



ITHACA

UU Connections

2024/2025 Issue No. 9

May 2025

Our Spiritual Journey

The Unitarian Universalist theologian John Luther Adams wrote:

"The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it".

I doubt that John Luther Adams when talking about the prophetic church was talking about prophecy in the way that I have previously understood it, that of swords and magic and great destinies that shape the world, written in mysterious ancient texts or whispered from the lips of oracles. No, he was talking about creating the world that we imagine.

What is the world that we imagine? What prophetic visions do we share as Unitarian Universalists today, and how are we shouldering the responsibility of making history, instead of being pushed around by it? What risks are we willing to take, as individuals and as a community, to bring that world to fruition?

Imagination is more than daydreams and what ifs. Imagination is envisioning what could be. It is speaking and writing the prophecy, and then being the catalyst that makes it happen. What could this community do if we were to unite to be a truly prophetic church? What imaginings could we dream into reality, if we did it together?

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.

ANNUAL MEETING



The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca's Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 21, preceded by pizza at 5:30 pm and beginning at 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary and via Zoom. See page 9 for agenda.

Sunday Services in the Sanctuary at 10:30 am

Live-streamed on our YouTube channel

Nursery childcare and Religious Exploration classes for children

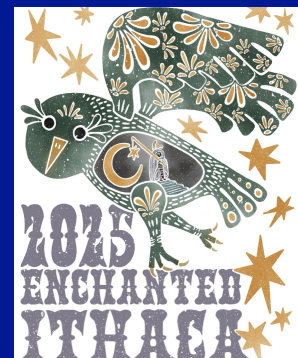
Join Us at the Ithaca Festival Parade!

You can march with us, table at the event, and/or make signs for the parade that lift up the UU values of Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, and Generosity.

Starting in May, look in the southern end of the Parlor during Coffee Hour for sign-making supplies.

You can sign up to march on Thursday, May 29, here: <https://forms.gle/StrCbbhi47N4pbbr6>

You can sign up to table between Friday, May 30, and Sunday, June 1, here: <https://forms.gle/17LyGwxnmjKFroQZ9>



Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Madeline Natale at REASST@uuithaca.org

Greetings from Religious Exploration

This month we are Living Love Through Imagination.

As we look through the lens of Love to explore the theme of Imagination, we will find creative ways to live our Values. With art, music, and mother earth as our guide, we strive to plant seeds of inspiration that grow within ourselves, our kids, and our congregation. This church year is reaching the end but growth is rapid under the summer sun.

*Let us make this earth a heaven, right here, right now.
Who knows what existences death will bring?
Let us create a heaven here on earth
where love and truth and justice reign.
Tess Baumberger*

Thank you so much to everyone who participated in our Faith in Action and made cards to send to Point of Pride, an organization that supports trans individuals who are struggling to access health care. We mailed out over 115 cards, sending love and encouragement to those in need.

Classroom Sundays

Elementary: This month the upper elementary aged children will be focusing on our monthly theme of Imagination through stories, activities, crafts, and games. The younger elementary students will be exploring our UU Values with Legos.

Middle School and High School: The youth will continue to explore what role they will play in "Building A Better World", an RPG-based curriculum that will lead youth and adults through the process of creating a game setting as a faith development and community-building exercise reflecting Unitarian Universalist values. Please have participants bring a set of gaming dice to each session if they have them.

Please register your children below for the 2024-2025 Religious Exploration program! This information helps us to plan for the upcoming year.

[First Unitarian Society of Ithaca RE Registration Form 2024-2025](#)

RE Snack Sign Up Spring 2025

We are looking for people to bring in snacks for RE on Sunday morning. The number of children and youth in our building every Sunday has been growing and, as you all know, they always seem to be hungry! Thank you so much to those of you who have already signed up. If you are able to provide some snacks to supplement the popcorn that would be great!

[RE Snack Sign Up Spring 2025](#)

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](#)

Join our Religious Exploration Program

We are excited to share that we are planning to expand our Classroom Sundays offerings next year to three elementary aged classrooms, a middle school classroom, and a high school classroom. This means we need even more amazing community members to engage with our Religious Exploration Programming by joining one of those rooms for half of the year.

Being a part of the lives of our young people is deeply meaningful and the effects last a lifetime. This important programming can only happen with the support of the entire community.

[2025-2026 Religious Exploration Engagement Sign Up](#)

Please join our [First UU Ithaca Parents Facebook Group](#)!

*Emily Richards CRE (Credentialed Religious Educator) - Director of Congregational Life
Madeline Natale - Religious Exploration Coordinator*

Religious Exploration Schedule for May

May 4 - Classroom Sunday

May 11 - Multigenerational Service

May 18 - Classroom Sunday

May 25 - Creative Sunday

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

Religious Exploration Events for May

Extended RE

May 4th, 12 pm-1 pm

Join us in the Arch room for extended community, conversation and crafts. All are welcome! We are creating a collaborative collage chalice to be hung in the building for all to see.

Youth RPG Game Nights

May 9th and 16th, 5-7 pm

Drop off your youth group kids to play in the RPG world they created during Religious Exploration this year. In these sessions they will complete quests, share laughs, and create mischief. We are looking for dinner and snack donations, please reach out to Madeline (REASST@uuithaca.org) if you're able to help!

Youth Group Picnic in Hazel's Backyard

May 18th, 2-4 pm

Calling all Tweens and Teens, Hazel's Backyard needs our help! Join us to explore the value of Interdependence by widening and clearing the paths in our very own backyard. This service project will be followed by a picnic and plenty of time to splash in the beautiful stream that runs through this patch of Heaven. Reach out to Madeline or Emily to discuss rides from the church to Hazel's Backyard located at 12 Twin Glens Rd., Ithaca, NY. Snack donations are greatly appreciated.

Party in the Park

May 25th, 2-4 pm at Stewart Park

Join the RE Team at Stewart Park for our end of the year celebration! Lunch is provided. Food donations are always appreciated. You can find us near the large sandbox.

Music for Little People

Wednesday, May 7th and 21st, 10 am-10:45 am

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

Connection Circle for Parents - Childcare Provided

Sunday, May 18th, 12 pm-1 pm, FUSIT Library

A Connection Circle 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. This month's gathering will take place on the second Sunday instead of the third because of the Easter holiday. Childcare is available. We invite you to join us for an opportunity for connection and community within our larger First UU community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment.

Worship Services

The theme for May is "Living Love Through the Practice of Imagination" 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, May 4, "Imagine. Reflections on the Message of John Lennon"

Rev. Peaches Gillette

I often say to others that I believe we can do better. I say this based on my hope and my want for a better world. Let's hope and want and imagine together. *Special music by VOICES Choir*

Sunday, May 11, "The Sparks of Imagination"

Emily Richards, CRE

Stories have long sparked our imaginations. Spoken first from the lips of mothers, parents, and caregivers, both tales of myth and history have informed our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Join us as we dream and imagine through story and song in this service for all ages.

Special music by Ithaca Children and Youth Chorus

Sunday, May 18, "Dreaming A World Into Being"

Emily Richards, CRE

What future do we imagine for ourselves and our community, and how do we breathe life into those dreams? What joys, growth, and successes have we already brought into being? And how do we live into our call to be a prophetic people? *Special music by Stephanie Ortolano*

Sunday, May 25, "Sanctuary of the Mind: Holding Space for Hope"

Rev. Janet Shortall

In times of cultural, political, and moral constriction - when fear narrows public discourse and authoritarianism demands obedience - our imagination can become a sanctuary. A sacred refuge. Not a place to escape reality, but a place where the soul can breathe, regroup, and reimagine what's possible.

Special music by Jack Roscoe and Jeremy Beutel



Director of Congregational Life

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CongregationalLife@uuithaca.org

Pastoral Care Associate

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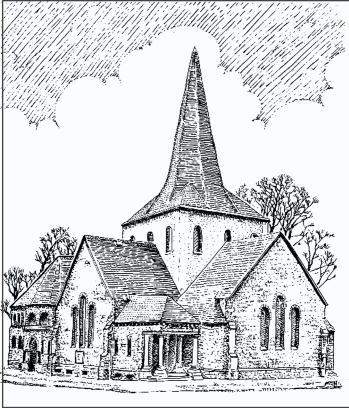
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for May is Living Love Through the Practice of Imagination

*Possible Ponderings is an offering of ways you might consider
engaging more deeply with the theme or reflecting on the ways the
idea of **Living Love Through the Practice of
Imagination** shows up in your life.*

May 1-10: Has age widened or narrowed your imagination?

May 11-17: Are you someone who imagines everything that can go right? Or everything that can go wrong?

May 18-24: What's the most radical thing you can imagine doing before you die? Are you sure that it's not realistic to live that life you keep imagining?

May 25-31: How close is your current life to the life you imagined for yourself in early adulthood? How would that younger self feel about the life you are living now? Surprised? Proud? Confused? Curious?

Spring Cleaning!

Our annual spring work day will be Saturday, **May 10**, from 10-12. We'll be focused on our outside spaces -- weeding, washing, sweeping, and some gutter cleaning for anyone willing to climb!

If you can help for any amount of time, please join us! Great conversations always happen at these work days, and if enough people are interested, we can order lunch at noon.

Any questions? Contact Sara Catterall
sara.catterall@gmail.com

FUSIT Listserv

If you would like to be added to the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca listserv, please fill out the form at <https://fusit.breezechms.com/form/oc48af>. If you have any questions, email Michelle at office@uuithaca.org.

***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!***



**Beacon on Aurora -
An evening with Martyn Joseph
Sunday, May 18,
doors open at 6:30 pm, concert
begins at 7 pm**

\$20 suggested donation at the door. Cash preferred. Electronic payment options (direct to artist) will also be available.

Martyn Joseph is a completely unique and mind-blowing artist. Take everything you think you know about singer songwriters and rip it up. For one man and a guitar he creates a performance with a huge far-reaching sound that is energetic, compelling, and passionate. Be it to two hundred people or twenty thousand, he blows the crowd away night after night.

2025 is Martyn's 43rd year in the business, and started with him being part of BBC Radio 2's "21st Century Folk Project", with his song "Albert's Place" and included appearances on BBC Breakfast TV, the Jeremy Vine and Ken Bruce shows on BBC Radio along with Radio 4's World at One.

FUSIT Choir

Come sing with us! The FUSIT Choir rehearses on Thursdays, from 7-8:30 pm in the Annex. Join in this wonderful, joyful and important part of our community service. Text Jayne at 607-256-9488.

Care Cafe - May 11th and 25th

2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the FUSIT Library

Rev. Peaches Gillette invites you to the Care Cafe. During our time in the 'cafe', we openly express our thoughts, reaching into ourselves and deeply touching upon and sharing what it means to be fully human in a complicated world. Each gathering will focus on a loosely structured theme around spirituality, encouraging participants to freely explore all aspects of their spiritual journeys. The flow of participants from week to week has created perfect cross-currents of relationships, broadening and securing FUSIT's sense of community. Time together in the Care Cafe allows many of us to meet and know one another more intimately.

Rev. Peaches Gillette pgfreedom09@gmail.com

Soul Matters Material for May- Imagination

The Soul Matters theme for May is *Living Love Through The Practice of Imagination*. 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/SoulMattersMay2025>

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 in the Narthex nametag cabinet (corner of Buffalo and Aurora Sts.).

Joys and Sorrows

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

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of Ruth Schwartz, a long time member of the church who died at Kendal on April 11. She was 103.

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 JoAnn Kowalski-

"A hearty appreciation to Jackie Jablonski and Phil Terrie who were instrumental in the success of providing seven meals to our fellow community members at the Code Blue shelter over the last several months. Jackie organized the volunteers to shop, prepare and deliver the meals to the shelter. Phil was on hand on the day of the meal preparation and delivery to assist with the logistics of carrying, loading and unloading.

The First Baptist Church shared their kitchen with us to prepare most of the meals. We are grateful to them for the kindness they extended to us by sharing.

There were many volunteers who stepped up to shop for provisions, act as head cook, prepare ingredients and package the food for delivery. This was an act of generosity for the community by our members with love at the center."

Office Hours in May

The office is generally open 9 am - 4 pm Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and 8 am - 3 pm Sundays.
Michelle works remotely Wednesdays.

Newcomers Inspired

Connected and Engaged

(NICE)



April 27, May 4,
May 18



Contact Elizabeth:

membership@uuithaca.org

All are welcome!

Together We Rise



Together We Can Do It! Pledge Now

Our pledge drive continues! If you have already pledged, many thanks! If you haven't yet, please don't delay.

FUSIT relies on pledges for 75 percent—three-quarters—of our operating budget. The Budget Team is working hard to finish crafting a budget for next year this week, but they need everyone's pledges so they will know how much income to count on for 2025-26. Your pledge will be a huge help!

Make your pledge this week. You can choose the method that works for you: go to <http://uuithaca.org> and click on **Donate/Pledge** on the red toolbar near the top of the screen; call the FUSIT office at (607) 273-7521; mail your pledge to First Unitarian Society, P.O. Box 6, Ithaca, NY 14851 (you can print out the pledge form from the website above and fill it in), or use this link <https://fusit.breezechms.com/form/e823758987877422>. If you have already pledged, consider adding a bit more to help out. Especially in these troubled times, generosity is a virtue. **Thank you!**

The Stewardship Team

Current Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is a great way to meet others in the First Unitarian Community and give back at the same time! Current Volunteer Opportunities are <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/connection/volunteer/>

Adult Religious Exploration

Building a Better World

Beginning **June 8th**, Youth Room
2nd and 4th Sunday from 12 pm-2 pm

Are you looking for a creative way to explore your values? Join Mike Timonin in the Youth Room every 2nd and 4th Friday of the summer months to Build a Better World. This small group will construct and play in an RPG world using the Building a Better World curriculum. Space is limited so please register.

[Adult RE BABW Registration](#)

Unirondack 2025

**Friday September 5 to Sunday September 6
(or Monday September 7)**

Our annual weekend is **NOT over the Labor Day weekend this year**. We know these 2025 dates are when school is back in session, so there will a 2-day registration option (arrive Friday evening, depart Sunday before dinner) and a 3-day registration option (arrive Friday evening, depart Monday anytime).

[Click here](#) to register!

Questions? Email Sue Mann (susan.m.mann@gmail.com)
or Michele Hochstetter (mbochstetter@gmail.com)

Last Call for Annual Report Submissions

Annual Reports from all teams and committees are due by **May 1st** in order to be included in the FUSIT Annual Report for the Annual Meeting on **May 21st**. Please send your team's **brief re-cap** of major events/accomplishments to Loretta at adminasst@uuithaca.org. **Please keep reports to 150 words or less and send as a google doc.** Longer submissions may be edited. Charts, graphics and photos are encouraged as well and should be sent in JPEG format. Thank you!

Mark Your Calendar!
FUSIT Annual Meeting
Wednesday, May 21st

Current list of Summer Service speakers and music for June 15 – August 31

A final list of speakers and music plus topics will be forthcoming in the June newsletter, on the listserv at listserv@uuithaca.org, and in the Weekly Announce throughout the summer. The general theme of this summer's speakers will be "My Truths." Summer services are held in the parlor each Sunday morning from 9:30 to 10:30. Following a shortened liturgy, speakers give sermons on a variety of topics focused on UU interests and values which are followed by moderated discussions among the attendees. The service provides a friendly and stimulating way to stay in touch with each other during the long summer season. Of course, coffee and tea are provided!

June 15 – Don Barber

June 22 – Jim Garbarino (music by The Graves' and Thompsons' Quartet)

June 29 – Rev. Joseph Boyd of Youngstown, Ohio

July 6 – Bob Parks and Angela Zhang

July 13 – Howard Nelson (music by Roberta Crawford)

July 20 – Rev. David Blanchard

July 27 – Carol Whitlow (music by The Hospicare Threshold Singers)

August 3 – Vicky McMillan

August 10 – Fred Balfour

August 17 – Rod Howe

August 24 – Elizabeth Bixler

August 31 – Tali Mugambee

Pub Theology

Tuesday, **May 27** 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 *Living Love Through the Practice of Imagination*. 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. 620 W. Green St., Ithaca.

Musings on Strategic Planning and a Thank You Message

"To be vibrant and attractive, a congregation needs a shared sense of direction. A strategic plan answers the question, "In what new and different ways will we touch lives in the coming 3 to 5 years?" D. Hotchkiss, Congregational Consulting Group Consultant

From The Coastal Business Journal, Vol.2, Does Strategic Planning Help Churches?: An Exploratory Study (Shah, David & Surawek, 12/03): "The findings indicate that churches using strategic planning experience greater growth in both attendance and finances."

Recently the Strategic Planning Committee distributed the following three questions, with hopes that your answers will aid in the development of a strategic plan representative of the goals of a majority of FUSIT members:

- 1. How would you describe FUSIT to someone new to the Ithaca community?**
- 2. What prompts (or would prompt) you to hold membership in FUSIT? Explain what the leadership could be doing to enhance the experience.**
- 3. List 1-3 goals you would like to see in FUSIT's plan for the next 3-5 years.**

The responses to open questions and surveys like this, along with congregational conversation, are a crucial part of the spiritual task of deciding as a community where to put our resources and energies.

The members of the Strategic Planning Committee thank you for thoughtful responses. Your voice in the planning process is invaluable and we are grateful for your cooperation and patience with the process.

In the weeks ahead, we look forward to chatting with you in the Parlor after service. Please submit your responses to our three questions by email to Susan Salton at susan.k.salton@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted by Rene Rogers, for the Strategic Planning Committee: Susan Salton, Marie McRae, Don Rakow, and Sara Catterall

May Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board will meet on the third Tuesday of the month, on **May 20th**, at 6:30 pm. Board meetings are a hybrid format, taking place in the Parlor and through Zoom.

All FUSIT members are invited to attend these meetings. 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/8825877699?pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUUFQzQndSVFRaFIPDzo9>

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990

Passcode: 602445

Ready to make a difference as a Trustee?

As one of nine dedicated board members, the Trustee plays a pivotal role in shaping the church's future. This team's mission? To dream big, set inspiring goals, keep an eye on our programs, and build partnerships within the congregation to bring our shared vision to life.

Together, they'll ensure that church leaders-and even each other-stay on track, accountable, and energized to make a meaningful impact. If interested, please contact Elizabeth Bixler at ebixler45@gmail.com.

Stay Connected

Curious about events and happenings at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca? Check out our Facebook page and stay current with what's going on in the community!

[First Unitarian Society of Ithaca Facebook Page](#)

Spiritual Yoga Class - Free!

Friday, May 16th, 5:30 pm-6:30 pm, Yoga Farm Ithaca

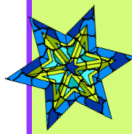
Please join our FREE FUSIT exclusive Spiritual Yoga class with Madeline Natale. Yoga will be held at Yoga Farm Ithaca, 509 N. Meadow St., Ithaca, from 5:30-6:30 pm with tea to follow! Bring your own mug, and maybe a snack to share. For further information, contact Madeline at reasst@uuithaca.org. This is the last Spiritual Yoga class for this church year.

Expanding Community

For many this charged political time can bring about increased feelings of isolation and division. We always welcome new members to our community and faith and hope to provide a safe space of connection and learning for all. 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.

Our Mission

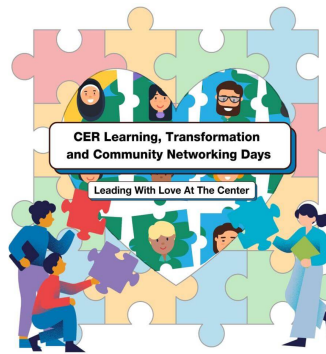
Our mission is to create connection, find inspiration and engage the world. Connect. Inspire. Engage.



FUSIT Annual Meeting, May 21st, 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary

Agenda

- 6:00 pm Call Meeting to Order
- 6:10 pm Welcome and Chalice Lighting
- 6:15 pm Year in Review
 - Congregational Life
 - Board of Directors
- 6:30 pm Hybrid Meeting Protocols
 - How to participate in the room or on zoom
- 6:40 pm Approval of May 21, 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes
- 6:50 pm Resolution: Amend FUSIT's Certificate of Incorporation (1868)
- 6:55 pm Adoption of 25-26 Budget
- 7:10 pm Election of Candidates for the Board of Trustees and the Nominating Committee
- 7:40 pm Adjourn and Closing Words



Central East Region - Learning, Transformation and Community Networking Days: Leading with Love at the Center

2025 is calling: how will Unitarian Universalists respond?

Join fellow UU's for inter-congregational connection, skill-building led by Central East Region staff, and community-building as we model and practice loving transformation. Let us answer the call together!

Whether you serve on your congregation's board, participate in committees, lead a program, serve as minister or staff, or simply love Unitarian Universalism and want to contribute, this day is for you.

Saturday, May 3, from 10 am to 4 pm
May Memorial UU Society, Syracuse, NY (ideal for the Western NY, South-Central, and Hudson Mohawk clusters)

More information is available here:
<https://www.uua.org/central-east/events/region/leading-love-center>

NEW Summer Program Small group size

\$325 per week
Scholarships Available

Ages 5-12

CAMP AURORA

Creating Connection and Community
Downtown Ithaca

Three Weeks of fun!

Fostering self-expression, creativity, and belonging,
art, music, movement, field trips, play

Week One
August 11-15

Week Two
August 18-22

Week Three
August 25-29

For more information, contact us at:
CampAurora@uuiithaca.org

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 N. Aurora Street

Camp Aurora

Camp Aurora is a week-long summer day camp in the heart of Downtown Ithaca for kids ages 5-12 that is centered on community, connection, and engagement. With a focus on creating meaningful experiences through exploring our interconnectedness to one another and the world, each fun-filled week will include art, music, movement, field trips, story, and adventure. Campers will have an opportunity to learn and grow together with an emphasis on self-expression, creativity, and belonging, with lots of space for free play and building social skills and relationships.

Camp runs from 9 am-3 pm each day.
Weekly Camp Fee: \$325
Scholarships Available

Week One: August 11th-15th
Week Two: August 18th-22nd
Week Three: August 25th-29th

Register Today:

[Camp Aurora Registration](#)

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