



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2020 / 2021 Issue No. 4

December 1-31, 2020

Ministerial Musings

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

We have been forced to learn how to be still.

We have been challenged to find grace where we didn't see it before.

We have been called to show up for one another in ways that we hadn't considered before.

We have been learning what it means to be community to, and with, one another when we can't be together in the same space.

We have done so much, learned so much, and given up so much.

And amidst it all, we have grown – as a community, a congregation, and as individuals.

The winter months can be challenging for many of us.

The holidays can be a celebration but they can also be a reminder that some of the people we've loved are no longer with us.

If you are feeling isolated, know that you are not alone.

If you are feeling worried, know that there is community here for you.

If you are feeling the challenges of this pandemic – financially or otherwise – know that we are here to help.

Through the generosity of the Human Needs Fund, I am able to help with temporary financial needs that have arisen for members of this congregation. If you have a need for assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Some of you may be feeling like you have more to give at this time. If so, I would encourage you to give to our Human Needs Fund, the offering for Christmas Eve, or our gathering of items for the Side with Love monthly offering.

My prayer for all of us is for moments of stillness and calm amidst the busyness and stress.

My prayer is for community in unexpected places.

My prayer is for love in the face of hatred, and courage in the face of fear.

Blessings to you and your families.

Rev. Margaret

***The office will be closed from
Thursday, December 24th, through
Sunday, January 3rd, and will re-
open on Monday, January 4th.***

Our Mission

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.

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the DRE

Dear FUSIT Community,

It is hard to believe December is already here and that the holiday season is upon us. I invite you to take a deep breath and find your own inner stillness. In the midst of the holiday preparations, the familiar stress and joy that the holidays bring, and the new worries and challenges that a holiday season in the midst of a pandemic present, allow yourself to find moments of rest, calm, and quiet. Explore ways to be present with your kids and your family. And know that those moments are enough.

Helpers will be needed each month to assist with delivering the UU Crate packages to families who are unable to pick them up. Please let me know if this is something you can commit a small amount of your time to helping with.

A special thank you to Loretta Heimbuch, Brian Heltsly, Kathy Hopkins, and Jan Marie Pfeiderer for volunteering their time to help get the November packets out to our families that were unable to pick up their packets.

If you have a child or youth you would like to be added to our Religious Exploration program to receive weekly emails and monthly activity boxes, you can contact me at the email address provided above.

*Emily Richards,
Director of Religious Exploration*

Stillness

This month we're exploring the many ways our UU faith invites us to become "A People of Stillness." The winter holidays are a time for beauty, peace and stillness. I hope that you are able to take the time to step away from the busyness of the holidays and rekindle hope by listening to the voices around you, watch for the light in all things, and find freedom from expectations.

UU Crate for December

I hope that you have been having fun with your November UU Crates! We just made a batch of lip balm today at my house. We added a little bit of honey and lemon oil to ours and we are excited to try this again in the future with some new flavor and scent combinations.

December packages will be available for pick up on the FUSIT porch during the following time:

Saturday, November 28th from 11:00am-12:00pm

Winter Solstice Celebration and Cookie Decorating Monday, December 21st, 6:30pm

In lieu of weekly meetings this month we will host a virtual Winter Solstice and Cookie Decorating event! All are welcome and there will be recipes for sugar cookies shared for anyone who wants to join us.

The Winter Solstice Celebration will begin at **6:30pm on Monday, December 21st** and include a short solstice blessing to be followed by a chance to connect and show off your cookie decorating skills.

Facebook Story Time

Weekly story time with Audrey is continuing live on our Facebook page! Please join us each **Tuesday at 7:00pm** for an opportunity to gather together virtually and enjoy a story that touches on our theme for the month.

Ways to Help

Volunteers are needed to drop off the monthly UU Crate packages to participating families. This typically happens on the **last or first Saturday of each month** (depending on when the first Sunday service falls) and only requires an hour or so of time.

Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering for the RE program or joining the RE Team, contact information is provided above.

Joys and Sorrows

Judy Scarpella has been moved from assisted living to Oak Hill Manor, 602 Hudson Street, Ithaca NY 14850. Cards would be welcome. Any person wanting a personal update is free to call Dianne Ferriss (272-6896).

Thank you to....

...Don Barber and Scott Grover for taking time out on a beautiful day in November to clean the FUSIT gutters!

...Simon Catterall, Steve Doria, Scott Grover, Mary Kirkpatrick, and Martha Walker for their work pulling the audio and video cable for our sanctuary improvements! Their time saved the congregation money on this project to improve our in-house recording capabilities for our online events, and for future in-house events as well.

Soul Matters Material for December on Stillness

Our December worship theme at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca is Stillness. 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/fusit-stillness>.



Green Tip From the Environmental Interests Circle

Blackout curtains, blackout blinds, and thermal curtains block sunlight and reduce the movement of heat through windows, increasing the fuel efficiency of air conditioners and heaters by keeping a room cooler on hot days and warmer on cold

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

Sunday, December 6: *Moving Toward Justice - A Service on Living the Pledge* Rev. Margaret Weis and leaders from the Living the Pledge Program

As Unitarian Universalists we are called to strive toward justice, equity, and the dismantling of white supremacy in our communities, our congregation, and ourselves. This service will be a kick-off for our congregation-wide effort focused on the Richmond Pledge to End Racism. Together we will explore how to delve deep into this vital work toward healing and justice.

Saturday, December 12: *Remembering Well - A FUSIT Memorial Service*

The necessity of physical distancing during the pandemic has prevented us from honoring the lives of those among us who have died. Join us for a zoom memorial service to remember members of our congregation and community, together.

Sunday, December 13: *Unplugging the Machine*, Rev. Margaret Weis

We human beings have a tendency to go-go-go, often neglecting ourselves in the process. With the year we've had, this is even more the case. Join us for a service as we reflect on how we might unplug from that which doesn't call us to our best selves, and consider how it would look to unplug and slow down.

Sunday, December 20: *Finding the Balance Point*, Rev. Margaret Weis

Amidst the chaos and upheaval in our lives these days, it can be a challenge to find a balance point between stillness and movement. Join us for a service where we explore the ways we can find balance in our lives, our communities and the world.

Sunday, December 20: *A Quiet Christmas Service @ 7pm*

Join us for a quiet evening of music, meditation, and shared silence. Amidst the busyness of the holiday season, we gather to honor the stillness of the season.

Thursday, December 24: *Beacon of Hope - A Christmas Eve Service*

Join us for an evening of candlelight, carols, story, and music as we celebrate Christmas Eve and the power of love to guide us through life's challenges.

Sunday, December 27 *Sharing our Stories: Holidays Past, Holidays Future*, David Salomon

In this informal live service, come listen to and share your own favorite holiday stories and traditions and tell us your wishes for the New Year and beyond. Who knows, we may even play a game or two!



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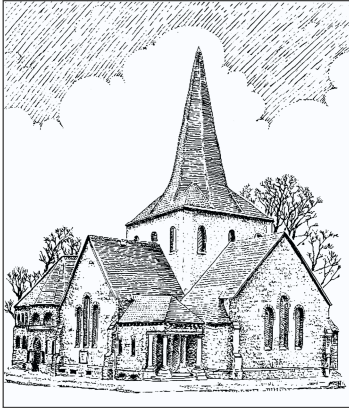
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for December is Stillness

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

December 1 - 5: Which spiritual practices evoke stillness in you?

December 6 - 12: How are you called to move into dismantling white supremacy?

December 13 - 19: How are you finding nourishment in stillness these days?

December 20 - 26: What might balance between movement and stillness look like in your life?

December 27 - January 2: How will you allow for stillness to live in you?

Possible Christmas Zoom Gathering

If someone is willing to host a zoom Christmas Day gathering, please contact Rev. Margaret at minister@uuithaca.org.

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.

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!

Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **December 4**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *The Shadow King* by Maaza Mengiste.

Upcoming books for 2021 are as follows:

January 15: *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich

February 5: *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

March 5: *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

April 2: *Life of a Klansman* by Edward Ball

Contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

Board of Trustees December Meeting

The Board of Trustees will hold their monthly meeting on Wednesday, **December 9**, from 6:30-8 pm via Zoom. All interested persons are invited to attend. Contact Andy Turner at ast4@cornell.edu for the link.

December's Side With Love Collection

This month's collection will be going to The Village At Ithaca. They are dedicated to serving all students and families with school-aged children to help them thrive, providing programs and resources to help students feel confident, intelligent, and connected to their community and learning process.

FUSIT will be collecting computers & computer accessories, specifically new headphones (that will fit elementary and high school aged youth) & earbuds (that come with various size buds) for the spring semester.

Collections will take place on Sunday mornings, at your home, or you may drop them off in the container on the parish house porch any time during the week. If you would like to have your contributed items picked up at your home on Sunday morning, or if you drop something at FUSIT please let Madonna Stallmann know at 607-216-5083, or email madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com. Also, if anyone would like to help Madonna with pick ups you may contact her at the phone number and email address mentioned above.

Babies First Appeal

Babies First is an all volunteer organization, in its 27th year at FUSIT, that provides tangible help to babies, young children, and their families in need within Tompkins County by offering free baby equipment. Referrals are received directly from individuals or from 18 plus non-profit public agencies throughout the county. Babies First accepts "like new" baby equipment including **pack 'n plays, strollers, high chairs, baby carriers etc.** BF also provides new unused car seats for infants and toddlers.

Covid 19 shut down Babies First in March. We began serving the needs of the community again in June and since then have given away lots of equipment and 13 car seats. We have worked with Tompkins County Action, DSS, The Day Care Council, The Village at Ithaca, refugee programs and others as they opened up.

We missed our Spring fundraiser and the future of Babies First looks bleak unless we can raise some funds to buy car seats. We currently do not have enough car seats to meet the need. Donations of equipment or financial contributions are always welcome. Please consider this and if you chose to help out with Babies First, make your check out to FUSIT with Babies First in the subject line.

Upcoming Events



Common Read Book Group: *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry (moved from November) **Wednesday, December 2, 6-7:30 pm**

Join Rev. Margaret for our monthly Common Read book group where we will be discussing *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry. Please email minister@uuithaca.org to sign up and receive the zoom information. For a copy of the book, visit Skinner House Books, Inspirit (UUA bookstore), or contact Rev. Margaret if you need assistance. Information about the January Common Read Book, *Justice on Earth*, can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/read/justice-on-earth>

Introduction to Unitarian Universalism - **Sunday, December 13th, at 12:30 pm**

New to First Unitarian Society of Ithaca and/or Unitarian Universalism? Join Rev. Margaret for an opportunity to learn more about this faith tradition, congregation, and ways to be involved and supported by this community.

Meeting ID: 943 4039 7541 Passcode: 317066

Filming of No Rehearsal Pageant (We need you!!!) - **Sunday, December 13th, at 4 pm**

We aren't going to let a worldwide pandemic keep us from the fun of our annual tradition of chaos at Christmas! But this year we've got to get the fun going a little earlier than usual. Join our zoom filming of our annual No Rehearsal Pageant. Together we will tell the timeless story of love being born into chaos. And don't forget to include your dogs, cats, chickens, or other furry friends. There's space for everyone!

Rev. Margaret Weis is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. Meeting ID: 982 6303 4472 Passcode: 473788

Pub Theology - **Wednesday, December 16th, at 6:30 pm**

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 STILLNESS. Invite your friends! Pub Theology usually takes place the **3rd Wednesday of the month.**

Winter Solstice Celebration and Cookie Decorating - **Monday, December 21st, 6:30pm**

Living the Pledge - Facilitator Training

December 4th and 5th

We are bringing the Living the Pledge Workshop to Ithaca on **December 4 and 5**, with an initial training for 20 future facilitators, who will then help facilitate a couple of similar workshops for our congregation in 2021.

The primary goal of this workshop is to develop confidence in our abilities to:

- Integrate the Pledge to End Racism into our daily lives
- Recognize and challenge systemic racism
- Confront racism and bias in our everyday lives, and
- Take leadership in ending racism in our community, our culture, and our lives

The Richmond Pledge to End Racism, based on the Birmingham Pledge, is a personal commitment to work on ourselves and with others developed by the Richmond, Virginia, UUA congregation, to address racism in all its form. It reads:

The Pledge to End Racism

I BELIEVE that every person has worth as an individual.

I BELIEVE that every person is entitled to dignity and respect, regardless of race or color.

I BELIEVE that every thought and every act of racial prejudice is harmful; if it is my thought or act, then it is harmful to me as well as to others.

Therefore, from this day forward:

I WILL strive daily to eliminate racial prejudice from my thoughts and actions.

I WILL discourage racial prejudice by others at every opportunity.

I WILL treat all people with dignity and respect;

I WILL commit to working with others to transform this community into a place that treats people of all races, ethnicities, and cultures with justice, equity, and compassion, and

I WILL strive daily to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of my effort.

The Living the Pledge Workshop is a 12-hour virtual zoom workshop designed to give participants confidence in their ability to talk about and confront racism wherever it lives. The workshop is about 50% small group discussion, with the same small group throughout and beyond the workshop. Some pre-work is required, as is a commitment to attend all sessions.

We are bringing the Living the Pledge Workshop to Ithaca on **December 4 and 5**, with an initial training to train 20 future facilitators, who will then each help facilitate a couple of similar workshops for our congregation in 2021.

As part of the workshop, participants develop a community of support and an understanding of how to use support in deepening our work in building a just and equitable multicultural world.

The workshop is for everyone - for people who have:

-engaged in other anti-racism/multiculturalism training. This workshop is designed to take your understanding and your competency to a deeper level, connecting you with other community activists.

-never taken a class about racism. This workshop will challenge you to invest in and deepen your learning so you can put yourself on the road to intercultural competence.

Contact Rev. Margaret or the FUSIT office for more information.

**Although this training is currently full, please let Margaret know if you'd like to be in a cohort as a participant.*

The Anti-racism Ministry Team has Begun!

Our major goal is to facilitate and support anti-racism education and action within our FUSIT community and then to move out into the greater Ithaca community. Our major hope is that we as a spiritual community will, over time, have a deep understanding of white supremacy, racism and how we can contribute to dismantling them in our society. This work is not just for those of us on this team but everyone at FUSIT. Another hope is that this work will become an important and persisting thread of our spiritual commitment to our first principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person. The team has had vibrant discussions about our goals, about how we want to organize ourselves, and about where we want to start this important work.

We will begin our work by bringing **The Richmond Pledge to End Racism** and the **Living the Pledge** program to our congregation. Five of us, including Rev. Margaret, have just completed a virtual form of this program offered by the Richmond Virginia UU Church, where the Pledge was started. What an excellent challenging program! On **December 4-5**, a group of FUSIT leaders will take part in a Train the Trainers workshop. On Sunday, **December 6**, our Sunday service will be: ***Moving Toward Justice – A Service on Living the Pledge***, Rev. **Margaret Weis** and leaders from the **Living the Pledge Program**. This service will be a kick-off for our congregation-wide effort focused on this program. By February, we hope to offer the first Living the Pledge program led by our own leaders. More definite dates and information will be available later in December. More information about the Living the Pledge program can be found on page 6 of this newsletter.

Meal Fundraiser to Support Local Immigrant Families December 5, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance and the Tompkins County Immigrant Rights Coalition are supporting two families locally, one from Haiti and one from Guatemala. They will be cooking traditional meals from their countries, for our enjoyment.

Pre-order delicious meals online and pick them up at the First Congregational Church of Ithaca on **December 5**, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. We will have COVID-safe practices in place - you won't even need to get out of your car!

Pre-orders due by Monday, **November 30**. Generous servings, perhaps enough for two people, for \$20 (or donate more!)

Meals include:

- 1) Haitian Joumou soup (beef or vegetarian)
- 2) Guatemalan empanadas (chicken or vegetarian)
- 3) Yellow rice
- 4) Refried beans
- 5) Salsa

In addition, there will be some Guatemalan bracelets for sale at the FCC parking lot (come early!) Questions? Contact Kristen Brennan at kmb.ithaca@gmail.com

Order here: <http://bit.ly/Ithaca-Supports-Immigrants>. Sponsored by SJC.

Women's Circle Monday, December 28, at 7 pm

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday, December 28 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. We are now generally meeting the 4th Monday of the month. All who identify as women are welcome. This is a drop-in group, so no need to sign up; just come. For information or questions contact Nancy Miller at ananda7733@gmail.com or 607 539 7733.

Zoom link is:

Meeting ID: 819 4014 1421

Passcode: 874536

Service Auction Update

Our annual auction has been moved to February 2021! We are excited to offer a new and exciting way to engage with this favorite annual fundraiser! If you are interested in being on the planning team, please contact board@uuithaca.org.

Coffee Hour Hosts

Coffee hour hosts are in charge of starting the zoom coffee hour, welcoming people to the session, opening the space for the sharing of joys and sorrows (which is facilitated by another assigned person), and creating breakout groups for the remainder of the session. Please email Rev. Margaret and let her know if you are interested in helping to create this important time in the life of our congregation.

Meetings with Rev. Margaret

Looking for a meeting with Rev. Margaret? Please visit this link to see availability and set up a time. <https://calendly.com/weis-rev>



Virtual Christmas Eve Service Thursday, December 24

*Please join the greater-Ithaca community in this candlelight service held
virtually on our website and YouTube.*

The service begins at 7:30 pm.

Tune in early to experience some of your favorite Christmas music at 7 pm.

Although we are not able to be together physically this Christmas Eve, let us gather our hearts together to share the beauty of story, music, and candlelight.

***Let us bring the spirit of Christmas into our lives
and out into the world.***