

CHANTICLEER

The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.



Monthly Theme



What does it mean to be a people

Widening the Circle

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Inside News

by The Chanticleer Editors

Despite the delay until March to open church for in-person Sunday services, there is excitement in the building. Staff are busy preparing new programs and improving systems and infrastructure of First Church.

The most exciting project is the new audio system in the Sanctuary, a project planned and funded a few years ago by Lu Krug's bequest. In January, Lead Music Director Alissa Rhode managed installation of new microphones, a new digital mixer, and much needed new wiring to replace the 20-year-old sound system.

While the new audio system was tested and tuned to the room, several staff swayed and hummed to the sound filling the room. The warmth and richness of our Steinway piano will fill you with a great audio experience on Sundays.

Please check weekly electronic news (Friday e-nnnouncements), our Facebook page, and our website for upcoming church opening dates and information on our COVID safety news. If you don't receive the weekly news, or would like to get on our Facebook Group, see the links below.

Click to receive weekly eNews

Subscribe to Facebook Group

February Share the Plate



Health Connections, Inc. (HCI) is a non-profit organization bringing health care services to some of Milwaukee's most marginalized populations.

Staff at HCI is dedicated to practicing primary care, behavioral health, and health-related social services coordination, with a special focus on vulnerable populations that traditionally experience barriers to accessing health care. These populations include youth, underinsured, HIV+, and LGBTQ.

In response to COVID-19, HCI has provided a significant amount of community-based COVID-19 testing and community education to Milwaukee County residents since February 2020. Testing is vital for reducing transmission rates among marginalized populations in Milwaukee. Culturally appropriate community education/outreach helps communicate COVID-19 prevention, risk, and care options.

HCI introduced several services to help communities come together safely. They continue to provide:

- Drive-thru & mobile COVID-19 Testing
- K-12 In-school Testing
- Community Event Testing in partnership with local organizations and churches
- COVID-related Regulatory Compliance for Schools, Congregate Living Facilities, Businesses, Government Agencies

Funding is needed for PPE, COVID-19 testing supplies and staff time to serve our community.

Donate to this STP Partner



Words on the Wind by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

We are sorry to share the disappointing news that we are temporarily postponing our return to in-person worship services and religious education during the Omicron wave of coronavirus. Our COVID Team, made up of First Church members who are medical professionals, made this decision because the Omicron variant is getting around vaccinations in a substantial way.

Our current in-person church plan relies on proof of vaccination or a negative COVID PCR test to keep people safe, instead of a low Milwaukee County COVID incidence rate on which our previous plan was based. Although vaccination continues to protect against serious illness and death, there is enough transmission among vaccinated people that we are joining the many churches who are choosing not to gather in large groups in person during this surge.

Why?

Although the risk to vaccinated people is relatively low, the risk to our health care system is high. Our hospitals and our health care workers are already hitting their capacities, and we are not yet at the peak of cases or hospitalizations in this surge.

Overwhelmed hospitals mean people who need medical care may not be able to get it, including vaccinated people who are immunocompromised or have other health conditions, young children who can't yet be vaccinated, as well as people who need care for other issues, from heart attacks to car accidents.

When will in-person worship be offered?

We will not be back in person for worship before March 6, 2022. We don't know when the peak of this surge will be, but we hope it will be in the next month. The COVID Team will meet again mid-January, and then will be checking in weekly to assess the situation. We will keep you updated through email blasts, announcements, and social media about next steps, and give you at least 10 days notice for the resumption of in-person services.

What about small groups?

Small groups of staff-led teams can continue to meet in-person at church if they so choose. We will be communicating with small groups of member-led ministries in the coming weeks to

Words on the Wind Continued

prepare you to meet in-person by getting you trained on vaccination-checking systems and new technology that will allow your group to meet in-person while others join you online.

What happens next?

We plan on gathering in-person for worship and religious education soon. Coronavirus is on its way to being endemic, and our church will keep adapting to changing circumstances. Sadly, because of the level of transmission and vaccine escape of this Omicron variant, we need to wait a little bit longer before we do that. We are disappointed and frustrated too. But we are continuing to live our Unitarian Universalist values and eagerly await the day we will see your beautiful faces in our beloved sanctuary.

Soon, dear ones. Soon.

With love,

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister, and

The First Church COVID Team

Erik Alexander, MD, COVID Team Chair Jean Johnson, Director of Administration Lisa Koneazny, RN Stacy Koenen, Healthcare Administrator Trudy Watt, Professor of Architecture



Re-Entry Ritual

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom and Rev. Dena McPhetres

Returning to in-person worship in March will be a sacred and emotional experience. We invite your intentionality in this moment, and offer a simple ritual to hold you.

At our first in-person worship services, we will have a table at the front of the sanctuary filled with candles. We invite you to arrive early to worship and light a candle marking your return to this sacred space. You may also wish to light a candle of blessing for our future, or a candle to honor anyone or anything lost during your time away.

We will continue to offer this ritual container as long as our members are using it, so you will probably have more than one opportunity to light candles. Thank you for sharing yourself, your blessings, and your grief in community.

Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



It was only a plan, but a plan we counted on, to be able to open for in-person Sunday worship in our beloved sanctuary in early February. When I count on something good happening, I am very disappointed when plans need to change.

Sounds like the story of the pandemic! We think we have a sense of what is happening now and what might happen in the future, then things change. The COVID-19 virus changes more rapidly than human-made plans.

I don't know what to compare this moment in our community's life to—the "anticipation" ketchup commercial? The Ground Hog's Day movie? How are you doing, dear ones? You've been very patient, loving and adaptable throughout these almost two years since the virus entered Milwaukee. It's normal to feel frustrated, disappointed, sad or angry when good plans are postponed. It's important now to keep the faith. We will be together again in 3-D soon.

At the liberal Christian seminary I attended, we said and sang the phrase "soon and very soon." I don't remember the rest of the content. It was probably about looking forward to the

resurrection or reunion with Jesus or the coming of God's Kingdom at last. At any rate, it was a joyful song. To tide us over this temporary delay, perhaps it would be fun to name what we are most looking forward to at our 3-D reunion in our beautiful church building?

"Soon, and very soon, we will _____."

Fill in the blank.

Soon and very soon, we will see how tall each other's children are.

Soon and very soon, we will say "is that you?" under the mask and grey hair.

Soon and very soon, we will hear the happy sound of babies' cries and parents' shushes.

Soon and very soon, we will hear the glad sound of children clattering down the stairs to the Young Room for Religious Education.

Soon and very soon, we will bump into someone in the church hallway who we haven't seen on Zoom and get caught up with their life.

How are you keeping the faith?

Yours, Dena



Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



At first, I attended church the way you might visit Urgent Care. When my heart ached, my spirit was tangled up and needing space to stretch, I would sneak into church. Right before service started, I would sit in the back row. I'd listen, then sing loudly, cry quietly, and sneak out of church before anyone noticed my soulful triage. This kind of spiritual practice is not recommended, yet it did provide a temporary salve on my soul. Those visits gave me a reprieve from my week and a safe space to feel, wonder, and seek truth.

Years later, I was a public-school teacher in a small city in Wisconsin with older and more conservative colleagues. I was surrounded by good people who nonetheless did not want to reflect on how oppression could be minimized or what efforts needed to be made to conserve the Earth's resources. I felt alone, idealistic, and paralyzed by anxiety for the world. My liberal heart needed nourishing. Seeking a community that would challenge and cherish me, I returned to the place I had found solace, a Unitarian Universalist faith community.

There I found people who named oppression, who worked to expand horizons for everyone and wanted to widen the circle of love in the world. Unitarian Universalists at our best, remind me of the song by Greg Greenaway, "What Must Be Done," he sings:

I learned as a child there are two ways to see The world as it is and the way it should be Some people say that's just not my problem Some people do what must be done

Today, I get to help widen the circle of love with, and to, our families, children and youth, and all of you.

February 1st marks the halfway point between winter and spring solstice—we are halfway to spring! We are resilient and we will continue to do what must be done.

And I hope you will join me in March downstairs in religious education, we need volunteers to widen some circles and even scribble inside.

Blessings, Rev. Kimberlee





6

Draw the Circle Wide

New Member Ceremony

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Jobey Clarke, Worship Associate
Click for info about this service
Sunday Service YouTube link

13

Who Are We and Whose Are We?

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Kevin Gibson, Worship Associates
Click for info about this service
Sunday Service YouTube link

20

Buck It

Rev. Denise Cawley, Pulpit Guest
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Patrick Mulvey, Worship Associate
Click for info about this service
Sunday Service YouTube link

27

Draw A Larger Circle

Annual Youth Service

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education
Tristan Strelitzer, Lead Choral Director
Click for info about this service
Sunday Service YouTube link





Pulpit Guest February 20 ◆ Rev. Denise Cawley

Reverend Denise Cawley currently serves as Minister at Unitarian Universalist Church West, in Brookfield, Wisconsin. She is a graduate of Meadville Lombard Theological School, has served congregations in Oregon and Wisconsin, and provided chaplaincy at Planned Parenthood. She worked in non-profit management for more than 20 years and has been a pivotal player in diversity, inclusion, marriage equality, and voting rights. Rev. Cawley also brings drawing, painting and fiber arts into her ministry.



Annual Youth Service February 27

If we seek to widen the circle of respect, reconciliation, understanding, and love, particularly in places where there is a history of oppression, we need to know our own history. Our youth will reflect on our church's history, shining a light on past efforts to "draw a larger circle" and the times we missed the opportunities to "widen our circle". This young generation of UU's seek a clear-eyed approach to the challenges before us while gaining wisdom from our past. Let us consider how today's challenges are echoed in the past as we endeavor to meet the challenges of today and "draw a larger circle" in the future.



Online Sunday Services on YouTube

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our Sunday services are livestreamed each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and the video is available after the service. On our YouTube channel, you can chat with other members during the service. Also on our YouTube Channel you will find past Sunday services, the ministers' sermons, our Worship Associates' stories, Sunday Forum presentations, and more.



Subscribe to our YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/c/FirstUnitarianSocietyofMilwaukee to receive reminders of our LIVE Sunday services or other live events.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

Religious Education (RE) Online in February

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

For safety reasons, the links to all our RE Online Sessions are only available in the RE Weekly Update email. Sign up for our **RE Weekly Update here**.

- UU Preschool-2nd Grade 9:15 a.m. Each week we
 offer our youngest children a time to connect, reflect
 and have fun together in faith community! Our
 PreKindergarten-2nd grade religious education
 sessions include a wonder box guessing, mindfulness
 exercises or games, story, and songs. These RE
 sessions are led by the dedicated RE staff members,
 teacher Mariah Groshek & assistant Lindsey Porter,
 who share their love of Unitarian Universalism with
 our children.
- Families Together 11:30 a.m. online. During this
 family ministry time, we explore our faith through
 song, story and games that focus on our Unitarian
 Universalist values and congregational monthly
 themes. Rev. Kimberlee leads these interactive
 sessions that connect our families and help build our
 church community.
- Middle School and Youth Group. In February, we are meeting at 1:00 p.m. on Sundays and 7:00 p.m. on Thursdays each week to learn about the history of our church as we prepare for our Youth leading worship service "Draw A Larger Circle" on Sunday Feb. 27.



We are eager to return to offering religious education at church for our families, children and youth and need your support and cooperation to make this happen.

Volunteering with children in RE is joy filled, surprising and easy, as no preparation is needed while we work to rebuild our program. Rev. Kimberlee will lead the lessons but teaching assistants and childcare helpers are needed. I hope you will consider volunteering at least one Sunday during first service this spring, your time and care will be so very appreciated by our young people as well as the parents and caregivers who have struggled during this pandemic.

All volunteers who work with our children will need to be vaccinated and willing to have a general background check to ensure the safety of our families. The time you commit to is flexible, and all RE classes will be during first service at 9:00 a.m.

Click to Volunteer for RE

RE Volunteer Schedule

SOCIAL JUSTICE



EJM Joins Plastic-Free MKE Coalition Projects A Challenge for Church Members

by Pete Hill

Earth Justice Ministry (EJM) joined the Plastic Free MKE coalition late last year and has some activities planned. The coalition has over 60 organization members and is working in various ways to reduce and eliminate single use plastics. EJM will engage in these broader actions and provide some more information through movie screenings and Sunday Morning Forums. Importantly, there is a chance to identify what a congregation that is committed to reducing single use plastics looks like. This is where you come in!

EJM and Plastic-Free MKE hope to engage 40 individuals in a modest and fun challenge.

Unlike the not-very-fun weight-loss challenges that come around this time of year, this challenge is to find an alternative for one plastic product each month in 2022.People in EJM (and you?) have lots of suggestions and we'll share our experiences with various products. We'll track our progress and see what reduction we achieve over a year. Additionally, we'll share what is happening in the coalition and think about what we might do with our shared knowledge gained through this challenge.

All are welcome to participate in the challenge, beginning when in-person church resumes.

Meanwhile, see our logo on Plastic-Free MKE at https://www.plasticfreemke.org/who-we-are





Sunday Morning Forum

11:00 AM ON ZOOM & YOUTUBE



FEBRUARY 6

Art As Activism

Susan Simensky Bietila, Art Activist

Since the 1960s, Susan Simensky Bietila has used graphics, murals, photography, art installations, and street theater to champion causes such as water protection, anti-war protests, the Black Panthers and the 28-year struggle to prevent the Crandon mine. She has supported reproductive rights, eviction rights, and the occupation of the State Capitol through published graphics. Susan will talk about times of protest and what you can do to help Milwaukee and the nation.

FEBRUARY 13

Signs of Life in Estabrook Park

Andrew Dressel, Photographer & Friends of Estabrook Park Board Member

Estabrook Park, nestled on the east side of the Milwaukee River between Milwaukee and Shorewood, provides a stunning parade of wildlife year-round. Dressel has pictures of over 200 species, including white tailed deer, beaver, river otter, balk eagles, osprey, herons, numerous warblers, hummingbirds, turtles, butterflies and dragonflies. He will show some of these images and speak about when and where you might be able to see the same sights yourself.



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

Sunday Morning Forum



FEBRUARY 20
Wisconsin Can Close Prisons Now

David Liners, WISDOM State Coordinator

Wisconsin's prison population has been stuck at an unacceptably high level for nearly 20 years. Our state has the highest rate of incarceration for African American people of any state in the nation. The cost, to taxpayers, to families and to communities is astronomical. There are things we could easily do in 2022 to dramatically reduce the prison population with no increased risk to public safety. In the process, we could close two of our 37 prisons and save \$100 million per year -- \$100 million that could go into programs to rebuild lives and communities.

FEBRUARY 27

The 2022 Midterm Election & the Future of Democracy

Joel McNally, Columnist,
Former political commentator on
Milwaukee Public Television & WMCS-AM Radio



The most important issue in the midterms is the continuing Republican assault on American democracy. Since 2016, Joel and his wife Kit, former members of First Church, have lived in Charlottesville, Va., which was attacked in 2017 by violent, right-wing hate groups celebrating Trump's election. It turned out to be a preview of Trump's destructive, angry presidency that ended with him urging a violent mob to attack the Capitol to stop Congress from certifying President Biden's election. Joel continues to write a weekly column on Wisconsin and national politics on Milwaukee's Shepherd

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

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 and Music Directors. At these meetings, we explore monthly themes like "Living with Intention," and "Awakening," and then identify topics for each of the Sunday services of the month.

To prepare Sunday services, individual Worship Associates work one-on-one with the ministers by selecting readings or telling a personal story related to the theme of the service. Worship Associates record a video of their story the week of their service date. On Sunday morning when we are in-person, Worship Associates share their story from the pulpit. The program includes training for Worship Associates on writing and recording stories, pulpit presence, and how to create the container for the shared experience of the worship service. Because Worship Associates will speak from the pulpit during worship without a mask on, they must have all medicallyrecommended vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Worship Associates will begin planning worship at the required Worship Associate meetings on:

- Sunday May 1, 1:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 15, 1:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m.

Worship Associates will begin serving at Sunday worship services in September 2022. WA monthly meetings are typically held on the third Sunday of each month after church.

Worship Associates make a commitment to serve for two years, including during the summers, and commit to attending all WA meetings. They 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.

A Worship Associate 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.

Click Here for Registration

DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS



UUA General Assembly June 22 - 26

Meet the Moment, Reimagining Radical Faith Community

by Bruce Wiggins
Denominational Affairs Coordinator

General Assembly (GA) is the annual national gathering of UUs and also the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend. First Church has funds to reimburse delegates.

At GA, we explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles. This year, our UU principals and purposes will be among the important items discussed in the form of a by-laws amendment (see article in this Chanticleer issue.)

In 2022, we will have the option of meeting online or in-person! For those who enjoyed the convenience and accessibility of remote

participation the past two years, GA will continue to offer virtual attendance with robust programming and enhanced delegate discussion tools. For those who have been missing the physical experience, GA 2022 will also feature face-to-face interactions, hanging banners, an exhibit hall, meals with friends, local site attractions, and more!

COVID management will be important for inperson attendees. For info on this as well as other aspects of both virtual and in-person GA, see https://www.uua.org/ga or contact Bruce.

Catch Up "GA Milwaukee"

by Bruce Wiggins

The theme for last year's GA "in Milwaukee" (it turned out to be all virtual) was Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage.

Nevertheless, we did some special videos about our city and UUs here. For the Milwaukee Spotlight programming and other programs, see these links below:

- Summary of Business from GA 2021
- Video of Events from GA 2021

A Conversation About Our UU Principles in the 21st Century

by Michelle Boehm, Rollie Hanson & Terry Wiggins

The seven principles are part of our Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition, often referred to as what our church stands for. They are important because they affect how we think about our faith, how we feel about it, how we describe it to others and our relationship to our church. The UUA Board of Trustees appointed a Study Commission to review the Principles and Purposes section of our bylaws to ensure they are relevant to our values in the 21st century.

The Study Commission is gathering feedback from all UUs via an online survey that closes on April 30, 2022. This is an important time to gather for a conversation about how we are living out our shared values, inspirations, purpose, and covenant. These conversations are purposely held prior to the survey deadline so we have an opportunity to talk about what is going on and why.

Both a virtual and in-person format are available so please choose the option that works best for you. Register at https://bit.ly/UUPriciplesTalk for one of these dates.

Wednesday, February 23, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Online Sunday, March 6, 1:00-2:30 p.m. at Church

For more information about this topic, please see the December Chanticleer article. link: https://uumilwaukee.org/the-future-of-our-sevenprinciples/

Splinters from the Board

by George Bledsoe

The Board of Trustees (BOT) held its monthly meeting on December 14, 2021, via videoconference. The board monitored the Senior Minister's compliance with Policy 4.6: Asset Protection. Items of discussion included but were not limited to blanket bonding as well as the frequency, scale of and responsibility for financial audits. The board unanimously found the Senior Minister in compliance with Policy 4.6.

President Jane Cliff presented a written report for Monitoring Policy 2: Policy Governance. This policy covers all aspects of how the board operates; following are some of the items we discussed. The BOT continues to appreciate and adhere to Policy 2's call for a diversity of viewpoints while governing with one voice. Per requirements, the BOT will have monitored all our Ends by year end. A BOT liaison to the Nominating Committee has been designated and will assist in identifying new board members. The board will vote on compliance of Policy 2 at our next meeting. The board engaged in discussion surrounding the upcoming Annual Congregational Survey, as well.

The BOT are determining next steps in establishing a BOT-level Complaint Policy, as we currently do not have one. Additionally, the BOT is considering options for a facilitator for the board's Anti-Racism Training. Further considerations and decisioning are expected next meeting.

FEBRUARY EVENTS



Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, February 7 & 16, 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.

Book Discussion Group

Sunday, February 13, 12:45 pm

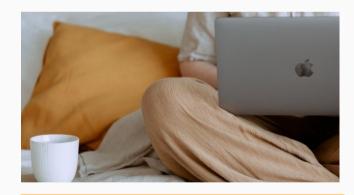


Join us as we discuss February's read *The Woman who Smashed Codes* by Jason Fagone. Contact Barbra Lancelot for the meeting location at uubarbra@gmail.com.

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.



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.

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 heartfelt compassion and condolences are with several members and their families who lost loved ones in recent months:

Sally Heuer whose mother died.

Ellen Krueger whose brother died.

Debra Klepp, whose former father-in-law, Ernest Robert Kenner, died December 10 at age 92 at the VA Hospital of Milwaukee from cancer. We also send Debra our condolences on the loss of her dear friend Naomi Tutu's father, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who died on December 26 of natural causes in the Soweto district of Capetown. He was 90 years old.

Lorraine Jacobs, whose sister and brother-in-law, Carole and Julius Yatchak, both died from COVID-related causes in late 2021. Julius was 90 years old, and died on November 14, 2021. His wife Carole was 84 years old and died on December 3, 2021.

Chris Larson and family, whose sister Betsy Larson Marusic, died on January 10, 2022 in Racine after a long journey with cancer. She was 47 years old.

Our healing thoughts are with Tess Burkart who broke her arm and is facing a long recovery. Tess welcomes cards and phone calls from church friends.

In Memoriam

Laura Ann Williams
July 13, 1970 ~ January 8,
2022



Laura Ann Williams died peacefully at home on Saturday morning, January 8, 2022, with her husband Shaun Navis, daughter Jessie, and a sister by her side. Laura had aggressive breast cancer that spread and was receiving home hospice care.

She was 51 years old and a member of our congregation since 2007. Her family will hold a memorial service in her home state of Indiana in late January. Plans for a Celebration of Life in Wisconsin will be forthcoming later.

We lit the Candle of Life in memory of Laura during our online worship service on Sunday, January 16, 2022.

Donations may be given to:
Breast Cancer Research Foundation:
https://www.bcrf.org/
or Your Local Public Library

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Please contact them directly to set up an appointment.

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Follow Us







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

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