



THE

CHANTICLEER

First Unitarian Society
of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.

December 2020

Words on the Wind

by The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

What does it mean to be a people of Stillness?
Is stillness strongest right before a bell is rung, or just
after its last vibrations quiet? Is there greater stillness in
the taut of anticipation, or in the exhaustion after an
occasion? Where do you find stillness in your life, your
mind, and your body?

Many years, when we enter December, there is a mighty
hustle and bustle around December holidays. This year,
however, as we enter December in the height of a re-
surg-ing coronavirus pandemic, the roads are quieter,
and many homes hold the glow of only the single
household. Many rituals this time of year center around
gathering, but this year we are being invited to stay
home.

What can Stillness offer as we navigate the losses of our
usual December rituals?

Stillness this year may not be a balance for our lives, but
rather its center. Even as we recognize the grief of los-
ing our usual rituals of connection, we can also mine
this center of stillness for sacred use. Stillness offers
space for breath, for depth, for contemplation. Grief is a
storm that can also include quiet and rest.

There are rituals to contain us. Rev. Dena wrote in the
[November Chanticleer](#) about setting up sacred space in
your home for the holidays. We have Christmas Kits to
share with you to connect you with First Church this
Christmas Eve (see page 5). And together in worship,
religious education, and small groups, we will explore
the gifts Stillness has to offer us in this strange, terrible,
yet still pregnant-with-beauty, December.

Sending you love and tender care,
Rev. Jennifer

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

DECEMBER 24

ONE SERVICE AT 5:00 P.M.

LIVE ON YOUTUBE

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom
The Rev. Dena McPhetres
Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education
Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director and
The Holiday Choir

Join us online for a simple, traditional multigenerational
Christmas Eve service of carols, candlelight, and stories, told
and sung from our First Church sanctuary. This year, Christ-
mas Eve will be different, and we invite you to prepare for it
by picking up a Christmas Kit from church (see page 5), set-
ting up your space at home for beauty by candlelight during
the service (see Dena's Digressions from the [November
Chanticleer](#)), and sending us a photo of yourself by candle-
light (see page 3). Instead of gathering in the sanctuary by
candlelight, we will bring the sanctuary into your candlelit
homes. Our voices will sing out and lights will flicker all
across the city.

MONTHLY THEME

What does it mean to be a people of

STILLNESS?

BLUE CHRISTMAS VESPERS

WEDNESDAY

DECEMBER 9 AT 7:00 P.M.

LIVE ON YOUTUBE



The Rev. Dena McPhetres
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Christmas will be especially challenging this year because our traditional ways of celebrating the winter holidays may not be possible due to public health restrictions during the pandemic. We enter this holiday season with more financial stress, mental health flare-ups, and spiritual burdens. We may be physically separated from extended family and friends, staying home and not travelling. Although Christmas is not always merry, it can be holy.

Join us online for the gentle presence of music and candlelight, readings and silence. We offer solace tonight for anyone who is feeling blue—those who have lost loved ones, and anyone who is feeling out of synch with the forced happiness of the holidays. You may want to set up a simple home altar, so you can light candles along with Rev. Dena during this quiet peaceful ceremony.

SUNDAY SERVICE

ONE SERVICE AT 10:00 A.M.

LIVE ON YOUTUBE

DECEMBER 6

“Stillness Within”

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister
The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director
Dale Skaggs, Worship Associate

Stillness can serve as a pause in the busyness of life, allowing us to turn within. Whether you find stillness in nature, in meditation, or in a few breaths in the busyness of the day, stillness offers the possibility of peace. For some, the pandemic has slowed life down, bringing more stillness and quiet. For others, the pandemic has actually turned up the noise of life and made stillness more difficult to find. Where and how do you find stillness? Join us for this worship service that explores cultivating stillness no matter what life throws at you.

DECEMBER 13

“Stillness in Tempo”

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister
The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Amy Wilbourne, Worship Associate

Stillness has a relationship with movement, just as the notes of a piece of jazz are punctuated by silence. As opposed to silence, stillness can be a frame for music, creativity, and teeming life. Stillness can serve as the ground for creativity, the rest that creates the next thing. Join us for this worship service that explores stillness as creative ground.

DECEMBER 20

Annual Holiday Pageant

The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Join us in this Christmas season for our annual Holiday Pageant where we tell the timeless story of the birth of Jesus, with our children as the cast! The holiday pageant is a joy-filled worship service, featuring wonderful music and a Unitarian Universalists reinterpretation of the old story of Christmas with its core message of peace and love.

DECEMBER 27

Beth Monhollen, Pulpit Guest
The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Paul Geenen, Worship Associate



Dena's Digressions

by The Rev. Dena McPhetres

One of my favorite InterPlay forms is called Shapes and Stillness. You can do it with one hand or your whole body. Make a shape, then move to another shape and another. Don't think about it, just let your body lead you. Find places among the shapes to rest in stillness. It's a form of moving meditation. Most folks who play with shapes and stillness don't spend much time being still, which reflects our on-the-go culture. Try doing shapes and stillness and spend 80% in stillness and 20% moving from shape to shape. Your awareness will change, your breathing deepen and your sensation of being a whole body will become more apparent. Heck, try 90% stillness and see what happens!

Last spring, after being in constant motion for seven weeks of frenetic pandemic, I signed up for Morgan Engels' Yin Yoga. During the first session, stillness was introduced in a way I'd never experienced during yoga. It was almost 99% stillness and 1% positioning into shapes. It was the first time that I set everything down since the pandemic began. A profound wholeness and contentment came over me during that stillness. It was OK, I was OK, we were going to be OK.

Stillness is a beautiful thing to witness within a dance. Constant movement doesn't let the eye rest. You can see more when a dance contains stillness amongst the movement. Winter in the north country encourages us to behold and be held in stillness. We're beautiful and we're going to be OK.

Yours,
Dena

Send Us a Candlelit Photo of you for Christmas Eve!

While we cannot be together in person on Christmas Eve, we can be together in spirit. Please email us a photo of you and your household for our Christmas Eve service. Send us a photo of you (whole households together!), in the dark, holding (a) lit candle(s), like we do at our Christmas Eve services. Bonus points for holiday spirit in the photo! One photo per household, please. Additional photos make our sorting work more difficult. Please send photos to: <https://form.jotform.com/202338387191054> by Wednesday, December 9.

Splinters from the Board

by Mike Hogan
Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees held our second meeting of the church year on September 22 using video conferencing.

We discussed Rev. Jennifer's report on monitoring progress on the Ends goal #4, adopted by the congregation during the 2017-18 church year.

End #4 reads, "Generously give and receive support, connection, and care in times of joy and challenge." Staff began measuring this End two years ago, so this was the first opportunity to assess progress. Here's how we're doing relative to the four measurements for this End.

1. The Congregational Survey, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, was rescheduled from this spring to October. We're assessing results now and will be reporting to the congregation in December.
2. People will let each other know what's happening in their lives, sharing stories of joy and challenge, giving and receiving, both publicly and privately: Staff measured this quantitatively and qualitatively, and noted that especially during the pandemic our congregation has been deepening our connections with each other.
3. Are people comfortable enough asking for Pastoral Care, and do they receive it? Post-COVID, more Pastoral Care contacts happened than in all of the previous church year.
4. Pledge Drive Increase Goal of 5%: The result of last spring's pledge drive was a 0.5% increase, which did not meet the goal but is better than might be expected considering the COVID-19 outbreak.

We will be monitoring other Ends at the next board meeting.

The board also discussed recruitment of a Youth Liaison to the board, as well as preparations for the Ordination of Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson. Rev. Jennifer provided an update on the Strategic Planning Team, which was in the process of recommending a consultant to facilitate that work.

Minutes of the meeting are posted on the First Church website. Feel free to share your questions or concerns with members of the board anytime.





Holidays at First Church

The staff at First Church invite you to beautiful, joyful, and interactive holiday services to celebrate in the safety of your home this Christmas season.

Blessings from,

*Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Rev. Dena McPhetres, Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Teresa Drews, Mariah Groshek, Lynne Jacoby, Jean Johnson, Linsey Porter, Alissa Rhode, Tom Schroeder,
Art Sims, Lillian Schley, Tom Schroeder, Deb Solis, Jim Spice, Tristan Strelitzer, Shari Wright*

Pick Up Your Christmas Eve Kits With a Blessing!

Celebrate First Church-style during our online Christmas Eve worship service. Pick up your Christmas Kits from church, and receive a blessing from one of our ministers.

Thursday, Dec. 17, 5:30–7:00 p.m. (Rev. Jennifer)

Sunday, Dec. 20, 3:00–4:30 p.m. (Rev. Dena)

Wednesday, Dec. 23, 12:00–1:30 p.m. (Rev. Kimberlee)

Find details on page 5.



Blue Christmas Vespers

December 9, 7:00 p.m.
On YouTube and
uumilwaukee.org.



Holiday Pageant

December 20, 10:00 a.m.
On YouTube and
uumilwaukee.org.

Holiday Sing-Along

Following the service at
11:00 a.m. on Zoom.



Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 5:00 p.m.
On YouTube and
uumilwaukee.org.

Holiday Virtual Reception

Following the service on Zoom.



HOLIDAYS AT FIRST CHURCH

Pick Up Your Christmas Kits From Church!

by The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

We want you to have everything you need on Christmas Eve to celebrate First Church-style during our one online 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service. Come pick up your Christmas Kits from church, and receive a blessing from one of our ministers, at one of the following pick-up times:

Thursday, Dec. 17, 5:30–7:00 p.m.
blessing from Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Sunday, Dec. 20, 3:00–4:30 p.m.
blessing from Rev. Dena McPhetres

Wednesday, Dec. 23, 12:00–1:30 p.m.
blessing from Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

Your Christmas Kit will include as many Christmas Eve candles as there are members of your household, along with other First Church Christmas Eve essentials.

Please plan to park near the church and have only one member of your household walk to pick up the kit from our porch on Astor Street, masked and distanced six feet apart. One of our ministers will be there to give you a brief blessing, along with your kit. There will be markers on the sidewalk to help you stay six feet apart from other First Church folks waiting for their Christmas Kits and blessings. If Wisconsin is under a stay-at-home order during the pick-up time, this event will be canceled, as will the Christmas Kit drop off (see below.)

If coming to pick up your Christmas Kit from church is not physically accessible to you, please email Shari Wright at shari.wright@uumilwaukee.org by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 13 requesting a Pastoral Care Provider (PCP) to deliver a Christmas Kit to you. Please indicate how many candles we should include. A PCP will contact you to arrange a drop-off date and time before December.

Holiday Community Giving

by The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

Spread joy this holiday season through giving and community connections! Though we cannot gather in Coffee Hour to claim our gift tag or decorate a mitten tree, the Children's

Religious Education Team and staff are working to find ways for our beloved church community to give to our Milwaukee community, especially children whose needs have become invisible during the pandemic.

We are building a relationship with Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth (MCCY) so we can better understand the authentic needs of the families they serve during the pandemic. MCCY's programming addresses gaps in services for underserved and impoverished populations in Milwaukee. The organization offers advocacy services, as well as educational, life-skills, and art-based groups, and much more.

MCCY leaders have requested that we donate new art supplies. Artmaking provides the children with a way to express and heal themselves, as well as do their schoolwork while at home or the community center! To donate, visit our [Amazon Wishlist](#). Then choose an item to purchase and ship it to our collection point. Our C.R.E. Team will be using the art supplies to create art kits.

2020 Christmas Eve Offering Recipients

Every year, our congregation gives the entirety of our Christmas Eve offering away. This year, we are giving the offering to two local organizations that help people in our community access food and shelter. Because our service will be online this year, we are asking our members to give directly to the following two organizations:

The Cathedral Center is a women's shelter in Milwaukee, which provides emergency shelter to women and families, while working to end homelessness one life at a time. Your donation helps provide shelter, basic needs necessities, and life-changing case management services to 1,000 women and families with children each year. Donate here: <https://cathedral-center.org/donate/>.

Interchange Food Pantry, a food pantry that First Church help found in 1971 along with a group of neighboring churches, is committed to helping provide healthy food to low-income residents of Milwaukee in a compassionate and supportive environment. Every \$1 you donate to Interchange buys \$5 worth of high-quality food for pantry guests. <https://interchangefoodpantry.org/donations/>.



DECEMBER EVENTS AT FIRST CHURCH

50th Anniversary Interfaith Conference Virtual Lunch

**“Undoing Historical Harm:
Faith, Race, and Politics” with Dr. Reggie Williams**

Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee
Thursday, December 3, 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Suggested Donation: \$25
For more info and tickets:
www.interfaithconference.org

Virtual Holiday Choir Forming

by Tristan Strelitzer
Choral Director

With a different kind of holiday season ahead of us, we will have a different kind of Holiday Choir this year! All First Church members and friends (high school age and up) are invited to join in being part of our 2020 Virtual Holiday Choir.

If you've seen the videos of our Chancel Choir singing "Spirit of Life," you have seen how we can still sing in the safety of our homes and join together as a community. If you choose to join, you will be given instructions on how to record and submit your video. There will be opportunities for help recording yourself via Zoom.

If you are interested in joining this holiday season, or have questions about our virtual choir ensemble, please contact Choral Director, Tristan Strelitzer at tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org no later than December 5.

Advent Practice – Lectio Divina

by Lynne Jacoby
Membership Development Coordinator

Drop-in for one session or join us for all four.
Friday Mornings Nov. 27, Dec. 4, 11 & 18, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Lectio Divina is an ancient monastic practice of exploring one's own responses to the scriptures. This Advent season Molly Schiffler and Lynne Jacoby are hosting a weekly UU version of this contemplative practice. Whether you hear the Christian Bible as poetry, as dangerous, as radically visionary, or just as text that has greatly influenced Western European culture; almost all of us have some response to it. Coming up to the high holiday of Christianity is a great time to explore yours.

[Click here](#) for the Zoom information.

Holiday Sing Along! (Zoom Style)

by Lynne Jacoby
Membership Development Coordinator

Calling all shower singers, car rock stars and anyone who hums a tune to themselves just because! Join us in belting out popular holiday songs together (while muted). Come help us get into the spirit. We'll provide the songs, lyrics and general holiday cheer – you provide a willingness to sing and sing. Families, dogs, tone deaf, all are welcome!

Join the sing-along on Sunday after service on December 20 at 11:00 a.m. [Click here](#) to receive the Zoom information. Hosted by your Membership Team.



Return to Stillness

by The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

December stillness conjures images of quiet walks in nature, listening for a bird call, or being in a cloud of snowflakes drifting onto the forest floor. Stillness is frequently partnered with quiet, times when we set aside the noise of life, recognize the present moment, and perhaps gain clarity on what we are feeling and thinking.

As a parent in a noisy family, I know setting aside the noise of life to become still is rare. I wonder, can we find stillness together without silence? Where is stillness in the family life? I find that shared stillness is elusive. One of the few places I know to find it is in church, gathering with all of you, sometimes holding powerful moments of silence. But listening and singing together also has the power of collective stillness.

“Return again, Return again,
Return to the home of your soul.
Return to who you are,
Return to what you are,
Return to where you are
born and reborn again.”

- Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

These are the words from one of the hymns in our teal hymnal, known as *Singing the Journey*. It is a song that I find resonates with the stillness inside of me. I used to cherish singing this chant over and over again to my child when he was an infant struggling to go to bed. Singing it each night helped ground me in my new identity and purpose as a parent. The stillness in that song is not about silence, but intention and presence. How can we return to the home of our souls together as a family?

Especially in the last few months, all together under one roof all of the time, we have found that family moments of stillness need to be cultivated and put on our schedule. It is far too easy to get caught up in the list of things to be done in a day. Ritualized moments of stillness like reading a book at bedtime together, sharing gratitude before a meal, is the only way to ensure stillness into our full family schedules. To claim stillness in family life, we often must abandon the idea of silence and reframe stillness as moments of co-created intention.

May you find opportunities to welcome and cherish stillness within your families this holiday season and even add some new rituals of shared intention.

A Dreadful Fairy Book

Book Club

with Jon Etter

by The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



Our children so enjoyed their time with author Lois Lowry that by request, we are delighted to bring back the RE Book Club! Join us this January for our RE winter book club, open to children in grades 3-8th to read the book *A Dreadful Fairy Book* by Jon Etter. Winner of the 2019 Best Middle Reader Book and First Horizon Award for Debut Books, Eric Hoffer Book Awards. Book club will meet on Zoom for three Sundays from 1:00-2:00 p.m. On January 3 and 17, we'll discuss the book. Then we have a chance to meet the author on January 31!

Purchase the book on Amazon as either a print or ebook, or request it through your local library. If purchasing the book poses any difficulty, we are happy to ship a copy to your family.

As well as being an author and teacher, Jon and his family are members of First Church. You can learn more about *A Dreadful Fairy Book* (and its two sequels) on his author site. We can't wait to learn more about Jon's writing process and hear the stories behind his books!

Register here for the Dreadful Fairy Book club: <https://bit.ly/UUREfairybook>.



Crossing Paths

6th-8th Grade

by Deb Solis
Youth Program Coordinator

Our next faith journey happens on December 6, 13, 27, and January 3 at 2:00 p.m. with our focus on Christianity

Crossing Paths is an interfaith learning program with the goal of helping youth build and clarify their own UU identity through engagement with other faiths. This interfaith journey will include Unitarian Universalism, Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism, Quakerism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Paganism.

Visit our uumilwaukee.org website for more information.



Cyber-Attack, Phishing Emails

What should I do?

by Shari Wright

Office Manager & Information Tech Team Lead

In the past month, several people have reported a suspicious email in their Inbox. The holidays are a season for scammers to send phishing¹ emails. The first step to stop scammers on the web is to identify the suspicious email in your Inbox. So, **GREAT JOB** for those of you have identified these phishing emails.

A phishing email imitates someone's familiar email with similar words, but not the real email address. At First Church, our ministers will **NEVER** send you an email to request cash or gift cards by replying to the email.

If you receive a phishing email, please take these steps to handle the phishing email:

1. Identify the phishing email by carefully looking at the email address. Don't reply to this email or click on any links.
2. Report the phishing email to your email provider.
3. Mark the email as spam, then delete the email.
4. Notify the person who was imitated in the phishing email.
5. It is not necessary, but always a good idea, to run a virus and malware scan of your PC.

If you have questions or need more explanation on how to handle phishing email, feel free to contact Shari Wright at shari.wright@uumilwaukee.org.

Don't fret if you received a phishing email. These types of emails are sent frequently to try to get through your email Inbox. The junk and spam filters try to catch these emails and do a good job of removing many which you will never see. If you practice these simple steps, you have learned a lot about computers and how to communicate in the digital world.

¹ Phishing is described by Wikipedia, "Phishing is the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information or data, such as usernames, passwords and credit card details, by disguising oneself as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication."

Reparations

Why the Wealth Gap Matters

by Mary Devitt

BLM2WIUU Coordinator

Black Americans experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment, significantly lower income, overrepresentation among essential workers, and health disparities which include greater rates of COVID-19 infection and higher mortality from the virus. This 13% of the country's population accounts for just 2.6% of the nation's wealth (wealth meaning those assets that can be passed on to future generations). In practical terms, a typical African American's net worth is \$17,000, in contrast to \$170,000 for the typical white American—a tenfold gap. 40% of African Americans own their own homes, compared to 70% of white Americans.

In her June 17, 2020 article "Why Does the Racial Wealth Gap Matter," Susan Smith Richardson, CEO of Center for Public Integrity, condenses her interview with William "Sandy" Darity. Darity is co-author with his wife Kristen Mullen of the book *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century*.

Richardson quotes Darity who identifies the racial wealth gap as "the best economic indicator of the degree of inequality and injustice in American society."

Darity says that "The reason the wealth gap matters in terms of Black/white differences is because it's such a critical index of the cumulative effects across generations of racial injustice in the United States." Richardson reminds us that "The failure of Reconstruction and a history of government policies and laws — from segregation to redlining — have helped create this gap." Reparations, Darity maintains, is needed to increase Black wealth and address this legacy of racial inequality.

Darity says, "Wealthier people are able to purchase a home in high amenity neighborhoods. They're better able to ensure that their children receive high-quality education. They're better able to participate in the political process in a country where money really does matter in the political process. They can leave bequest to future generations to ensure their economic security and economic well-being. It is generated primarily by intergenerational transfers of resources from parents and grandparents to the youngest generation."

Our goal is one America, equal justice. Reparations is the way there.



SUNDAY MORNING FORUM

11:00 AM ON ZOOM & YOUTUBE

DECEMBER 6

“UWM School of Public Health & COVID-19”

Presenter: Amanda Simanek, Associate Professor of Epidemiology



The coronavirus pandemic has impacted all of us in Wisconsin. Here in Milwaukee, some members of our community have been particularly hard hit. Four Milwaukee ZIP codes show the highest incidence of infection — two are predominantly African American and two are Hispanic. Milwaukee is facing what Gov. Tony Evers has called “a crisis within a crisis.” Professor Simanek will discuss Zilber School of Public Health projects and research on COVID-19’s impact on our community.

Host: Mark Mueller

DECEMBER 13

“Wisconsin Humane Society & Social Justice”

Presenter: Anne Reed, President & CEO



The Wisconsin Humane Society has social justice built into its history. A current program, “Pets for Life,” helps residents in two ZIP codes of Milwaukee adopt pets, or care for existing pets, through support from volunteers and free Humane Society veterinary service.

Host: BJ Ermenc

DECEMBER 20

“Creating a Sense of Community through Art”

Presenter: Tia Richardson, Community Mural Artist, Cosmic Butterfly Design



What is community? How can we work together if we all have different opinions? We are all parts connected to a greater whole. Richardson tries to understand what unity is through her art. In this presentation, she will share some past projects to show examples of what we might consider as evidence that we can work together despite our differences. For more views and information visit www.cosmic-butterfly.com.

Host: Lorraine Jacobs



December Share the Plate

by Dawn Blackmore
Share the Plate Team

Planned Parenthood Wisconsin is our December Share the Plate recipient. Planned Parenthood has many clinics in the Milwaukee area, as well as national offices and international partners. As stated on their website: "Planned Parenthood delivers vital reproductive health care, sex education, and information to millions of women, men, and young people worldwide. For nearly 100 years, Planned Parenthood has promoted a commonsense approach to women's health and well-being, based on respect for each individual's right to make informed, independent decisions about health, sex, and family planning."

Planned Parenthood Wisconsin reflects the diverse needs of our communities. It currently provides affordable quality and confidential health care to 60,000 people each year in its 22 health centers across Wisconsin.

To make a donation directly to Planned Parenthood, please visit their website at <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-wisconsin>.

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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