



ITHACA

UU Connections

2021 / 2022 Issue No. 3

November 1-30, 2021

Message from the Minister

We are more than three months into our year of interim ministry together and the holiday season is about to begin, a season that traditionally begins with Thanksgiving and continues at least through New Year's Day.

I, however, consider Halloween to be the start of the holiday season. When I was a child, Halloween was observed, celebrated, and by some castigated, throughout the community. My second grade teacher was no lover of Halloween. I recall other teachers delighting in Halloween. Some told stories of their own childhood Halloween adventures. My sixth-grade English teacher told us that she and her friends tilted over outhouses in the rural community of her 1930s and '40s childhood. I remember hearing that same teacher say that Halloween was the one holiday left that adults hadn't ruined for children. I do not know how true that still is. But I see enough children of various ages trick or treating in my New Jersey neighborhood to believe that Halloween still lives.

I look forward to the (remainder) of the holiday season. Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Diwali and Christmas are among the solstice holidays celebrated by Unitarian Universalists. I won't say much about that now except that I honor them all in some way.

I begin November wishing and hoping that—wherever and however you gather—each of you knows the joy of gathering with family and friends in the coming season. I am not skipping past November. It will be as full a month as any for me, for you, and for this church. Some of you will have children coming home for Thanksgiving. Others of you will be visiting with family and friends at a distance.

We have already done a lot together, beginning with getting to know each other (a process that will continue) and working together as a religious community supporting the spiritual and ethical lives of its members of all ages and acting to make positive differences locally and around the world.

I look forward to a fine November here at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca.

Rev. Tony Johnson

Our Mission

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

**Reminder-
Daylight Saving Time Ends
November 7**

**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.

Greetings from the DRE

We are finally here. Here at the time we have been waiting for, the time when we are all welcomed back into our building to worship together. And yet we must acknowledge that our children under twelve are still not vaccinated and our classrooms remain empty. And through the joy of being able to be in person again in our sanctuary, I am also holding you in the sadness that things are still not back to normal. That what we considered normal two years ago may never come to be in exactly the same way again. And it is ok to grieve. Our history shapes us and who we are, and change can be hard. As human beings we love routines and take comfort in the expected. And while we may never get back to exactly the way things used to be, we will continue moving forward to a different and new normal together. Towards a time when we will sing the children to their classrooms, perhaps with masks covering our smiling faces, but we will get there. We can hold onto our history, and learn from it, while looking forward to the future. You and your families are a part of our history, our present, and our future. And I look forward to creating new moments here with you soon.

Emily Richards, Director of Religious Exploration

RE Plans for November

This November the RE program is continuing to offer weekly opportunities for families, children and youth to gather in person, outdoors, weather permitting. The all ages gatherings will take place the first three weekends in November from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm. Youth Group will now take place every other Sunday during our normal services from 10:30 am-11:30 am. 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, just choose the tab at the bottom for November to see what opportunities are available. 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.

November RE Events

All Ages

Sunday, **November 7th** from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm - [Sapsucker Woods Nature Walk](#)

Sunday, **November 14th** from 12:30 pm-1:30 pm - [Cass Park](#)

Saturday, **November 20th** from 3:30 pm-4:30 pm - [Fall Bonfire at the Barber's](#)

Youth Group for ages 12+ in the Annex or Outdoors 10:30 am-11:30 am

Sunday, **November 7th** - [Youth Group Justice Meeting](#)

Sunday, **November 21st** - [Youth Group Justice Meeting](#)

Holding History

We Come to Love a Church

By Andrew C. Kennedy

We come to love a church,
the traditions, the history...
To link together the
generations in this imperfect,
but blessed community
of memory and hope.

RE Plans for December

In December we are going to pivot back to our UU Crates and fun monthly activities on our theme of *Opening to Joy*. If you would like to participate you must sign up here:

[UU Crate Sign Up](#)

Responses must be in by **Friday, November 12th** if you would like to participate in the December UU Crate so that there is ample time to order and receive any needed materials for each family. Packets will be available to **pick up Sunday, November 28th between 10 am and 12 pm**, or you can request that they are delivered if you are unable to retrieve them.

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.

The 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 is needed. Commitment can be as little as a single one hour program up to weekly regular meetings for youth.

Joys and Sorrows

Our condolences go out to Joan and Steve Doria who are mourning the unexpected loss of Joan's vibrant cousin Nick, at 48, and grieving the sudden loss of Steve's father, Frank, a few weeks shy of his 78th birthday.

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.

Soul Matters Material for November

The Soul Matters theme for November is Holding History. 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/SoulMattersNovember>

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.

Office Closures

The office will be closed on the following dates:

Thursday, November 11
Thursday, November 25
Friday, November 26
December 27 - 31

November Worship Services

November 7, Democracy Is An Act of Faith

Rev. Tony Johnson

In the words of historian John Hope Franklin, "Democracy is essentially an act of faith....The historical process in emphasizing the movement of man [sic] toward perfection finds a congenial atmosphere among democratic practices." Last Tuesday's election was an act of faith by each of us who cast a ballot.

November 14, How To Love A Country – Reflections on the Poetry of Richard Blanco

Rev. Tony Johnson

In 2013, Richard Blanco was the poet for Barack Obama's second presidential inauguration. In 2019 he published a new book of poems titled *How to Love a Country*. Let's step back from the rhetoric of campaigns that led up to the election just past and reflect upon what it means to be a citizen at this time. This will draw on Blanco's poetry and life story as an immigrant Latinx gay man.

November 21, An Attitude of Gratitude

Rev. Tony Johnson

Days and rituals like the American Thanksgiving holiday exist in many cultures. Whether in good times or bad, we in the United States pause at this time to gather with friends and family and reflect on all that we have to be grateful for. The meaning of the holiday is complicated and powerful, but an attitude of gratitude is appropriate.

November 28, TBA

Thanks to...

A huge thank you to Jennifer Streid Mullen for her incredible generosity of time and knowledge over the past years. Temporary congregational administrator and Treasurer of the Board were only two of the many important hats she wore. We bid her a fond farewell as she moves to Michigan to be closer to family. Fortunately she does expect to keep her connections here with FUSIT.

**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***

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*Religious Exploration
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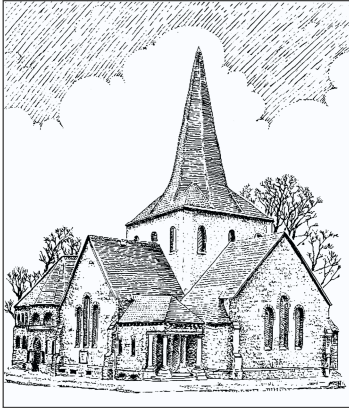
*Administrative Assistant
Loretta Heimbuch
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Emergency Pastoral Care

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

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.

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
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P.O. Box 6
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Visit our Website and get
your newsletter:
www.uuithaca.org

Possible Ponderings

The theme for November is Holding History

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

November 1-6: What memory has been with you the longest? What does it want from you so badly that it has held onto you for so long?

November 7-13: What memory will die with you if you don't pass it on? Is this the month you finally make a concrete plan to assure it lives on in the memory of another?

November 14-20: What memory holds your truest self? What memories help you hold on to yourself?

November 21-27: Have you figured out the memory you want to be remembered by?

November 28-30: What has life taught you about memory and pain?

Women's Circle - Monday, November 22

Women's Circle will meet via Zoom on Monday evening, **November 22**, 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 or 607 539 7733.

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

Men's Group - Monday, November 22

The Men's Group will meet once a month on the 4th Monday of the month. The November meeting is scheduled for **November 22** 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.

***Your Board is Listening* - From John Gaines**

Last month Board President Don Barber introduced you to Open Questions and told you that your responses to Open Questions will help the Board fulfill one of its most important functions - planning for the Society's future.

As he mentioned, the Fall 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?"**

How do YOU respond to that question? You may have many responses, but we are asking that each response be limited to 12 words or fewer. You may offer as many responses of 12 words or fewer as you would like, but we want to focus on the essence of your response. Confining it to just a few words will help with that, much as we do with the Annual Water Ingathering.

What should you do with your responses? Email them to me at jagivjagiv@gmail.com. I will enter them into a Google sheet for easy Board access. If you would like to see how others have responded, let me know and I will share access to the Google sheet with you.

In addition to these responses we will be asking every active group within the congregation (committees, ministry teams, staff, small group ministry, etc.) to gather individual responses from their members to contribute to the Google sheet.

In the Winter we hope to have an Open Question on **Mission** and one in the Spring on **Racism**.

If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. Thank you for your assistance in this vital work.

Tech Team Looking for New Members

The tech team that provides support for our streaming and recorded Sunday services is looking to recruit additional members. If you're comfortable with computers and would be interested in learning more about what's involved in this opportunity, please contact Russ Charif (russ.charif@gmail.com) or Tim Ball (timothy.ball.violin@gmail.com).

Your Help Is Needed to Provide Lunches for the Ithaca Homeless Shelter

Social Justice Council needs four volunteers to make and deliver lunches to the Ithaca homeless shelter on Tuesday, **November 2nd**.

You would buy supplies, make the lunches within 24 hours of delivery, and deliver them between 9:30 and 11:30 am to the Friendship Center at 618 W. State Street. Each lunch needs to include a sandwich, a piece of soft fruit, and a cookie or other small dessert. Deliveries can be made through a window on State Street, so there's no need to go inside.

Our congregation provides 60 lunches (usually four volunteers making 15 lunches each) on the first Tuesday of every month. The Social Justice Council can reimburse your expenses, at your request.

To volunteer and/or ask questions, please contact Jackie Jablonski at jackiejab@me.com.

November Book Discussion Group

The next Book Discussion Group meeting is scheduled for Friday, **November 5**, at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The book is *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong.

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

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.

Thanks to Your Generosity for October 3rd Shared Plate

On October 3rd the Shared Plate Offering collected \$355 for donation to Loaves and Fishes. The staff and volunteers of Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County are committed to providing a place for free meals, hospitality, companionship, and advocacy for those in need, regardless of their faith, beliefs, or circumstances. Founded in 1983 and located in St. John's Episcopal Church, Loaves & Fishes is Tompkins County's only community kitchen serving free meals Monday through Friday.

Possible Thanksgiving Gathering

If someone is willing to host a zoom Thanksgiving gathering, please contact Michelle at office@uwithaca.org.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

We are planning a limited Christmas Eve celebration in the Sanctuary this year. It will be in-person and live streamed. Stay tuned for more information that will be forthcoming in the mid-week announce.

*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!*

Way Forward Team Guidance for Continued Re-opening Phase 3 - Beginning November 1st, 2021

We are excited to finally be welcoming members of our congregation back into our Sanctuary for our **Sunday morning worship services** with the following guidelines:

- A maximum of 40 participants, not including those people who are a part of the service, will be welcomed into our Sanctuary each Sunday morning starting in November, 2021.
- All participants must register in advance through our registration forms in Breeze and check in at either the Narthex or Garden Entrance when they arrive.
- Physical distancing will be required in the Sanctuary during all services, with designated spaces clearly marked.
- Everyone must be masked at all times while in the building, except those actively speaking at the podium. Masks will be provided.
- A social hour will follow each service but no food or drink will be served and we ask that people not bring their own to limit the amount of time people are not in masks.

We will continue to allow **limited building use outside of Sunday worship by the following FUSIT Groups:**

- FUSIT Board and EXCO
- Small Group Ministry
- Staff
- Team and Committee Meetings
- Other small adult FUSIT groups such as Women's Group, Men's Group, Book Club etc.
- Small group activities including youth ages 12 and up
- Individuals or small groups who wish to utilize our physical resources, such as the library or organ

Approved spaces include: the Sanctuary, the Annex, the Parlor, the Arch Room (Mark Pedersen Room), the Library, and the Conference Room (122 Ellen Watkins Harper Room).

- Library and Conference room 10 people maximum
- Parlor, Annex, and Arch Room 25 people maximum
- Sanctuary: Maximum of 60 people
- Everyone must use the sign in/out sheet placed at one of the five entrances to the building: Annex, Parlor, Front, Garden and Parish House. This must be done each and every time, even if it is a brief visit.

In addition we will be welcoming **limited rentals of our spaces** beginning in November under the following guidelines:

- A maximum of one event rental per week.
- Recovery group meetings may resume.
- All renters must continue to practice COVID safety precautions including masking, social distancing, and contact tracing, as well as any other requirements stipulated by their specific rental agreement.

All individuals, even those fully vaccinated, must wear a mask and practice social distancing guidelines while inside the building.

If the answer to any of the below three questions is yes we ask that you please refrain from using the building for any reason.

- 1.) Have you had any COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days, including fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell? EXCEPTION: If you had a negative COVID test while experiencing these symptoms or after these symptoms subside, you may use the building, following FUSIT's masking guidelines as usual.
- 2.) Have you had a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test in the past 14 days?
- 3.) Have you had close contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in the past 14 days? EXCEPTION: Fully vaccinated people may get tested 3 - 5 days after exposure and quarantine until they receive a negative test result, then may use the building following FUSIT's masking guidelines.

Please follow current CDC guidelines for domestic and international travel.

- All room requests must be made at least one week in advance.
- All use must be reserved through the office, not Breeze. Please email Michelle at office@uuithaca.org.

Food may be brought into and consumed in the building with the following guidelines:

1. Only consume food you personally brought for yourself and place your mask back on as soon as you have finished eating
2. Plan on removing all garbage/leftovers, please do not leave anything in the building
3. No shared food or potlucks at this time
4. Food may not be brought in for Sunday services.
5. All surfaces must be wiped down before and after eating

All groups must clean up after themselves.

There must be a minimum of one hour between the end of one gathering and the beginning of the next in each space.

All other groups may meet indoors at any location of their choosing, complying with all of the guidelines by NYS for unvaccinated people.

Outdoor gatherings

For outdoor gatherings social distancing is highly recommended, in the case that social distancing cannot be maintained, masks are recommended, even for vaccinated individuals. Any gathering that includes children under 12 will require masks for all attendees.