



THE

# CHANTICLEER

First Unitarian Society  
of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.

July 2020

## Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

When I was in the 6th grade, my Mom and I started reading Shakespeare together. I fell in love with Puck, the mischievous fairy who complicates things and makes people laugh. Reading Shakespeare felt like learning a new language, and I remember how exciting it was when the rhythm of the words finally started to make sense to me. I liked Puck so much because I was so delighted when I was able to understand the humor—it felt like being in on an inside joke.

I learned aspects of my character from my mother this way, through our shared love for literature, but also through witnessing and experiencing her dedication to do hard things and to show up for the people she loved. I also learned aspects of my character from my father at the same time as he teased us about reading Shakespeare: have a sense of humor about life, and connect with the people you love even across difference. This was one of many times I learned aspects of my character from books and stories. I learned who I wanted to be and who I didn't want to be; how I wanted to act and how I didn't want to act.

Where have you learned various aspects of your character?  
Who has influenced you, either as someone you wanted to be like, or someone you didn't?

In this July of change and societal reckoning, may you have the chance to remember who you want to be in this world. What character are you in this larger unfolding story? How did you come to be? Who are you becoming?

During the month of July, I will be on vacation and study leave, returning to regular office hours on Monday, August 3. Rev. Dena will be available for pastoral care and church needs.

With love,  
Jennifer

## SUNDAY SERVICE

ONE SERVICE AT 9:00 A.M.  
LIVE ON YOUTUBE

JULY 5

### “Learning from Milwaukee’s Bronzeville”

Paul Geenen, First Church Member

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

George Bledsoe, Worship Associate

A member of our Worship Associate team defined character as “what other people can see about who you are.” As a driver for the Adult Center at Cross Lutheran Church, shuttling elderly African American women to and from their homes, I listened to my passengers exchanging stories about their experiences growing up in Milwaukee’s Bronzeville. The stories of Mary Young, dancer, maid, and postal worker, and Bob Harris, veteran, boxer, and educator, exemplify the character found in the African American community. Join us as we reflect upon what we can learn from Milwaukee’s Bronzeville.

Paul Geenen is an entrepreneur, a community activist, an author, a grandfather of eight, and a great-grandfather of two. He is the author of *Milwaukee’s Bronzeville: 1900 - 1950*, *Schusters and Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores*, *Sherman Park: A Legacy of Diversity in Milwaukee*, and *Civil Rights Activism in Milwaukee: South Side Struggles in the ‘60s and ‘70s*. He volunteers with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, mentoring a fourteen-year-old young man. He is a community organizer, working on electing progressive candidates at the local, state, and national level. Paul has been a member of First Church for three years and serves on the Worship Associate and Circles of Support teams.

MONTHLY THEME

What does it mean to be a people of

**CHARACTER?**

JULY 12

## “Character and Politics”

The Rev. Dena McPhetres

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director  
Amy Wilbourne, Worship Associate

How do we define character and who gets to define character? Can people with flaws, (which is everyone, really), still function as beacons of character? Can we honor a person’s complexity without using circular reasoning to excuse harm that came from their mistakes? Which character traits do you look for in political leaders and how does that influence your vote?

JULY 19

## “After the Pilgrimage”

Omega Burckhardt, First Church Member

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director  
Beth Monhollen, Worship Associate

We prepare for our journeys in myriad ways: reading ahead, packing our suitcases, finding the best maps and guides. Our knowledge as well as our physical objects, once carefully stowed, are harder to put away when we come home. Why do we expect it all to fit neatly when we return? What happens when the journey is not one of physical movement, but one of emergence, adaptation, or transformation?

Omega Burckhardt, Candidate for Ministry, is entering her final year of seminary at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Omega served as the intern minister at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church in Racine, and she will begin an internship at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, Illinois, in August. Her areas of interest include small group ministry, technology, and faith formation, as well as the cultivation of relationships within the Iglesia de la Gran Comunidad, a Spanish-speaking UU online congregation. Omega and her family have been members of First Church for ten years.

JULY 26

## “Salvation by Character”

The Rev. Dena McPhetres

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director  
Jeff Pearcy, Worship Associate

When Unitarians were forming their core beliefs in the United States, they asserted that human actions in this life on this earth were most important to their salvation. Developing a good character, and acting from that character, was considered each individual’s divine right and responsibility to the common good. What do you consider a “character-building” experience? Simply surviving tough times or allowing difficulty to transform you?

# Dena’s Digressions

by The Rev. Dena McPhetres

Our theme this month is Character. What does it mean to be a people of character? I chose this theme back when the Democratic National Convention was scheduled for mid-July in Milwaukee. Every election causes me to reflect on human character and try to discern which candidate’s character might be best suited to do the job. A presidential election ups the ante on this discernment.

What is character? It might be helpful to think of someone whose character you admire, someone whose character inspires you. Perhaps this person is someone you know personally, perhaps not. How did they shape you? How do you stay in relationship with them, whether or not they are still alive?

At a funeral or memorial service, we hear stories that lift up the best parts of the deceased’s character. We learn things about someone we didn’t know before, even if they are a close loved one. Sometimes the person described was so good, it seems like they were a saint, not quite as human as the rest of us. Yet we all have flaws. What makes our human failings character flaws? How do we overcome them and can we forgive them in others?

The *Soul Matters* resource suggests we keep our favorite people of high character close to us, to inspire and remind us of how we want to live. I keep photos of my ancestors on my home altar, to inspire me, to remind me of the risks they took to live with integrity, to provoke me into wondering what they would think of the times we are in now, and what choices they would make if they were in my shoes today.

Whose character shaped you most and how do you stay in relationship with them or what they stood for? In these troubling times, we need such anchors.

Yours,  
Dena

## Virtual Coffee on Zoom!

Community, Conversation & Connection  
Summer Sundays at 10:00 a.m.



Join Membership Coordinator Lynne Jacoby online for a Zoom Coffee Hour. Once you enter, Lynne will coordinate smaller groups of five or six for conversation. Members, guests, and visitors are all welcome! Bring your own coffee.

Link to Join Sunday <https://zoom.us/j/3109225327>, Password: uumke or call +1 312 626 6799 and enter the Meeting ID 310 922 5327 when prompted.



# Theme Circles Frequently Asked Questions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres

## What is a Theme Circle?

Theme Circles are monthly small groups that deepen and support the spiritual journeys of participants in community with each other and in connection with the church's monthly worship themes.

## Is this a sermon discussion group?

No, the goal is not to explore the sermons in more depth, but to explore the monthly themes in more depth. Sunday services enrich the experience of the theme but are not the focus of Theme Circles.

## What is the focus of Theme Circles?

Connection to self, others, and that which is larger than ourselves through engaging reflective questions, short readings, spiritual exercises, and sharing our experience in a space of trust.

## What do we mean by spiritual exercise?

Spiritual exercise goes beyond the question "What do you think?" and invites us into the deeper question: "Where are you willing to let your faith take you?" The goal is to get us out of our heads and into our lives. This is not to say we leave thinking behind. Instead, the aim of the spiritual exercises is to challenge our tendency to use "objective analysis" as an escape. By pushing us to engage and talk about "what is really going on in our lives," we find ourselves challenged not just to think differently, but also to live differently.

## What do Theme Circle meetings look like?

Here is a sample format:

- Centering (opening words, chalice lighting, followed by a moment of silent reflection)
- Brief Check-In – around 15-20 minutes
- Spiritual Exercises – around 40 minutes (Members share which spiritual exercises they chose and how it went)
- Engaging the Questions – around 40 minutes (Members practice deep listening as they share their experience 'living the questions' related to the month's theme)
- Check-Out – around 10 minutes
- Closing Words

## Who can participate in a Theme Circle?

Theme Circles are open to the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee members, pledging friends, and regular guests who register during the annual fall registration period.

## How often do Theme Circles meet?

Theme Circles meet once a month for two hours during the third week of October to June. Circles include up to eight participants guided by a trained facilitator.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Jeanne Marie Lowry**  
**1951 ~ 2020**

Jeanne Lowry died peacefully on Thursday night, May 21, 2020, with family at her side. Jeanne suffered a fall and a head injury on May 19, was hospitalized and diagnosed with an intracranial hemorrhage. She was 69 years old and a member of our congregation for 25 years.

A 49 Day Buddhist Ceremony will be held online by the family, open to all. A Memorial Service at First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee will be scheduled in the future when gathering can be done safely. A Candle of Life was lit in Jeanne's honor on Sunday, May 31 during online Sunday Services.

Memorial donations may be made to:

- The Guest House of Milwaukee
- Street Angels Milwaukee Outreach
- Milwaukee Mindfulness Practice Center



## George Floyd said, “I Can’t Breathe”

by Terry Wiggins  
Earth Justice Ministry

These three words connect the essence of the three enormous challenges facing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our day.

“I Can’t Breathe” were the some of the last words of George Floyd, only one of the too many Black men killed by White police this month, last month, this year. When will it stop, and how long will it be until Black Lives Matter?

“I Can’t Breathe” also reflects the situation of the many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who suffer from environmental injustices and resulting health problems. Asthma or other health issues might be caused by emissions from a coal-fired power plant or plastic plant that are more likely to be sited in an area where Black, Indigenous, or People of Color live. Or the environmental injustice might be the actions of the wealthier nations that cause climate change and affect the poorer, more marginalized nations where many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color live in the world.

“I Can’t Breathe” are the words that reflect the situation of those with COVID-19, which we know affects disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and People of Color more severely than it affects white people. The increased difficulty is due in part to underlying conditions, including lung disease, as well as likely higher levels of exposure. And of course, we know that difficulty breathing is a symptom of COVID-19.

Milwaukee is witnessing all three of these challenges. Let us work together to build a world in which everyone can breathe free. Earth Justice Ministry encourages everybody to get in where they fit in.

## Hello and Farewell

by Tree Moore  
Retiring Co-chair, Earth Justice Ministry

As I leave Milwaukee at the end of June, I write this note of regret and sadness as well as gratefulness for precious memories. And I’m wanting to encourage you to continue the work of the Earth Justice Ministry along with other justice issues.

I joined the church almost four years ago. The beliefs expressed in the UU faith have been a breath of fresh air after my previous Presbyterian indoctrination. Perhaps as important has been the experience of being welcomed into a spiritual community. Here’s a list of welcoming experiences. After becoming a member, I participated in a Sunday where folks spoke of their experiences of living in various decades. I spoke as an eighty-year-old. A year later I gave a sermon on grief—both scary and rewarding. The summer when daughter Kara was lost in the woods, Jack Wilson asked me to play a piano piece, “Woodland” by Margie Adam.

More recent involvements have been as co-chair, with Bruce Wiggins, of the Earth Justice Ministry. We created several meaningful campaigns including “Are You Willing?” Plastic-Free, and my favorite, “C’mon Home to Eat.” Parading around during Coffee Hour as a tomato, or watermelon was good silly fun. And then there were the worms in Religious Education for the kids to pet.

There are a number of reasons why I’m moving. I’m a country girl concerned about soil. Barbara Richards and I bought 10 acres in Viroqua with an old house and out-buildings. I’m an eager permaculturist with ideas of gardens, pond, orchards, wild space plus animals. I’m hoping to build small cob or straw houses, encouraging young folks to join us. We are off on an exciting adventure with Earth! We aim to live our values and love Earth.

May we all do so!  
Gratefulness and love, Tree.



## Planning for Our RE Future

by Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Religious Education

In July, I will be away from the Religious Education (RE) program to be on study leave and take a vacation. In my stead, Lillian Schley, Deb Solis, some special guests, and some remarkable volunteers will be leading our Summer Fun online RE program focused on connection, community and fun.

My time away will be spent with my family, making art and then restructuring our religious education program to prepare for the fall. I will be exploring some new technology resources that can enhance religious education virtually, such as interactive games and platforms, as well as writing lessons that connect to our congregation's themes, worship services and ends. It is my hope to make this situation an opportunity to discover new tools for religious education to utilize during our time away from the church as well as when we return to being together physical in our church.

In faith,  
Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Religious Education

## Our Whole Lives (OWL) Program Update

by Deb Solis  
Youth Program Coordinator

The Our Whole Lives program (comprehensive, age-appropriate, value-based sexuality education) is on hold until further notice due to the pandemic. I am subscribing to a quarterly OWL program newsletter to keep on top of the progress being made to bring OWL programming back to our church community. I have also been attending webinar trainings to discuss the future of OWL programming at church once the pandemic subsides.

First Church's plans to host an OWL training weekend this summer are also postponed. OWL training relies on necessary small group assessments and interactive content, which cannot be done virtually. Our OWL program is important justice work and must be reintroduced with appropriate consideration, thought, and planning. I shall keep you informed of important updates as I receive them from the UUA.

## All About Youth

by Deb Solis  
Youth Program Coordinator

This summer, the Youth Group will meet on the first Sunday of the month (June 7, July 5, August 2, and September 6) at 4:00 p.m. There will be additional special events and meetings throughout the summer. To keep up to date with youth opportunities and links to Zoom meetings, sign up for the [RE Weekly Email](#).

The youth recorded their Bridging Ceremony, honoring the graduating high school seniors. You can view this unique youth-led worship service on our YouTube Channel [here](#).

### UU Faith Lab

UU Faith Lab is an online, personalized, and small group experience for Unitarian Universalist youth who have completed 9th-12th grade or the homeschooled equivalent. UU Faith Lab will teach youth to discern their gifts and use them to build spiritual practices and a faith community. Participants will practice co-creating UU worship experiences. UU Faith Lab Begins July 10th with an online community gathering around covenant. The program runs through July 31st.

Faith Lab organizers are interested in your thoughts on making this experience accessible to youth. Whether you are a potential youth attendee or an adult who wants to support youth attendees, you can get in touch by email at [youth@uua.org](mailto:youth@uua.org).



# Virtual Poetry Contemplation

Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m.

Continuing throughout the summer

“Listen, respond and rest with” the words of selected poets and in the company of others in our community. Based on the Monastic practice of Lectio Divina, the focus of this practice is our individual responses to the words. Come listen for what resonates and illuminates. Members, guests and visitors are welcome to join this open, weekly, drop-in practice.

Ongoing Meeting Link <https://form.jotform.com/201557183259964>

Call +1 312 626 6799 with ID 138 116 309

Password to enter the meeting: **Poetry**

Questions? Email [lynne.jacoby@uumilwaukee.org](mailto:lynne.jacoby@uumilwaukee.org)

## Join Us Any Thursday Evening!

7:15-8:30 p.m.

Continuing throughout the summer

See your First Church friends and meet new ones in smaller breakout room opportunities every Thursday evening.

- 2nd and 4th Thursdays - Team Trivia (As in you'll be working with a small team so you don't have to know it all!)
- 1st and 3rd Thursdays, - Short Video Share and Chat (“Ted Talk” type videos with a chance to share thoughts after in smaller groups.)

Bring your own refreshments....

Both events are drop-in, so come any Thursday. Save this link for both!

<https://form.jotform.com/201556720178051>

## Learn About Computers and Become an Expert

You are invited to join us every Friday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. by computer, tablet or smartphone. Shari Wright and other tech experts will be available to answer your computer, smartphone or Zoom questions. Each week you will receive information related to a specific topic.

Click [here](#) to receive the link to join us.



## HOW TO REACH US

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Staff members have varying hours. Please contact them directly to set up an appointment.

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