Monthly Theme

What does it mean to be a people of Creativity
Inside News

May is always a busy month at First Church!

Take special note in this issue:

- Two wonderful sabbatical pulpit guests in May (p. 6)
- May 21 – Religious Education Sunday
  One Service only at 11:00 a.m. (p. 6)
- May 21 – Annual congregational meeting at 12:45 (p. 11)
- Meet candidates for the Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee (pp. 12-13)

Sunday, May 21 Schedule

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary open for quiet reflection
10:00 a.m. Coffee Hour & Forum
11:00 a.m. Multi-Generational Worship Service & Livestream
12:00 p.m. Coffee Hour
12:45 p.m. Annual Congregational Meeting In-Person & via Zoom

Share the Plate
by Bob Monahan

The Religious Education community selected The Trevor Project as our May Share the Plate recipient. The Trevor Project is dedicated to building a safer, more-inclusive world where all LGBTQ young people see a bright future for themselves. LGBTQ young people are four times more likely to attempt suicide, and suicide remains the second leading cause of death among young people in the U.S.

The Trevor Project works across five major areas to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of LGBTQ young people.

- Crisis Support: crisis counseling via phone, text, and chat 24/7, 365 day a year.
- TrevorSpace: a safe, affirming, moderated online community for LGBTQ young people between the ages of 13-24, intentionally designed for them.
- Advocacy: legislation, movements, education, and more to change our world for the better.
- Education: helping allies and educators understand the needs and challenges of LGBTQ young people.
- Research: participating in research studies and partnering with suicidologists.

As The Trevor Project celebrates its 25th anniversary, LGBTQ young people across the U.S. face dangerous rhetoric and frequent legislative attacks, including a record number of bills targeting transgender and nonbinary youth.

Counter these potentially life-threatening challenges with a secure online contribution at the link below or mail your check to First Church made payable to The Trevor Project. We’ll forward your contribution to them.

Donate to this STP Partner
At what age did your creativity come the easiest? During childhood, I remember finger painting as a preschooler, designing and sewing doll clothes when my fingers became more dexterous and my desire to emulate my mom and older sister was strong. I remember making up puppet shows, plays, games and stories with our favorite baby-sitter. When I was a teenager, I found my home in speech, theater and music. My niche in high school was being one of the “creative kids.” But everyone is creative, aren’t they? We just may not know it or claim it.

When did your creativity become the most difficult? Creativity is most difficult for me when I am tired, grieving or overwhelmed. Yet I believe that using my creativity or at least my playfulness is the best way out of exhaustion, grief or overwhelm.

Where are the moments in our daily lives when we could break out in song, play with colors, do a little happy dance, write a kind message, throw some different ingredients together for supper? Where are the moments in our daily lives when we could stop plodding through tasks and play with our to-do list?

Artists, woodworkers, poets, and parents are makers. To make something, we use our creativity. Everyone makes a life, so everyone is creative. M.C. Richards wrote, “All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life.” May we encourage one another in our big art of life!

Yours,
Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

New Worship Associate Cohort Named!

We are excited to announce the names of the members who will be serving our congregation in the new cohort of Worship Associates in 2023-2025: Desiree Pointer-Mace, Jeremy Koenen, Liz Irwin Moore, Nancy Spransy, and Trudy Watt. Thanks to everyone who applied and congratulations to the new cohort! They will be joining Bizzy Schultz, Dave Umhoefer, Erik Alexander, Gul Afshan, and Ryan Pawlowski who are serving in the 2022-2024 cohort.

We are so fortunate to benefit from the stories and readings shared by our Worship Associate Team each year!
I spent fifteen years as an art teacher, instructing children, youth and adults how to express themselves using clay, a computer, paper, Craypas, glitter, yarn and more. From pottery to origami, basketweaving to papermaking, the task of learning how to use and teach it all, in an accessible way, often felt daunting. I found adopting the childlike spirit that embodied my youngest students, who did not overthink the undertaking but just began to play with materials, was the way to embrace the task and even find deep joy in the process. I learned that each medium guides the artist into expressing themselves in a new, often unexpected way. If you can give yourself permission, the creativity within will find a solution.

In all those years of teaching art, I can honestly say that I do not believe I could, or ever have, taught a soul how to be creative. I was only responsible for making a space, providing encouragement and catalysts for that particular kind of people-magic to emerge. M.C. Richards, potter and author of Centering, puts it this way:

“\textit{We have to realize that a creative being lives within ourselves, whether we like it or not, and that we must get out of its way, for it will give us no peace until we do.}”

One of the rules of brainstorming is no evaluation during the process. Creative problem solving needs the inner critic to quiet, so that we can play with new possibilities. When we find ourselves stuck, perhaps repeating limitations we have absorbed as truth; creativity can be a bridge between hopelessness and hope. Let us remember to play, imagine we have already found a way through, let yourself conceptualize the impossible. The creative being inside you can make a space where innovation can happen. M.C. Richards also asserted that, “The imagination equips us to perceive reality when it is not fully materialized.” and “\textit{All the arts we practice are apprenticeships. The big art is our life.}”

May creativity be your playful companion, a guide to unexpected new wells of hope in the artmaking that is each of our lives.

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education
Adventures of a Hindu Unitarian Universalist
Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Pulpit Guest
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director and the House Band
Bizzy Schultz, Worship Associate
Click for info about this service

Theories of Generativity
Rev. Jim Foti, Assistant Sabbatical Minister
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Ryan Pawlowski, Worship Associate
Click for info about this service

Faith Formation Celebration-RE Sunday
One service only at 11:00 a.m. with livestream
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Religious Education
Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Click for info about this service

Love at the Center
Rev. Hanna Roberts Villnave, Pulpit Guest
Karen Beaumont, Guest Organist
Patrick Mulvey, Worship Associate
Click for info about this service

In-person Sunday services at 9:00 & 11:00 a.m.
Pulpit Guest ◆ Rev. Manish Mishra Marzetti

Suzie Considine of the Sabbatical Committee writes, "When I returned to in-person services at First Church just about a year ago, I was immediately reminded of how much I had missed the opportunity for shared reflection and spiritual connection during the first few years of the pandemic. While each Sunday service has certain familiar elements that I enjoy, I also look forward to a Sunday sermon that will challenge me and make me think about something from a new perspective. I am especially excited to hear from our upcoming pulpit guest Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti on May 7, who will share his message ‘Adventures of a Hindu Unitarian Universalist’.”

Religious Education Sunday May 21

One Service Only at 11:00 a.m.

On May 21, the Religious Education Sunday will have one worship service at 11:00 a.m., although the sanctuary will be open for quiet reflection at 9:00 a.m. Although the RE program has grown since in-person church resumed, our numbers of children, youth, and families are lower than pre-pandemic times. We hope you will join us at 11:00 a.m. for our multi-generational celebration of Religious Education, followed by our Annual Meeting!

Pulpit Guest ◆ Rev. Hannah Roberts Villnave

The Rev. Hannah Roberts Villnave's ministry reflects the places she lives and works, and she is passionate about building religious communities that are grounded in local context while holding a radical vision for a more just and compassionate world. Born and raised as a UU in Racine, WI, Hannah's first taste of religious community was at Olympia Brown UU Church where she taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, and was an all-around Church Nerd. Between her growing up years in Racine and today, Rev. Hannah has done everything from teaching middle school to packing boxes in a warehouse to working as a restaurant host. She eventually earned her Master of Divinity at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC and served from 2017-2022 as the settled minister at the UU Church of Cheyenne, WY. Rev. Hannah lives in Appleton with her wife, Catherine, and their two kiddos, Adah and Benjamin.
Faith Formation Stations
Summer RE 2023
by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

No preparation is needed to volunteer, and the gift of your time and energy makes it possible for our children and families to know they are welcomed and engaged at our church. This summer, children 6-12 will be in the Faith Formation Station Room during 10 a.m. Sunday services. They need another responsible adult to ensure that all children are safe and cared for each Sunday.

Please consider helping out in our nursery, preschool or Faith Formation Room this summer.

- 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. Volunteering once this summer makes a big difference!
- The first step is filling out the RE Volunteer form.
- Then please look at our online schedule and sign up for when you are available.
- Sign up [HERE](#)

Memorial Day Sabbath for RE Staff
On Sunday May 28, Memorial Day weekend there will be no Religious Education classes or childcare available during our Sunday services. We do this to offer a rare sabbath and weekend off for our part-time religious education staff. Families are always welcome in the sanctuary and parlor, and activity bags are available. We thank you for your understanding.

OWL Grade 7-9 Returns
by Deb Solis, Youth Program Coordinator

We are so happy to once again offer our in person Our Whole Lives (OWL) program for grade 7-9 youth at First Church for the 2023-2024 church year. We are limiting this class to 12 participants and all participants must be register for Religious Education at First Church before enrolling in this OWL class.

Our Whole Lives is a comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education program that help participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, Our Whole Lives provides accurate, information while also helping participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

We require all parents of OWL class participants to attend a Parent Orientation Meeting with our facilitators with a meeting date to be determined at this time. In order for your youth to participate in this OWL program families must be members of First Church

We are so very grateful to our committed, volunteer, trained facilitators who make it possible to offer this important, life changing program for our youth.

If you have any questions about this program please contact Youth and OWL Program Coordinator, Deb Solis at deb.solis@uumilwaukee.org.
On May 14, a Dedication of Parents and Children will take place during our 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services.

The Child Dedication Ceremony is a time for celebrating the birth or adoption of a child in a ceremony of naming and dedication. It is a time for welcoming our children into the world, into the family, and into the church community. It is a time for acknowledging that each child’s life is sacred and holding that truth in the light of our faith.

This simple ceremony is related to the Christian “baptism” or “christening,” though the meanings we attach to it are significantly different. Please read our UU Child Dedication Brochure for a full description.

The ceremony is a public declaration by parents dedicating themselves to faithfully nurturing and supporting their children. The congregation recognizes your child’s original blessing, and we dedicate ourselves to nurturing your child and you. Because of the promises our congregation makes to the family during the ceremony, child dedications are available only to members of the church.

If you are interested in having your child dedicated on May 14, fill out this online form by Sunday, May 7 or email Rev. Kimberlee.
Grief Support Group on Hiatus
by Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

Our online grief support group that began in January 2022 is on hiatus until further notice due to significantly decreased attendance and need. If you are grieving a loss and would like support, there are always Pastoral Care Associates available to be a listening presence one-on-one. Just contact Jeri Pearcy at: fuspastoralcare@gmail.com. There are also grief support groups available through the Grief Resource Center at Horizon Hospice.

Co-Facilitator Deborah Conta and I have been honored to accompany and support several members and guests on their grief journeys over the last sixteen months. We wish you peace and healing.

All in the Family

Our heartfelt condolences are with Shauna Leinbach, whose mother died on March 31. May peace and healing be with you and your family.

In Memoriam

Gerald “Gerry” McDonald
August 5, 1949 – March 18, 2023

Gerald “Gerry” McDonald died peacefully on Saturday, March 18, 2023, surrounded by his loving family, after a courageous 9-year battle with cancer. He was 73 years old and had been a member of First Church since 2001.

A Celebration of Life was held on Sunday, April 16, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at South Shore Park Pavilion in Milwaukee. We lit the Candle of Life for Gerry during our worship services on Sunday, April 9, 2023.

Those wishing to remember Gerry through a donation may make a gift to contribute to a park bench in his honor at South Shore Park.

To donate online: Click on the link below and select “Donate to the Park People.” Note that, as part of the checkout process, you must click on the “Add Special Instructions” text to add a note that you would like to direct your donation to the memorial bench for Gerald (Gerry) McDonald in South Shore Park.
Endowment Fund Task Force (EFTF) Update

by Ron Oshima
EFTF Member

Here’s a brief update from the Endowment Fund Task Force planning team. Since we began meeting at the end of January, we’ve been focusing on two major areas:
1. Governance of the endowment
2. Investment management of the endowment

In discussions of governance, protection of endowment principle and a very long term investment horizon are our guiding stars. The team unanimously agrees that a trust document needs to be developed to define the appropriate governance policies and structure, and install the necessary guardrails. Many details remain to be sorted out in this area with the help of a qualified attorney.

Regarding an investment advisor, we have interviewed several investment advisory firms (including the UU Common Endowment Fund where the Memorial Trust Fund is currently invested) and are following up with some of them where answers to our uniform questions were not sufficiently answered.

We will be making a presentation on May 21 at our Annual Meeting and look forward to discussing our progress with you then.

It's Never Too Late to Support the Endowment Fund!

Goal: $3,000,000
Dollars pledged as of April 18: $2,767,331

Pledge to this principal-protected endowment fund with the online pledge form.

Contact Us
Annual Meeting Set for May 21

First Church’s Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, May 21 at 12:45 p.m., both in person in our Sanctuary and simultaneously via Zoom. Childcare is available in the preschool and nursery during the annual meeting.

Learn about significant First Church accomplishments over the 2022-23 church year and hear about our financial condition. Vote on new Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee members for next church year and get the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions. Of particular interest this year, we’ll hear about the progress of the task force that’s working to set up the new Forge Our Future Endowment Fund.

Members are eligible to vote if they became members of the congregation 60 days prior to the meeting date and have made a financial pledge or contribution of record in the past year. A list of voting members will be posted on the website 15 days prior to the meeting.

If you’d like to attend via Zoom, you must fill out this form by Saturday, May 20.

Blessed at Pridefest Volunteers Needed!

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

Local congregations are returning to spread love, joy and affirmation at the Blessed at Pridefest booth, June 2-3 in the Health and Wellness Common area. This year the Blessed at Pridefest booth we will have a fun photo station, stickers, and a blessing gate! The Blessing Gate is a collaborative artwork where everyone is invited to share blessings on ribbons that will adorn the gate. Volunteers are needed to make our interfaith blessing event happen. Blessed at Pridefest clergy will be offering personal blessings using our blessing menu. Lay volunteers will invite people to participate in the blessing gate, offer a blessing menu to be blessed, and direct them to clergy volunteers. If you want to help us generate some love and divine affirmation in Milwaukee on June 2 -3 sign up here or contact us at blessedatpridefest@gmail.com

BYO Church Picnic

June 4, 1:00-3:00 pm!
Kern Park, Picnic Area 3

Save the date for a First Church picnic after church on Sunday, June 4! Everyone should bring their own lunch and drinks, we’ll supply the fun!

See the map for information on the location and ample parking. There will be picnic tables, accessible bathrooms, and an indoor shelter. Playground and basketball court are nearby.

The park is located at 3614 N. Humboldt Blvd. Here is a link to the Kern Park Map.
Candidates for the Board of Trustees

**Victor Dana Brooks**

Dana and his wife Laurel joined First Church in 2019 when they returned to Milwaukee from Sturgeon Bay, Wis. Since joining First Church, Dana has served on the Morter Lecture Committee and the Membership Team. He was a public defender in Milwaukee and established a small firm. Moving to Door County in 1984, he was on the Boards of United Way, Door Shakespeare, and Hope United Church of Christ. Dana helped organize the Legal Aid Society of Door County, where he served more than 25 years on its Board, including as president, vice-president and secretary. He helped create and advise non-profit organizations and he was Court Commissioner for Door County Circuit Court. Dana has worked as a poll observer, election official, Democratic County Counsel for presidential campaigns, and as a part of the voter protection hotline.

**Stacy Koenen continued**

worked in healthcare administration for over 20 years. With her family she loves to travel and visit museums and zoos. She and her husband continue to be very active members of the congregation and look forward to their future involvement with the congregation.

**Stacey Thieme**

Stacey has been a member of First Church since 2010. Through a Beliefnet.com quiz, she discovered that Unitarian-Universalism matched her values best. She quickly found First Church was a great fit for her husband Geoff and daughter Kailey as well as herself. Stacey has taught RE classes, been a Mystery Friend, and participated in many church and YANKS events. After Stacey’s son Kyle joined the family in 2011, Stacey co-founded the UU Parenting Group that was active until 2019. Over the past 12 years, Stacey has taken part in the Gathering Waters Sangha (our church’s Buddhist Group), Theme Circles, and the church Winter Pageant. She joined the CRE Team in 2019 and has co-chaired it for the past 2 years. Stacey continues to teach RE classes and has recently been trained to teach OWL. She looks forward to helping the church connect and grow in new ways.
Candidates for the Nominating Committee

Jane Cliff

Not raised in a faith community, Jane was happy to discover our liberal and tolerant church through her partner Julie Hamrick. Jane joined First Church in 1994, Julie joined shortly after, and they raised their daughter in the church. Jane was a "mystery friend" and served on the Library Cart, Personnel, Pulpit Guest, Membership, and Irma Morter Lecture Committees. May 2022, she completed her term on the Board of Trustees. Jane finds committee work to be informative and meaningful. She sings in the Chancel Choir, is active in Defend Democracy, and enjoyed Circle Suppers. Jane retired from the U.S. Forest Service where she was a forestry technician, wildlife biologist, public affairs specialist, and media spokesperson for agency leaders. Jane is grateful to be part of a spiritual community that helps in her quest for a life of integrity and learning, and making a difference in the world. She is also grateful for dear friends in the congregation.

Michael Pointer Mace

Michael and his family joined First Church in January 2017 when the need to build community within the framework of social justice became essential. His children have greatly benefited from our church’s OWL program and he and his wife look forward to the spiritual grounding they receive at First Church each week. He is a teacher and has used his commitment to young people in roles including father, special education teacher, Director of Special Education, Principal and currently as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Seeds of Health charter school network.
2023 Congregational Survey Results
by Ben LeFort
Board of Trustees President

First of all, thank you all who gave of your time to fill out the survey! We had a slightly lower level of response to our 2023 survey as we had in previous years. Here's a brief summary of the results.

There is still room for us to educate and familiarize ourselves with our Ends Statements. Overall, members do not feel that we are doing as well accomplishing our Ends in the 2023 survey as they did in the 2020 survey. However, we are still doing better than we did in the first survey in 2018.

This is not surprising as the survey was taken in February 2023 at the end of nearly two years without in-person services. But it points to the fact that we have much work to do to re-engage and reconnect with what we love most about First Church.

There have been some shifts in the demographics of survey respondents, most notably a trend toward higher ages and more families with older kids at home.

Feel free to check out more details on the survey results in this Overview and the accompanying Data Charts.

Splinters from the Board
by Tony Panciera
Board Member

The Board of Trustees held our March board meeting on March 28. President Ben LeFort shared news of a generous bequest from Frank Evans. We decided to delay decisions about how these monies would be allocated until after the return of Reverend Jennifer from sabbatical.

Elizabeth Lentini joined for an update from the Endowment Fund Task Force. They are working to clarify structure, rules, and restrictions for the Forge Our Future contributions. They will return to the board in August with a formal draft proposal.

Director of Administration Jean Johnson shared that attendance has been strong since the sabbatical began, especially among visitors and families with small children. Tony Panciera shared that analysis and reporting is completed for the annual survey. The survey was generally positive and a return to pre-pandemic responses. Additional feedback is being disseminated for follow-up.

The Board passed a charge for delegates to General Assembly, encouraging them to support the Article 2 Commission’s work, while voting their conscience.

Nominating Committee’s slate of candidates for the annual meeting was presented. The candidates for the Board are Stacey Thieme, Stacy Koenen, and Dana Brooks. The Nominating Committee candidates are Jane Cliff and Michael Pointer-Mace. The slate was unanimously supported by the Board.
**Book Discussion Group**
Cancelled May Book Club

Join us as we discuss May’s read, *The Color of Water. A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother*, by James McBride. Contact Barbra Lancelot for more information at uubarbra@gmail.com.

**Buddhist Study Group**
Wednesday, May 3 & 17, 6:30 pm
At Church or [Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we meet to share our thoughts and interpretations of Buddhist teachings and ideas. Then we meditate as a group for a short while and have fellowship. Contact is Mark Miller at gatheringwatersssangha@gmail.com.

**Chancel Choir**
Every Thursday in May, 7:15 -9:00 pm
At Church

Join us on Thursdays in singing as we prepare to perform at Sunday services. Open to all singers high school age and up (no previous experience or audition required). Contact Tristan Strelitzer for more information or to join at tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org.

**Connect & Reflect**
Every Thursday, 5:45 pm
[Join Us Online 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. All are welcome.

**Grief Support Group**
Not currently meeting.

Our online grief support group is on hiatus until further notice. If you would like support, Pastoral Care Associates are available through Jeri Pearcy at: fuspastoralcare@gmail.com. Grief support groups are available at the Grief Resource Center at Horizon Hospice.

**Poetry Contemplation**
Every Wednesday, 9:00 am or 2nd & 4th Tuesday, 6:30 pm
[Join Us Online Here](#)

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

**Chronologically Gift Potluck**
Sunday, May 28 at 12:30 pm at church.

Contact Pat McFarland or Barbara Collignon for more information.
MAY 7
The BeeVangelist
Charlie Koenen

More information can be found in the church website here.

MAY 14
Immigration: One Word, a Thousand Meanings
Maryam Durani, civil society activist, women’s rights advocate, International Woman of Courage Award Recipient 2012.

Maryam Durani is helping the 400 Afghan Refugees who arrived in Wisconsin in January, 2022. Every Immigrant is an individual. Maryam helps them adapt. They come to a new country without the support of friends, or extended family social circles. Once here, they need to learn English, find employment, housing and schools, how to access health and social services. Cultural differences combine to deepen the learning curve as a new resident. These include gender attitudes, religious diversity, ethnicity and traditions. Maryam advocates for these refugees and facilitates their integration into American life.

MAY 21
Brown Berets of Wisconsin
Maria Cruz

More information can be found in the church website here.

This is the last Sunday Forum of the Spring. Sunday Forum will return in September.
Staff Directory

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

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

MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Rev. Kimberlee Carlson
kimberlee.carlson@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 204

ASSISTANT SABBATICAL MINISTER
Rev. Jim Foti
jim.foti@uumilwaukee.org

MINISTER EMERITUS
Rev. Andrew C. Kennedy, D.Min.

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION
Jean Johnson
jean.johnson@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 203

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
Lynne Jacoby
lynn.jacoby@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 205

OFFICE MANAGER
Shari Wright
shari.wright@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 207

YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Deb Solis
deb.solis@uumilwaukee.org, ext. 209

RE ASSISTANT
Quinn Brakob
quinn.brakob@uumilwaukee.org ext. 210

FACILITIES MANAGER
Ken Liddell
ken.liddell@uumilwaukee.org ext. 206

FACILITIES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANT
Jim Spice
jim.spice@uumilwaukee.org

LEAD MUSIC DIRECTOR
Alissa Rhode
alissa.rhode@uumilwaukee.org

CHORAL DIRECTOR
Tristan Streilitzer
tristan.streilitzer@uumilwaukee.org

COLLABORATIVE PIANIST
Teresa Drews
teresa.drews@uumilwaukee.org

How to Reach Us
414.273.5257
first.church.office@uumilwaukee.org
1342 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202

Follow Us

Church Building Hours
Sundays: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm
Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:30 pm
Monday - Wednesdays: 5:00 - 8:30 pm

If you are attending a scheduled group, ring the bell. If you need access to the building at other times, please make an appointment at first.church.office@uumilwaukee.org.

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