



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2020 / 2021 Issue No. 1

September 1-30, 2020

Ministerial Musings

Sunday Celebrations at 10:30 am
View Sunday worship at www.uuithaca.org

When we put down ideas of what life should be like, we are free to wholeheartedly say yes to our life as it is. -Tara Brach

It has been said that anyone who, when asked in 2015, answered the question, "where will you be in 5 years?" was wrong.

I think it's safe to say that 2020 has been nothing like what any of us has expected. A worldwide pandemic, wearing masks everywhere, sequestered to our homes for the safety of ourselves and our neighbors, worshipping via the internet, schools frantically assessing whether to open virtually or in person – the list goes on.

And, we are living amidst one of the most tumultuous times in our nation's history as we wrestle with the realities of police brutality, the continued oppression and violence against black and brown bodies, the dangers facing our trans siblings (particularly those who are people of color), the call for deeper exploration and understanding of the ways that racism shows up in each of us and our institutions, and the loss of employment and access to adequate nutrition.

Add to that an upcoming election that will determine the trajectory of our democracy as we know it, and it's easy to feel ... "all of the things."

We are holding a lot these days. We are worried, and scared, and oftentimes going without the human community and touch that perhaps we took for granted just six months ago.

If you are feeling sad, or scared, or worried, or passionate, or energized – that sounds about right. If some days you are feeling like it's just not possible to get anything done because the work is so big – that sounds about right, too. Here at FUSIT, though our buildings remain closed, we are open. Our small group ministries are open. Our online Sunday services are open. Our Pub Theology series is open. Our coffee hour is open. Our Religious Exploration for all ages is open. Our striving for a better congregation and community is open. These programs may be virtual, but they are strong and vital to living into our mission of creating connections, finding inspiration, and engaging the world.

*Your board and staff teams have decided to prioritize a commitment to anti-racism this program year. Together we are determining what the next steps are, and are grateful to those of you who have expressed a deep desire to do this work. The board will be hosting a congregational conversation on **September 13th** following coffee hour and I encourage everyone to attend. Together we will be exploring how to dive more deeply into this work, and we need your voice!*

I am so excited and hopeful that FUSIT is making the commitment to do more with racial justice and anti-racism this year. This work is important, and challenging, and life-giving if we let it be. As I preached back in May, anti-racism work is like weeding, we must get at the roots and not let our work break off at the surface. So, let's dig deep and get dirty. It's the best way forward.

None of us is sure what the next few months will bring. But I am certain that this congregation and its ministries are necessary and vital to sustaining our spirits and engaging with the important issues in our community and the world.

I miss seeing you, and shaking your hands, and gathering in person, and singing, laughing, and crying together. I miss my people. And, we are strong enough and loving enough to see this through. So, let's get to the work of loving and living boldly.

"See" you on Sunday,
Rev. Margaret

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.

Congregational Conversation hosted by the Board Sunday, September 13th at 12:15 pm (following coffee hour)

The Board will host a Congregational Conversation devoted to exploring action items related to anti-racism following the in-gathering service on **September 13th**. Additionally, the Board will be considering a proposal put forth for a new staff position devoted to social justice and anti-racism work at the September Board meeting. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Emily Richards at dre@uuithaca.org.

Greetings from the DRE

Dear FUSIT Community, many of you know me already, I am Emily Richards (she/her/hers) and I have been a part of this congregation and faith for many years and am now thrilled to become more deeply involved in this community as the Director of Religious Exploration here at FUSIT.

I recently had the opportunity to take a Philosophy of Religious Education course through the UUA and I came away from that with a wealth of ideas and information, as well as a deepened understanding of this faith, our history, and the possible paths forward. I also came away with the humbling knowledge that I have so much more to learn. During that course part of our work was to come up with our individual philosophies of religious education, and while mine is new and will undoubtedly change as I continue to learn and grow, as we start this new year together I wanted to share that with you.

Religious education is an opportunity. An opportunity for lifelong learning that is fun and engaging while providing depth and meaning. It is a chance for people of all ages to come together and explore what faith means to them, drawing from the six sources for wisdom. To engage with one another and to work together to bring about structural and significant positive changes that are in line with our identity and principles as Unitarian Universalists. It is a covenant that together we will create a safe space where ideas, lessons, history, diverse viewpoints and differing ideas can be studied, examined, and challenged, together and separately. It is a place where we can create experiences of wonder and joy and explore the mysteries surrounding us. It is putting into practice our affirmation that we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people by working towards dismantling racist systems of oppression within our own walls, our communities, this country, and the world. And it is doing these things with intent, so that as a group, community, and individuals we can find meaning and increased understanding, and take purposeful action.

It truly takes a village, or in this case, a community of people engaging and uplifting one another in our faith and spiritual growth. I am honored to be a part of that journey with all of you now, and for many years to come.

*Emily Richards,
Director of Religious Exploration*

The 8th principle and FUSIT Family Summer Anti-Racism Curriculum

The UUA approved an 8th principle this year addressing issues of racism and our stance on them. For our children and youth this new principle states simply: We must work together for diversity and against racism & oppression.

Powers has been emailing FUSIT RE families this summer with suggested readings, links, and questions to facilitate conversations and initiate intergenerational actions with children regarding racial justice.

The staff and board have set the goal to do anti-racism work on various levels in the FUSIT community and beyond. If you are interested in learning more, please contact me and stay tuned for more information.

Expectation

Our theme for September is expectation, and as we enter this fall continuing to traverse the unknown waters of the beginning of a new school year during a pandemic, we are all dealing with our expectations of what we expect this time to bring in this current reality.

What we do know is that we are here to help to navigate this time together, to help one another to examine and adjust those expectations so that we can allow ourselves to embrace new beginnings, to expect change, and experience the magic of being set free from expectations.

RE Plans for the Year Ahead

August has been a whirlwind of reading, researching, and planning for the upcoming year! In the creation of our programming, it is important for us to consider what the needs of our RE families, children and youth are. so if you have not yet filled out the FUSIT Religious Exploration Survey Fall 2020 please consider filling it out now so that we know in what ways we can best support you and your family. <https://forms.gle/LzdxigwCkPAF6N2Y8>

Our plans for this year currently include three main avenues of connection that families and youth can utilize to deepen their UU faith and spirituality.

- Monthly Physical Materials (UU Crate!)
- Virtual meetings
- Emailed Content

(continued on following page)

Greetings from the DRE (Cont'd)

In an effort to assist our youngest members engage more fully with our virtual worship services, every Sunday there will be a special labeled packet inside the monthly UU Crate sent home that is meant to be opened during Time for Wonder each week.

Expanding Community

For many this pandemic has brought 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 physical distancing. Please continue to invite any and all people that you know that you believe could find meaning by exploring what the FUSIT community and Unitarian Universalist faith can offer.

Back to School Blessing

Our first worship service will include a Back to School Blessing, honoring the different situations that students are navigating this fall. No backpacks necessary and there will be a special back to school item sent home with our September RE packets.

Ways to Help

Even though we are not meeting in person for the foreseeable future there are still ways you can help! Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering for the RE program or joining the RE Team, contact information is provided above.



Green Tip From the Environmental Interests Circle

Synthetic fabrics such as polyester, nylon, acrylic, and natural-synthetic blends shed tiny fragments of their plastic fibers whenever they are worn or washed, contributing significantly to microplastic pollution of the world's waterways. Avoid their use when practicable.

Sunday, September 13: Ingathering Sunday, Rev. Margaret Weis

Our annual tradition of gathering the waters and blessing them will continue this year – even in a new form. Each year, we bring water from places that are sacred or special to us and gather them together, bless the waters, and use that water for rituals throughout the year. Please send a picture of your family at your special watery place, or a picture of that place, or a picture of water, to minister@uuithaca.org by **September 10th** for inclusion in our service.

Sunday, September 20: Unmet Expectations, Rev. Margaret Weis

What does it look like when our expectations aren't met? How are we impacted when what we hoped might happen doesn't materialize, or important people in our lives let us down? We will explore how to move forward with disappointment and unmet expectations.

Sunday, September 27: Let It Be, Rev. James Galisinski, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton, NY

In spite of tragedy, death, and pandemic, there is so much wisdom in those three little words. We may have the greatest expectations but things are often out of our control. Sometimes all we can do is simply let things be.

Soul Matters Material for September on Expectation

Our September worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Expectation. 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/expectation-fusit>.

Virtual Service Auction

The Board of Trustees will be heading up the Virtual Service Auction this year. Although they are still in the planning stages, they will be asking for volunteers from the congregation to help with this event. Look for more information which will be forthcoming in the October newsletter.

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.

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Religious Exploration
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Music Director
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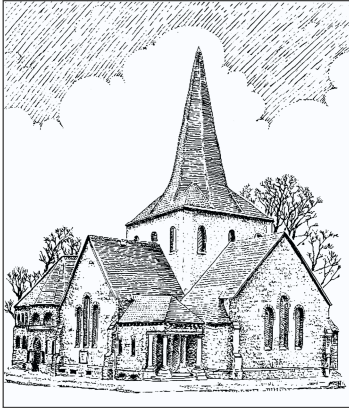
Congregational Administrator
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Join the FUSIT (internal) Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/>

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

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
306 North Aurora Street
P.O. Box 6
Ithaca, NY 14851-0006



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

Possible Ponderings

The theme for September is Expectation

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

September 1-5: How are you learning to live in our uncertain world? How does this impact your expectations?

September 6-12: What are you waiting for that is exciting and bringing you up? What are you anticipating with worry or sorrow?

September 13-19: What are your expectations when entering into community with others?

September 20-26: What happens when your expectations aren't met? How does that feel?

September 27-October 3: What are your expectations about belonging - at work, in your family, at church, in other places?

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 and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

Website Updates

If you see any info on the website that you believe is incorrect or out of date, please send the url and the incorrect info in an email to Jessica at office@uuithaca.org. We could use all eyes on the website to make sure it's current. Thank you for your help!

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.

**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!**



You've Been Flocked! Join in the FUN!

We are trying out a new way of bringing joy to each other, and raising some money for our congregation in the process! Interested in having the yard of one of your friends, neighbors, or co-workers "flocked" this fall? Send an email to the office to find out more information, and we will deliver a flock of rainbow-colored lawn flamingos to their yard and stick them in their grass for the day - completely out of the blue!

What's the point? To have fun!

What's the cost? Sliding scale between \$20-\$100

90 Sweatshirts Needed for Migrant Farmworkers by September 6!

Farmworkers are arriving at Turek's Farms in Kingsferry. They are mostly coming from warmer climates & they travel light. The chilly mornings that approach us will make work more difficult for them unless we help by providing them with sweatshirts. Jackie Jablonski put out a call for sweatshirts a couple of weeks ago, but was only able to collect 10. We need to collect 90 more by **September 6**. Please go to your closets, thrift shops, and if you can afford it, buy new...gather as many small, medium, or large sweatshirts as you can. When you have done that, email Jackie Jablonski, jackiejab@me.com, or Madonna Stallmann, madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com. You may also call Madonna, 607-216-5083. A pick up of your donation will be arranged for Sunday, August 30, or Sunday, September 6. Think of this as a virtual/vehicular Sunday Celebration Side with Love collection! :) Thank you for your kindness! -Madonna Stallmann

Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **September 4**, at 12:30 pm at Stewart Park. The book is *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead. Please bring a mask and lawn chair.

Upcoming book titles and dates are: Friday, **October 2**, *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar and Friday, **November 6**, *Talking to Strangers* by Malcolm Gladwell. The October and November meetings revert to Zoom depending on the weather. Contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

"A Planet To Win – Why We Need a Green New Deal" Book Discussion, Sunday, Sept. 13, 7:30 pm via Zoom

Join the EIC to discuss this highly acclaimed book by Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Adana Cohen, & Thea Riofrancos, with a foreword by Naomi Klein.

"This compelling book clearly lays out the arguments for a "Green New Deal," tying the goals of the climate and sustainability movements to those of the broader labor and social justice movements. Grounded in the transformative approach of FDR's New Deal – coupled with the oratory of W.E.B. Dubois, Martin Luther King, Jr. and LGBTQ rights activists – this book is a call-to-arms for everyone concerned about the future of the world. Rather than focusing on small changes that individuals can make, this book proposes "big and bold ideas" with the understanding that "collective action rather than individual sacrifice is what is required in the face of an existential crisis."

The book is \$12 from Verso Books, and 2 copies are available to borrow from the FUSIT library; contact Wendy if you want an e-version, ww16@cornell.edu. Zoom link coming. Contact Deanna English deanna.l.english@gmail.com or Jack Zinda jazinda@gmail.com with questions.

Upcoming Events



Common Read Book Group

Each year, the UUA suggests a book for members and friends of our congregations to read together. The books that have been read are listed at www.uua.org/read. Often, these books focus on a particular social justice or other spiritually-grounded issue. Join Rev. Margaret for this monthly book group meeting. Please email minister@uuithaca.org to sign up and receive the Zoom information.

We hope you'll take part in this new tradition of engaging our minds about issues that are important to Unitarian Universalists and the world we so deeply love. Discussions will take place on the **first Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30 pm on Zoom**. Please pre-register by emailing Rev. Weis.

—**September 2 @6-7:30pm, *Daring Democracy: Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want*** by Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen, (Beacon Press, 2017) For a copy of the book, visit Beacon Press, or contact Rev. Margaret if you need assistance.

—**October 7 @6-7:30 pm, *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*** Edited by Mitra Rahnema (Skinner House, 2017), centers the stories, analyses, and insights of a number of Unitarian Universalist religious professionals of color as they explore how racial identity is made both visible and invisible in Unitarian Universalist communities.

Pub Theology - Wednesday, September 16

Join us for an evening of good fellowship and conversation. We will gather at 6:30 on Zoom and reflect together on the monthly theme of EXPECTATION. Invite your friends! Hope to see you there! Pub Theology takes place on the **3rd Wednesday of every month**.

An Important Message to the members and friends of FUSIT

In coffee hour this past Sunday, there was a report shared of racist comments addressed to a person of color during previous coffee hour conversations. We as a board want to say in the strongest possible way that racism will not be tolerated. Racist comments, actions, and implications break the covenant we share. They make our spaces, whether virtual or in person, unsafe for people of color and other marginalized groups. We are deeply saddened that people of color have not been able to feel safe and welcome in our congregation. We are committed to working to improve this institution. To assist in immediately creating a safer space for all members, friends, and staff of our congregation, several board members will be present at the remaining summer coffee hours.

Additionally, as we transition from summer hiatus to regular services this Fall, we will be honoring our Spring commitment to work toward being a more anti-racist institution. As outlined in the “Widening the Circle” document recently released by the UUA, this issue goes beyond motivations from a specific incident, and requires sustained action within our congregation and in our larger faith community. We highly recommend all members and friends explore this report which can be found here: https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/widening_the_circle-text_with_covers.pdf

We have a lot of work to do as a faith community. We hear the many voices wanting FUSIT to move from education and reflection to action, and we agree. Some of this action will be aimed outward as advocacy and as Andrew Quagliata so eloquently suggested in his 8/9/20 sermon (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=983rBI2c5V4>), it must exist in a cycle with the learning, listening, and dialog we need to do internally.

Throughout the past few years our congregation has engaged with ideas around anti-racism through sermon topics, book groups, and small group discussions. We are planning to do more. In the letter we sent this Spring we committed to working to dismantle “the systems of oppression, white supremacy, and racism within ourselves as individuals, our congregation, and our community” through the ideas listed here:

- Engage in a year-long study process of race and racism to include consideration of adopting an 8th principle (<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>) of UUism that states: “journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”
- Participate in local and state-level conversations about police brutality and reformation of our policing practices and strategies.
- Evaluate our policies (safety policy, in particular) and consider alternative procedures to replace any policies that involve police in congregational matters.
- Engage in spiritual development and education, as it pertains to our personal and congregational ideas about race, bias, justice as a spiritual practice, and systems of oppression and white supremacy.
- Explore the ways we can, as an organization and as individuals, understand and leverage our privilege and power toward the establishment of a more just and equitable society
- We are currently working on creating specific goals related to these items and beginning plans for how to honor these commitments. As part of that work, the Board will host a congregational conversation devoted to exploring action items related to anti-racism following the in-gathering service on **September 13th**.

Additionally, the Board will be considering a proposal put forth for a new staff position devoted to social justice and anti-racism work at the September Board meeting on **September 8**. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please watch the newsletter for further details.

With gratitude, humility, and hope,

Rev. Margaret Weis, Minister
Andy Turner, President of Board of Trustees
Matt Hare, Vice President of Board of Trustees
Diana Nier, Clerk of Board of Trustees
Kim Wilkinson, Board of Trustees
Lyn Staack, Board of Trustees

Lyn Staack, Board of Trustees
Elton Hall, Board of Trustees
Carsten Hess, Board of Trustees
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