't make all four Sundays, we can help you stay current. And of course, the final chapter ties everything together. And that session will be a good chance to challenge ourselves. We hope that elders will be able to join us, but for those under 50, it is never too early to build the structures within your life. These centenarians are surrounded by younger generations that support and learn from them.

We hope you will join us.

Don and Rita Barber

Nametags

If you would like a nametag, please fill out the ***nametag request form*** at the Welcome Table or contact adminasst@uuithaca.org and we'll make one for you.

Then look for your new nametag at the Welcome Table after the Sunday service.

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. Please check the Mid-Week Announcements for the updated weekly schedule.

Important Office Deadlines:

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

Women's Circle on March 25

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=ZDkYanRKMmo2czhqSWgrSVhmbGFqdzo9>

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, **March 24**, for an evening with **Rachael Kilgour**.

In the Sanctuary of First Unitarian at 7:00 pm

Rachael is a Canadian-American songwriter and performing artist whose plain-spoken, lyric-driven work and intimate performances have endeared her to listeners and fellow artists alike. The 2015 grand prize winner of the international NewSong Music Performance & Songwriting Competition and winner of the 2017 Kerrville New Folk Contest, Kilgour has been featured at NYC's Lincoln Center, at The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and at the Sundance Film Festival.

Doors open at 6:30 and the concert starts at **7 pm**.

\$20 suggested donation at the door. Cash preferred.

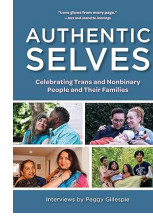
For more information and to reserve your ticket, go to <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/beacon-on-aurora/>

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!

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](#)



LGBTQ+ Book Discussion Group

We will continue to discuss "*Authentic Selves, Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families*" on **March 11** and **April 8**. The group meets from 7 - 8 pm via Zoom. All are invited to attend, even if you have not read the book or haven't read all the stories for that month, as we engage in lively and important conversations around this topic. The compelling 35 stories provide a glimpse into the real lives, both the challenges and triumphs, of these remarkable people and their families. In March we'll discuss the next 9 stories (which begin on page 180). Copies of the book can be found in our church library and at the Tompkins County Public Library. Loretta Heimbuch adminasst@uuithaca.org will lead the discussion. This program is part of FUSIT's commitment to renewing our status as an LGBTQ+ Welcoming Congregation. Join Zoom meeting: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/87206162355?pwd=QUhodUxrK2lFa3JlXRTJaSVlIQmpvUT09>

Meeting ID: 872 0616 2355 Passcode: 327155



LGBTQ+ Group Meets Monthly

This Small Group is especially for FUSIT's LGBTQ+ community and meets monthly. **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. Please reach out to Ely at eleanorwillard97@gmail.com for more information.

International Transgender Day of Visibility March 31

Celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities as well as recognize those that helped fight for rights for transgender people.

And just as important as visibility, is safety and protection for the transgender community. Over 400 anti-LGBTQ+ bills are being considered around the country in these first weeks of 2024, surpassing the 510 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced in 2023. Over the last four years mainstream medical establishments in the U.S. have been targeted, fuelling an aggressive public campaign questioning the legitimacy of gender affirming care. All of this slowly eroding legal protections, and attacking the dignity, the humanity, and the ability of LGBTQ+ individuals to live safely in our country.



Message From the Board of Trustees

“Let the children come to me...” Matthew 19:14 (RSV)

Fred: Megan, Could I tell you a short story about children in Sunday services?

Megan: Since Ben & I have two kiddos under four, I'm interested.

Fred: On a Sunday 60 years ago, a college friend of mine invited me to his Jehovah's Witness Sunday service. All during the service, the children of all ages were in the back of the sanctuary, making ordinary, but moderate, children noises.

Megan: Now I'm really interested.

Fred: Being raised a Methodist, I asked my college friend why the children were allowed to be in the room. “Well”, he said, “the Bible quotes Jesus “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” I've carried my friend's response in my memory to this day.

Megan: Interesting. We first started coming to FUSIT as COVID was receding. Getting the nursery restarted was still in planning. My then-18-month-old was with us in the pew and would call out and wander a bit. While I'm sure this wasn't everyone's idea of spiritual nourishment, enough people would come to me after the service and say they loved hearing little voices because it meant the church was alive and growing. This gave us the confidence to continue coming back. We started to ignore the little worried voice in our heads that was saying “wait until the kids are older and try again.” We're grateful that the community gave us that open door, and that we heard and saw very clear messages from leadership that children are valued here in our UU community.

Fred: Sometimes I hear a three-year-old in the back of the sanctuary call to another child during the service, I notice that I can still hear everything being said from the pulpit.

Megan: No doubt it can be distracting, it is for us too. But even in a service where we miss a comment from the pulpit, we, as parents, are absorbing love from those around us, and it's protective for us. Most importantly, our children are building muscles that will strengthen them and this community in the future. Now my oldest is 3 1/2, and while still in need of some engagement and capable of many shenanigans during the service, there is a cadence to our Sundays that provides them with comfort and stillness.

Fred: If my college friend was in this conversation, I'm thinking that he would be nodding vigorously.

Megan: As a mother, I feel that there's no greater gift to give my children than the opportunity to take refuge from the chaos of life, to feel loved and accepted by a trusted community, and to learn the value of self-reflection, service, and genuine connection.

Fred: I'm wondering if there is a sermon inside one of us speaking to the way that the Bible, the Koran, and the Buddhist teachings welcome children?

Megan: I'm wondering that too...Raised southern Baptist, I never remember any teachings like this, only to obey and be quiet. :)

Fred Balfour, Board Trustee, Children's ages: 56 and 54

Megan McCormick, Board Trustee. Children's ages: 3 and 1.

Ministry Visioning Team Update

The Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) encourages all First Unitarian members to respond to the **Winter Open Question: How could FUSIT evolve and transform to continue to meet the needs of the community and prepare for the future?** The responses to these questions help inform the decisions of the Board and the Ministry and serve to guide the development of the Vision of Ministry for the upcoming year. Responses are requested by **March 15**. There is a place to deposit your responses in the Parlor or you can email them to board@uuithaca.org.

As part of MVT's charge, the team continues to support and supervise the Ministry Staff in their varied and important responsibilities. MVT also considers the well-being of staff and is looking to work with the Board in this area. Also included in their charge is support of the various teams that are active at FUSIT. A monthly Team Leader Council (TLC) meeting is held for team leaders to share information and activities on the first Tuesday of each month.

Representatives from MVT are continuing their work on the budget team. The team is charged with creating and delivering to the Board at its April meeting a one-year operations budget and a two-year capital budget. This is an important and essential function for the continued operation of FUSIT.

MVT recently met with the Board to discuss important issues and plans to continue to meet with them on a regular basis to ensure effective communication about their work.

Please contact the Ministry Visioning Team with any questions you may have. Email us at mvt@uuithaca.org.

2024 Annual FUNdraiser

COMMUNITY-WIDE ONLINE AUCTION

Coming Soon!



April 26, 27, 28
Opens Friday, 4/26, 9 am
Closes, Sunday, 4/28, 9 pm
Goal: \$8,000



Preparations are underway:

- * Presentation to our Board has happened.
- * The Bidding Owl website has been updated.
- * A list of community contacts has been created.
- * A list of community vendors has been created.
- * An auction team has come forward.
- * Outreach materials have been developed.



During the month of March, we will be contacting local vendors to see if they would like to join this community fundraising project. We now have a list of 75 vendors and need volunteers to select their favorite shops and restaurants and solicit gift certificates and baskets from them. It's a great outreach for FUSIT and fun to get to know our local merchants. If you are interested in participating, please contact Marie Benedetti at marieben@twcny.rr.com for instructions.

And with everyone generously offering wonderful items up for bid, spreading the word, and actively participating, we're guaranteed a successful fundraiser!