



# I THACA *UU Connections*

2021 / 2022 Issue No. 2

October 1-31, 2021

## *Message from the Interim Minister*

You are a welcoming congregation to *this* minister! I thank you for the wonderful welcome you have extended to me since my arrival. I thank—and applaud—you for the gathering at Stewart Park that made me feel even more welcome. There I got to meet many of you for the first time. I want to meet you again as we live and work together through this year. I want to meet those whom I have not yet met.

Of course, such hopes are tempered by the realities of COVID. I think we all did very well at the park in socializing while maintaining practices that minimized health risks. The worship team, the board members, the staff and I are in conversation on the present situation, what is possible and what is not possible. In fact the conversation has been part of the meetings I have attended of every committee. My judgment is that a high level of vigilance is still in order, but that we can with care consider the limits and possibilities in the situation.

Part of your welcoming has been the frequent question, Have you found an apartment yet? The answer is, Yes. But now I need to furnish it. If any of you have suggestions as to where I can find inexpensive used (or new) furniture, please let me know. I need to find a few essential pieces before then, including a bed, kitchen table and chairs, lamps, and something to sit on in the living room. If you have any suggestions or leads, email me at [minister@uuthaca.org](mailto:minister@uuthaca.org).

I also want to welcome *you* into the ministry I bring to the Unitarian Church of Ithaca. It is a ministry of caring for people as individuals, sharing what wisdom I have, inspiring the best in the congregation, and helping you prepare to welcome your next settled minister.

I have been impressed by the commitment, knowledge, and expertise displayed in the committee, team and trustees' meetings I have attended since I began my ministry on August 1st. We are going to do well together. This year of interim ministry is off to a good start.

*Rev. Tony Johnson*

### 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.

Please check the church website at [www.uuthaca.org](http://www.uuthaca.org) for the latest **Way Forward Team** updates and information.

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

# Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Emily Richards at [dre@uuithaca.org](mailto:dre@uuithaca.org).

## Greetings from the DRE

Here we are, a month into our new church year, and I am so ready to join with you in celebrating and exploring our theme for this month, *Cultivating Relationship*. This past year and a half has been challenging. In so many ways, big and small. And one of the biggest challenges for this community has been the physical separation and how that has hindered our ability to be in relationship with one another.

I appreciate everyone who took the time to fill out the RE Survey, this provided me with invaluable information about what families need and how to best provide for those needs. And what I heard overwhelmingly is that our families, youth, and children need safe, in-person opportunities for connection.

Beginning this month the Religious Exploration program will offer outdoor gathering opportunities for all ages in a variety of locations in and near Ithaca. We will also begin to offer weekly meetings for vaccinated youth ages 12 and up. Please see below for details about when and where we will be meeting throughout the month of October.

This month please join me in reconnecting and *Cultivating Relationship* with one another as we continue to navigate these challenging times and find a way forward together.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

## RE Plans for October

This October the RE program is offering weekly opportunities for families, children and youth to gather in person, outdoors, weather permitting. The all ages gatherings will take place the first four Sundays in October from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm. The youth meetings will take place Sundays 2:00 pm-3:00 pm and will alternate between youth group meetings focusing on issues of justice and group ukulele lessons led by our wonderful music director, Stephanie Ortolano.

All participants must be masked when interacting with our children and youth, regardless of location or vaccination status. If you would like to volunteer to assist with any of these activities here is a sign up sheet for adult RE Volunteers. All RE Volunteers must be fully vaccinated, masked, and have a background check.

## RE Volunteer Sign Up

Please click on the name of the weekly activity to register your family or youth for participation.

### **All Ages- 12:30 pm-1:30 pm**

Sunday, **October 3rd** - [Little Tree Family Apple Picking\\*](#)

Sunday, **October 10th** - Tutelo Park Nature Walk and Parents Group

Sunday, **October 17th** - [The Pumpkin Stand](#) Pumpkin Picking and Fall Fun\*

Sunday, **October 24th** - [Cayuga Nature Center](#) Trail Walk and Parents Group

Sunday, **October 31st** - Happy Halloween! Stop by the FUSIT porch for a special treat.

### **Youth - 2:00 pm-3:00 pm (Cascadilla Gorge or FUSIT Anex)**

Sunday, **October 3rd** - [Youth Group Justice Meeting](#)

Sunday, **October 10th** - [FUSIT Youth Ukuleles](#)

Sunday, **October 17th** - [Youth Group Justice Meeting](#)

Sunday, **October 24th** - [FUSIT Youth Ukulele](#)

Sunday, **October 31st** - Happy Halloween! Stop by the FUSIT porch for a special treat.

\*If you would like to participate in our apple picking and/or pumpkin picking but are concerned about the financial burden to your family, please reach out and we can make sure that you and your family can fully participate.

## **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.

## **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.

## **Cultivating Relationship**

### **In Gatherings**

Rev. Marta I Valentin

*In gatherings we are stirred  
like the leaves of the fall season  
rustling around sacred trees,  
tossed hither and yon  
until we come to rest together,  
quietly, softly . . .*

*We come to gather strength from each other.  
We come to give strength to each other...*

## **Religious Exploration is Seeking Team Members and Volunteers**

The RE program is excited to offer outdoor in-person gatherings this month for families, children and youth. That means we need volunteers to lead and assist with these weekly activities.

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, as well as leading adult programming for parents are needed. Commitment can be as little as a single one hour program up to weekly regular meetings for youth.

## **Big Thanks**

Give a big shout out to Sara Catterall for making the internet upgrade happen! Recording the Sunday service is now happening at an incredible speed. Previously it took 4 hours to upload the service and slowed everything else down to an unworkable pace. It now takes about 2 minutes.

## **FUSIT Office Hours**

Fall office hours for the Congregational Administrator are **Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 am-4 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 for October**

The Soul Matters theme for October is Cultivating Relationship. 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/SoulMattersOct>

## **Joys and Sorrows**

*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@uiithaca.org](mailto:joysandsorrows@uiithaca.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.*

## **October Worship Services**

### **Sunday, October 3**

*DRE Emily Richards, “A Community of Covenant”*

What does it mean to be a covenantal people? How can we embrace ourselves and one another in relationship as fully human beings? We will explore together this important aspect of our faith and what it means to us and our journey along the path of transformation.

### **Sunday, October 10**

*Rev. Tony Johnson, “An American Sunrise”*

This sermon is derived from the poetry of Joy Harjo, Poet Laureate of the United States. Harjo is the first Indigenous person to hold this post. I use the title of her book, An American Sunrise, but draw on other of her work in this service, on the Sunday preceding Indigenous Peoples Day on Monda

### **Sunday, October 17**

*Rev. Tony Johnson, “Active Neighboring”*

To be a neighbor means more than to live next door to someone. Neighboring is an active engagement with that person. Groups or organizations, such as this church, can also be neighbors. Active neighboring is important in any city, large or small.

### **Sunday, October 24**

*Rev. Tony Johnson, “Keeping the Rights We Have”*

In recent years, conservative groups and politicians have worked to chip away at rights that were hard won in the twentieth century. Their targets include voting rights and a woman's right to choose to have an abortion. What must we do to keep the rights we have?

### **Sunday, October 31**

TBA

## **Looking Ahead**

We look forward to when a limited number of congregants can be allowed into the Sanctuary in November. Keep on the lookout for further information to come.

Join the FUSIT (internal) Facebook Page:  
<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@uiithaca.org*

*Religious Exploration  
Emily Richards, Director  
dre@uiithaca.org*

*Music Director  
Stephanie Ortolano  
music@uiithaca.org*

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

*Congregational Administrator  
Michelle Waffner  
office@uiithaca.org*

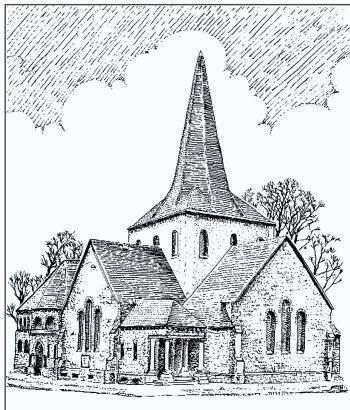
*Administrative Assistant  
Loretta Heimbuch  
adminasst@uiithaca.org*

## **Emergency Pastoral Care**

In case of pastoral need, the Rev. Tony Johnson can be reached at minister@uiithaca.org or via his cell phone at 646-515-4729.

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

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



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Visit our Website and get  
your newsletter:  
[www.uuithaca.org](http://www.uuithaca.org)

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## Possible Ponderings

### ***The theme for October is Cultivating Relationship***

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

**October 1-2:** What's the wisest thing you were taught about cultivating relationship?

**October 3-9:** When was the first time you deeply connected to someone in a way that caused you to also connect with yourself?

**October 10-16:** When did you first realize there was something called "a chosen family"?

**October 17-23:** Is it time to stop cultivating a relationship and instead walk away from it?

**October 24-31:** What relationship in your life needs to be restored? What connection have you ignored for too long?



### **Women's Circle Monday, October 25**

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on **October 25**, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. 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](mailto:ananda7733@gmail.com) or 607 539 7733.

**Zoom link is: Meeting ID: 819 4014 1421**  
Passcode: 874536

### **Men's Group, Monday, October 25**

The Men's Group will meet once a month on the 4th Monday of the month. The October meeting is scheduled for **October 25** 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](mailto:carsten@hess.net) or Kevin Moss at [kevinm607@hotmail.com](mailto: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/ithacauus](https://www.instagram.com/ithacauus) and Twitter, @IthacaUUs.

## **From the Nominating Committee YOU ARE NEEDED!**

This is a friendly message from your Nominating Committee. We have been asked to help find new people for a number of leadership and Committee/Team roles at our Society.

Our congregation is in an exciting time of re-starting in so many ways, with so many opportunities to get involved and help maintain or re-make FUSIT as YOU would like to see it! Lots of people have already stepped up into new roles. You are needed!!

If you are looking for new ways to get involved, or just want to chat about the Society, please contact any of us on Nominating. We would like to know how you feel about the church, what your skills and interests are, and where you might help. Your congregation can currently use leadership and behind-the-scenes assistance in many areas: Communications, Personnel, Governance, Care Team and Hospitality, to name a few. Where might you fit?

Even if you're just curious, please reach out!

Contact Beth Howard ([beth4howard@gmail.com](mailto:beth4howard@gmail.com)), or find any of us in the Breeze directory, or contact the office and Michelle will put you in touch with us.

*Your Nominating Committee: Fred Balfour (chair), Sue Roenke, Amber Harris, Beth Howard*

## **October Book Discussion Group**

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **October 1st**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *Everything Inside: Stories* by Edwidge Danticat.

The Book Discussion Group has chosen the following books for upcoming months:

**November 5:** *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong

**December 3:** *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond

**January 7:** *Behold the Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue

**February 4:** *House on the Lagoon* by Rosario Ferre

For further information contact Jennifer Streid-Mullen at [streidmull@gmail.com](mailto:streidmull@gmail.com).

## **Volunteers Needed for Virtual Services!**

We are currently in need of **Zoom Coffee Hour Hosts**. This is a great way to connect deeper with fellow FUSIT members.

## **Tech Team for Sunday Services**

We are looking for additional people to join our Tech Team.

The Tech Team volunteers compile all the separate components for the virtual Sunday Services (music, chalice lighting, sermon, etc.) into one file that can be uploaded to our YouTube Channel. If you are tech savvy and have a good internet connection, we would love to have your help with crucial volunteer role.

If you are available for either of these, please email Michelle ([office@uithaca.org](mailto:office@uithaca.org))



**FUSIT continues  
Living the Pledge  
to End Racism!**

If you have not yet taken the pledge, or taken the workshop, now is your opportunity. We will launch another workshop this fall - our third since we began Living the Pledge.

Those who have taken the workshop have overwhelmingly found it worthwhile and challenging. It's a commitment our congregation has undertaken together—a chance to learn much more than you might already know about the history of race in this country, what Black Lives Matter really means, and how you might help work for greater racial understanding and justice.

There is space in this fall's workshop, which will take place over six Thursday evenings beginning September 30. Each session runs two hours, and it is necessary to commit to all six sessions.

For more information or to get on the "interested" list, contact Michelle in the office, or email [office@uithaca.org](mailto:office@uithaca.org).

**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!**

## **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 September 15, 2021 meeting, held both in-person and via Zoom from 6:35-8:25pm.

**Sexton:** Rev. Tony reported that we have received several applications for the sexton position, and the candidates are being reviewed.

**Committee Chairs:** Matt Hare has agreed to chair the Stewardship Committee. The Board appointed Nathan Fawcett as chair of the Finance Committee for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

**Governance Work, 1:** The Board passed motions to:

- Appoint members to the new Personnel Committee
- Appoint four initial members to the new Governance Committee. (NomCom is working to find three to five additional members, to create a balanced representation of the congregation.)
- Create an Ad Hoc Communications Committee

**Governance Work, 2:** The Board is working to create a regular self-evaluation process. Watch this space for updates!

**Community and Communication:** The Board recently released a special message on the FUSIT YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/4tODgExZ3uQ>. We will continue to work toward reopening the Sanctuary and being able to gather in person, and will post more videos as they become relevant.

**Open Questions:** The Board of Trustees has been studying and working to practice Partnership/Policy Governance this year. As part of this effort, and in partnership with the minister, staff, and congregation, the Board will produce and adopt an annual short list of Open Questions about the Society's future, as the basis for ongoing planning conversation in the board, with the minister and staff and with the congregation at large. The Board has created an Ad Hoc Open Questions Committee to advise the Board on this process.

The next Board meeting will take place on **October 20, 2021**, from 6:30-8:00pm. It will be a hybrid meeting held both in-person and via Zoom.

## **Letter from the Board**

*Dear Beloved FUSIT Congregation,*

*The Board of Trustees has been studying and working to practice Partnership/policy Governance this year. An Annual Work product of the Board is to produce and adopt an annual short list of Open Questions about the Society's future. Open Questions are the basis for planning conversation in the board, with the minister and staff and with the congregation at large.*

*Open questions invite us all into discussion together about the big issues we face as the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca. The questions may not have immediate answers, but they help the congregation and the Board envision our future around important topics.*

*This Fall's Open Question is:*

***In these pandemic times and beyond, how can we as a congregation connect more deeply, inspire healing, and engage all our members?***

*We will begin that discussion shortly. Stay tuned to weekly announcements to learn about how you can participate. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.*

## **Volunteer Recognition**

It has been too long since we have been able to come together. But several of our community have been doing work that holds our community together. The Board of Trustees would like to recognize and publicly thank a few of our community for their efforts in recent months.

- Dick Kurtz for staying on top of maintenance issues at the Annex PreSchool caused by excessive humidity.
- Nominations Committee, Amber Harris, Sue Roenke, Beth Howard, and Fred Balfour, for making many connections to find volunteers for our committees and teams. The Nominations Committee has adopted a proactive approach of leadership development which the Board strongly supports.
- The Recycle Sale, in this time of social distancing, converted itself to the Treasure Sale this fall. This took hours of teamwork by: Marie Benedetti, Simon Catterall, Robin Cisne, Joanne Trutko, Angela Zhang, Sue Roenke, Marshall Hopkins, and Michelle Waffner.

Thank you all from the Board and your FUSIT community.

## ***Help Needed to Provide Lunches for the Homeless Shelter***

FUSIT provides 60 lunches to the Ithaca homeless shelter on the first Tuesday of each month.

Please consider helping to prepare and deliver these lunches on Tuesday, **October 5**. You would buy supplies, make 15 lunches within 24 hours of delivery, and deliver them between 9:30 and 11:30 am to St. Johns Community Services (SJCS) Day Center at 618 W. State Street.

Each lunch includes a sandwich, a piece of soft fruit, and a cookie or other small dessert. Deliveries are made through a window on State Street.

Social Justice Council can reimburse your expenses, at your request. To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at [jackiejab@me.com](mailto:jackiejab@me.com).