



ITHACA

UU Connections

2025/2026 Issue No. 5

January 2026

Our Spiritual Journey

Recently during my time serving the Binghamton UU congregation as their ministerial intern I attended a workshop where a small group of us participated in an activity exploring our beliefs. This is an activity that I have done with youth before, but with much less theologically centered questions. One of the questions asked participants to create a continuum with their bodies showing where their belief lays between two options:

I believe that humans are inherently good.
I believe that humans are inherently bad.

I'm sure you can guess that this particular question was weighted heavily on the "humans are inherently good" side of the room. And you might think that this would be the case in any group of people but not all theologies believe what we, as Unitarian Universalists believe. That all humans are inherently worthy. It is, in fact, this belief in, what was then termed "universal salvation", that got the Unitarians and the Universalists labeled as heretics in the first place. Well, that and the denial of the Trinity.

And this belief in the inherent goodness and worth of every human being is a form of resistance. In a world where we are being told that the value of some human beings is less than others, where people are being dragged from their homes and imprisoned and separated from their families, where the disparity in wealth continues to grow, the belief that all people are worthy has become a radical notion.

So, if belief in the worth and dignity of every person is radical, let's be radical.

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

**Sunday Celebration at
10:30 am
in the Sanctuary.**

Live-streamed on our YouTube channel.

[https://www.youtube.com/
@FirstUnitarianSocietyofIthaca/
streams](https://www.youtube.com/@FirstUnitarianSocietyofIthaca/streams)

*Nursery childcare and Religious
Exploration classes for children.*



Spring Fundraisers

We need volunteers to help make our spring fundraisers a success! Sign up here for more information about and to get engaged with our upcoming Oatmeal and Ice Cream, Pancake Breakfast, and Plant Sale!

[Fundraiser Sign Up](#)

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the Director of Religious Exploration

Our theme for the month of January is “Practicing Resistance”. As parents of tiny humans, in a world that feels like it's on fire, how do we teach resistance let alone practice it? How do we continue to dismantle systems that oppress us when we are drained and exhausted? These are questions I've asked myself time and time again.

Rest is resistance. Society tricks us into thinking that if we aren't constantly going, then we are failing. This is not true! This idea is a part of hustle culture and it does not serve us or our families.

Practicing resistance can look like slowing down, especially in the winter months. Hibernate, take a nap, breathe. I am sure you're thinking “Madeline I have bills to pay and work to do, I can't just take a nap.” That may be true AND what if you skipped the dishes at the end of the night? The dishes won't go anywhere. The dishes are never in a rush. Your children won't judge you if they see the dirty pan in the sink. In fact, it will remind them of the delicious meal their parent made for them. They will notice their parents are snuggling with them on the couch a little bit longer. Maybe this frees up time for stories or movies to end the day.

You don't have to make some profound change in order to lean into resistance. Caring for yourself is enough and it is perfect.

With Love and Care, Madeline

January Classroom Sundays

This month the elementary aged children will explore our monthly theme “Practicing Resistance” through stories, activities, crafts, and games.

Middle School will continue to explore their Unitarian Universalist Values through the lense of other faith traditions using the “Crossing Paths” Curriculum.

Youth who are in *High School* are encouraged to join the weekly services or volunteer in RE. They are welcome to facilitate games and crafts for the elementary kids or play in the nursery with our babies and toddlers.

Elementary religious exploration is in a time of change. We are starting the new year by introducing “Choose your own Adventure” RE. All elementary kids will start RE in the arch room for Children's Chapel. They will light their chalice, revisit covenant, embody the 7 values, and enjoy a story that aligns with the theme of the month. After this connection time they are invited to choose between 2 or 3 activities. Our goal is to deepen their connection with all of the kids in RE across many age groups and allow them to take ownership over their RE experience.

Please register your children below for the 2025-2026 Religious Exploration program! This information helps us to plan for the upcoming year AND keep your children safe.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2gmAdfKS-DrbPQF2Xum7a_oqgzj7Epf2hOcAWcnmRxWmt3A/viewform?usp=header

Volunteer Involvement

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

As we begin to shift into the winter months, it is important to begin collecting new RE volunteers to join the kind and nurturing team of RE Teachers. Classrooms run twice a month for all of the 5 classrooms. We have substitutes available to cover any Sunday that you might not be available for and the schedule is already made, making it much easier for all of us to plan ahead! If you're new to Unitarian Universalism, volunteering is a great way to learn more about our values!

[2025-2026 RE Classroom Schedule](#)

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

Religious Exploration Schedule for January

Class runs from 10:45-11:45 am. School aged children are invited to start in the Sanctuary.

January 4th - Classroom Sunday

January 11th - Creative Sunday

January 18th - Classroom Sunday

January 25th - Multigenerational Service

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

January Religious Exploration Events

A Uni-verse-al Birthday

Join us on **January 24** for our first ever "Everybody" Birthday Party! This is a multigenerational astrology themed birthday party. We will have table top games, dinner and cake! This event will be held in the annex from 4:30-7:30 pm.

Teen Movie Night

January 24th from 7:30-9:30pm

This movie night is intended for youth who are in middle and high school. Invite youth to bring friends! No registration needed, please email Madeline to inquire about the movie title. Popcorn and drink will be provided. Join us for the Uni-verse-al birthday party beforehand to enjoy dinner and cake.

Connection Circle for Parents - Childcare Provided

Sunday, **January 18**, 12 pm-1 pm

Sophia Lyon Fahs Room

Our Connection Circle for individuals who are actively parenting will begin meeting again this month. Gatherings will take place monthly on the third Sunday of the month from 12 pm-1 pm, with childcare available. We invite you to join us for an opportunity for fellowship and community within our larger First UU community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment.

Music for Little People

Wednesday, **January 7th and 21st**

12 pm-12:45 pm, Arch Room

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.

Adult RE

Building a Better World

Explore a Better world through the table top role-playing game curriculum "Building a Better World". Reach out to Mike Timonin (Mike.timonin@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

Pub Theology

Tuesday, **January 27th**, 6:30 pm

Liquid State Brewing, 620 W. Green Street, Ithaca

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 *Practicing Resistance*. Non-beer and non-alcoholic drinks options available! 21 and over please. Bring your friends! Hope to see you there!

January Worship Services

The theme for January is "Practicing Resistance" 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 4, "Resisting and Embracing Change"

Emily Richards, CRE

An unknown author wrote: *Change is never painful. Only resistance to change is painful.*

As we begin this new year together we will reflect on this community, this faith, and the world around us and how to practice resistance while embracing change as we continue to discover what it truly means to be a transformational people who center love.

Music by Laura Ramos

Sunday, January 11, "Practicing Resistance"

Rev. Peaches Gillette

Music by Kevin Moss, guitar and vocals

Sunday, January 18, "The Power of Your Food Choices"

Don Barber

We interact with food several times a day. Where it comes from, how it's produced, how it's prepared, and how we eat it are all these choices which convey our values and our choices for the world we will live in.

Music by Yusuf Ugurer, tenor

Sunday, January 25, "Outlawing Jellybeans and Other Injustices"

Emily Richards, CRE

In this fun and interactive service based on the story by Johnny Valentine we will consider how we use our power and how we respond to injustice.

Music by UU Choir

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that our church is located on land that is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee People and the Cayuga Nation. Their presence is imbued in these lakes, valleys, gorges, and hills. May we nurture our relationship with our Haudenosaunee neighbors, and our shared responsibilities to this place of their homelands

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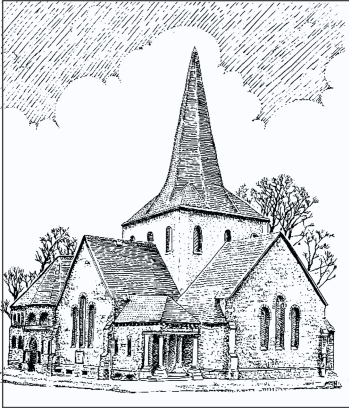
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for January is Practicing Resistance.

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

January 1-10: As a kid, did you resist the rules or did you follow them? How might you see an echo of that earlier self in your life today?

January 11-17: Is there a time from your past where you wish you would have found a way to resist the fear of failure?

January 18-24: Have you been following the path of least resistance for so long that you no longer notice?

January 25-31: Our self-focused culture is not designed to encourage activism and other-centered resistance. Who do you have to thank for your becoming someone who counter-culturally cares about and works for needs greater than your own?

Parking

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

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 can be found here: <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/connection/volunteer/>

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/oe48af>. 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!*

Social Justice

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. Find more information about various teams on our website.

Side with Love and Shared Plate

Each Sunday in January, we are collecting food and personal items for young people supported by the Village at Ithaca and unhoused youth staying at the Village House. Needed items: socks appropriate for children age 6-20, toothbrushes and toothpaste, cereal bars, raisins and dried fruit, peanut butter in plastic jars, dry boxed mac n cheese, ramen Noodles

Democracy Circle Meets on the Second Sunday

The 8th Principle Action Ministry (8PAM) has been gathering on the second Sunday of each month as a Democracy Circle to share ideas and companionship, engage with one another and educate ourselves and each other during this turbulent time in our history.

We'll meet Sunday, **January 11th** at noon in the Sophia Lyon Fahs Room.

We discuss actions in which we can engage and listen to one another. Any and all are welcome, whether you attend once or often. Please bring your suggestions, ideas and thoughts. Initially small groups were formed to focus on various areas including Engaging with Others, Engaging with the Community, Communication and Action and Constitution Study. We continue to evolve with our ideas and actions.

The Environmental Interest Circle

The Environmental Interest Circle meets to discuss/exchange ideas and actions that further sustainable living for each one of us, for the FUSIT congregation, and for our congregations' role in the greater community. We will meet on **January 7th** at 7 pm in the Parlor and over Zoom, and continue to meet every first Wednesday of the month.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqaTN5elM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 4475 3524 Passcode: 894885

Soul Matters Material for January

The Soul Matters theme for January is *Practicing Resistance*. 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/SoulMattersJan2026>

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.

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 Nancy Dolge, Walt Peck and the Care Team:

With much gratitude we want to report that The Human Needs Fund fundraiser and shared plate in November yielded \$1,252.81 to replenish the \$4500 fund. This special FUSIT account allows us to confidentially offer a small amount of support to congregants who find themselves in a sudden financial crisis. Thank you so much for your generosity.



Care Team

The Care Team provides pastoral care and support for congregants who are going through challenging times. If you or any member or close friend of FUSIT need some assistance, contact Kathy Hopkins at 607-582-3025 or Care@uuithaca.org.

Pastoral Care Emergencies

Please contact Rev. Janet Shortall at pastoralcare@uuithaca.org or 607-218-2088.

Care Café - January 11th and 25th

Thank you for joining us for Care Café, held every other Sunday during the church year from 12:00 -1:30 in the Library after service and coffee hour.

The conversations we share during Care Café are rich, honest, and designed to offer meaningful insights about our journey through life together. The diverse personalities and perspectives we bring only deepen our understanding of how each of us navigates the challenges and joys we encounter. I hope to have you with us.

As we look ahead, here are upcoming dates:

February 8th and 22nd

March 8th, and 22nd

April 5th, 19th

May 3rd, 17th, and 31st

Rev. Peaches Gillette



Our Mission

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

Message from the Board of Trustees -

As part of our commitment to living our values and creating a Society where everyone feels loved and cared for, in 2023 the Board of Trustees started a Staff Wellbeing Initiative. Our staff are the foundation of everything we see, hear, and experience each week that brings us joy and fulfillment. Not only that, they are each individually special, with unique gifts, passions, and ideas that make our Society the amazing place it is. The Staff Wellbeing Initiative involves annual, individual interviews with staff focused on hearing their feedback and asking them what they need in order to not just stay in their jobs, but to feel fulfilled by their jobs and valued by their leadership and congregation. After those interviews, we look at all of responses and meet with the Ministry Visioning Team to identify ways that we can better support staff wellbeing individually, interpersonally, and organizationally. Wellbeing isn't just a personal charge — it's a community commitment that means being proactive, asking questions, listening, and being accountable to taking action. We want FUSIT to be a place that not only makes congregants feel seen, heard, and uplifted, but our staff as well. They are our backbone and our heart. If you see a staff member, tell them how much you appreciate them!

Megan McCormick, President of the Board of Trustees

January Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board is now meeting on the third Wednesday of the month and will meet on **January 21**, 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/88258776990?pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUFRQzQndSVFRraFlPdzo9>

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990 Passcode: 602445

Office Hours

For the month of January, Michelle will be in the office Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays and working remotely on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. If you have in person office business, please send an email to office@uuithaca.org to make an appointment.

Holiday Closing

*The office will be closed
December 24-January 2
and will reopen January 5.*

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

UUs of Color

We invite people of color (having African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, Middle Eastern, Native American, Pacific Islander identities) to gather with us. Our purpose is to commune with one another, amplify our voices, and promote diversity in our UU community. Activities may include having meals together, welcoming new POC into the congregation, planning a service, collaborating with other groups at (or beyond) FUSIT, and more. We meet the first Monday of the month at 6:00 pm and around meaningful events. Please contact poc@uuithaca.org for more information.



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 dre@uuithaca.org for more information.

Women's Circle Meets on January 26th

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

Join the Choir!

Come join us. We rehearse in the church Annex on Thursdays (except holidays) from 7-8:30 pm. Contact Jayne for more info at choir@uuithaca.org.

Expanding Community

For many this continues to be a time of increased feelings of isolation and being cut off from others. We always welcome new members to our community and faith and hope to provide a safe space of connection and learning for all. 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.

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](#)

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