



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2021 / 2022 Issue No. 1

September 1-30, 2021

Message from the Minister



The start of a new congregational year is a time of excitement, hope, and possibility. This is true even as the Covid pandemic continues and many of the customs and rituals of reopening and gathering are not possible. We are excited to up the level of activity and engagement. We are hopeful for what we as a church might achieve within the community and beyond. We are open to possibilities that we do not expect and cannot even imagine.

Even with socially distanced in-person meetings and video meetings in lieu of meetings that would otherwise be in person and just happen on the street, I am beginning to meet and know members of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca.

To help our knowing each other, I will tell you a bit more about me than you may already know.

I became a Unitarian Universalist and joined my first UU church in Boston in 1969, while still in college. After working in a hospital for several years, I resumed formal education, graduating from the Harvard Divinity School in 1977. My first congregation was in Burbank, California. Since then I have served in parish and community ministries in cities and suburbs in a half-dozen states on three coasts and at the national level. Since 2008 I have specialized in transitional (interim and developmental) ministries. Over the years I have taught as adjunct faculty at the undergraduate and graduate level. For two decades, one of my homes away from home has been the YMCA in Newark, New Jersey.

I love people and the spontaneous interactions possible in many settings. The necessity of social distancing limits the spontaneity of human contact. But this is how we must live in the world, so that we can move through the pandemic. We will do this together. We have already begun the work of the interim period. We are working together during the 2021-2022 church year as you prepare to call your next settled minister and we learn together how to live spontaneously and fully in the time of pandemic.

We are already making the most of this year!

Rev. Tony Johnson

Click here
for updated guidance
from the Way Forward Team:

[Updated Guidelines August 11,
2021 \(ithaca.ny.us\)](https://www.ithaca.ny.us/Updated-Guidelines-August-11-2021)

Welcome Event and Sundae Sunday

September 12, 2021

After the virtual 10:30 am celebration, we'll
meet at **Stewart Park Small Pavillion**

12:30-1:30 pm.

Come join us for our annual ice cream
sundaes and welcome Interim Minister,
Rev. Tony Johnson.

Masks required.

FUSIT

Water Communion

Please join in celebrating our
local ingathering ceremony by
sending in images, videos, and/or
words that show or represent
water that is meaningful to you.
This information can be sent to

Emily Richards at
dre@uuithaca.org and is due
by **September 4th** at
the latest.

Religious Exploration News

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

Greetings from the DRE

I greet you all with the joy in my heart that comes from beginning a new year with you, and the grief that comes with the knowledge that we are still not in a place where we can physically be together.

We do not gather now so that when we do gather we can all gather. Again, we do not gather now so that when we do gather we can all gather.

I recognize that this is a challenging place to be eighteen months after we closed our doors. We see the light at the end of the tunnel. We see the possibilities for the future. A time when we can sit together in the pews, when we can sing the children to their classrooms, a time where we share coffee and hugs.

In this time of fatigue, from the constant distance and vigilance we have had to maintain to keep one another safe, I want to express my deep gratitude and admiration for this community. A community that strives to live into the principles that unite us. A community that cares for one another and acknowledges the inherent worth and dignity of each person. A community that sometimes stumbles, but always gets back up ready to learn, and grow, and do better. To be better.

It might seem at first glance that we have been here before. The days are getting longer as school is beginning and we are watching the reports of hospital beds filling up and once again riding this wave of sickness and uncertainty. And yet there are possibilities before us that bring us hope that we did not have one year ago. Hope that we will be able to gather again in our sanctuary before the year is out. Hope that the continued work we have done to protect one another keeps us safe. Hope that we can connect and engage with one another in new ways as we move forward. Hope that this congregation can take the time we need for self-reflection and self-improvement to become the community we are capable of being. A community of radical preemptive inclusion that lives into our covenant with one another and fosters a culture of appreciation.

I believe that we can work together to make these possibilities a reality. Because I believe in this community.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

Embracing Possibilities

Our theme for September is embracing possibilities.

Welcome to this place of possibility!

By Marianne Hachten Cotter

Welcome to this place of possibility!...

*Here may our sight become vision
to see the unseen,
to glimpse the good that is yet to be.*

RE Plans for the Year Ahead

This summer has given me the chance to reflect on the opportunities we offered last year and to think up new possibilities for the year ahead. I am full of ideas, energy, and excitement about the ways that we can find to connect this year. The one that I'm missing right now is you! Please fill out the RE Survey so that I can get a better idea of your needs, the needs of your family, and your children so that I can filter the possibilities into programming that is useful and meaningful to your family.

<https://forms.gle/uaQWjz8vWwQTD27>

To start off the year we will be providing a special back to school blessing for all RE participants and an opportunity to gather for our Welcome Event for Rev. Tony and Sundae Sunday. More information will be coming about additional programs, events, activities, and materials beginning in October.

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 available at our Welcome Event on **September 12th**.

Ways to Help

Even though we are not meeting in person for now we are finally in a place where we can imagine a time where our children will be back in the building and back in their classrooms. 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

Our thoughts are with...

...the family and friends of Fran Barraclough, long term member of the church who died on August 15. Fran was in her late 90s. Further information about a service will be forthcoming.

Just a reminder that Joys and Sorrows will continue to be shared during our Zoom coffee hour while our services are virtual. Please send notices to the team at, joysandsorrows@uuithaca.org by 9 am on Sunday before the service. Notices written in the chat during the meditation portion of the service will also be included.

Big Thanks

Thank you a thousand times to Dick Kurtz of Buildings and Grounds for his many hours of work renovating the seriously deteriorated Steppingstones preschool bathrooms. We would not have been able to afford these much needed repairs without him. He expertly replaced the floors, toilets, one of the vanities, baseboards, and part of the drywall, painted, cleaned the clogged exhaust vent panels, and made stopgap repairs to the buckling parquet floor in the main classroom.

And many thanks to Sara Catterall for lovingly caring for our building spaces during this challenging time.

FUSIT Office Hours

Fall office hours for the Congregational Administrator are **Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 am-4:00 pm**. These hours may change once we are able to meet in person. If they do change, an update will be sent in the weekly announce.

Soul Matters Material

The Soul Matters theme for September is Embracing Possibility. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider. The material can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/SoulMattersSeptember>

Red Cross Blood Drive

Friday, **September 3**, from 1:00-6:00 pm in the Parlor. Sponsored by the American Red Cross. Walk-ins welcome.

September Worship Services

Sunday, September 12: *To Transform the World*

Rev. Tony Johnson

What is the business of the church and its people? It is to transform the world, in ways great and small, at the individual level and at historic scale. It is nothing more and nothing less.

***Sundae Sunday: After the 10:30 am virtual celebration on September 12, head to the Small Pavillion at Stewart Park for ice cream sundaes and a chance to meet our Interim Minister, Rev. Tony, from 12:30-1:30 pm.**

September 19: *What is Your Mission in Life?*

Rev. Tony Johnson

In the mid-20th century, psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote: "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life." Your mission might be personal and private or it might be a commitment to a major issue or it might be artistic expression, or it might be _____. You fill in the blank.

September 26: *Policing and Public Health*

Rev. Tony Johnson

The phrase "public health" brings to mind infectious diseases and how to prevent or contain them. Beginning in the 1970s, scholars have increasingly thought of acts of violence as a public health issue.

Emergency Pastoral Care

In case of pastoral need, the Rev. Tony Johnson can be reached at minister@uuithaca.org.

You can also contact Michelle in the office at office@uuithaca.org, or call Madonna Stallman 607-216-5083, and they will connect you with Rev. Tony.

Our Mission

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

Join the FUSIT (internal)

Facebook Page:

[https://
www.facebook.com/
groups/
171869686459/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/171869686459/)

Leave a message for
FUSIT staff by calling
the Google voicemail
number at
(607) 218-2088

Interim Minister
Rev. Tony Johnson
minister@uuithaca.org

Religious Exploration
Emily Richards, Director
dre@uuithaca.org

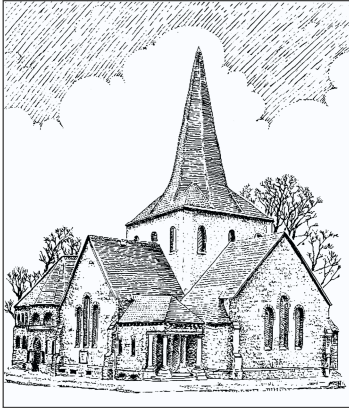
Music Director
Stephanie Ortolano
music@uuithaca.org

President, Board of Trustees
Don Barber
sunnybrk@gmail.com

Congregational Administrator
Michelle Waffner
office@uuithaca.org

Administrative Assistant
Loretta Heimbuch
adminasst@uuithaca.org

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 Embracing Possibility

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

September 1-4: What's something new you've learned about yourself in the last three months?

September 5-11: If you did not have to sleep, how would you spend the extra 8 hours?

September 12-18: If you weren't doing your current job, what would your dream job be?

September 19-25 How has your belief in the possibility of a better world grown or shrunk over the past couple of years?

September 26-October 2: Is it possible that the thing you're sure you're right about is wrong?

Women's Circle Monday, September 27, at 7 pm

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday evenings during the summer, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm **September 27**. We are now generally meeting on 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. Anyone is welcome to bring a poem or a reading. 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

Men's Group

The Men's Group will meet once a month on the 4th Monday of the month. The September meeting is scheduled for **September 27** at 7:00 pm in the Parlor. All who identify as male are invited to join us. For further information please contact Carsten Hess at carsten@hess.net or Kevin Moss at kevinm607@hotmail.com.

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/ithacaus and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.



Volunteers Needed - AIDS Ride for Life - September 11, 2021

Volunteers are needed to work the King Ferry Ride for Life pit stop this **September 11**. When last we were together there, we were joined in our deep grief over the loss of our beloved Mark Pedersen. As you probably know, Rod will ride again this year. We will adorn ourselves in our traditional Hawaiian garb and listen to Don Ho tapes.

Work begins with car unloading and table/canopy construction at 6:45 am at Treleaven Winery, followed by decorating of volunteers, tables and porta-johns, while others prepare the Gatorade and food. Volunteers are needed at the road intersections to yell, wave flags and pompoms and send a heads up re: any rider having difficulty. Mostly we need volunteers to be excited, upbeat and observant.

In place of a sit down dinner at Stewart Park, there will be coupons for volunteers to eat at many food trucks at Stewart Park following the ride's conclusion.

For more information or to sign up, visit aidsrideforlife.org.

Religious Exploration is Seeking Team Members and Volunteers

As we look ahead toward a time where we can imagine the possibility of our children and youth being back in our classrooms, as well as the different ways that we can reconnect this year, we need your help!

The RE Team needs new enthusiastic members to help guide our programming. If you have been looking for a way to make a huge impact on this community please consider the RE Team.

Volunteers to be mentors to our children and young people will be needed for one to two days a month once we can gather again in person. Options include primary classroom teacher, assistant classroom teacher, Creative Sunday leader, classroom substitute teacher, and helpers to set up and break down for regular programming and special events.

September Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **September 3**, at 12:30 pm at Stewart Park. The book is *Against the Loveless World* by Abulhawa. For further information contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at streidmull@gmail.com.

NEW - Mid-week Singing Meditation

Wednesday, September 22 at 5 pm

Join Music Director Stephanie Ortolano for a contemplative service using simple chants, silence, and words to center ourselves and connect to one another. The first meeting will take place at Stewart Park. Please contact Stephanie at music@uuithaca.org if you would like to attend and to be informed of any changes to the time/venue.

***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!***

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

Antiracism at FUSIT

The FUSIT Antiracism Ministry Team continues its activities in the name of racial awareness and justice. Details for this year's happenings are still being worked out, but you can get information on any of them by contacting Beth Howard or any other member of the Antiracism Ministry Team. The Team is just launching for the new church year, and welcomes new members.

There will be another opportunity to participate in the "Living the Pledge to End Racism" workshop this September and October. This highly touted 12-hour series will likely take place over six weeks on a weeknight evening. We have many people interested, but there is still space available. Contact the office soon to get on the list.

A bi-monthly book discussion group will focus on race-related titles from the UU Common Read from years past, and/or titles by Ware lecturers at UU General Assembly. The September title is ***Breathe: A Letter to My Sons*** by Imani Perry. Joann Kowalski and Barbara Shew will facilitate.

A second film and lecture series on race-related topics is also in the works. This fall's topics will focus on voting rights, and will likely be meeting monthly on second Tuesday evenings. Stay tuned for more details.

In addition to this programming, the Team hopes to take more direct action to support antiracist organizations and causes locally and beyond. To find out more and contribute to our efforts, please join us! (beth4howard@gmail.com)

Update from the FUSIT Board of Trustees

The FUSIT Board of Trustees will be providing a brief "Sense of the Board Meeting" report and sharing it through the weekly newsletter the week after a Board of Trustees meeting. The full meeting minutes will continue to be made available, but this brief meeting summary is intended to keep the congregation tuned in to the activities and priorities of the Board.

Here is the "Sense of the Meeting" from the August 18 meeting, held both in-person and via Zoom from 6:31-8:08pm.

Sundae Sunday: Angela Zhang reported on behalf of the Transition Team that interest in meeting Rev. Tony Johnson is high, and an event for that purpose would be a good idea. Emily Richards reported on behalf of the staff that we are close to having the smaller Stewart Park pavilion reserved for Sunday, **September 12**. An in-person gathering there can double as our traditional Sundae Sunday ice cream special and an introduction to Rev. Tony.

Gathering Policy Update: The Way Forward Team has updated the FUSIT policy for in-person gatherings in light of new developments in the Covid-19 situation, and reported these changes to the Board.

Ministerial Transition, 1: Rev. Tony gave a brief introduction and is looking forward to working with the worship team, tech team, and musicians to launch Sunday services in September.

Ministerial Transition, 2: The Board appointed a Transition Team consisting of Therese O'Connor, Elton Hall, Angela Zhang, Jessica Brown, Fred Balfour, and Marie Benedetti. Thank you to all for your time and care!

Governance Work: The Board passed motions to:

- 1 Create a Governance Committee
- 2 Create a Personnel Committee
- 3 Establish a clear policy for executive sessions of the Board
- 4 Approve the use of a Board-only Slack channel for intra-Board communications

Sexton: We urgently need a sexton in order to reopen for in-person gatherings. The Board has therefore resolved to coalesce the three budget items 'sexton', 'cleaning', and 'snow removal' into one line item: 'sexton', with a total amount of \$21,000, but allowing a total cost of up to \$26,000. Additionally, if it proves necessary, the Board pre-approves a return to contracting out the cleaning and snow removal services, but with the increased financial cap, to give Rev. Tony and staff the greatest flexibility in resolving this need.

The next Board meeting will take place on **September 15, 2021**, from 6:30-8:00pm. It will be a hybrid meeting held both in-person and via Zoom.

Care Team 21-22 News

The Care Team continues its work to provide support to our congregation as we move into our second fall dealing with COVID. If you or any member or close friend of FUSIT need some assistance you can contact Madonna Stallman at 607-216-5083. Or you can contact Michelle Waffner, church administrator at the church office. Rev. Tony Johnson, our Interim Minister, is available for pastoral care and emergencies through the church office or email minister@uuithaca.org. Nancy Dolge and Rita Barber continue to coordinate Memorial Service Receptions when we are able to have services at the church. Kathy Hopkins at 607-592-3025 coordinates finding rides for those who need transportation to appointments.

- We would love to have people join us.
- We would love to find someone to write cards to those who have significant events or losses in their lives.
- We need someone to coordinate meals or groceries when a congregant needs some short term help.
- If you have a few minutes a week to make a call to members who are alone and isolated during COVID, please contact Madonna or Michelle.
- Lastly we need a person who has a wide knowledge of our members and of local medical and mental health resources as a back up and consult for Madonna.

I want to thank Rev. Margaret for her consistent availability for Pastoral Care while she was with us. We will do our best to support Rev. Tony in taking over that part of his job.

Date for our first Care Team meeting with Rev. Tony will be in the Weekly Announce.

Newsletter Deadlines 2021-2022

The newsletter deadlines for the year are listed below. They are all on Thursdays at 9:00 am.

<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Time Period Covered</i>
August 19	Sept 1 – 30
September 16	Oct 1 – 31
October 14	Nov 1 – 30
November 18	Dec 1 – 31
December 16	Jan 1 – 31
January 13	Feb 1-28
February 10	March 1 – 31
March 17	April 1 – 30
April 14	May 1 – 31
May 12	June 1- 12
May 26	Summer 2022