



THE

CHANTICLEER

First Unitarian Society
of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.

March 2021

Words on the Wind

by The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom
Senior Minister

What does it mean to be a people of commitment?

At First Church, I have noticed our folks take commitments quite seriously. Many require a period of discernment before taking on something new. Then, if the answer is “yes,” our folks work hard to live out their commitments and communicate early and clearly if a withdrawal must be made. This is an honorable approach to living commitments deeply.

Another honorable approach is to be in regular discernment about all of one’s commitments: what is working? What is not? Where do my values and priorities lie today? How can I align my resources, be they time, energy, or money, with my life’s values and priorities?

This month, as we consider what it means to be a people of commitment, I invite you to live into your values—either by holding steadfast to the commitments you have made or by reviewing them in light of your current priorities. Stay in communication with those to whom you have made commitments, and keep your resources aligned tightly with your values.

We hope you will prioritize First Church in your annual giving and make a financial commitment to your spiritual community this pledge season. Financial pledges, commitments to the church about what resources you intend to give to the church over the course of the 2021–22 year, are how we make our budget. The members of our

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MONTHLY THEME

What does it mean to be a people of

COMMITMENT?

SUNDAY SERVICES

ONE SERVICE AT

10:00 A.M.

LIVE ON YOUTUBE

FEBRUARY 7

“Striving & Thriving: Youth Sunday”

First Church Youth Group

The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,

Minister of Religious Education

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Gus Pointer Mace, Worship Associate

One year has passed since our world and daily lives have been changed by the pandemic. We have asked our youth to share with the congregation through video, prose, and images how the pandemic has affected their lives. What is it like to be a teenager today during this time of upheaval and unknowing? How have they continued to thrive and what are their aspirations for our future?

MARCH 14

“How Do We Decide? Discerning Commitment”

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Amy Wilbourne, Worship Associate

Making a real commitment is serious business, so we must take discernment seriously. What tools do you use to choose when to say yes, and when to say no? How do you know when you’ve reached capacity? When we need to decide together as a people, what discernment tools can we use? Join us for this service where we will explore how to say yes and how to say no, how to discern what is worth our time and energy, and how to share commitments.

congregation who are leading the work to gather financial commitments have set a goal of 100% participation from our members and friends, and we hope you will help them achieve that goal.

As you discern your financial commitment, consider that it currently costs about \$1,625 per member to produce church—including worship, music, programs for children, youth and adults, building costs, and administration. We encourage equitable contributions, knowing our members have different financial capacities. Some members are generously contributing significantly more than our per person production cost, which balances the budget with members and friends who need to contribute less. We enthusiastically welcome you at whatever financial level makes sense for you and hope you will choose to make a commitment to your spiritual community in this year's pledge drive, so we can plan our budget for the 2021–22 church year!

Sending love to you,
Jennifer

Dena's Digressions

by The Rev. Dena McPhetres
Associate Minister

Learning requires many small acts of commitment. Learning to be a friend, a spouse, a community member. Learning to be anti-racist. Learning how to write, play an instrument, throw a pot on the potter's wheel, weld a sculpture, build a shed, knit a sweater. We don't usually succeed the first time. It takes practice, skill-building over time, incrementally.

Earlier in my life, I quit piano lessons to take flute lessons. Then I quit flute lessons to take voice lessons. I quit highland dance to take karate, then I quit karate to have more time for modern dance. There is never enough time for all the commitments that I would like to make. Even small commitments take time and energy. When I make a commitment, I live in relationship to it. I regret setting some commitments aside in order to take on new commitments, yet how else would I grow?

Twelve years ago, I set down my flute so that I would have time to enter the search for a new ministry. I found you. It was worth the commitment, many times over! Recently, I picked up my flute and could hardly get any notes out of it. If I want to play the flute again, it will take commitment to practice. But doesn't every-

thing? Doesn't everything that matters take a commitment to practice?

What are you practicing these days? How is your relationship to commitments, small and large, going these days? What commitments do you want to grow?

Yours,
Dena

MORE SUNDAY SERVICES

10:00 A.M.

LIVE ON YOUTUBE

MARCH 21

"Commitment Makes Us Stronger"

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister
Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director
Dale Skaggs, Worship Associate
Pledge Drive Celebration Sunday

As a community, making commitments together makes us stronger. When we share commitment, we not only deepen our community's resilience, we also amplify the effects we have in the world. Being a people of commitment means we become a functioning whole that is more beautiful and more powerful than just the sum of our individuals. Join us for this closing Sunday of our Pledge Drive where we will celebrate how community transforms us and our neighbors through commitment.

MARCH 28

"Choosing Love: Commitment to Relationship"

The Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister
The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Jobey Clarke, Worship Associate

Choosing love every day is how we renew our commitment to relationship, even, and especially, through the hard times. Quarantiffs will not break our relationships, but not choosing love will. How do we choose love in our friendships, marriages and partnerships? How has pandemic stress affected our personal commitments to relationship? Our commitments grow and change as we do and are always subject to review.



Splinters from the Board

by Dianne Dentino
Board of Trustees Member

A meeting of the Board of Trustees (BOT) was held on January 26, 2021, using video conferencing. Jean Johnson and Noreen Gilbertsen provided the First Church Q2 financial update which included no significant changes at this time. The apartments are all occupied, gain on overall investments is positive, professional expenses, RE expenses, Committee expenses, and Stewardship expenses are low primarily due to the impact of COVID-19. For example, there has been no travel and staff has been taking advantage of online professional development opportunities. Discussion with the strategic consultant, John Wimberly, and his financial report have been helpful, informative and instructive about paths to pursue for the financial health and future of our community. Additional work needs to be done, but Reverend Jennifer stated that we are on a good path.

This year's Congregational Survey has now concluded. Out of 390 pledging members, 163 surveys were completed. The replies skewed demographically 60 plus. The survey helped clarify how our community is doing regarding our End Statements. The survey reflected highest scores for End 4 (giving and receiving support), and lowest scores for End 8 (creating welcome). The BOT spent some time brainstorming and discussing how we might move toward the welcoming community we aspire to be.

Partner Surveys were sent out to the ten different entities First Church has teamed up with this year. Six surveys were completed and returned. The surveys provided suggestions on how we could improve our partnerships. Overall, the surveys reflected that we're doing a lot, our partners appreciate our collaboration and support, and that members feel good about their involvement.

The Senior Minister's Report reflected over 2,300 views from our Christmas Eve service, during which we collected a record donation of \$8,000! There was also positive press coverage regarding the Open Letter from Faith Leaders initiated by Reverend Jennifer, as a result of the January 6th event in Washington DC. The focus of the event was to defend democracy and call out racism.

Due to COVID, First Church religious education virtual attendance is down. Our kids and youth are ZOOMED out. Action-steps are being taken to attempt to re-invigorate attendance. For example, for the Youth Group, weekly meet-up time will be moving to Thursday evenings. New and additional opportunities to engage our church fami-

lies, children, and members are underway as well. For example, the winter book club & the collection of valentines is underway that ensure that we have enough for members who might appreciate receiving a valentine. Additionally, registration for Mystery Friends has begun. Please visit uumilwaukee.org for details.

Members of the Board of Trustees welcome your thoughts and concerns. Our contact information is on the First Church website at www.uumilwaukee.org.

Levels of Commitment

by Lynne Jacoby
Membership Development Coordinator

Supporter, Sustainer, Visionary, Transformer?

I'm a believer in commitments but struggle to practice in any disciplined manner, which is one of the reasons I so admired my late wife Mary. Long before I met her, she tithed. In December she'd bring up her Excel of non-profits, make adjustments until it totaled 10% of her income, sort by amounts and write checks.

The Boston Unitarian Universalist (UU) Church, where we met, was on that list, somewhat below the Woman's Shelter where Mary served on the board, and above organizations like the Equal Rights Campaign and NPR (we were not very unique New England lesbians!)

When we changed UU churches though, our combined Pledge climbed right up Mary's list.

Partly because the new congregation was closer, so we became more involved. I became a Youth Group Advisor, Mary joined a small group. But mostly because the Pledge Team at that congregation introduced us to the UUA's Fair Share Giving Guide.

"Huh," I thought when I saw it, and then I nudged my wife and said "We have to do better."

I was definitely the "church lady" of our partnership by then, but even I hadn't thought much about defining the influence the church had on my life and perspective. So I liked the commitment level categories (as goofy as they may seem). More, I just liked knowing that all else being equal (Mary and I had no debts, no children, no outstanding expenses) exactly what equitable support of our congregation might look like for us.

(Continued on page 4)



I am a little embarrassed to say that although we doubled our pledge that year, we didn't even quite meet the first level of support. Partly because Mary had her own longstanding commitment to match whatever she gave to the church with what she gave through the church via Share the Plate (the second offering plate tradition of her Catholic upbringing was deep in her!). Luckily we were in a position to increase both in a way that felt right enough to each.

The same chart helped me when my income as a family decreased on Mary's death – and again when my conviction grew that not only is the UU church good for me and our community, but also for the world. Even I could see that a Visionary level of giving to First Church was the right goal for me at that point.

As always - everyone's contribution to First Church is a personal private choice about what is right for their family. As always every single gift that helps support this wonderful community is meaningful and so appreciated!

But if you are curious—More information is available on the UUA Fair Giving Chart at <https://2h92ys19cvmtcxv4q1ix439v-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Fair-Share-Contribution-Guide-1.pdf>

Spring Journey to Membership Class

by Lynne Jacoby
Membership Development Coordinator

Four Wednesday Evenings in April. Led by our ministers, staff and lay-leaders this series explores Unitarian Universalist theology, history, principals, our social justice framework as well as the meaning of membership and ways to connect here at First Church. A prerequisite to joining, but a commitment to joining is not necessary to participate. Come if you are planning to join but also if you are curious, or just want a deeper understanding of intentional covenantal community as we strive to practice it here at First Church.

Join us on Zoom to explore April 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 6:30 – 8:15 p.m. Register Here <https://form.jotform.com/200933929702154>



Pledge Drive 2020-21 ALL IN! Sustaining First Church

This year our goal is a 100% participation of members and friends.

Currently there is a \$125,000 gap between our operating expenses and income. If everyone raised their pledge 15%, we could close this gap and make sure First Church is sustained long term. Not everyone can do this. To make your pledge or learn more about Equitable Giving Church-wide, go to our [pledge giving page](#) on our church website.

Pledge Deadline Sunday March 21

Pledge on-line and upload a picture of your family for our community montages during Sunday Services late February and early March.

Summer Service Proposals Wanted

by Kristine Hansen
Pulpit Guest Team Chair

Do you have a compelling message for our spiritual community that would nourish, engage, and inspire? During the summer, church members have the opportunity to create a worship service and deliver your own sermon. Worship helps us reflect on the meaning of our lives and how to align our actions with our core values.

Stay tuned for more information, including the form to submit your proposal by May 1, but start thinking of ideas now. Selections are made by the Pulpit Guest Team by early June. Reach out to Pulpit Guest Team members Kristine Hansen, Kari Gunderson, Maria Dorsey, Keith Anderson, and Natalie Quinton with questions.



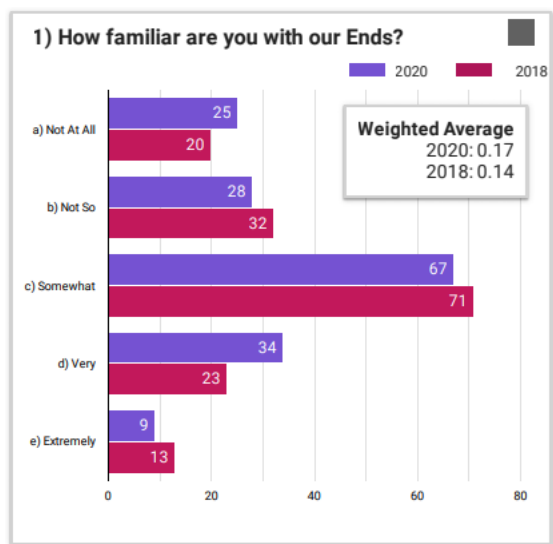
2020 CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

2020 Graphics Results are located on our website. [Click here to see all graphics.](#)

Response Numbers:
2020: 163
2018: 159

Highlights from the Congregational Survey

by Jane Cliff
Board of Trustees Member



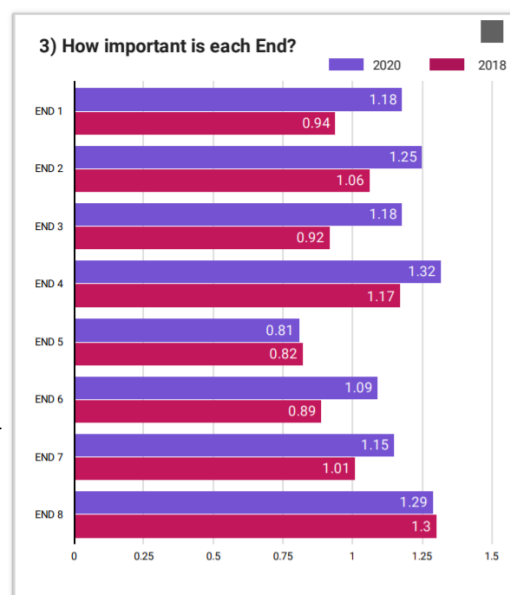
ENDS STATEMENTS

We, the people of First Church
build community where we:

1. Value, develop, and celebrate the gifts that come from authentic connection across difference, emphasizing racial, ethnic, and generational difference.
2. Recognize power differences and challenge injustice where it arises.
3. Follow the leadership of people most affected by injustice, partnering to move the Milwaukee community toward justice.
4. Generously give and receive support, connection, and care in times of joy and challenge.
5. Promote Unitarian Universalism and our shared values in the world.
6. Open ourselves to wonder, making ourselves vulnerable and available to find meaning, inspiration, and transformation.
7. Create communal experiences celebrating our interconnectedness.
8. Create accessible, courageous, and innovative welcome to people who might find a sense of belonging and a spiritual home with us.

Thank you to all who participated in First Church's 2020 congregational survey! Your responses help the Board and staff measure progress towards meeting our Ends statements, or goals, that guide our congregational commitments and actions and also help identify areas that may need additional time and resources. As you read the highlights below, please keep in mind that any conclusions are limited to those who answered the survey; thus, the survey may not fully represent the entire congregation.

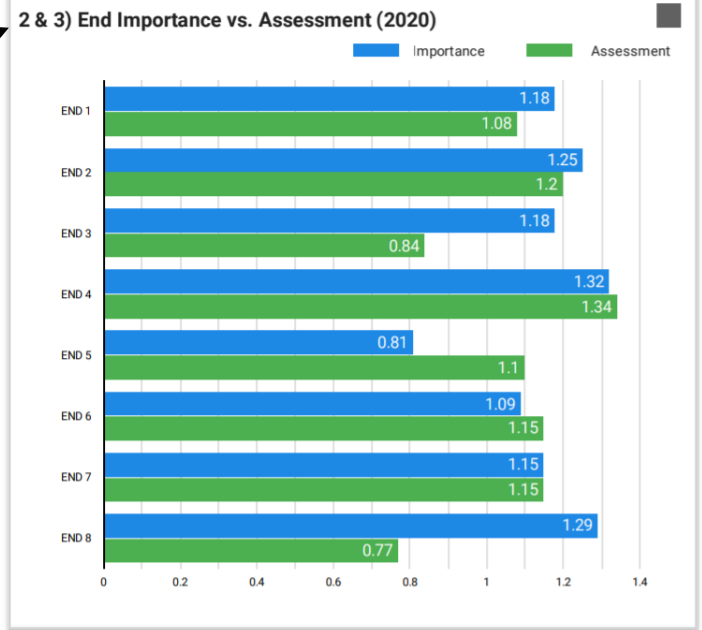
- ◆ About **22% of members answered the survey in 2020** (163 versus 159 in 2018). In 2020 we had significantly more respondents who have been members for 20+ years (60 in 2020 vs 34 in 2018), and a correspondingly larger number of respondents were older than those who responded in 2018.
- ◆ Over 26% of respondents said they are **very or extremely familiar with First Church Ends**. Roughly 32% of respondents were not at all familiar with the Ends, while 41% were somewhat familiar with them.
- ◆ The congregation has seen **significant progress made on all of our Ends** since 2018, and the gaps between importance and congregants' assessment of how true each is today have decreased, indicating that we are making progress.
- ◆ In both 2018 and 2020, the respondents think **we do the best at End 4 "generously give and receive support, connection, and care in times of joy and challenge."** End 4 was viewed as the most important goal in 2020, while it ranked second in 2018.
- ◆ In 2020, respondents think **we need to improve the most in implementing End 8 "Create accessible, courageous, and innovative welcome to people who might find a sense of belonging and a spiritual home with us."** End 8 was seen as the second most important goal in 2020, while it ranked first in 2018.



2020 CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

(Survey Highlights, continued from page 5)

- ◆ In 2020, the **difference between how well we do in living our Ends versus how important we think they are is largest for End 8**, followed by End 3, “Follow the leadership of people most affected by injustice, partnering to move the Milwaukee community toward justice.”
- ◆ In terms of importance, the congregation **ranked the Ends similarly in both years**. However, almost all of the Ends are now perceived as more important in 2020 than they were in 2018.
- ◆ In 2020, **attendance numbers are at the extremes**. When asked how often they attend services, more members responded “Rarely” or “Always,” and fewer responded with the options in between.
- ◆ People are more **likely to talk about First Church than invite someone they know**. This may be cultural, but how could we find a UU way to do this? Responses to questions about talking to non-members and welcoming different people followed a bell curve.
- ◆ We’ve **dropped overall on the Net Promoter Score (a.k.a. NPS, which indicates how likely one is to recommend something, with 10 as most likely)**. We don’t have more people ranking us poorly, but fewer people rank us a 10. However, we do have about the same number of people ranking us 8-10 as in 2018. This may be due to the switch from in person to online services in March 2020 and people not as able/inclined to engage with church activities. Or it could be due to the group of people now attending services rarely. Other possible explanations include online, COVID, or political fatigue, or online just doesn’t connect with people the same way as in-person services and activities do.



- ◇ 20 fewer respondents identified as **people of color** (only 3% of respondents to this question in 2020 versus 17% in 2018) & 20 more identified as not people of color (97% in 2020 versus 83% in 2018).
- ◇ In 2020, more people **identified hearing** (33% versus 27% in 2018) and thinking difficulties (20% versus 13% in 2018); could be related to a greater number of older respondents.
- ◇ The curve of **household income** looks similar to 2018, but we have more detail now that we’ve asked the question with actual numbers instead of categories. Per strategic planner John Wimberly’s report, Milwaukee’s median household income is \$66K/year. 57% of people who answered this question in 2020 reported incomes higher than \$75K/year.
- ◇ In both 2018 and 2020, roughly 33% of respondents identify as **male and 67% identify as female and 100% identify as Cis rather than Trans**.

DEMOGRAPHICS

All look similar to 2018 with the following exceptions:

- ◇ In 2020 more respondents identified as **straight/heterosexual** (85% of respondents to this question in 2020, versus 80% in 2018).
- ◇ A significant jump in the number of respondents **above the age of 66** (59% of respondents to this question in 2020 versus 41% in 2018).
- ◇ **Fewer families with children of all ages** (33% of 2020 respondents to this question versus 40% in 2018). One factor may be that families were too busy to complete the survey with kids at home due to the pandemic.

ENDS BY DEMOGRAPHICS

- ◇ For all demographic categories monitored (people of color; LGBTQ; people with a disability; older than 66 years; households with kids; attended less 3 years; attended more than 10 years; BOT or Executive Team member), the 2020 NPS numbers (net promoter score, which means how likely one is to recommend something) are **lower than those in 2018**.
- ◇ **BOT and Executive Team members had the highest overall NPS across all ends in both years, while LGBTQ respondents had the lowest NPS overall both years.**

(Continued on page 7)



- ◇ The **biggest change in NPS rankings was in the people of color** demographic (third highest in 2018 versus eighth highest in 2020).
- ◇ Comparisons between the overall **NPS number is inconclusive for income levels**, due the different way we asked the question in the two survey periods.
- ◇ In 2018 all, and in 2020 a **majority of demographic categories, thought that End 8 (creating accessible, courageous and innovative welcome) has the largest gap** between how well we're doing and the End's importance—while we've seen some change, we still need to improve here.
- ◇ In **2020 LGBTQ respondents**, people who have attended less than three years, and BOT members identify End 3 (follow leadership of those most affected by injustice) has having the largest gap between our current performance and the End's importance. This was not the case for any group in 2018.
- ◇ In 2020, all demographic groups except for LGBTQ respondents think that **First Church does the best in meeting End 4**, generously giving and receiving support. In 2018, all groups except people of color and people with disabilities agreed with this finding.

For more details on the 2018 and 2020 congregational surveys, talk with Board members Ben LeFort, Rollie Hanson, or Jane Cliff.

IN MEMORIAM

Theodore (Ted) Scher

May 16, 2031 ~ January 31, 2021

Theodore (Ted) Scher died on January 31, 2021. Ted was 89 years old and had been a member of the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee from 1971 - 2019. We lit the COVID Candle for Ted during worship on Sunday, Feb 21, as we do for friends and family of church members who die during the COVID-19 pandemic. We send our condolences to Ted's children, grandchildren, and all his loved ones.

Discuss

An Indigenous People's History of the United States

by Chris Linder
UU+ Study Group

The UU+ Study Group invites you to an exciting opportunity to discuss the book *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

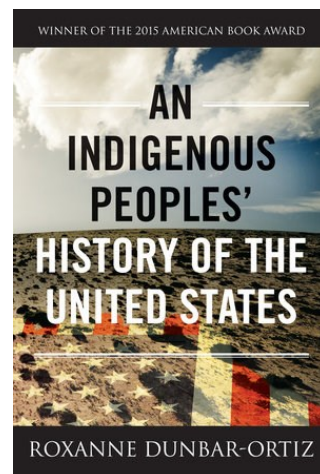
At the UUA General Assembly last summer, Dunbar-Ortiz presented a fascinating and moving video presentation on her book, describing the ideology of European colonialism and domination, and its effect on the indigenous populations in the United States.

Everyone is invited to watch and discuss her ideas and information at two meetings in March, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

- March 16th view and discuss her video presentation.
- March 30th we will meet again to discuss her book.

The content of the video and the book are different and are both worth examining.

For more information and get the Zoom link, see our [web page](#). Please contact Chris Linder if you have more questions at celinder@att.net.



What's It Like to Serve as a Pastoral Care Associate (PCA)?

by Rev. Dena McPhetres

"Being a PCA has given me the opportunity to get to know many church members who I probably otherwise would not have connected with on such a deep level. I have really enjoyed giving back to the church community that has given me so much and feel like the time I have spent supporting other members has truly made a difference in helping them through these difficult times." ~ **Susan Nolte**

"As a parent of young children, I find it particularly meaningful to serve as a trained listener to other parents in the congregation. Especially during this extremely challenging time of pandemic, everything about parenting is amplified. My role as a PCA has allowed me to sit with folks who are deeply caring for others every day, often at the expense of their own self-care, and to hold a quiet space for them, without passing judgment, without offering advice—just listening and asking questions to help them open up the space for themselves even further. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the congregation in this manner." ~ **Sarah Richards**

To learn more about the pastoral care ministry, watch this 40 minute video by our UU MidAmerica regional staff lead Rev. David Pyle: <https://vimeo.com/402294106>. The video will help you discern whether serving as a Pastoral Care Associate at First Church is a good fit for you.

Pastoral Care Associates are church members who make a commitment to serve our congregation for three years as confidential, trained listeners for members experiencing difficult life transitions. We meet monthly for support, ongoing training, and spiritual development.

Mandatory training will be held online in September/October 2021 with the possibility of in-person small group gatherings depending on the trajectory of the pandemic. Pre-reads and online training modules are required homework. We will also schedule Zoom gatherings for the new PCA team to discuss and practice what you learn.

For more information, please visit the [FAQ page on our web-site](#).

If you know a member of First Church who is a good listener and might be interested, please encourage them to watch the discernment video. For greater diversity and inclusion, we especially encourage people under the age of 50, parents, males or people of color to apply, although all applications are welcome. Application deadline is May 1, 2021.

PCA Application Form

Getting Your Ducks in Order: End of Life Planning Part 2 Spiritual Issues

by Rev. Dena McPhetres

Tuesday, March 23, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Spiritual considerations for end of life include thinking about how you want to spend your last days, (if given the choice) how to talk to your loved ones about your wishes, beliefs about death and afterlife, disposition of your body after death, and memorial service or funeral plans.

A national survey by The Conversation Project reports that although 90% of people say that talking with their loved ones about end-of-life care is important, only 27% have actually done so. Although 82% of people say it is important to put their wishes in writing, 23% have actually done it. Let's get together and take the first step toward clarifying and articulating our wishes for end of life. Then the next step will be up to you.

Register for this free online program at <https://form.jotform.com/210196797850971>. Registration deadline is March 20, 2021.



Finding A Way Forward

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

In this past year, we have witnessed people embody a commitment to serve, to get up when feeling broken, to continue when even when all one can think of is rest. Living through our grief, yet still finding a way to smile as we find our way through unruly times. Grounded in perseverance and a dogged belief in our future, we have counted our blessings and then done the next right thing and over and over again, finding a way forward, even when we do not have a map.

Our dogged perseverance coupled with our belief in love, community, and relationship has been our guidepost to connect, to heal, and build a better future. What we believe matters, what we think, and how we see the world directly translates into how we move through the world and what actions we take.

Each Sunday in religious education, we light our virtual chalice to the words, "We are the church of the helping hands." Last year, we were so excited to make over 400 sandwiches with those helping hands for people experiencing food insecurity in our community. This year it was hard to imagine being able to do that again when we are struggling with the realities of safety and service. Yet, we have again found a way forward.

By partnering with community organizations there is still a way to be "helping hands," to serve and find purpose in our beliefs, grounded in action. We are called to help those in need and so we find a way to do the next right thing. This month, I hope you will consider participating in the Lunch Pack & Love social justice opportunity.

Making lunches is a direct way you can feed people in our community. We believe that together we can and do make a difference, one meal a time, living into service, and knowing that taking action is building a better future. I hope you will join me this month and commit to Lunch Pack & Love.

In faith,
Rev. Kimberlee



“LUNCH PACK & LOVE” Church of the Helping Hands

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

People of all ages need to feed our community this month. Time for LUNCH PACK & LOVE on March 22! This month, our church is partnering with community organizations that are committed to serving people struggling with hunger. Kids Impact Community-KIC, has created this intergenerational opportunity for people of all ages to pack lunches for residents throughout the Greater Milwaukee community struggling with food insecurity.

In eastern Wisconsin under regular circumstances, 1 in 10 people are struggling with hunger. Today, the disrupted food chains, the unexpected loss of income, the additional needs, and quickly revised emergency food services have only added increased strain onto what was already an ongoing challenge.

Just One More Ministry, located in Glendale, is an organization that rescues excess food from area restaurants, food suppliers, and caterers and repackages it for shelters, food pantries, and community members in need. With the organization's regular streams of food disrupted, they need additional support through packed bagged lunches. These lunches are easy to distribute with minimal contact and will be distributed as quickly as they are received.

Ways to participate: Packing Lunches & Creating Inspiration Notes, Sponsoring Lunch Packing & Delivery.

When and Where: Your family will complete this project in your own home following food safety guidelines. All lunches need to be delivered by March 22 between 1:00-8:00 p.m.

More details when you register to be a First Church LUNCH, PACK & LOVE Volunteer at <https://bit.ly/UULunchpack>.



Religious Education 2020-21 Survey: Students, Families, and Volunteers

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

RE has changed a lot in the past year! This makes our annual RE survey especially important. Our short religious education survey allows us to evaluate how we are doing and how we can improve our Religious Education program to meet the needs of our families and our congregation's Ends.

Have you enjoyed this year's brand new virtual programming, or the return of favorite events like the Holiday Pageant?

What feedback do you have to help us improve Religious Education program? Take our survey at <https://form.jotform.com/200357305568152>

Crossing Paths: 6th-8th Grades

by Deb Solis
Youth Program Coordinator

Our next faith journey happens on March 7, 14, 21, 28 at 2:00 p.m. with our focus on Hinduism. 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. [Click here for the full course description.](#)

March Share the Plate

by Dawn Blackmore

Every spring, our Religious Education Program youth members choose an organization to receive Share the Plate donations. The Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth (MCCY) is our March Share the Plate recipient. Their mission is to "End the suffering of abused children in Milwaukee County through comprehensive advocacy, education, and supportive services that heal trauma, build resilience, nurture the ability to thrive, and create a path toward eradicating the epidemic of child abuse in our community."

Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth was founded in 2011 with the specific goal to design programs that address gaps in services for abused children and youth in Milwaukee. With programs such as Terrific Tuesdays/Wonderful Wednesdays, Individual Advocacy, Healthy Relationships, Parent Education, Child and Family Advocacy, Seeking Safety and Virtual Book Club, MCCY has offered supportive services for all age groups. The youth group at First Church has been donating art supplies regularly to this organization to support the creative and art based groups that foster learning, creativity and resiliency.

To learn more about this organization and to make a monetary donation to the Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth, please see their website at: <https://www.mccy.org>.

Join the Book Discussion Group

by Chris Linder

On Sunday, March 14, the Book Discussion Group will meet to discuss *Spying on the South* by Tony Horwitz. It is the story of Frederick Law Olmstead, known as a landscape architect, who spent his early life as a journalist who traveled to the South in the 1850s to report to northern readers what it was like. The author compares Olmstead's impressions than with what those same places are like now.

On Sunday, April 11 we will discuss *The Second Mountain* by David Brooks, the New York Times op-ed writer. It is his reflections about finding joy in life after getting a degree, establishing a career, having kids, and buying a house. He finds that it is time for shifting to religion, philosophy, and community. He describes fulfillment gained from being self-centered to other-centered.

Everyone is welcome. Meetings are second Sundays of the month at 1:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating, contact Chris Linder celinder@att.net to receive the link, which will be sent out shortly before the date of each meeting. See the complete list of titles we're reading this year on the [website](#).



First Church Can Pay Your Registration for Virtual General Assembly

by Bruce Wiggins,
Denominational Affairs Coordinator

"This is only the second GA I have attended in recent years and I found it to be inspiring, challenging, raw and real -- even virtually! The worship services were spiritually fulfilling and the workshops I attended were exceptional in content and richness." **Deb Solis, member and church staff after attending GA 2020.**

"I was inspired and warmed by the enthusiasm and hope on display for advancing anti-racism and bending society towards righting the wrongs of our white-supremacy-based and colonization-driven culture." **Mark Bender, current President of our Board of Trustees after attending GA 2020.**

Forms for paying your registration to the UUA General Assembly 2021 (also known around here as "GA Milwaukee") are now available. Let Bruce Wiggins know of your interest or fill out and submit the form on the church website.

GA is "live" June 23–27, but registrants will be able to access recordings of lectures, worships, and workshops after the conference.

We call it GA Milwaukee because it will have a Milwaukee flavor. It was supposed to be live in our city this year but is now all-virtual because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it will have some Milwaukee programming including "Spotlight Milwaukee" videos, and the special offering at the Sunday worship service will go to a Milwaukee organization doing excellent social justice work. For more details, see <https://www.uua.org/ga>.

Funds to pay for many First Church members to attend have been made available in the church budget and a grant from the Lu Krug bequest. Preference will be given for youth and young adults, first-time attendees, and persons who will be Delegates from our congregation. Delegates vote at the business meetings of our Association of Congregations. If you have any questions, contact Bruce Wiggins (contact info in the church online directory and paper directory.)

Want to Become A Worship Associate? Apply by March 15!

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Worship Associates help lead our Sunday worship services, collaborating with the ministers to reflect on meaning, purpose, and the life of the congregation. Worship Associates help develop Sunday themes for worship in monthly meetings with the Ministers, Music Staff, and Program Staff. At these meetings, we delve into personal and communal understandings of monthly themes like "Hope," "Intention," and "Welcome," and then identify topics for each of the Sunday services of the month. Then individual Worship Associates work one-on-one with the ministers to prepare individual Sunday services by selecting readings or telling a personal story related to the theme of the service. During the pandemic, Worship Associates record their stories the week of their service date and submit to our Music Directors. On Sunday morning, Worship Associates moderate the chat on YouTube, then join Zoom coffee hour online as a welcoming presence to newcomers. The program includes training for Worship Associates on recording stories, how to write a compelling story, and how to create the container for the shared experience of the worship service.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for church members who:

- are inspired by worship and want to contribute to the congregation's depth of experience;
- want to engage in philosophical and theological reflection about meaning and purpose;
- have diverse identities, which this year particularly means young adults, newer members, and people of color;
- have poise and public speaking ability; and
- are deeply committed to the church and its values.

SERVICE COMMITMENTS AND APPLICATIONS

Please submit your application by March 15, 2021, through the website at <https://uumilwaukee.org/ministers-and-leaders/worship-associates/>. Worship Associates will begin with planning worship with the required Worship Associate meetings on Sunday, May 23, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., and Sunday, June 13, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., and will begin serving at worship services in September 2021. The other WA meetings will be held during the 2021-22 church year, typically on the third Sunday of each month, from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Worship Associates make a commitment to serve for two years, including during the summers, and commit to attending all WA meetings. Worship Associates will support the Ministers in leading worship about once every two months; on the date they serve covering the 10:00 a.m. worship online during the pandemic, and both the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. services in person when we re-gather.



Bye-Bye Plastic? Plastic is NOT Safer During the Pandemic

by Terry Wiggins
Earth Justice Ministry

Currently, the CDC is emphasizing that the main way coronavirus spreads is person-to-person, and not through contact with contaminated surfaces.[1] This means that we can forego plastic bags at the grocery store and go back to bringing our own cloth bags.

Plastic is a form of fossil fuel. Your plastic water bottle, grocery bag, foam carry-out container: all are made from oil or gas. It takes lots of energy to make them.

A decade ago, fossil fuel companies had in reserve five times as much coal, oil, and gas as climate scientists thought it was safe to burn. And they keep exploring for more, even though some of the direct use of fossil fuels has been decreasing. They send the excess to plastics plants, of which many, many are being constructed or planned.

Sometimes, even more fossil fuel is consumed in the manufacture, transportation, and disposal of alternatives to plastics than by using plastics themselves. But we know that plastics do not break down, and they become plastic litter, which gets into our waters and marine life.

As a 2019 NPR story reported, "So if people want less plastic, they'll have to pick replacements carefully. ... we have a history as a species of solving one problem with great intensity, only to figure out that we've created another one. ... One thing that waste experts agree on is that there's too much trash, whether it's plastic or paper or something else. And people are making more of it than ever." [2]

Plastic-Free MKE suggests that the best thing we can do to reduce the plastic piling up in Milwaukee is to refuse single-use plastic bags, straws, water bottles, utensils, and cups.[3]

Earth Justice Ministry urges us all to waste less, use less plastic, and take the pledge on Plastic-Free MKE's website.

[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>

[2] <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/09/735848489/plastic-has-a-big-carbon-footprint-but-that-isnt-the-whole-story>

[3] <https://www.plasticfreemke.org/>

View This Year's Outstanding Sunday Forums Online

by Bruce Wiggins
Sunday Forum Team

First Church has had provocative and enlightening online Forums this church year, and they have been recorded. You can view them on the church's YouTube channel. The Sunday Forum is a lecture series that showcases sometimes controversial speakers discussing topical issues: politics, the environment, health, the arts, education, and more. Sunday Forum is held online via Zoom and YouTube Live at 11:10 a.m. during the regular church year.

To view past Sunday Forums: On YouTube, find First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee YouTube Channel. Scroll down the home page to find all Forums listed.

To find upcoming Sunday Forums on the church website: Click on "Events" and then "Sunday Forum" on the dropdown menu. This will show you the upcoming Forums. Click on "Previous Events" at the bottom of the page to see a list of Forum lectures that have passed.

Sunday Forums for this church year began Sept. 20, 2020. Here are some 2021 online videos on YouTube.

- Jan. 3 "Militarism and Climate Change," Julie Byrnes Enslow, Peace Action Wisconsin & 350.org MKE
- Jan. 10 "Re-Entry Into Our Community" & "Democracy Becomes Action," Presenters Lisa & Conor Williams
- Jan. 17 "The Trial of Julian Assange and Its Implications for Press Freedom," Nils Melzer and Ray McGovern
- Jan. 24 "Science, Law and Criminal Legal System Reform," Kate Judson, Ctr for Integrity in Forensic Sciences

(Continued on page 14)



SUNDAY MORNING FORUM

11:00 AM ON ZOOM & YOUTUBE

MARCH 7

“Sojourner Family Peace Center”

Liz Marquardt: Senior Director of Data Analytics, Grants, and Compliance



Our community is hurting. At the end of 2019 and throughout 2020 there was a dramatic increase in domestic violence homicides and calls to the police for abuse related crimes. Liz Marquardt will discuss how to recognize domestic abuse and what you can do to respond. The conversation will include information about the dynamics of abuse, the impact on families, and risk factors for homicide. We will review Sojourner’s new “Know Your Risk” outreach message and discuss how you can uplift the message, support survivors, and make our community safer. She has been speaking to audiences about recognizing, and responding to, domestic violence throughout her 33 years at the agency. Host: Jo Ann Bachar

www.familypeacecenter.org

MARCH 14

“Shepherd Express: Milwaukee’s Forum for Progress”

Presenter: Dave Lührssen, Managing Editor



The Shepherd Express has a long history dating back to the early 1980s. Over the years, the Shepherd Express grew into Wisconsin’s third largest newspaper in circulation and became a forum for Milwaukee’s music scene, performing arts, and progressive politics. When COVID-19 struck Wisconsin, the Shepherd Express suspended its weekly print edition and pivoted to becoming a daily website. In August, defying the shopworn cliché that “print is dead,” the Shepherd Express returned to the physical world as a glossy monthly magazine that preserves familiar aspects of the old newspaper packaged in a new format. Host: Lorraine Jacobs (for Christian Becker)

www.shepherdexpress.com

March 21

“United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, Global and Local Challenges”

Presenter: Jack Murtaugh, Sustainability Development Goals/Program Chair, United Nations Association of Greater Milwaukee



In 2015, 193 world leaders at the UN committed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals identified by citizen consultations held around the world. The Goals are interconnected as they address ending poverty and hunger, reducing social and economic inequalities, addressing climate change, and protecting human rights. Implementation of these goals was never going to be easy, especially since financing was recognized as being integral for success. In 2020, the implementa-

(Sunday Forum continued on page 14)



SUNDAY MORNING FORUM

11:00 AM ON ZOOM & YOUTUBE

(Continued from page 13)

tion has been affected by such issues as COVID-19, the rise of authoritarian leaders, economic stagnation, and the increase in the migration of refugees. If the world community is going to move forward in creating an environment of peace, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals provide a path for action. The United States needs to both be an example and a leader in their implementation.
Forum Host: Dan O'Keefe



March 28

“Public Safety, Top Priority”

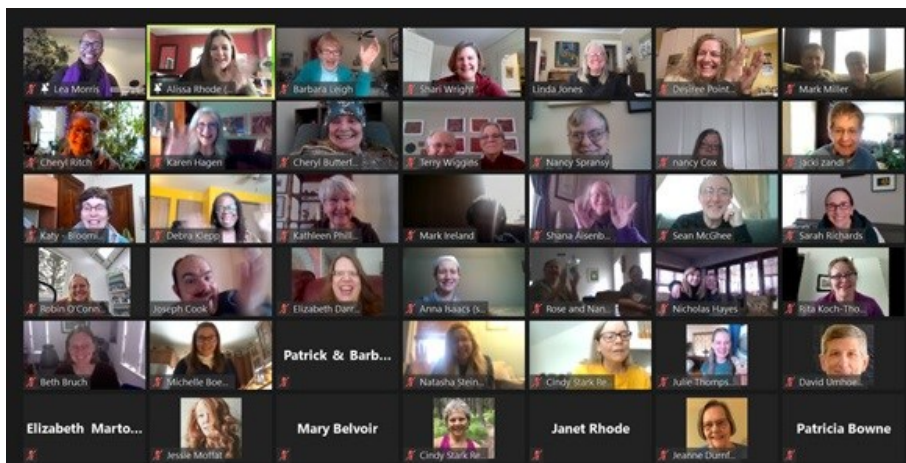
Presenter: Josh Kaul, Attorney General of Wisconsin

Josh Kaul's top priority is public safety. Under his leadership, the Wisconsin Department of Justice has worked to combat the opioid epidemic and the increasing use of meth in Wisconsin. He has also worked to make our schools and communities safer from gun violence, and to pass legislation designed to prevent Wisconsin from having another backlog of untested sexual assault kits. Kaul is also committed to fighting for clean and safe drinking water and against climate change and to protecting the rights of Wisconsinites. Forum Host: Mark Mueller

(Forum on YouTube, continued from page 12)

- Jan. 31 “Eco-fascism: Lessons from the German Experience,” Peter Staudenmaier, Marquette University
- Feb. 7 “Starr King School for Ministry,” Jessica Neno Cloud, VP for Advancement, Starr King School for the Ministry
- Feb. 14 “Politics in Wisconsin, 2021 Edition,” Jay Heck, Common Cause-Wisconsin
- Feb. 21 “What’s It Like Running for Assembly in Wisconsin?” Jacob Malinowski, former candidate for Wisconsin Assembly
- Feb. 28 “Police Accountability,” George Martin, Milwaukee Martin Luther King Justice Coalition





Global Audience Attends “Heart Wide Open”

by Alissa Rhodes
Lead Music Director

On February 13, the First Church Music Ministry hosted “Heart Wide Open: Soulfolk & Song with LEA.” 107 Zoom accounts registered for the event, with attendees joining from as far away as Northern Ireland. Guests also joined us from two Canadian provinces and fifteen states across the continental US. We sang, we listened, we chatted and engaged in a lively and inspiring songversation with LEA. By the end, my heart was not only open, it was full.

Thank You to Our Event Sponsors! I would like to extend a deep and heartfelt gratitude to event sponsors Dale Skaggs and Lynda Lambert, Patrick and Barbara Patterson, Nick and Angela Hayes, Mark Miller and Amy Wilbourne, who collectively donated LEA’s artist fee. Their generosity made it possible for 100% of ticket proceeds to benefit the First Church Music Ministry and our ongoing efforts to expand programming beyond the scope of Sunday services.

In the months to come, we will continue to explore ways in which we might offer communal musical experiences that nurture, engage and inspire. If you would like to learn more and/or are interested in possibly sponsoring a future event, please contact Lead Music Director Alissa Rhode at alissa.rhode@uumilwaukee.org.

Thank you to all who attended and donated to make “Heart Wide Open” a success!

HOW TO REACH US

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1342 N. Astor St., Milwaukee, WI 53202

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

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