



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2019 / 2020 Issue No. 9

May 2020

Ministerial Musings

We are living in strange times. I miss sharing worship in the same room with you - singing, laughing, and seeing you!!! I am so grateful for the ways we have been able to gather for online worship, zoom meetings, and other creative ways as well. Thank you for your ongoing support and patience as we discern how best to "be the church" in these unprecedented times.

Our theme for May is curiosity. I hope you are finding ways to be curious during this time. I'm curious how you are spending your time these days. How are you making space for your spirit, your joy, your sadness? How are you making space for rest and renewal? I'm curious how it is with your soul.

For me, it has been a bit of a rollercoaster experience during these past few weeks - some moments of ups and downs, sadness and contentment. It's so difficult when so much is unknown. I find comfort in my practice of gratitude - for this community, for my family, and for my health.

We've had lots of people ask us how they can help during this time. Some are sewing masks, others are donating food, some others are running errands for those who are most at risk. Others are asking if they can contribute to our Human Needs Fund (HNF). And, some among us are finding they need help from this fund. So, I thought I would take a moment to explain more about what the HNF is and how it can be used.

The Human Needs Fund is used to help with short-term temporary needs. This might be something like buying a round of groceries, helping with prescriptions, or paying an overdue utility bill. The fund is fueled by donations and the money does not need to be paid back. The recipients of this fund need only to reach out to me and I will keep your utilization of the fund confidential.

Asking for help can be difficult. Please do not be ashamed if you need help. We are here to help, in the ways that we can, to make this time more bearable for us all.

If you have questions about the Human Needs Fund please do not hesitate to ask me.

Thank you to you all for your commitment to social distancing, for being creative with the ways you are creating community in this time, and for your ongoing love. Together, we can do hard things.

*Be well,
Rev. Margaret*

**Sunday Celebrations online at 10:30 am
For the time being, until further notice,
to view worship on Sunday, go to the
website: www.uuithaca.org.**

FUSIT Shares its Love!

Use the attached crafty sheet (on page 7) to send some love to those who need it these days! The tags can be decorated and left at the box at FUSIT on the parish house porch. Then they will be attached to some of the masks being made for essential workers.

The "thank you notes" can be added to and decorated, then also dropped off at FUSIT. Then they will be placed in care packages being sent to the CMC healthcare workers who are serving in New York City!

Thank you for helping to spread some cheer during this challenging time!

Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Susanne Quagliata at dre@uuithaca.org

From Susanne Quagliata, Acting Director, Religious Exploration

Rethinking the Way We Do Religious Exploration

Our children and youth need us more than ever to help them navigate these uncertain times. They might not know all the details of the pain and suffering happening in our world, but they can sense it. This time of physical distancing presents an opportunity to learn, reinforce, sit with, and live our UU values.

Since the moment we knew we would be unable to meet in person on Sundays, I have been asking myself, "How can I support my church families if we can't meet at the corner of Buffalo and Aurora?" While we can't physically be together, we can remain connected and inspired. Here are a few approaches we've been experimenting with:

Time for Wonder: I hope you have been able to watch our services live streamed on YouTube or watch the recordings later. Each week during Time for Wonder I offer a challenge to our children and youth and many include the option of sharing their experience with the challenge on our FUSIT Facebook page.

RE Check-In: Powers and I offer a Zoom session on Fridays at 11:30 am where our children get the chance to share with each other and we engage in some fun activities like yoga and Would You Rather.

Lesson Plans: I have been sharing lessons with families each week via email. These include chalice lighting words, a story, discussion questions, and several activities.

Family Soul Matters: In my weekly email to families registered in our RE program, I also include the Family Soul Matters packet. This theme-based resource includes readings, activities, and songs that correspond with our worship theme for the month.

Story Time: We've been offering storytime on Facebook Live twice a week. If you haven't joined Leah on Mondays at 11 am or Audrey on Wednesdays at 7 pm, you should mark your calendar!

We are all in this together. Please reach out to me if there is anything I can do to support you or your family.

Set Up Your Own Maker Space

Setting a Maker Space in your home provides a fun and engaging way for anyone to get creative and reflect on our theology. The essentials of a Maker Space include an understanding that there is no wrong way to do something and freedom of expression is key. You can raid your recycle bin to get started. Cardboard, yogurt cups, string, tape, scissors, and glue sticks are helpful tools. Then a little encouragement, statements like "I wonder", and time are all you need to get going.

Join the FUSIT
(internal) Facebook
Page: [https://
www.facebook.com/
groups/
171869686459/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/)

Facilitators needed

We are currently in the process of creating new Small Group Meetings and are seeking people interested in facilitating a meeting. Training is available to those interested. Please contact Viviani Tillett at memcoord@uuithaca.org.



Jennifer Lawrence Birnbaum is planning to create a video of FUSIT GOOD NEWS. Please send her (choir@uuithaca.org) photos, drawings, short messages (less than 50 words) or short videos (less than 10 seconds) of your good news by **May 10th**.

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/](https://www.facebook.com/FUSofI/) Instagram www.instagram.com/ithacauus and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

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

Joys and Sorrows

Our thoughts are with ...
... Jeanne Paisley who broke her leg and is currently in Schuyler Hospital and would love cards. You can mail them to Schuyler Hospital (rm133) 220 Steuben St, Montour Falls, NY 14865.

Thanks to...

...all who "Shared the Plate" on April 5th. We collected \$835 for the Foodnet Meals on Wheels program.

....these members of the Environmental Interests Circle for their participation in the Earth Day Sunday service on April 19th: Rich Andrusis, Deanna English, Marie Kautz, Dick Kurtz, Carol Whitlow, Wendy Wolfe, Mary Woodsen, and Jack Zinda.

Treasurer Wanted

Interested in playing an important role at FUSIT and helping shape our programs each year? We will need a new Treasurer some time in 2021. Treasurer's key responsibilities include annual budget preparation and helping monitor spending versus budget. We have a bookkeeper and payroll services, so Treasurer is also responsible for overseeing bookkeeping and integrity of financial systems. Being comfortable with spreadsheets, basic accounting, and coordinating with various team leaders is important. Treasurer attends most Board meetings and is a member of the Finance Team. Overlap/training/partnership with current Treasurer over the next year, and expected term is 4-6 years. If you might be interested, please contact Treasurer Jennifer Streid-Mullen at Streidmull@gmail.com.



Green Tip from the Environmental Interests Circle

On plastics, the labels "compostable," "biodegradable," and "biobased" have different meanings. Only plastics labeled "compostable" are certified able to break down within six months, leaving no toxic residue, in commercial and industrial composting facilities. No plastic should be disposed of in home composting systems.

A Message from the Dream Catchers Team

Dear fellow FUSIT members and congregants:

We on the Dream Catchers Team want to thank every one of you who have shared your thoughts and provided feedback in response to the questions we've been posing over the past several weeks. In the first phase, we gained great insights into what you all feel are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats our church currently faces. Then, in phase 2, you provided insights on some of the big questions FUSIT faces today and into the future.

As with so many aspects of our lives right now, the time has come to pause our investigation until a time when we can all be together again and interact around additional questions. We anticipate culminating the process with a congregation-wide dialogue, hopefully in the early fall. Once we've coalesced all of your feedback, we'll prepare a strategic planning report for consideration by Board. While we had hoped to conclude this process this spring, it's more important that we engage all of you at every step, so that the report we prepare is truly a group portrait.

See you in September! Questions? Please contact Don Barber at sunnybrk@gmail.com.

The Dream Catcher Team

Looking at Death in the Time of COVID 19

Wednesday, May 6, 6:00-8:00 pm

Nancy Miller, Jens Wennberg, Rev. Margaret

For most of us the topic of death is emerging with the realities of this virus. COVID 19 requires some specific decisions even for younger adults. We will look at how this topic affects end of life decisions for both old and young. We will talk about how we can prepare ourselves. There will be breakout discussions. Zoom ID: 955-9545-7648, Password: 076499

Book Discussion Group

Our next meeting of the Book Group is May 1st at 12:30 pm. With the difficulty in getting the same book, we decided we would each read one interesting book and report back to the group about it...without any spoilers to give away the ending. The group will meet via zoom, and the link will be sent out a few days before. For more information, please contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at Streidmull@gmail.com.

Our Mission

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

Leave a message for Jessica or other FUSIT staff by calling the Google voicemail number at (607) 218-2088 and she will pass any

Minister
Rev. Margaret Weis
minister@uuithaca.org

Religious Exploration
Susanne Quagliata, Acting Director
dre@uuithaca.org

Sexton
Sandy Soule

Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
fusitmusic@uuithaca.org

Adult Choir Director
Jennifer Lawrence Birnbaum,
fusitchoir@uuithaca.org

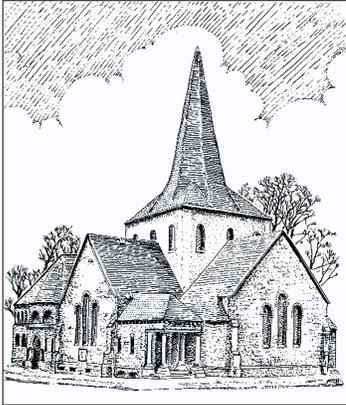
Community Engagement and Outreach
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The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
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P.O. Box 6
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Ministry Meetings

If you need to have a ministry meeting, please contact the office at office@uuithaca.org or the team leader to see if the meeting will take place through Zoom.

Zoom Video Communications is a remote conferencing services company which provides free remote conferencing services that combine video conferencing, online meetings, chat, and mobile collaboration.

Soul Matters Material for May on “Curiosity”

Our May worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Curiosity. This month’s packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. Here is the link: tinyurl.com/ithaca-curiosity

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.

Virtual One Shots at Camp Unirondack

Every weekday Unirondack is offering **virtual programs for campers** as follows:

Ages 11-13 from 2-3:15 pm

Ages 14-17 from 4-5:15 pm

Ages 18+ on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-7:15 pm

More information and advance registration for these program at www.unirondack.org.

Possible Ponderings

The theme for May is CURIOSITY.

May 3-9: Which were you taught was more important: the “expert mind” or the “beginner’s mind”?

May 10-16: As you get older, are you more curious or less?

May 17-25: What is the greatest adventure that your curiosity took you on?

May 26-June 3: Has being curious ever come at a cost for you?

A Message from the FUSIT Board of Trustees

In these stressful and unprecedented times the Board has been meeting weekly to keep abreast of developments and do the planning and pivoting needed to weather this crisis. We are attentive and active, but at this point the strength and resilience of our congregation is keeping us out of crisis mode. Reverend Margaret, her staff and volunteers have creatively found ways to keep our connections strong even with social distancing. In fact, our congregation's virtual Sunday services have been engaging people from smaller UU congregations where services have been impossible.

There are fiscal uncertainties, for sure. We are buoyed by the strong stewardship response to date and appreciative of work by our treasurer, Jennifer Streid-Mullen, and the Finance Committee that allowed a rapid application for federal payroll protection funds. The search for a new Director of Religious Exploration is proceeding for now, with final decisions about it coming later this Spring. Still, much remains to be done to prepare for our annual meeting, plan for next year's fundraisers, and find ways to realize our vision and mission in this new reality.

Our goal with this message is not only to update and reassure you, but also to ask for help from those of you who are in a position to offer it.

***The Care Team** is diversifying and finding new ways of connecting helpers with those who need help. Contact Nancy Miller (ananda7733@gmail.com) if you are able to be a helper, or Madonna Stallmann (madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com) if you would like some help.

***The Nominations Committee** is looking for potential Board members (contact Arthur Woll at arthurwoll@gail.com).

***Another opportunity to help FUSIT** and other organizations in our community, if you are able, may arrive in your bank account this month from the federal government. If the stimulus check is coming at a time when you are secure, consider sharing a portion of it with FUSIT and a portion with another community group serving those in need. FUSIT donations can be to the general Congregational Life fund or to the minister's discretionary Human Needs Fund.

Think of any gifts of your compassion, time, or abilities, as paying it forward, or leaning into our mission to connect, engage and inspire.

We are grateful for the ways so many of you support the First Unitarian Society. Together, we will find our way through this pandemic, leaning on each other, inspiring each other, and finding ways to live our values.

Andy Turner, President; Wendy Salomon, Vice President; Matt Hare, Clerk; Elton Hall, Diana Nier, Lyn Staack, Kim Wilkinson, Angela Zhang



Spark the Magic

giving with love

It's a Miracle!

In this strange time of disquiet and distance, our annual pledge campaign is ahead of last year at this time! As we go to press, our First Unitarian Society of Ithaca has received 156 pledges of support for 2020-21. Those pledges total a whopping \$280,234. That means we are already at 75 percent of our very ambitious goal. That goal was set well before anyone knew that massive closings, cancellations and layoffs were just ahead for far too many.

We Live in Hope

Thank you! We are deeply grateful to our members and friends who have already pledged. You have truly sparked the magic and given with love. This spring has shown all of us how important our society is to us and to our community. First Unitarian is providing hope and comfort, even in these days of remote togetherness.

We Give in Hope

If you have not yet pledged, take courage. Your pledge is your promise, your vote of confidence in the future. We are all pledging from a place of hope. Our pledge demonstrates our belief that we will not only survive but thrive. What we have learned will make us stronger, more flexible, more patient, more able to appreciate modest joys.

If you have never pledged before, consider a modest beginning, perhaps \$12.50 per month. Knowing how much income to expect in the coming year enables our Board of Trustees to plan with confidence. And we need your pledge now, because the Board is already deciding how much we hope to do in the fiscal year ahead, which begins on July 1. That also means you have a full year, until June 30, 2021, to pay your pledge.

A word about the Stewardship Team. During pledge season, January through May, we usually meet frequently, often once a week, at dinner time, with shared pizza and beer. We have enjoyed getting to know each other and welcome you to join us. We create a theme, organize a mailing campaign, plan announcements and a party, and hope to talk with you in person about the importance of pledging. As you know, this year has been different. It was a miracle that we were able to hold our Magic of Ministry Feast. Since then, we have been meeting by Zoom, not as festive, but your generosity has buoyed us through this strange time.

Instead of thank you notes, we have been calling to thank you for pledging. We have enjoyed the opportunity to hear how things are going with you and to thank you personally.

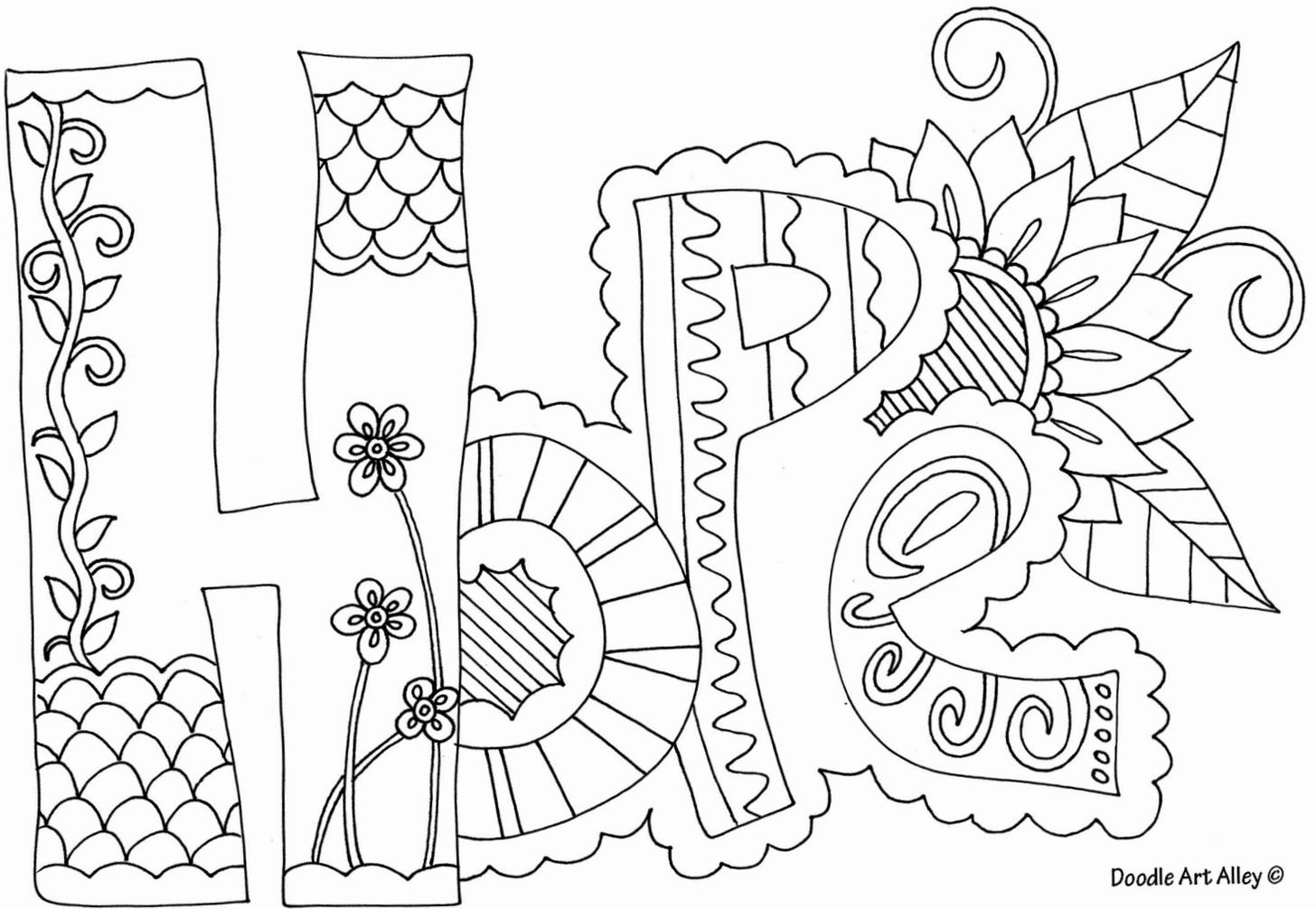
If you haven't pledged yet, pledge today. Use the magic of the telephone (607-273-7521), the Internet (www.uuithaca.org) or the U.S. Post Office (P.O. Box 6, Ithaca, NY 14851). We are looking forward to thanking you, too.

And of course we will be calling those who haven't pledged yet, again to find out how you are doing, and to encourage you to pledge in hope. We need you to minister our magic in our congregation and beyond.

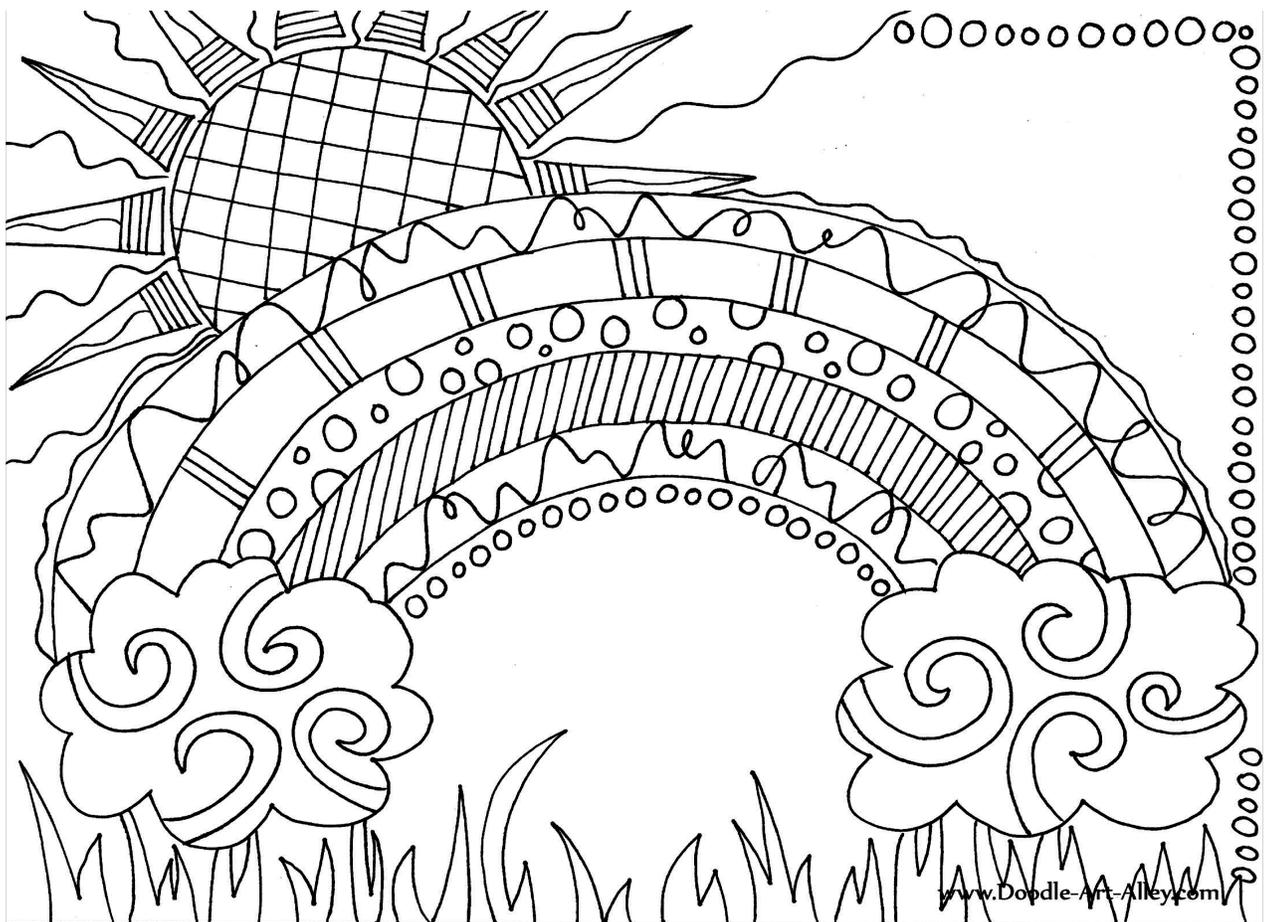
*Sincerely,
Sharon Costianes, David Salomon, and the entire Stewardship Team*

Coloring Zentangles

Zentangles provide a simplistic and lighthearted way to unwind from the stress of the day. It hones your focus by drawing you away from agitation through subtle, calming and intricate strokes that lead to wholesome beauty.



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Thank You!

Thank You!

