



ITHACA

# UUU Connections

2019 / 2020 Issue No. 10

June 1-14, 2020

## *Ministerial Musings*

Dear FUSIT members and friends,

You have been on my mind and heart these past weeks as we practice social distancing and sheltering in place. I have been uplifted to see the ways you are showing up for one another: engaging in small groups, attending worship and coffee hour online, and grocery shopping for those who need it, and offering meals to those who need them. What a blessing it is that we have one another and this vital religious community during such a trying time.

Our safety team and staff at FUSIT has been meeting, gathering resources and discerning how, when, and in what manners we might consider re-opening our building and resuming in-person programming. As you know, information and guidance from health agencies and the powers that be is ever-shifting and changing.

Most recently, guidance has come out from our Unitarian Universalist Association. I've attached the communication from our UUA President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, to this message. The essence is that, given the current outlook, the UUA is recommending that we prepare not to resume in-person programming until May 2021.

Yes, I know. Yes, a year. I know—it's a lot to consider.

And I know that this guidance was not offered without deep discernment, consideration, and intention from our national leadership. I am grateful for the hard work they are doing to help keep us all safe and well.

We at FUSIT are working diligently to ensure that we can continue to offer fantastic, engaging and inspiring programming for worship, religious exploration, and spiritual enrichment. We will continue to be essential even as we continue to offer programming online.

These next few months will bring many decisions, changes, and shifts in the way we have built our expectations of what "being the church" looks like. We promise that this is all done with a great and deep hope that we can be together again as soon as possible. We also know that there is possibility that this will change. That being said, your health and safety are paramount in our minds and hearts, and we need to plan accordingly.

You all have amazed me with your ability to care for yourselves and each other, even at a distance. Thank you for your diligence and care for your community. We love you.

*With love and hope,  
Rev. Margaret*

Link to communication from UUA President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray  
<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/message-uua-president-updated-guidance-gathering>

**Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am until Summer Services begin on June 21 at 9:30 am. To view worship on Sunday, go to the website: [www.uuithaca.org](http://www.uuithaca.org).**

### **Please note :**

**The Annual Meeting has been moved to June 17th.**

**Please send your team's annual report to [adminasst@uuithaca.org](mailto:adminasst@uuithaca.org) by June 1st at the latest if you'd like it included.**

# Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Susanne Quagliata at [dre@gmail.com](mailto:dre@gmail.com).

From Susanne Quagliata, Acting Director, Religious Exploration

## All Souls Matter

In August 2018, I was honored and anxious when Reverend Margaret asked me to serve as the Acting Director of Religious Education for one year. We held a Visioning Retreat with Kim Sweeney in January 2019 and planned to conduct a search in the spring of 2019, but for many reasons that search never happened and I agreed to serve another year.

As I wrap up my second year in my role as your DRE, I thought this would be a good time to share a bit about what we've accomplished together and what religious education might look like for the foreseeable future.

We have accomplished so much together in the last two years. With the support of the RE Team and many dedicated volunteers, I focused on building relationships with our children, making the curriculum meaningful, and communicating consistently. Children registered in our program increased, average attendance increased, and volunteer participation increased. We offered important age-appropriate curriculum like Crossing Paths and Our Whole Lives. We formed partnerships with church-wide initiatives and experimented with a variety of ways to engage children during multigenerational services. We created systems, policies, and procedures that will serve our church community for years to come.

As much as I am proud of these accomplishments, I am most proud of the connections that have been made. We have welcomed children of all ages and encouraged them to come as they are. Children in our program have established important relationships with each other. Intergenerational relationships have been formed that are meaningful to our children and adults. And we have connected with our local community through a variety of important service projects.

I have learned so much in the last two years. There is one lesson that seems most pertinent at this moment: What we create together on Sundays can be magical, but the most important religious education that we do happens outside the walls of our church. It happens in our homes every day. There has never been a more important time to live and model our UU values for the young people in our lives.

This isn't easy work. Like many of you, I was not raised in a UU household. Finding this religion later in life means I have been learning about it alongside my children. I have read that we, as UUs, are not always good about talking to our children about why we choose to be UUs. It might be because we want our children to be able to find their own way or because we don't feel confident enough to have those conversations.

But our children need us to have those conversations. Even if they are messy. They need to know how our actions, behaviors, and decisions are shaped by our UU values and when they are not. My experience in small group ministry has best prepared me for those important conversations.

The Soul Matters small groups we have at FUSIT give participants space to listen to their deepest self, to hear their inner teacher, and to explore a monthly theme that focuses on a spiritual value that our UU faith honors. As we experience the themes through the spiritual practices we become more connected to life, others and ourselves. The experience will feed your soul and prepare you to support the religious journeys of the young people in your life.

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

## DRE Search Update

The DRE Search Committee is happy to report that our search continues through this stay-at-home time. We encountered some delays as we awaited the results of the pledge drive and watched the impacts on our lives and congregation from COVID19. Now we are back on track, interviewing highly qualified candidates who bring wide-ranging experience, skills and knowledge. We could not be more impressed by the caliber of our candidates and we remain optimistic about the outcome of our search. We are grateful to the Board and members of the congregation for their support, both financially and through the encouragement we have received to continue our work. Stay tuned for further updates, and let us know if you have any questions in the meantime.

*Rev. Margaret, and members of the  
DRE Search Committee (Lynn Garman,  
Matt Hare, Leah O'Connor,  
Kim Wilkinson)*

## Our Vision

As the Unitarian Universalist presence in Ithaca, we envision ourselves as a vibrant, dynamic community. We cherish fellow seekers, nurture open dialogue and spiritual growth, and inspire action on matters of conscience, serving as a beacon of reason and hope in our interconnected world.

## **Joys and Sorrows**

Pat and John Gaines welcomed a new grandchild into their hearts. Welcome to the world Freya!

Our thoughts are with Oliver Habicht who would love to receive cards and well wishes sent to: 109 Simsbury Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850. His Caring Bridge page is: <http://oliver.habichts.net/>

## **Treasurer Wanted**

Interested in playing an important role at FUSIT and helping shape our programs each year? We will need a new Treasurer sometime in 2021. The Treasurer's key responsibilities include annual budget preparation and helping monitor spending versus budget. We have a bookkeeper and payroll services, so the 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. The 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](mailto:Streidmull@gmail.com)

## **Book Discussion Group**

Our next Book Discussion Group is **June 5th** at 12:30 pm. The plan for this meeting is to each read one book by Faulkner and then discuss that book and his works at the meeting. 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](mailto:Streidmull@gmail.com).

## **Thanks to...**

...all who "Shared the Plate" on April 26th. We collected \$450 for Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County.

Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County is a Christian ministry which provides a place for free meals, hospitality, companionship and advocacy for those in need, regardless of their faith, beliefs, or circumstances. It serves nearly 2,700 free meals each month and about 140 meals each day.



**Spark the Magic**

giving with love

## **The Church is Really Important to Me!**

One of the most surprising journeys this spring has been the generous, heartfelt response to our spring pledge campaign. Truly, members and friends have given with love and hope in this uncertain time. When a Stewardship Team member called to thank one of you, the reply was, "Well, of course I had to pledge. The church is really important to me!"

Some apologized that they were not able to pledge more. We understand. Who knows what the coming year will bring. But this much is sure: The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca will be here, ready, willing and able to connect, inspire and engage, thanks to you.

## **More Important than Ever**

In most years, annual pledges account for more than 70 percent of our church's income. But this year, with the news that there will be no Recycling Sale in August, your pledge for the coming year is more important than ever.

Our campaign is going well, but we are not there yet. As we go to press, we have 186 pledges totalling \$323,485. We are a little behind last year at this time, but still hope to reach last year's record total of 206 pledges totalling \$345,000. Ah, that would be magic.

## **We Need You!**

Heartfelt thanks to our first responders who have already pledged. You are our lifeline.

If you have not pledged yet, there is still time! But we are getting close to a 2020-21 budget and the annual meeting, so do not delay. We can only plan to spend what income we will have. We need you.

Large or modest, all pledges are important. They add up quickly. If you have never pledged before, consider \$12.50 per month. A few pledges at that level, plus a few more at \$50 or \$100 or \$200 per month, and we will be sparking magic a plenty.

Make your pledge online, by text, phone (607-273-7521) mail or our website: [uuithaca.org](http://uuithaca.org) Simply click on the Spark Magic button to find your way. Or give your pledge to a Stewardship Team member when we call.

If you have questions about pledging, or want some facts about what your pledge supports, check out our website ([uuithaca.org](http://uuithaca.org)) or contact Sharon Costianes ([sharon.costianes@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.costianes@gmail.com)) or David Salomon ([dsalomon01@gmail.com](mailto:dsalomon01@gmail.com)). And thank you for the magic you bring to our First Unitarian community!

**Leave a message for Jessica or other FUSIT staff by calling the Google voicemail number at (607) 218-2088 and she will pass any information along or call you back.**

Minister  
Rev. Margaret Weis  
[minister@uuithaca.org](mailto:minister@uuithaca.org)

Religious Exploration  
Susanne Quagliata, Acting Director  
[dre@uuithaca.org](mailto:dre@uuithaca.org)

Sexton  
Alexander (Sandy) Soule  
[a.e.soule@juno.com](mailto:a.e.soule@juno.com)

Music Director  
Stephanie Ortolano  
[music@gmail.com](mailto:music@gmail.com)

Adult Choir Director  
Jennifer Lawrence Birnbaum  
[choir@gmail.com](mailto:choir@gmail.com)

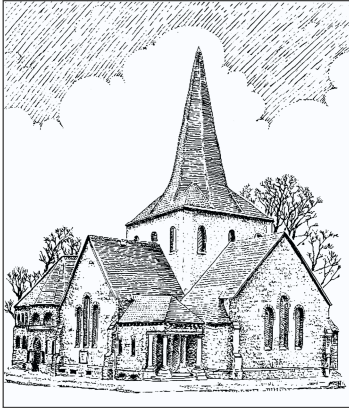
Community Engagement and Outreach  
Viviani Tillett  
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President, Board of Trustees  
Andy Turner  
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Jessica English  
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Visit our Website and get  
your newsletter:  
[www.uuithaca.org](http://www.uuithaca.org)

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### ***Budget Discussion: Congregational Conversation*** **May 31, June 7**

Join Jennifer Streid-Mullen, Treasurer, and other FUSIT congregants for a discussion of the budget proposal for 2020-21. Our fiscal year starts **July 1st**, and an important task for members at our Annual Meeting on **June 17** is to approve a budget for next year. Join us to hear about next year, including plans to hire a full time DRE, and discuss your questions and concerns. The meeting will be on Zoom at 12:15 pm, with the link to be provided closer to the day. We hope to also demo the voting process we will use at the **June 17th Annual Meeting**.

### ***Soul Matters Material for June on Beauty***

Our June worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Beauty. 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-beauty](https://tinyurl.com/ithaca-beauty)

### ***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.*

### ***Unirondack Closed***

Camp Unirondack is closed this summer due to COVID-19, so we are unable to plan our usual FUSIT Labor Day weekend camp. We will notify FUSIT if there are changes to this plan. We will dearly miss our time at camp this year!

## **Possible Ponderings**

### ***The theme for June is Beauty***

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

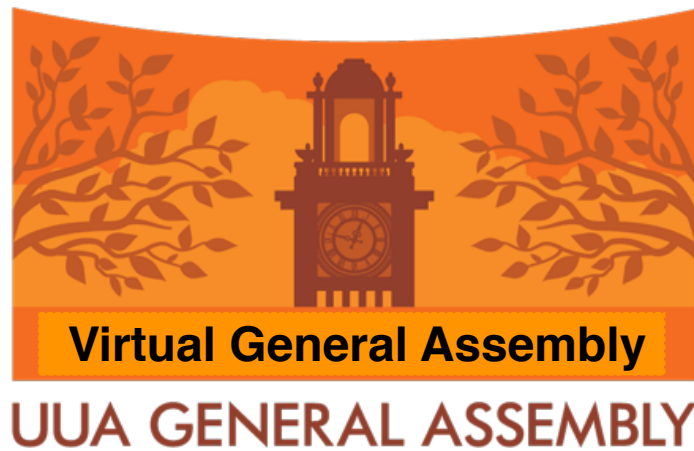
**June 4-13:** When were you first healed by beauty?

**June 14-20:** What makes a beautiful soul? What do you do to beautify your own soul?

**June 21-27:** When did beauty first teach you something?

**June 28-July 4:** When was beauty a doorway to the divine?





## *General Assembly June 24-28, 2020*

### **Rooted, Inspired, and Ready!**

Find the schedule here:

[https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/2020\\_grid\\_east.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/2020_grid_east.pdf)

Join Rev. Margaret, staff, and other FUSIT members for a week of learning, engagement, and deepening into UU identity. Virtual General Assembly (VGA) 2020 offers Unitarian Universalists an opportunity to gather and deepen our connections with each other and our faith. In addition to the General Sessions, Synergy, Service of the Living Tradition and Sunday worship, registered attendees can also enjoy daily morning worship, Welcoming celebrations, live workshops, an on-demand library of programming, presentations by featured speakers, and special events such as coffee hours, worship reflection time, and evening entertainment. General information at: [uua.org/GA](http://uua.org/GA).

This year's General Assembly coincides with the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's arrival. This will give us a chance to wrestle with our history of colonialism, invite us into truth-telling, and center on indigenous people. **Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!** is the theme for General Assembly in June 2020. We are in touch with our theological roots, we are engaged in transforming our faith, and we are fired up to take action in the wider world.

*We encourage everyone, adults and youth, to attend this year's 100% virtual event. And the Mark Pedersen Memorial GA Fund is available to help with the cost of registration for those with financial need. Contact [office@uuithaca.org](mailto:office@uuithaca.org) for an application and further information.*

### **Major Events Streamed to Virtual GA Registrants**

#### ***Welcoming Celebration***

GA officially begins with a joyful, worshipful opening celebration with inspirational music and speakers. The opening celebration sets the tone for the days ahead. The Opening Celebration will include a procession of banners from hundreds of UU congregations and organizations.

#### ***Ware Lecture***

The UUA President, in consultation with the General Assembly Planning Committee, invites a distinguished guest each year to address the General Assembly as the Ware Lecture. This year's featured speaker is Naomi Klein, award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and bestselling author.

#### ***Featured Speaker Series***

We are excited to announce the Featured Speakers for the 2020 General Assembly. The Featured Speaker Series is made possible in part by the generous sponsorship of Beacon Press.

## **Annual Meeting** **June 17, 2020, at 5:00 pm**

**Meeting ID: 899 4720 0292**

**Password: 736454**

Join us for our Annual Meeting - this year on Zoom! We will elect a new slate of board and nominating committee members, approve the annual budget, and reflect on our time together this past year. More info to come on how to vote and the Annual Report (which will be sent electronically unless you request a paper copy from Jessica at [office@uuithaca.org](mailto:office@uuithaca.org)). If you have questions about your membership status, or how to log on to Zoom, please contact Jessica or Rev. Margaret for guidance.

### **Worship Service Plan for Summer 2020**

We have an exciting group of people who will be leading our summer worship services. These services will be streamed at 9:30 am on Sundays **between June 21 and Labor Day**. The congregational conversation that usually occurs during our summer services will take place at the beginning of coffee hour each week. The speaker will be available for the first fifteen minutes of coffee hour for questions and reflections from those gathered there.

**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!**



### **Green Tip From the** **Environmental** **Interests Circle**

Home vegetable and herb gardening is an increasingly popular source of safety-guaranteed food and saved money. The New York League of Conservation Voters offers guidance on starting and establishing a garden, indoors or outdoors, with links to more in-depth resources.

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

### **How to Stay Connected During These Next Few Months**

Keep your eyes out for a postcard coming to your mailbox with ways to stay connected with FUSIT this summer! Programming, worship, small groups, and more!

### **Board of Trustees June Meeting**

The Board of Trustees will hold their monthly meeting on Tuesday, **June 9th**, at 6:00 pm.

### **Social Media Connections**

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

### **Welcome New Members**

Please give a warm welcome to these new members of First Unitarian Society of Ithaca: Emily Olander, Tim Ball, Lydia Dempsey, Chuck Lyons.

### **New Small Group Ministries Forming!**

Invitation is open for anyone interested in joining a Small Group Ministry that will start this Summer. Please email Marsha Kardon [mfkardon@gmail.com](mailto:mfkardon@gmail.com) or Viviani Tillett [memcoord@uuithaca.org](mailto:memcoord@uuithaca.org) to register.

