

DECEMBER 2021

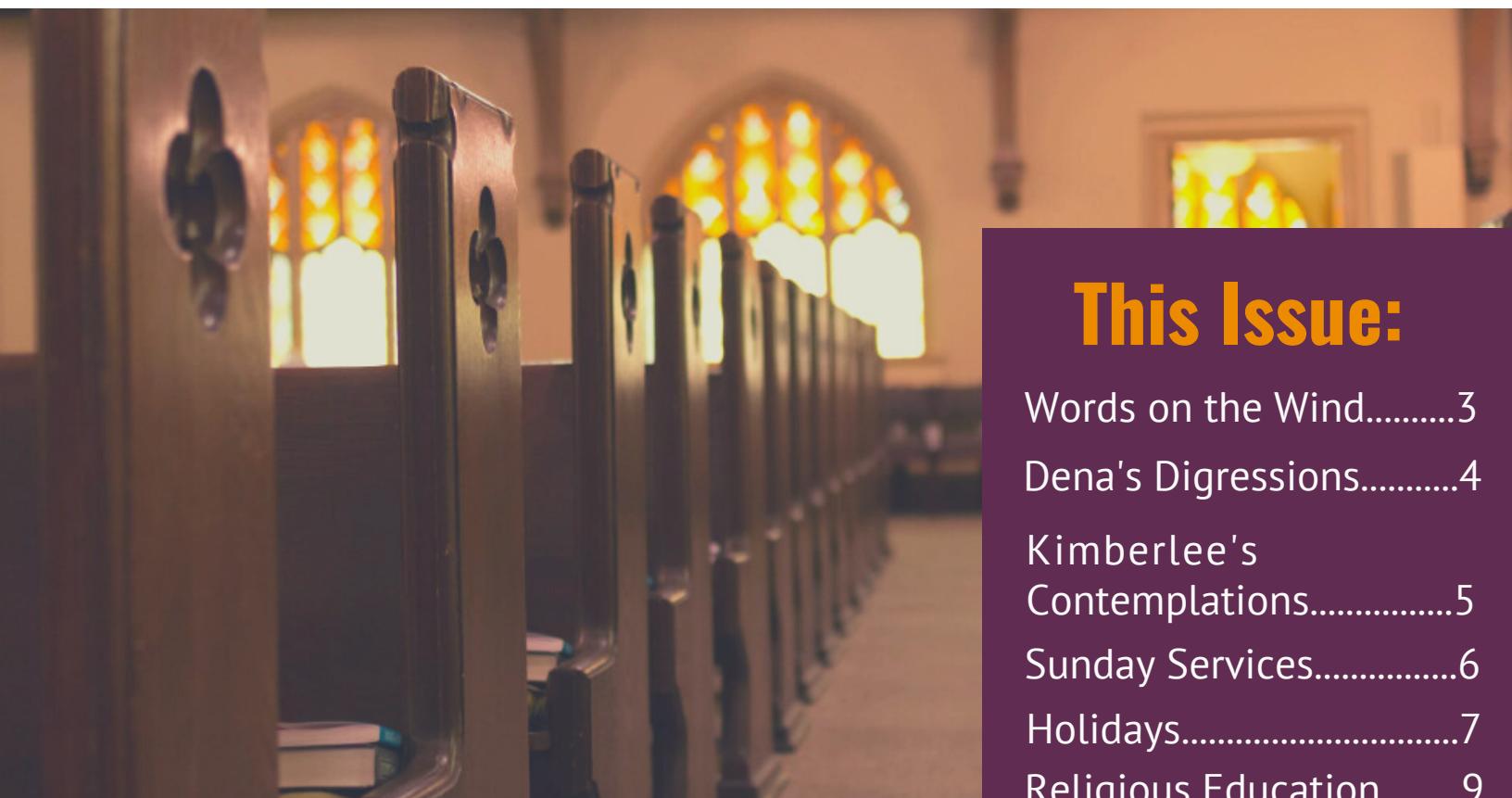


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The First Unitarian Society
of Milwaukee

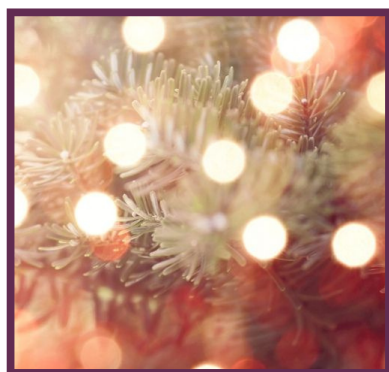
nurture. engage. inspire.



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Monthly Theme



*What does it mean to
be a people*

Opening to
JOY

Christmas Eve Offering Recipients

Every year, our congregation gives the whole 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. We will be collecting donations during the in-person service on Christmas Eve. You may also give to these organization with our online giving form on December 24.

Repairers of the Breach is Greater Milwaukee's only daytime refuge and resource center for homeless adults open 6 days per week. They believe that offering life-saving, life-sustaining, and life-restoring programs is key to self-reliability.

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.

December Share the Plate

Maroon Calabash is our December Share the Plate recipient.

Maroon Calabash is a Black-led nonprofit organization that provides a space for Black birth workers in Milwaukee County to practice liberatory Reproductive Justice at the intersection of cultural traditions and modern medicine.

Maroon Calabash partners with Next Door Foundation and provides support to Black pregnant and postpartum folxs by providing doula services. They provide a deeper network of support for their clients that is nonjudgmental and offers full spectrum reproductive care. They also run a number of drives for supplies to meet the needs of postpartum folxs including diaper drives (this includes donations of baby wipes, postpartum pads and ice packs) as well as soliciting donations of gently used baby supplies, furniture and clothes. For more information on Maroon Calabash or to donate to their drives, please visit their website at <https://www.marooncalabash.com/>.

Contributions can be made securely online at the [First Church link here](#) or mail your check to First Church made payable to: Maroon Calabash. The church will send all contributions to Maroon Calabash.



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

With great joy, we will open the sanctuary for Christmas Eve services at 3:30 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 6:30 p.m!

This December, we will explore the joys and challenges of “Opening to Joy.”

While we must limit attendance to 100 people per service for safety reasons, we are so looking forward to gathering with you in our beautiful church home for our first indoor, in-person services since the COVID pandemic began. Make sure to reserve your seat in advance! Reservations can be made beginning December 1 and are open to members and guests on a first-come, first-served basis. We will livestream the 5:00 p.m. service for people who need to attend virtually.

After Christmas Eve, we will return to worship online-only for a month, so staff have time to get everything in place to be able to offer in-person and online services simultaneously every Sunday morning. We anticipate opening the church to every Sunday in-person worship services beginning in February. Attendance at those services will also be limited to 100 people per service, and will require reservations in advance, and proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test to attend. Online worship services will still be available as well.

There will be challenges and imperfection in the process of returning to in-person worship at First Church, but there will also be great JOY. I look forward to truly opening to that joy with you.

Funds Available for Members and Friends in Crisis

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom &
Rev. Dena McPhetres

There are funds available for First Church members and active friends who are experiencing short-term financial need. If you, or one of your First Church friends, is having a sudden financial need, contact one of the Ministers to talk about this crisis support fund. These funds are available as a result of the generosity of First Church members who have been donating to a small Ministers' Discretionary Fund designed to help our members and active friends who are in emergency situations like sudden job loss, hospitalization, or pandemic-related urgent financial need.

We now have over \$4,000.00 available in this fund and want to make sure church members and friends are aware of this resource for financial emergencies. If you are in need, please contact Rev. Jennifer or Rev. Dena.

Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



It doesn't seem like joy should be complicated, but sometimes it is. Opening to joy, our theme for December, indicates there is something we can do to increase the likelihood that we will experience joy, and I think that's true. As we approach another pandemic winter, making a practice of opening to joy might be more important than ever.

Pandemic winter is a strange season. Last pandemic winter, I felt joy less frequently than usual, but when it came, I felt it more acutely and appreciatively, recognizing how it felt like grace into a time of sorrow and loneliness. This inspired me to practice looking for and noticing joy more often. For example, I notice a burst of joy inside when I see your dear faces on Zoom or during our outdoor worship services. I notice joy when observing the beauty of nature on my daily walks. I reminisce about joy in times past – winters of skiing, snowshoeing, skating, building snow forts, making snow angels. I feel joy when talking to a friend or greeting a neighbor. Simple things like singing around the house give me unaccountable joy.

When do you feel joy? What are you doing when you feel joy? If you can identify it, do more of it, as long as it doesn't harm you or others. Let yourself feel joy and appreciate it because sometimes it is fleeting.

Christmas scriptures and music often use the word "behold." My practice of opening to joy involves beholding what brings joy. Behold. Stop. Notice. Feel joy. It's OK to open to joy, even if it brings tears

All in the Family

Life is hard sometimes. We experience sickness, job loss, broken hearts, and broken bodies. We want to support you through those difficult times.

Our healing prayers are with **Barb Garnier** who is recovering from shoulder surgery.

Our healing thoughts are with **Marlowe Nortrom** who is recovering from a broken hip.

Congratulations to **Katie and Noel Kegel** who welcomed their baby daughter Athena Aster Kegel into the world on June 11, 2021.

Rev. Kimberlee's beloved mother-in-law, Jean Carlson Adams entered hospice in November. During this time, her family welcomes emails and cards of support, but not extended conversations.



Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



When asked, “What is joy?” Rev. Willie James Jennings of Duke Divinity School responds, “I look at joy as an act of resistance against despair and all its forces.” He goes on to explain that when he says despair, he means, “all the ways in which life can be presented to us as not worth living.”

This definition of joy resonates within me as staying open to joy requires a rebellious heart and a willingness to embrace life even as we struggle during these times. Lately, I’ve found joy in the little things like holding the hand of a loved one in the hospital, watching my child teach the neighbor child how to ride their bike, hot tea on a cold day and getting to bless a baby as the snow falls.

I believe joy is a part of our life inheritance because joy is so indomitable, intertwined so intrinsically with life that it exists even in despair. I know I have found it even there.

When we find laughter together in the midst of suffering or gather together in a ritual of remembrance that celebrates our beloveds, we find joy can exist even in our sorrow. Joy offers

us a moment of transcendence in these moments and creates a connection with something beyond ourselves that is sacred and worthy.

Being open to joy, cultivating joy in our lives requires a grateful heart that celebrates our blessings as it acknowledges the possibility of suffering and loss. We are not grateful or joyful without a sense of wonder at our aliveness and relationships that connects us to the world.

Joy as an act of resistance, let this be an action we take every day.

Let us make opening to joy something we put on our holiday list and check it off whenever we find it. And then put it on the list again every day we wake up and breathe in air and smile at those we love and keep getting to live.

May we be exemplars of intention to one another, sharing gratitude, acknowledging all the little things that add up to name and claim joy.

Blessings,
Rev. Kimberlee





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Joy to the World!

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Paul Kosidowski, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

[Sunday Service YouTube link](#)

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Joybilee: Letting Go & Getting to Joy

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Yalanda Ludtke & Susie Seidelman, Worship Associates

[Click for info about this service](#)

[Sunday Service YouTube link](#)

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Our Odes to Joy Holiday Pageant

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Religious Education

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

[Click for info about this service](#)

[Sunday Service YouTube link](#)

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First Universalist Church Minneapolis

Online at **11:00 a.m.**

[Click for info about this service](#)

[Sunday Service YouTube link](#)

Holidays at First Church



Blue Christmas Vespers

Wednesday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m. On YouTube
Although Christmas is not always merry, it can be holy.

[Click for information about this service](#)

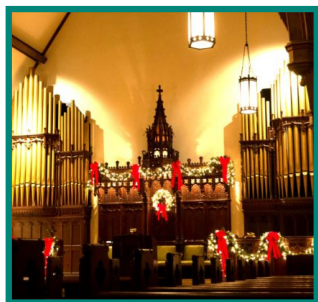


Holiday Pageant

December 19 at 10:00 a.m. on YouTube

[Click for information about this service](#)

[Learn how to participate in this service](#)



Christmas Eve Services

December 24 at 3:30, 5:00, & 6:30 p.m.

We will hold our traditional Christmas Eve services in the Sanctuary.

[Click for information about this service](#)

[Reservations required for In-Person Service](#)



Advent Practice

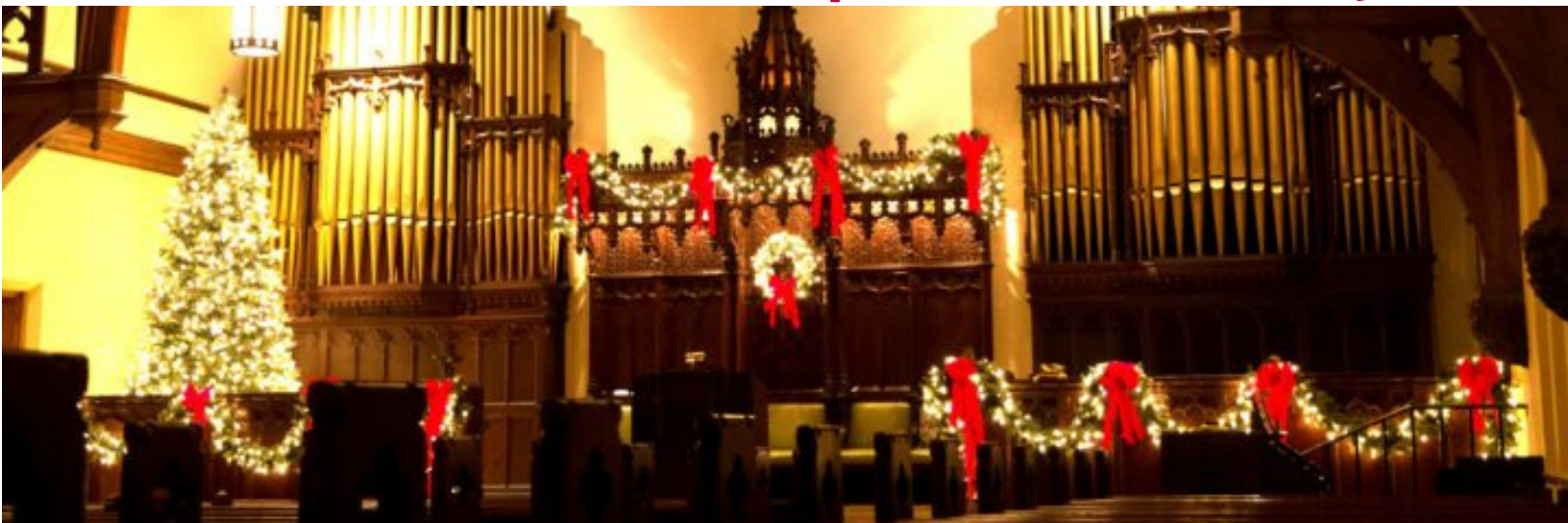
Weekly, December 1-22, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

This Advent season, slow down mid-week with the ancient monastic contemplative practice of Lectio Divinia.

[Click for more information.](#)

[Click to receive the secure Zoom link.](#)

With great joy, we announce that we will hold 3 Christmas Eve services in-person in the Sanctuary!



3:30, 5:00, and 6:30 p.m.

Join us for our simple, traditional multigenerational Christmas Eve service of song, candlelight, and stories in our Sanctuary. There will be an opportunity to socialize, masked and without refreshments, in the Common Room after each service. The whole family is welcome in all services.

Reserved seating only limited to 100. Reservations open December 1. Link to reserve your seat is: bit.ly/ChristmasatFUSM. If you cannot access a computer, call Shari Wright at (414) 273-5257.

Proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test is required and will be checked at the door.

Find important safety and logistics details on this [web page](#).

Online at 5:00 p.m.

This service will be livestreamed from the Sanctuary to all who prefer. To enjoy the service, we will provide the livestream link and order of service on our [website](#).

Christmas Kits: To help you bring the sanctuary into your candlelit home, you may request from the church office a Christmas kit containing candles to hold and orders of service. If you are not able to come to the door of the church to pick up your kit and would like a kit delivered to your home by our Pastoral Care Provider "elves," please contact PCP Coordinator Jane Dorweiler at fuspcprovider@gmail.com or 414-839-3053 by Sunday, December 19.

Christmas Eve Offering Recipients: We give away our entire Christmas Eve offering every year. This year, you can support one or both of these worthy organizations: Interchange Food Pantry our neighborhood food pantry and Repairers of the Breach daytime refuge and resource center for homeless.



Holiday Giving Tree

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomzcak Carlson

We have a short window to be a part of our local Holiday Giving Tree through United Way this year, donations are due by December 3, 2021.

Let's help ensure individuals that may otherwise go without have something to open this holiday. We invite you to contribute \$30 towards filling a gift wish. All donations will be used to purchase and directly ship the requested gift to the participating nonprofits for distribution to the individuals and families they serve. Whenever possible, United Way plans to purchase gifts from Black-owned businesses, small businesses, and women-owned businesses in our region.

Please consider donating through our First Church Giving Tree link at [United Way First Unitarian Society Milwaukee](#).

Thank you for taking part in this special program to make the season brighter for so many across our region.

December RE Calendar

December 2

7:00 p.m. Youth UU Wellspring -
Second Source

December 5

11:15 a.m. Families Together
1:00 p.m. Crossing Paths: Catholicism

December 9

7:00 p.m. Youth Group - Soul Matters
Opening to Joy theme

December 12

11:15 a.m. Families Together
1:00 p.m. Crossing Paths: Catholicism

December 16

7:00 p.m. Youth Group - Fun & Games

December 19

Holiday Pageant

December 23

7:00 p.m. Youth Group - Soul Matters
Opening to Joy theme

December 26

11:15 a.m. Families Together
1:00 p.m. Crossing Paths: Catholicism

December 23

7:00 p.m. Youth Group



Giving Tuesday and Joy

by Lynne Jacoby

First Church will be participating in Giving Tuesday this year to help fund virtual access to our programs even when we go back to gathering in person.

And believe me I can't wait to gather again in person! I confess I've long resisted the idea of "embodied" experiences as a deep way of understanding. Not anymore! Being together physically makes a difference. Plus, I just miss people and chance conversations that help weave connection in the halls or after meetings, and hello grins given and received. I miss it all.

Still, when I think of virtual church, I think of my 90-year-old dad, whose been tuning into services from Vermont and says (almost every time I speak to him!), "Your ministers are just wonderful, just wonderful, both of them!" And I think of Cami, who explained to our Zoom Anti-racism Team meeting last week that she was speaking softly because she had just put her daughter to bed. I also think of Janet, Lisa, Nancy, Don, Chris, and others who have been vital leaders in this community and remain so from different states now, thanks to Zoom.

Selfishly, I think of Liz who Zooms in from Oklahoma to our weekly Poetry Group. In fact, when we move the weekly group to in-person once a month, I'm guessing a third of our participants live too distantly to join us for those sessions. If we can't bring them into the room virtually on those Wednesdays, I'll miss their insights, humor and perspectives.

But with Liz, I'll find myself smiling even before I know what she's going to say, and I think it's because she almost always has a deep strain of gratitude in her reflections. I don't even know if gratefulness is a conscious choice or practice for her. But I do believe it's a source of a joy I sense in her that is not always upbeat, but is contagious even through Zoom. I'd miss her example of gratitude. I'd miss her joy.

Winter Membership Class

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.

The Journey to Membership class is a prerequisite to joining, but a commitment to joining is not necessary to participate.

Wednesdays, January 12, 19, 26 and February 2 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. online with Zoom.

[Click Here for Class Registration](#)



First Unitarian SOCIETY OF MILWAUKEE
Earth Justice Ministry

Earth Justice Ministry Joins Plastic-Free MKE Coalition

by Bruce Wiggins
Co-Chair Earth Justice Ministry

Earth Justice Ministry plans to join the Plastic-Free Milwaukee Coalition and lend our hands and voices to reduce the use of single-use plastic in our city. We'll also promote the Lake-Friendly restaurant program P-F MKE has initiated.

Check out the new Earth Justice Ministry logo we'll use in social media, public statements, and other communications. Thank you Digital Outreach Coordinator Molly Sommerhalder!

Interfaith Conference Annual Meeting

by Patricia McFarland

Our Interfaith Annual "Luncheon" and meeting will be on Zoom on Thursday, December 9 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting is scheduled in the early evening to respect the Chanukah season. Details to follow. Contact Pat at 414-630-1978 for more information.

Register Now For Fall Yoga

Instructor Morgan Engels offers Monday evening and Wednesday morning yoga classes through Zoom, allowing students to participate from the safety of their homes.

The first half of this class will begin with some gentle Qi Gong movements to open up, warm up and connect to our breath. This part of the class can be practiced standing or seated in a chair. The second half of the class will be the practice of Yin Yoga. Yin Yoga is practiced entirely on the ground. Yin Yoga invites you to slow down and create space for stillness while nourishing joints, ligaments, tendons, and fascia. Yin is yoga at its deepest, quietest, and stillest moments.

Monday Yoga 5:45 p.m.
Dec. 13 - Feb. 21

[Online Registration](#)

Wednesday Yoga 9:00 a.m.
Dec. 15 - Feb. 23

[Online Registration](#)



Sunday Morning Forum

11:00 AM ON ZOOM & YOUTUBE



DECEMBER 5

Obamacare Wars

Phillip Rocco, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science-Marquette University, is co-author of “Obamacare Wars: Federalism, State Politics and the Affordable Care Act.” Phillip will review his book and bring us up to date on the state of healthcare in Wisconsin and the nation. Prof. Rocco’s research examines the political economy of policy expertise.

DECEMBER 12

Life of American Journalism?

John Harrison Nichols is a liberal / progressive American journalist and author. He is the National Affairs correspondent for The Nation and associate editor of The Capital Times. Books authored or co-authored by Nichols include The Genius of Impeachment and The Death and Life of American Journalism.



Join the Forum on Zoom or watch these presentations live or saved after Sunday on the First Church **YouTube Channel**.

Sunday Morning Forum



DECEMBER 19

A Conversation with Brent Hazelton

Brent Hazelton, Artistic Director Milwaukee Chamber Theater, will share with us his thoughts about the current season of the Milwaukee Chamber Theatre and his plans for the theatre's future seasons. He will do this via an informal question and answer format. As an institutional leader, Brent is eager to explore how a regional theater can speak directly to the experience of its community and include everyone who chooses to call it home in that conversation.

In-Memoriam

Cheryl Lee Butterfield

Cheryl Lee Butterfield died early in the morning Friday, October 22, 2021 at St. Luke's hospital. Cheryl traveled a long journey with a rare slow-growing cancer of the blood vessels since she was diagnosed in 2012. Cheryl was 76 years old and was a member of First Church for 20 years.

An online memorial service was held Thursday, November 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. with the Rev. Dena McPhetres, officiating. A recording of the service is available for viewing at this private You Tube link: <https://youtu.be/ieHrfmJ6gaM>

A Candle of Life was lit in memory of Cheryl during our First Church online worship service on Sunday, October 24, 2021.

Charitable donations may be made to:
Literary Services of Wisconsin
First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

In-Memoriam

Eleanor Janet Wickman

Eleanor "Ellie" Wickman died peacefully in her sleep at home on Tuesday, October 12, 2021. She was 80 years old and was a member of First Church since 1981. She was the beloved wife of Buzz Wickman for 57 years.

A private memorial service with family was held on Friday, October 29, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at a local funeral home with the Rev. Dena McPhetres, officiating.

A Candle of Life was lit in memory of Eleanor during our First Church online worship service on Sunday, October 24, 2021. A celebration honoring Ellie's life is anticipated for the summer of 2022 in Milwaukee.

Charitable donations may be made to:
Eva Burrell Animal Shelter
6091 W. US Highway 2
Manistique, MI 49854



Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, December 1 & 15 6:30 p.m.

[Join Us Here](#)

Join us as we meet to share our thoughts and interpretations of Buddhist teachings and ideas from the current book. Then we meditate as a group for a short while and have fellowship. On Zoom. For more information, contact Mark Miller at gatheringwaterssangha@gmail.com.

Poetry Contemplation

Every Wednesday, 9:00 am

[Join Us Here](#)



Join us online as we listen, respond, and rest with the words of selected poets and in the company of others in our community. Come listen for what resonates and illuminates. Members, guests, and visitors are welcome to join this open, weekly, drop-in practice.

Book Discussion Group

Sunday, December 12, 12:45 pm

Join us as we discuss December's read: *Mind Fixers: Psychiatry's Troubled Search for the Biology of Mental Illness* by Anne Harrington. A compelling analysis our understanding of mental illness in biology and behavior. The author confronts the gaps between aspirations and reality with fairness and empathy.



Connect & Reflect

Every Thursday, 6:00 pm

[Join Us Here](#)

Connect with a small group as we share a short reading and check in with how your spirit is doing. Reflect together on a few questions prompted from the reading. Sharing is always optional. Bring yourself, your dinner, your joys, your concerns. All are welcome.

A Conversation about the Future of our Seven Principles

by Michelle Boehm, Rollie Hanson, and Terry Wiggins
Article II Team

Do you know the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism may be revised?

The Seven Principles are part of our Living Tradition, a covenant and statement from the merger of the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association in 1961. In creating the UUA bylaws, the merger process created a covenant that the member congregations would affirm and promote the Seven Principles in Article II.

Concerns were brought forth at the 2017 General Assembly (GA) that the Seven Principles had not been updated regularly as planned and may not address our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. The UUA Board of Trustees appointed a Study Commission in 2019 to review the principles section of the bylaws and propose revisions through a lens of love in action.

That proposal will be submitted in January 2022 and may be voted on at GA 2022. It will soon be time for our congregation to examine our values and determine whether they align with any proposed revisions, because our delegates to GA may be called upon to participate in a vote that would have lasting impact on our church community.

Stay tuned! We will be sharing more and encouraging conversations on this important topic

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person

2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Splinters from the Board

by Dianna Dentino

Board of Trustee Member

The Board of Trustees held their monthly meeting in October. The Board reviewed highlights from the First Church member survey conducted in December 2020. There were 160 replies. The survey reflected a mosaic that is our community.

Responses from the most recent survey reflected an older demographic of replies and fewer families replies compared to the survey taken in 2018. The focus of the survey was the Ends Statements and how they are perceived and processed by First Church members, and if we as a community think that progress towards these Ends Statements is being made. The survey results do reflect that members feel that we are making progress towards our Ends Statements.

Reverend Jennifer reported that while we are still in the midst of the pandemic, the First Church COVID Team is creating a comprehensive safe return plan as the COVID numbers decrease. At this writing, preliminary discussions to returning to in-person services include a projected three-step process. The specifics of that three-phase process can be found on our website.

Safety protocols for all three phases will include: proof of vaccination or test results within 72 hours of the meeting plus other safety protocols to include masking, limited numbers of people gathering, appropriate distancing, etc. All phases will offer virtual options in addition to in-person.

Other business discussed was the Strategic Planning Committee interviewing fund raising consultants. They hope to have names to put forward to the Board of Trustees at the November meeting. The goal is to address and close the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee's persistent financial gap to provide our present and future community members with a stable foundation for continued presence in the Milwaukee community, now and for future generations.

Staff Directory

SENIOR MINISTER

The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom
jennifer.nordstrom@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 201

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

The Rev. Dena McPhetres
dena.mcphetres@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 202

MINISTER EMERITUS

The Rev. Andrew C. Kennedy, D.Min.

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

Jean Johnson
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MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Rev. Kimberlee Carlson
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YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

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FACILITIES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

Jim Spice

MAINTENANCE WORKER

Art Sims

LEAD MUSIC DIRECTOR

Alissa Rhode
alissa.rhode@uumilwaukee.org

CHORAL DIRECTOR

Tristan Strelitzer
tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org

COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Teresa Drews
teresa.drews@uumilwaukee.org

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

Board of Trustees Officers

President Jane Cliff

Vice President Ben LeFort

Secretary Tony Panciera

Treasurer Tom Briscoe

Members

George Bledsoe

Dianna Dentino

Patricia Geenen

Rollie Hanson

Mike Hogan

Mark Miller

How to Reach Us

414.273.5257

first.church.office@uumilwaukee.org

1342 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202

PLEASE NOTE: In December, we will have some limited meetings and programs in the building. Please email the staff for more information.

Visit us at



uumilwaukee.org



Follow us on Instagram. Like us on Facebook. Join our Facebook Group. Subscribe to our YouTube Channel.