

AUGUST 2022



THE CHANTICLEER

The First Unitarian Society
of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.



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Monthly Theme



*What does it mean to
be a people*

Love



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

In the first class of the First Church Journey to Membership series, I ask our new members to close their eyes and remember a time when they felt fully, deeply, and unconditionally loved. If they can't remember a time, then I ask them to imagine feeling that way. Each new member has some time to reflect individually, and then they share their stories with one another. At the end of the session, I ask them to complete the sentence: Love is always _____.

The sentences they come up with are always beautiful, and often surprising, from 'Love is always needed' to 'Love is always vulnerable' to 'Love is always powerful,' to 'Love is always present'.

In class, we make meaning of our experiences and then create a truth statement about how the world works: we create theology.

For Unitarian Universalists, the word we most often use interchangeably with God is the word "Love." The theology underneath that exchange is complicated and collectively created.

Sometimes the truth we create together is that Love is the most powerful force in the universe, and sometimes it is that Love makes us vulnerable. Sometimes we wrest theology from suffering and declare that Love holds the world together. Sometimes we even discover that Love can save us.

Each of us has our own lens into the meaning of Love in the world, and together we create a kaleidoscope of beauty and theology. Love connects us, holds us, and sends us forth in the process.

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom,
Senior Minister

Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



Sometimes a quote comes at me and rings the bell of my heart, resounding like the meditation bowl we ring during worship in our sanctuary. While perusing the materials from Soul Matters on the theme of Love, this quote from Mother Theresa landed right in my solar plexus: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

I judge people more than I’d like to. Maybe we all do. I wish I didn’t. Maybe we all wish we didn’t. Judging people takes up a lot of time and space in my head, crowding out the opportunity to really meet someone. I’m trying to become more aware of my judgment tendency. Whatever I am thinking about someone, it may not be true. I observe how my initial judgments blur and change as I get to know someone—how love replaces ignorance.

What if we went about our days with love as our first assumption? As we tend to each other at church, gradually returning from two years of physical separation, love is what we assume as we behold each other and find out who we are now. Love knits us together. Love pulls at the raveled thread as we soften, come undone, let ourselves feel and be vulnerable to all we’ve been through.

If I judge you and how you are doing in any given moment, I have no time to love you, because my mind is full of separations. If I love you, my mind is open and the image of you is like a painting in progress, colors changing as love reveals true knowing.

I feel so fortunate to be on this journey of love and knowing with you.

Yours,
Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister



Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



Last month, I was privileged to attend General Assembly, the annual conference and business meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association. GA combines faith, education, activism, and fun into five full days.

GA included detailed presentations and thoughtful conversations about the potential revision of the Seven Principles, the words we often use to describe Unitarian Universalism. The Article II Study Commission is the group charged by the UUA's Board of Trustees to consider and propose a potential revision. One draft idea that was shared proposed rewriting our principles as a set of value-based actions that we expect from one another, more verbs in our principles, more direction to act.

My heart is nervous and excited by the idea of changing our principles and sources. A lot has changed since the mid-eighties when the principles and sources were significantly adapted. Our faith language should reflect the wisdom we have gained since. These efforts breathe life into our UU claim that we are a living tradition, evolving and not tied to one text, creed, or written set of values.

Any change to our principles will only be made with a strong consensus within our faith in the coming years. The Article II Study Commission has a huge task before them, including gathering input from UU's across our association.

Those who took part in the Article II discussion groups this church year contributed to this process.

The UUA Board and Article II Study Commission assert that our deepest common theological grounding and value is Love. They invite us to examine how Love already shows up in our current principles, such as by naming worth and dignity and demanding justice, equity, and compassion for everyone. Where else can you find love guiding us in our principles and faith movement?

Unitarian Universalism names Love as the centering value among our theological diversity. It is love that holds us together, we are motivated by our love for this world and our hope for a more loving world. Unitarian Universalists affirm unconditional, universal love as a foundation and grounding for our actions in the world.

Our church is the place where we learn to practice the love in the world that we are striving for together. We are not alone. For me, church is a buoy in a fast-moving torrent that can too often forget kindness and misappropriate love. I am grateful to have this faith community to serve and return to again and again to find ways to continue this journey of love.

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

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Love in Community Is Not a Hallmark Card

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Patrick Mulvey, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Living Through the Lens of Love

Rev. Jen Crow, Pulpit Guest

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Marissa Riepenhoff, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Love and Boundaries

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Jobey Clarke, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Love That Saves

**Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson,
Minister of Religious Education**

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Laurel Brooks, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

Summer Sunday Service 10 a.m.



Pulpit Guest August 14 ♦ Rev. Jen Crow

Rev. Jen Crow serves as Senior Minister at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. She is the founder of Wellspring, a Unitarian Universalist program of spiritual deepening used across the country. Her commitment to recovery, spirituality, transformative love, and authenticity is at the center of her life and work. She lives with her wife and kids in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Chancel Choir Starts Up for New Church Year

The Chancel Choir will be starting up again for the 2022-2023 Church year with Thursday evening rehearsals starting on August 25. New and returning choir members are invited to join us for rehearsals from 7:15 – 9:00 p.m. and choir membership is open to all members and friends of church, high school age and up. The choir sings about once a month for services from September to June. Previous knowledge/experience with music is helpful, but not necessary. If you are interested in joining or have questions, please contact Choir Director, Tristan Strelitzer at Tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org.

What Can Theme Circles Do For You?

by Rev. Dena McPhetres,
Associate Minister

Church member Mary Gleason describes her enthusiasm:

“I have now participated in four different Theme Circles, and it has been such an enriching experience. The materials never fail to delight! At the heart of the group experience is the gift of getting to know other UUs on a deeper, more personal level. It’s been a treasure to me, especially during these pandemic times.”

If you are longing for connection, consider joining a Theme Circle—the small groups that reflect together on our monthly worship themes. Registration opens in September!



Welcome our New Pastoral Care Provider Coordinator

by Rev. Dena McPhetres
Associate Minister

We are delighted to welcome church member Liz Irwin Moore into the role of Pastoral Care Provider (PCP) Coordinator! Liz has been a member of First Church since 1984. She has 20 years of experience working as a psychotherapist and also worked as an Intake Counselor at a psychiatric hospital. She has served in many leadership roles at First Church including Chalice Circle facilitator, grief support group co-facilitator, Board of Trustees, and chair of the Associate Minister Search Committee. She was an RE teacher and assistant and enjoys volunteering in our nursery.

We give our hearty thanks to Jane Dorweiler who served with distinction as our PCP Coordinator for over three years, including during the ever-shifting COVID-19 pandemic. Jane, we appreciate your insights, sensitivity, adaptability, and positive morale during these challenging times. Thank you!

Pastoral Care Providers are the volunteers who provide a practical service like a meal or a ride to other members with short-term needs. If you need this kind of assistance, please contact Liz at: fuspcprovider@gmail.com or 414-265-1729.

Walk & Roll at Lakeshore State Park, August 13

by Cheri Biscoe

Environmental Justice Ministry

Join Cheri Briscoe for a meander along the Hank Aaron State Trail at Lakeshore State Park, with views of colorful prairies, Lake Michigan and downtown Milwaukee. With the help of its very active friends group, this park continues to grow more beautiful each year. Join us to learn about ongoing and future habitat restoration projects, the history of this unique site, and the plants and animals that call our lakeshore their home.

Join us at 10:00 a.m. and we'll walk approximately 1 mile on the trail around this manmade island behind Henry Maier Festival Park. This adventure is appropriate for all abilities and will last approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Contact Cheri at cherib41@gmail.com or 414-239-7883 to let her know you're coming.

We'll meet at the large shimmering tree sculptures at Discovery World along Clybourne Avenue. From there we'll cross the street to begin our Walk and Roll.

Defend Democracy

UU the Vote

by Joan Hansen

Our fifth principle of Unitarian Universalism is the right of conscience and the use of the democratic principle within our congregation and the society at large. We have the opportunity to practice this principle by voting in both the primary election on August 9 and the general election on November 8.

There are a number of candidates running for office and many offices to be filled. Please consult the websites myvote.wi.gov and vote411.org/ballot for information regarding voter registration, absentee ballots, early voting and unbiased information about the candidates. You can also contact members of the Defend Democracy/ UU the Vote team, Kathy Rivera, Nancy Peterson, Juanita Mast or Joan Hansen for more information or to volunteer to help with the get out the vote effort. There are many opportunities to help including phone calling, letter or postcard writing or helping people to register to vote. Democracy is strongest when all can participate.

Two Church Members Begin Volunteer Tutoring Organization

by Kristi Davis

Molly Shiffler and Kristi Gutierrez are two of six members of Common Ground who have initiated a new organization to teach reading to kindergartners through third graders in Milwaukee. The organization is called Forward Scholars.

Molly, a retired Cardinal Stritch reading professor, chose Book Buddies, a reading program with proven results, to the Forward Scholars team.

The program relies on volunteers to teach reading one-on-one to an assigned student twice a week during the school day over the course of the semester. Volunteers receive training and lesson plans tailored to their students.

Kristi joined First Church primarily because of its focus on social justice. Since retirement, she has been searching for a way to help make a positive difference in Milwaukee. She is impressed with the structure of the Book Buddies reading program and the positive results gained while using it in other cities like Milwaukee. And she was convinced that this program will make a positive impact after talking with someone who had volunteered in Madison. That woman explained that of all the programs with which she has volunteered, this one made the biggest difference.

If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more about volunteering for Forward Scholars, contact Kristi Gutierrez at kristidavis51@gmail.com.

Geography of Grace

by Amy Wilbourne & Diane Horne
Facilitators of Geography of Grace

Geography of Grace is an adult spiritual development offering which invites you to explore your inner geography, to listen for your inner Teacher, and hear the wisdom of your own spirit. Just as many of us are removed from contact with the natural world through urban living or busy lives, we also live distanced from our inner nature. These two landscapes connect to and inform each other.

Using the circle of trust approach developed through The Center for Courage and Renewal (based on the work of Dr. Parker J. Palmer) this small group program utilizes “third things,” such as poetry, stories, music, and art, to map a journey of metaphor, symbol, and intuition, opening new vistas in our inner landscape.

In addition to the focus on geography, the other theme for this program is grace. The Latin word for grace is the same as the word for gratitude: grata or gratia, which means “a given gift.” This program is meant to help us gain (or regain) contact with our best selves, with those innate gifts we hope to offer the world.

Enrollment in A Geography of Grace has a maximum of fourteen participants. The program will meet in person every third Saturday for 8 sessions beginning October 22 (subject to change.) More information about the registration will be coming soon.

We Invite You to Help Create Our Future!

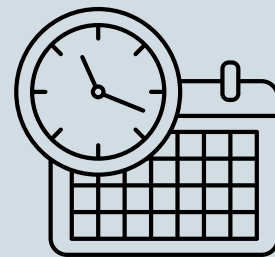
by Mark Chambers and Holly Patzer
Co-chairs Special Fundraising Team

As you have heard, we are excited to hold numerous Focus Group Sessions during the month of August. Several First Church members will host and present at these sessions. Each session will not be longer than an hour, entailing a 20-minute presentation followed by time for Q&A. These gatherings are not for soliciting financial support, but rather to share the possibilities and gather input on what is most important to our congregation.

Your input and feedback are highly valued. We would love to have you join us for one of the eight in-person sessions in the Leenhouts Common Room, however we are also offering four virtual session options.

CHILDCARE: Please note that childcare will be available for the Sunday, August 21 session.

**Let's have some fun exploring all
of the possibilities for a sustainable
future!**



Join a Focus Group

In-person Focus Group Schedule.

Held in the Leenhouts Common Room, no pre-registration required for in-person

Sunday, August 7, 11:15 a.m.

Thursday, August 11, 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 14, 11:15 a.m.

Wednesday, August 17, 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 21, 11:15 a.m.
(Childcare available this session)

Thursday, August 25, 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 28, 11:15 a.m.

Tuesday, August 30, 6:00 p.m.

Zoom Focus Group Schedule

Sign up for the Zoom link for any of these sessions at

<https://form.jotform.com/221814714123043>

Tuesday, August 9, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 16, 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, August 18, 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 23, 6:00 p.m.

Staff Directory

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MINISTER EMERITUS

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

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

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