First Unitarian Universalist Society of Ithaca

Connections

2026/2027 Issue No. 3 November 2026

Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am in the Sanctuary.

Live-streamed on our YouTube channel.

Nursery childcare and Religious Exploration classes for children.

Our Spiritual Journey

As we head into the 2026 midterms, studies are showing that Americans are experiencing an unprecedented amount of stress. Which may seem unsurprising given the political turmoil of the last few years.

In a recently published article from the American Psychological Association titled *Stress in America 2026* they wrote: "...many adults appear to view chronic stress as something to be managed rather than overcome. In response, many seem to be recalibrating their expectations, shifting from hopes of returning to stability toward learning how to live amid ongoing uncertainty. Stress is no longer being experienced as an interruption to everyday life. For many U.S. adults, it has become part of the baseline."

In this time of rising costs, political uncertainty, and disconnection how are we staying grounded? What spiritual practices are helping you to find stability? How can we, as a community, offer a place of healing and hope, a place where we meet one another with kindness and compassion, knowing that we are all living in this time and yet may be experiencing it differently.

The article goes on to note that this increased stress has begun to affect how many adults spend their time, including a shift to lower engagement in their communities. This change is not only due to a decrease in available time to participate but also from what people report as a lowering of their mental and emotional bandwidth.

Ideally being together in community should give people a renewed sense of energy and engagement. The very act of coming together should be healing. But what does healing even look like in an age of uncertainty?

We should acknowledge that showing up isn't always easy. Sometimes the very things that make community most necessary are the things that leave us feeling least able to participate. So perhaps we begin with grace: for ourselves and for one another. Let's make our community a place where people can come as they are, where a quiet presence is as welcome as an active hand, where we are met with gratitude instead of criticism, and where reaching out is an invitation rather than an obligation. Healing doesn't ask us to be endlessly strong. It asks us to find ways to be together.

Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life

LIVE Fall Service Auction

Friday, November 6th

6:45 pm in the Sanctuary

So many wonderful services and items have been donated by fellow congregants! It's such a fun and exciting evening of bidding and winning - you won't want to miss it!

Featuring a delicious pre-auction dinner catered by Maimouna's Cuisine at 5:30 pm in the Annex



Chili and Cornbread Lunch

Sunday, **November 22nd**

11:45 am -1 pm in the Annex

Please join us for the return of our annual Cider and Cornbread Communion during services followed by a shared meal of chili and cornbread in the Annex.

Cooks Needed

Do you have an amazing chili or cornbread recipe that you would love to share? Would you like to help make mini cornbread muffins for our communion? We need volunteers to make cornbread and/or a pot of chili for our **November 22** Cornbread Communion and Chili event.

We especially need somehow to bake our mini cornbread muffins for the communion itself. Recipe will be provided! Options that are gluten free, vegan, and allergen friendly are especially welcome. Please sign up here.

Religious Exploration News

Religious Exploration

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

To heal in a community is to be witnessed. To be vulnerable without need for intervention from another. No need to fix or change how our friend, peer, or family member is feeling and experiencing life. It's co-regulation and shared experiences. It's leaving behind the burdensome idea that we must do this alone.

With love, Madeline, Director of Religious Exploration

We are recruiting new volunteers to be in our classrooms for the 2026-2027 church year.
Our new RE structure gives all volunteers more flexibility. If youre new to Unitarian Universalism, volunteering is a great way to deepen your understanding of our UU values! Background checks are required.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cWvzoDZN3Icni7bM5vOYH768akw4e5gHylLy8_gZLjU/edit?usp=sharing

Sunday Programming

Grades 8+ will begin their Coming of Age Journey. Once a month students will meet with their youth advisors and peers to explore their inherited views and values while learning to discern which of those views and values they would like to hold on to and which of those they would like to release.

Youth who are in *5th, 6th, and 7th grade* will meet once a month to work with Journeys of Deeper Joy. This curriculum is an interactive Role Playing Game. You can take a closer look by visiting the UUA website:
https://www.uua.org/lifespan/curricula/deeper-joy/journeys-rpg

Elementary will continue to explore the Soul Matter Themes through the "Choose your own Adventure" RE model. 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.

For the rest of the month we will have a one room school house. These Sundays will include holiday celebrations and different activities week to week. During the first 15-20 mins of these all age Sundays, our youth (5th grade +) will learn how to become part of the wider UU Ithaca community by joining hospitality, supporting younger RE groups, participating in church service and more. 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.

If your group is interested in hosting our youth, please email Madeline.

You can now register your children for 2026-2027 Religious Exploration! This information helps us to plan for the upcoming year AND keep your children safe.

26-27 Registration Form

Religious Exploration Events

Live Auction Movie Night

November 6th, 6 pm-8:30 pm
This movie night takes place during the Live Auction to provide a few hours of entertainment for the kids while parents enjoy this marvelous fundraising event. Dinner in the Annex at 5:30 pm is catered by Maimouna's (African) Cuisine, $17 per person, children under 3 are free and tickets can be reserved here: Dinner Tickets
Register your kids for movie night using this link: Movie Night Registration

Holiday Decorating

Join us during coffee hour on **November 29th** to decorate the Parlor for the Winter Holidays.

Our Whole Lives Sexual Education Course

Starting in January our 8th and 9th graders are welcome to join us for class. OWL is a comprehensive sexual education program facilitated by trained OWL teachers. The material covers topics like consent, healthy relationships, anatomy, gender expression & identity, sexual orientation, values and more. Space is limited so please register NOW using this link:

OWL registration

Music for Little People

Thursday, **November 5th and 19th**
10 am-10:45 am
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 upstairs in the Arch Room each month. Sing, play, dance, explore instruments, and connect through music.

Adult RE

Pub Theology

Tuesday, **November 24**
6:30 pm, Liquid State Brewing, 620 West Green Street

Join us at Liquid State Brewing for an evening of good fellowship and conversation at our favorite local brewery (owned by UU Ithaca members!). We will gather at 6:30 pm and reflect together on our monthly theme of *Healing*. 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.

Our Whole Lives Facilitator Training

Virtual **February 1st- February 20th, 2027**

Are you interested in becoming a facilitator for OWL? The next training is in February! Registration is open NOW and this training will fill up quickly. The dates are as follows:

—Monday, **February 1, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Thursady, **February 4, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Monday, **February 8, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Thursday, **February 11, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Monday, **February 15, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Thursday, **February 18, 2027**, 6:00-8:30 pm
—Saturday, **February 20, 2027**, 10:00 am-3:00 pm

For more information on this training use this link: https://www.uua.org/lifespan/owl

Email Madeline to begin the registration process.

Care Cafe

Sunday, **November 1, 15, 29**
12 pm in the UU Ithaca Library
Please join us for our drop-in Care Cafes, a drop-in group for young adults and older. These meetings are facilitated by Emily Richards, Christine Kapral, and Rev. Janet Shortall and offer a space for rich and honest conversations that foster connection. Childcare available upon request, contact dre@uuithaca.org. Meets every other Sunday.



November Worship Services

The theme for November is "Healing" 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, November 1

Service of Remembrance, *Emily Richards, M. Div*
As we move into the dark half of the year, we enter a sacred time when many traditions pause to honor their ancestors and beloved dead. Just as the Day of the Dead, Halloween, Samhain, and All Souls Day all offer invitations into honoring the transition from life to death, remembering loved ones we have lost, and moving towards healing, so too will we honor the grief that we share and the blessings of those who have touched our lives.
Music by Dr. Sera Smolen and the Opus Ithaca Cello Choir

Sunday, November 8

"Where Do We Go From Here?" *Rev. Douglas Taylor*
The election has passed, for better or worse, and we are left with the question, what comes next? Where do we go from here? Our work at the ballot box may be done, for the moment, but there is still so much that our UU values are calling us to do to begin to heal and move forward together.
Music by VOICES Chorus, Dominisk Ronsvalle Piano and Hymns

Sunday, November 15

"Hope Is Not a Forecast," *Rev. Janet Shortall*
In uncertain times, hope can be more than a feeling—it can be a spiritual practice. Jane Goodall's life reminds us that hope does not require us to deny difficult realities or know how the future will unfold. Rather, hope calls us to remain open-hearted, grounded in our values, and willing to act for the world we want to help create. In the weeks following the midterm elections, we'll explore how we can practice hope together: meeting uncertainty with courage, nurturing our connections with one another, and choosing what we will do next in the service of a more just and compassionate world.
Music by Laura Ramos

Sunday, November 22

"Gather in Thanks," *Emily Richards, M. Div*
Let us come together in gratitude for the season and this community, taking part in the nourishment of our annual Cider and Cornbread Communion. Join us for a service that will engage all ages, filled with story, song, and connection. Please stay for our chili and cornbread lunch to follow.
Music by Ithaca Children and Youth Chorus

Sunday, November 29

"Have We No Principles?" *joAnn kowalski*
How did this happen -- that we moved from a list of principles to an interconnected expression of values? What does it mean to allow love to hold us together in a changing world?
Music by Laura Ramos

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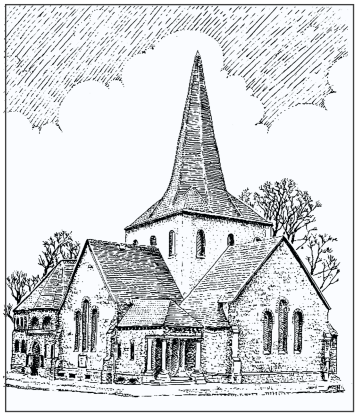
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Newsletter deadline for the next issue will be **November 18,** 2026 and will cover December 2026. Please email articles to Loretta Heimbuch at adminasst@uuithaca.org.

The First Unitarian Universalist Society of Ithaca
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Visit our Website and get your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for November is Healing.

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

November 1-7: Are old stories telling you who you are?

Nnovember 8-14: If you were hurting and someone brought you a box full of memories from your childhood to help heal you, which one would you reach for first?

November 15-21: If you could have healed one of your parents' wounds, which would it be?

November 22-28: Who or what taught you to feel guilty about resting when there is still so much to do?

November 29-30: What is the kindest thing you could do for yourself right now?

Current Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is a great way to meet others in the UU Ithaca Community and give back at the same time! Current Volunteer Opportunities can be found here: Current Volunteer Opportunities

UU Ithaca Listserv

If you would like to be added to the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Ithaca listserv, please fill out the form at https://fusit.breezechms.com/form/0e48af. If you have any questions, email Michelle at office@uuithaca.org.

Stay Connected

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

November Soul Matters Material

The Soul Matters theme for November is *Healing.* 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/SoulMattersNov2026

How to Support TransYouth: A Conversation with Author Nico Lang

Join us for an inspiring and heartwarming event as award-winning journalist and author Nico Lang shares stories from their powerful new book, "American Teenager." This moving work celebrates the resilience, courage, and joy of trans youth navigating today's challenging world. Together, we'll explore ways our community can uplift and support queer and trans kids, leaving with tangible ideas for creating a safer and more joyful future for all youth.

Date: Thursday, **November 19**
Time: 6:30 pm
Location: First Unitarian Universalist Society of Ithaca
Free & open to the public—all are welcome! Book signing to follow the discussion.



Come be part of a discussion that will uplift your spirit, connect you with others, and help us all find more ways to help queer kids thrive.

Sunday Morning Announcements and Matters of Our Lives

Announcements during Sunday service:
As much as possible announcements will be limited to no more than two per service and are made at the discretion of the CA and worship leader. Announcements should be made by the CA and should be limited to no more than 100 words. Email announcements to office@uuithaca.org

Matters of our Lives:
Should be coordinated at least two weeks in advance with Magdalen and should be no more than 300 words and include a personal reflection or anecdote. Please note that not all dates will be available for a Matters of Our Lives.

Appreciations

As we nurture a culture of appreciation at UU Ithaca, let's sing praises to the many people who help make our community the wonderful place it is. Who here at First Unitarian Universalist 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.

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.

—Each year, the Women's Fund Advisory Committee of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County highlights the invaluable contributions of women, acknowledging their significant impact on society, culture, business, philanthropy, and beyond. This year, the Laura Holmberg Award was presented to Elizabeth Bixler for her dedication in making a difference in the lives of women and girls in Tompkins County through her many efforts in the community. A well-deserved honor for Elizabeth.

Sage Chapel Candlelight Service Choir



Registration is now open!
Wednesday, December 23

It's time once again to begin rehearsals for our beloved December Candlelight Service in Sage Chapel on the Cornell University campus!

We invite you to join this special community choir for two months of music-making, fellowship, and a beautiful holiday tradition.

Rehearsal and Service Schedule
Regular Rehearsals
Thursdays, 7 - 8:30 pm began October 29 in the Annex Entrance at 208 E. Buffalo Street (in the building next to the stone church.)

Candlelight Service Day
Wednesday, **December 23**
The day includes two services (exact times to be announced) and a dress rehearsal before the services. A light dinner will be provided for all choir members.

Non-Music Readers are Welcome!
All vocal parts are recorded to help you learn your notes, so you don't need to be an experienced music reader to participate.

Ready to Sing with Us?
To register contact Jayne Demakos at choir@uuithaca.org

Women's Circle Meets November 23

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://us02web.zoom.us/j/82169260621?pwd=ZDkyanRKMmo2czhqSWgrSVhmbGFqdz09

Meeting ID: 821 6926 0621 Passcode: 015515

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 during this time of fear and division. 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.

LGBTQ
Welcoming Congregation

Social Justice

A central aspect of Unitarian Universalism is to restore balance to our community and the world. This translates to a firm commitment to social justice action, which traces back to our values. Because every person is sacred and there is an interdependent web of all existence, we cannot turn away from injustice.

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

Side with Love is a weekly collection for items for organizations chosen by various UU Ithaca teams and Connection Circles. In November the Shared Plate and Side with Love collection will both go to the Code Blue Shelter in Ithaca, which provides meals, beds, and counseling to those experiencing homelessness.

On every Sunday in November we will be collecting breakfast food: oatmeal packets, packaged fruit, granola/breakfast bars and pop tarts (no crunchy food, tree nuts, peanuts or fresh fruit), prepackaged food and snacks. In addition the collection will include disposable dishes and cutlery and personal hygiene items of toothbrushes, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, tampons and pads, diapers. Also needed are new men's socks and underwear, and gently used coats, gloves, hats and sweaters.

The Code Blue shelter expects 55-100 people per day from November through next April and will be less able to provide food this year due to a 60% budget cut. The facility will continue to be managed by Volunteers of America, with nightly meals coordinated and prepared by Ithaca houses of worship.

We need volunteers to shop, cook and deliver meals. And we need money to buy groceries for the meals. You can sign up at the Democracy Circle table in the Parlor on Sunday mornings. We are able to use our UU Ithaca kitchen and groups of volunteers work together to prepare dinners on chosen days. Come to the Democracy table for more information.

Thank you for your generosity for this important project of helping our neighbors in need during the coldest winter months. Contact: Sara Catterall sara.catterall@gmail.com

Democracy Circle

The Democracy Circle is a social justice group that turns values into direct action. Members identify personal causes and the group rallies to support and amplify each one The group will meet on Sunday, **November 8th**, at noon in the Youth Room on the second floor of the Annex. Any and all are welcome, whether you attend once or often. Please bring your suggestions, ideas and thoughts.

The Environmental Interest Circle (EIC)

The Environmental Interest Circle meets monthly in person and over Zoom to discuss/exchange ideas and actions that further sustainable living for each one of us, for the UU Ithaca congregation, and for our congregations' role in the greater community, including environmental concerns and conserving energy. The group will meet on Wednesday, **November 4th,** at 7 pm in the Parlor and over Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81644753524?pwd=SDBqaTN5elM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09

Meeting ID: 816 4475 3524 Passcode: 894885

Message from the Board

Highfalutin concepts, practical leadership.
**PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE.*
**INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY*
Are these works useful in a small UU church? Mark Twain comes to mind with his quote "Don't use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do". Let's examine those five-dollar words up close.

Many of us remember Mark Petersen with love and joy. Mark was UU Ithaca's administrator for decades, serving through the tenure of several ministers. He was the expert on all things going on at 302 and 306 N. Aurora Street and 208 E. Buffalo. Sadly, he died unexpectedly in 2018. And 18 months later Covid-19 arrived. And then our beloved Rev. Margaret resigned. Suddenly "institutional memory" became a fifty-cent word. And we were working hard to recover the wide knowledge that Mark provided.

Partnership Governance provided the guidance to revise our operational structure. With active input from across the congregation, we defined two permanent teams, one for operations, OAT, and one for ministry, MVT. Each team includes volunteers, staff, and a Trustee. And, if we have a seated minister, that person is a voting member. We now have "partnering teams governance". And we have "institutional memory" across members and staff. And we have understandable 50-cent words. And, all of this honors the memory of Mark Petersen.

Fred Balfour, Trustee and Board Clerk

November 18 Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board usually meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm and will meet on **November 18.** Meetings are a hybrid format, currently taking place in the Parlor and through Zoom.

All UU Ithaca members are invited to attend these meetings. Ten minutes are set aside at the beginning of the meeting for congregation feedback. Please join us! Zoom Meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85316773587?pwd=YY0ELJBzca3EDcvqlIX4snaaFDUia8.1

Meeting ID: 853 1677 3587
Passcode: 869602

Care Team

A heartfelt reminder: 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 UU Ithaca need some assistance, contact Kathy Hopkins at 607-582-3025 or Care@uuithaca.org. At coffee hour, visit our table and look for folks with pink name tags. More information.

For Pastoral Care: Rev. Janet Shortall is available at 607-218-2088.

Remember that we all are The Care Team.

Fall Office Hours

Michelle will be in the office Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays and working remotely on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.