



ITHACA

UU Connections

2019 / 2020 Issue No.4

December 2019

Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am

Sunday, December 1: *Leaning Into The Mystery* Rev. Margaret Weis
Carl Sagan once said, "If we ever reach the point where we think we thoroughly understand who we are and where we came from, we will have failed." What is it about uncertainty and mystery that scares us? How do we choose to lean into the uncertainty?

Special music by UUUU and Friends

Sunday, December 8: *Mystical Meals: A Face-to-Face Faith*
Guest speaker Marty Pelham, UU Ministerial Intern at 1st Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse

Shared meals can be a setting for establishing and building relationships and relationships are key to our covenantal faith. Can we translate the mysterious alchemy of the shared meal into welcoming newcomers and building deeper ties with those who are already here?

Special music by members of the CCO Youth Orchestra

Sunday, December 15: *The Mystery of Waiting* Rev. Margaret Weis
In the Christian season of Advent, we will reflect together on the ways that waiting, making space, and allowing silence can shift our experience of what we do not know.

Special music by Roots and Wings Choir

Sunday, December 15 at 6:30 pm: *Quiet Christmas Service*
Rev. Margaret Weis

During this time of joy and celebration, we can also feel grief, sadness, melancholy, and a sense of overwhelm. Join us for a contemplative service of music, poetry, reflection, and community.

Special music by Stephanie Ortolano, Music Director

Sunday, December 22: *Wintery Mix – A Multigenerational "No Rehearsal" Pageant* Rev. Margaret Weis

In this multigenerational service we will celebrate using music, story, and prayer on this winter season and the mystery it holds.

Special music by FUSIT Adult Choir and Klezmer Band

Tuesday, December 24 at 5:15 pm and 8:00 pm: *Candlelight Christmas Eve Services* Rev. Margaret Weis

Join us at Sage Chapel at Cornell for our annual service of candlelight, story, song, and joyful community. Together we will celebrate light in the darkness and love born amidst chaos.

Special music at 5:15 pm with brass and vocal solos, and special music at 8:00 pm by FUSIT Adult Holiday Choir

Sunday, December 29: *A Service of Readings and Reflections for the New Year, led by Celebration Associates*

Special music by Charlotte Greenspan and Carrie Regenstein, piano 4-hands

Ministerial Musings

"In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices."

— Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything*

We have entered into a season where we are told time and time again that we do not have enough. We are told time and time again that we need more – presents, time, wrapping paper, money, things. This is a season that can challenge our spirits and our faith in the possibility that we already have everything we need – if we only open ourselves to it all. It is possible we can be both generous and grateful at the same time.

I love this idea presented by author Elizabeth Gilbert – that we would be wise to keep saying thank you, over and over again, to those who have sustained and supported us.

Who are those people and places for you? Who are the people you have been gifted in this life? To whom are you a gift?

I've been reflecting lately on this "miraculous scope of human generosity," and it's likely you'll hear me preaching about these ideas of generosity in the coming months. Generosity is a practice, an outlook, a promise, and an act of faith. I've been reflecting on how I can be more generous with my time, my presence, my talents, and my treasure. How can I offer myself as a gift to others?

I hope that, in this season of buying and rushing, you too find moments to reflect on these things. I hope that you find the time to offer a word of gratitude to those who have sustained you. I hope you ponder how you are a gift to others, and give thanks for the gifts they are to you.

I want to thank you, dear congregants, for your generosity – with your time, your spirit, and your gifts so that we can continue to be the vibrant UU presence in Ithaca that we have been for generations. Thank you for sharing this ministry with me. It is a true gift.

*With sincere gratitude,
Rev. Margaret*

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

Newsletter of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca (FUSIT), New York

Holiday Closing

Church office will close at 4:00 pm on Friday, **December 20**, and will reopen on Thursday, **January 2**, at 9:00 am.

Side with Love Collection for December

All December we will be collecting care items for Second Wind Cottages residents that the youth will package.

Second Wind helps homeless men in the local community by providing small homes. Kits collected will contain a composition notebook, a package of nice pens, a bible (NIV), ground coffee, coffee filters, a nice razor with refills or a package of nice disposable razors, shaving gel, and reusable shopping bags. Other items are optional but should be non-perishable as we will store these. The youth will assemble them in reusable shopping bags as the ban on plastic bags will go into effect soon.

2019 Gala Service Auction

The Gala Service Auction was a huge success, beginning with the scrumptious plant based hors d'oeuvres prepared by Stephanie Ortolano and her team of chefs, and the wonderful music of Valerie Graves and friends! We raised over \$13,000 thanks to all those amazing volunteers and staff who helped for many hours before, during and after the auction!

And a heartfelt thanks goes out to all those who contributed their generous donations and to our enthusiastic bidders! We could not have done this without you!

Soul Matters Material for December on "Mystery"

Our December worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Mystery. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. Here is the link:
<https://tinyurl.com/Ithaca-Mystery>

Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Susanne Quagliata at drefusit@gmail.com or 607-273-7521, ext. 23.

From Susanne Quagliata, Acting Director, Religious Exploration

Our Religious Exploration program is growing, attendance is up, and our classrooms are full. **But we don't have enough volunteers.** As a result, we are looking for more hands and we are making it really easy. Included below is a table that indicates how many children are registered in our RE program by classroom:

Classroom	Enrolled
Preschool	8
Grades K-1	13
Grades 2-3	19
Grades 4-6	15

Our school systems are designed to accommodate classes of this size, but our religious education program is not. We have recently set up a "maker space" to help reduce the number of children in some of the classes (especially when attendance is greater than room capacity), but if we had more volunteers we could explore other creative options.

NEEDS:

Classroom Teachers: Volunteer twice a month in a RE Classroom during service. This means you can still attend half of all Sunday services!

Classroom Assistants: Help out once a month in a RE Classroom during service. This means you can still attend three of every four Sunday services!

Susanne provides training, lesson plans, and lots of support to minimize outside effort from our volunteers. The curriculum is provided in advance and the classroom with all required materials is set up when volunteers arrive. Contact Susanne Quagliata at drefusit@gmail.com to express your interest in volunteering.

Other volunteer opportunities include filling in as a substitute teacher, offering an extra pair of hands to help with special events, bringing in healthy snacks, or leading a Creative Sunday.

Religious Exploration Schedule for Children/Youth

December 1: Classroom Sunday

December 8: Creative Sunday

December 15: Classroom Sunday

December 22: Multigenerational Service

December 29: Multigenerational Service



Winter Solstice Event

Saturday, **December 21** from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This December please join us as we celebrate the promise of new life, the return of the light, and find hope. With inspiration from our Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh UU Principles we will honor the arrival of winter's dark sky. A short interactive solstice ritual will take place in the Sanctuary, followed by seasonal refreshments and crafts in the Parlor. For more information or to volunteer please contact Susanne at drefusit@gmail.com.

Thanks to...

.....to those who gave to the Shared Plate Offering on October 27th, we raised \$450 for the Advocacy Center.

...to those who donated for the October Side with Love – we collected over 61 sweatshirts for local migrant workers.

...Hospitality Team 3, under coordinators Sharon Beltaine and Jesse Koennecke, who helped with greeting, ushering, snack providing, coffee preparation and clean up after the services on October 20 and 27, and to Hospitality Team 4, under coordinators Russ Charif and Wendy Wolfe, who undertook those tasks on November 3 and 10.

Snack providers, please remember to provide a list of potentially sensitive ingredients.

Hospitality teams provide the organized volunteer power to make each week's Sunday service and coffee hour a welcoming time for all who attend.

If you are not currently part of a Hospitality Team, please see John Gaines on Sunday or get in touch with him at [607-898-3943](tel:6078983943) or at jag222@cornell.edu. Thank you, all, for your efforts to increase our Hospitality!

Soul Matters Drop-In Group Sunday, December 8

Jennifer Streid-Mullen and Susanne Quagliata are running a drop-in Soul Matters group monthly this fall, for anyone interested. Come and delve into a deep sharing and listening to each other on the topic of the month's Soul Matters package, and explore the theme of our Sunday services and RE program at a deeper level. The group format will echo a typical Small Group Ministry session, which will be explained. We will meet Sunday, **December 8**, 12:15-1:30, in the Mark Pedersen Arch Room. The topic for December is Mystery. You are welcome to bring lunch or food to munch on.

Board of Trustees October Meeting

The Board of Trustees will hold their monthly meeting on Tuesday, **December 10**, at 6 pm in the Parlor. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Fragrance Free Consideration

Some members of our congregation experience serious allergic reactions to strong fragrances and scents. Please refrain from using them when attending events at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca.



All Church Night December 17th!

On the third Tuesday of each month, we will gather for a **Potluck Dinner at 5:30 pm in the Parlor & many teams will have their meetings.**

We will be offering free childcare!

A great opportunity for multi-team collaboration, welcoming of newcomers and families, and engaging together in community. We hope you'll join us! Please bring a dish to share.

The following teams will participate in our All Church Night on **December 17th!**

If you'd like YOUR ministry team to participate in the All Church Night, have your team leader speak with Rev. Margaret.

Team/Committee	Time Slot
Aesthetics Team	6-7:00 pm
Buildings and Grounds	6-7:00 pm
Music Team	6-7:00 pm
Religious Exploration Team	6-7:00 pm
Environmental Interest Circle	6-7:00 pm
Membership Team	7-8:30 pm
Celebrations Team	7-8:30 pm



Green Tip from the Environmental Interests Circle

Many appliances, electronics, and other devices in your home consume significant amounts of electricity while unused but plugged in, and many of these can be safely separated from their power source when not in active use. The Natural Resources Defense Council offers a PDF of guidance on identifying your devices with the highest "phantom loads" by meter reading or using a Kill-a-Watt meter (the Smartphone app Dr. Power also provides this information about more than 100,000 devices) and reducing their energy use with assistance from smart power strips, device timers, and adjusted settings.

Minister

Rev. Margaret Weis
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Religious Exploration
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Sexton

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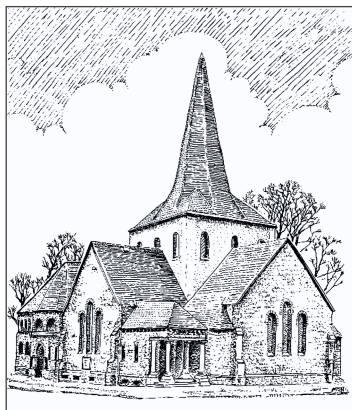
Administrative Assistant

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Our Mission

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

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 North Aurora Street
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Ithaca, NY 14851-0006



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

Men's Group

The Men's Group meeting for December will be held on Monday, **December 23**. All those who identify as male are invited to join us 5:30-7:30 pm in the Mark Pedersen Arch Room to share stories and eat some pizza.

Contact Jens Wennberg jens207@gmail.com or Carston Hess carston@hess.net for information.

Book Discussion Group

The Book Discussion group will meet on Friday, **December 6**, at 12:30 pm in the Potter Library Room to discuss the book *Threading My Prayer Rug* by Sabeeha Rehman. This is a well-written and interesting memoir by a Pakistani woman who has an arranged marriage which brings her to NYC. For more information, contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at 351-3087 or streidmull@gmail.com.

Women's Circle

Women's Circle will meet in the Beatrix Potter Library Room on Sunday, **December 22**, from noon to 1:30 pm. All who identify as women are welcome. This is a drop-in group, so no need to sign up; come when you can. For information or questions contact Tricia Borg at pcbrogorg@yahoo.com or 224-436-0539.

Social Justice Council Meeting

The Social Justice Council will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, **December 9**, from 5:30-7:30pm in Room 122 (Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Room). Come to learn what our action teams are doing, and to participate in choosing the recipient of each month's "Sharing Sunday," and to enjoy good sociability and conversation. We start with an appetizer potluck at 5:30 and then cover our agenda from 6-7:30. All are welcome.

Pastoral Emergencies

In case of pastoral need, the Rev. Margaret Weis can be reached at 607-218-4281 (cell) if you need to speak with her.

Additionally, if you need a ride to any event at church, please contact Walt Peck at wgp8@aol.com as early as possible, so that he can contact a member who is willing to help.

If you are willing to provide occasional rides for others, contact Walt to give him your name and contact information.

Upcoming Events



December 1 - Newcomer Drop-In Circle

1st Sunday of every month @ 12-12:30 in the Parlor

December 1 - New Member Ceremony during worship

December 7 - Caroling in Dryden 2-3 pm (meet at corner of routes 13/38/392 (or at Southworth Library if weather is inclement).

Pub Theology at Liquid State Brewery (date TBD)

Join us for an evening of good fellowship and conversation at our favorite local brewery (owned by FUSIT members!). We will gather at 6:30 and reflect together on the monthly theme of MYSTERY. Feel free to bring some food for yourself or to share! Non-beer and non-alcoholic drinks options available! Bring the kids (as long as you keep an eye on them)! Bring your friends! Hope to see you there!

December 11 - Lunch Bunch 2nd Wednesdays @12-1:30

Looking to connect with others during the week? Bring your lunch and join us in the Parlor for conversation, connection, and fun! Rev. Weis is hosting!

December 21 - Multigenerational Solstice Event

2:00-4:00 pm in the Sanctuary and Parlor

Update from the Care Team

At our meeting on October 20th, The Care Team decided to meet quarterly. Our next meeting will be in January and then probably April or May. If needed, we'll call a meeting in between. In the future we won't meet on All Church Night, but will likely meet on a Sunday after church.

"Babies First" Annual Ornament Exchange

The "Babies First" Christmas tree will be in the South Parlor through the month of December. We invite you to take an ornament from the tree and return a gift for a baby to our basket there. We will be encouraging all of the children to participate in this exchange but also hope that all of you will help us make life easier for babies and their families. We can use donations of new board books, pac 'n play sheets, sleep sacks, snowsuits, and dollars to buy car seats. Please take out what we currently have regarding donations. All gifts should be unwrapped. Celebrate the birth of a baby this year. Questions? Contact Jane McArthur janespickmcArthur@gmail.com or Sue Rakow at Sue.rakow@gmail.com.

Crafters

Are you making ornaments to decorate a tree this year? Babies First needs up to six handmade ornaments for our tree. Could you contribute? Call Jane McArthur (607)216-2151 or bring to the tree on **December 1 or 8**.

Did you know...

You can find out about events happening in our congregation, see pictures of past events and connect with other UUs. Like and follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/FUSofI> Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacaUUs and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

Possible Ponderings



The theme for December is Mystery. Possible Ponderings is an offering of ways you might consider engaging more deeply with the theme or reflecting on the ways the idea of Mystery shows up in your life. These will also be printed in the order of service each week.

December 1 - 7: Who has taught you the most about "living with and loving the mystery"?

December 8 - 14: In your experience, has love been a mystery or a choice? Has it been an accomplishment you created and choose or a mysterious "other presence" that choose and created you?

December 15 - 21: What was the first mystery to capture your imagination? How does that still shape you today?

December 22 - 28: If you had to name one "holiday miracle" you believe in, what would it be?

December 29 - January 4: Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?

Ushers needed for Tuesday, December 24th, Christmas Eve (TWO SERVICES)

We are looking for individuals/couples/families who are willing to usher at EITHER the 5:15 pm or 8:00 pm service at Sage Chapel. Ushering involves not only helping folks find seats and collecting the offering but also helping with the candle lighting ceremony. Please contact Steve Hand shand35@gmail.com or 275-7008 or Geoff Dunn gdunn@frontier.com or 280-5953.

Blood Drive Success!

The Red Cross Blood Drive on November 14 collected 17 pints of blood. Thanks to both congregants and community members who contributed in memory of Mark Pedersen. Our next Blood Drive will be on Thursday, January 9, 2020.



Are You Interested in Having Christmas Dinner at the Church?

We'd like to schedule a dish-to-pass Christmas dinner on **December 25th**, but we need someone to coordinate the event. Please contact Jessica at office@uuithaca.org or 273-7521, ext. 21, to let us know if you'd like to come and if you would like to organize the dinner.

Two Christmas Eve Traditional Candelight Services

Bring your family and friends and join us in one of our festive and glorious services filled with readings and fellowship, candlelight and song with the Rev. Margaret Weis.



Tuesday, December 24 at 5:15 and 8:00 pm

Sage Chapel at Cornell University

(see map in Parlor after Sunday service)



Please join the greater-Ithaca community in one of these traditional candelight services at Sage Chapel on the Cornell Campus. There will be TWO services - one at 5:15 pm with vocal and brass solos featuring Mark and Zeke Lawrence, Sharon Costianes and Larsson Wing; the service at 8:00 pm will feature the FUSIT Holiday Choir.

Need a Ride to Sage Chapel on Christmas Eve?

If you need a ride to either the 5:15 or 8:00 pm Christmas Eve services or can provide a ride for others, please contact Walt Peck at wgp8@aol.com as early as possible, so that he can contact a member who is willing to help, or add your name and contact information.

Caroling in Dryden! December 7th from 2-3 pm

Everyone is welcome to join members of our choir as we sing in the season at the annual Village of Dryden Holiday Festival. Music Director Stephanie Ortolano will bring along the caroling books; you just need to bring yourself (and weather-appropriate clothing). We will be singing by the Christmas Tree in Time Square and can also walk around the Village. If the weather is particularly frightful, we can meet at the Southworth Library otherwise the meeting spot is at the corner of routes 13/38/392. Contact Stephanie at fusitmusic@gmail.com for more information and/or directions.

December Choir News

Please contact Jennifer Lawrence Birnbaum at fusitchoir@gmail.com if you are interested in joining the holiday choir for either **December 22nd** or **Christmas Eve**. Please also contact her if you're interested in playing in the All Ages Klezmer Band.

2020 Calendars Available December 8 & 15

After the service on **December 8th and 15th**, both Liz Einstein and Marty Hiller will be selling calendars in the Parlor. Liz is selling 2020 Finger Lakes Waterfalls calendars for \$13, of which \$8 is profit. The proceeds will go to Golden Opportunity (GO), a local non-profit tutoring program for at-risk children living in low-income families. Marty Hiller will be selling 2020 Ithaca Community Gardens calendars as a fundraiser and community outreach. The Ithaca Community Gardens is a public community garden with outreach to and accessibility for low income gardeners. These calendars will be sold for \$15 each, with profits supporting low income gardeners.

Race and Racism Meeting Rescheduled - December 3

In America, most white people don't ever have to think about race. But most people of color face racial prejudice and racially-based injustice every single day. If you are concerned, outraged, or just want to better understand the role of race in our town, our country, our world, come to the monthly meetings for the series on ***Race and Racism*** that are usually held on the **4th Tuesday of every month** at 6:30 pm in the Parlor. Due to the Christmas holiday, however, December's meeting has been rescheduled for **December 3**. All are welcome.

if you would like to be added to an email list to receive future FUSIT race-related information, contact Beth Howard at beth4howard@gmail.com.

The FUSIT Shakespeare Program

December 1 – *Love's Labour's Lost* (Subtitled)

January 5 – Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*

January 19 – Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (Subtitled)

March 1 – Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*

March 22 – Kenneth Branagh's *As You Like It* (Subtitled)

March 29 – Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice*

April 12 – Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (Subtitled)

April 26 – Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet (Part I)* (Subtitled)

May 3 – Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet (Part II)* (Subtitled)

May 24 (Bonus) – Kenneth Branagh's *All Is True* (Shakespeare's last 3 years)

Free to all church attendees (members and guests). Not open to the public. ***All programs start at 3:00 pm in the Mark Pedersen ArchRoom (elevator available).***

Films are two to three hours long with a ten minute intermission. Snacks and drinks allowed.

Arranged and moderated by Preston Wilson.

Facilitated by Jessica English and Rev. Margaret Weis