

JANUARY 2024



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 of*

**Liberating  
Love**



# Inside News

by the *Chanticleer* Editors

## Happy New Year!

**Defend Democracy Day:** Join us Sunday, January 7 for Defend Democracy Day when we will welcome non-partisan community organizations to discuss how we can enable and encourage voting to direct our efforts to defend democracy in Wisconsin. (p. 11)

**Mystery Friends** program starts this month. Connect with a First Church pen pal with this beloved inter-gen activity. (p. 10)

**Christmas Eve Collection:** Thank you all for celebrating another wonderful Christmas Eve at First Church. We give away our entire collection on Christmas Eve. We appreciate your generosity as you contributed a total of \$5,960 to these worthy organizations!

Interchange Food Pantry - \$2,254

Repairers of the Breach - \$1,903

Guest House of Milwaukee - 1,804

### Severe Weather Closing on Sundays:

We will be open and hold services whenever possible, however church services may be cancelled during weather emergencies. If we need to cancel church services, the church will list its cancellation on the church phone answering system, the church website, and Facebook page. We will also send an email to our e-announcements list. In some instances, even if we do hold services, Religious Education classes may be cancelled. If RE classes are cancelled, we will try to have a group activity.

## Share the Plate January

by Lynde Uihlein  
Share the Plate Team Member



The Community Center for Immigrants (CCI) is our January Share the Plate recipient. CCI promotes integration into American society by providing educational, legal, and social services to Milwaukee's immigrant and refugee community. Through English and civics classes and holistic support services, clients gain the skills necessary to attain citizenship, find employment, access community resources, and support their children's education.

Currently there are 9 million immigrants in the United States who are eligible for citizenship, but only 10% apply each year. CCI believes everyone should have access to citizenship and CCI's affordable immigration legal services are designed to meet the need for low-income refugee families. For more information, visit the CCI's website at

<https://communitycenterforimmigrants.com/>

Donate to this STP Partner



# Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

The playwright Tennessee Williams wrote that love saves us, and we must in turn, save it: “The world is violent and mercurial,” Williams wrote, “it will have its way with you. We are saved only by love--love for each other and the love that we pour into the art we feel compelled to share: being a parent; being a writer; being a painter; being a friend. We live in a perpetually burning building, and what we must save from it, all the time, is love.”

This month at First Church, we will explore the theme of “Liberating Love” in our worship, religious education, and small groups.

I have seen love bind people together, keeping families and friends connected across miles and oceans and deserts of earth and spirit.

I have also seen love set people free, when love allows us to surrender, to release, to accept.

How can love be liberating? How can it connect? This month, the Anti-Racism Team invites you to join us in exploring both through attending a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event at The Table at Alice’s Garden. Read more on page 12.

My mentor, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, said “love begins with listening.” I would love to hear your stories of liberating love, and love that has kept you connected. How has love changed your life?

With love,  
Jennifer  
Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

# Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



Human love is not enough. I guess that is a faith statement. Perhaps it sounds like blasphemy to you, but it took me a long time to arrive there, so hear me out.

I was raised Unitarian Universalist in a family that did not pray. When friends hurt me or were not there for me, I did not know where to turn for solace. As I grew older, I did not know how to put the rug back under my feet when it was pulled out due to the death of a loved one, broken dreams, or disillusionment. When no one is home, no matter how many doors we knock upon or phone numbers we ring, where is love?

When I was grieving after my mother's death and my best friend's death and my grandmother's death (in that order), I remember asking my great-aunt Ella what she did when she was in emotional pain and despair. She said, "I know your family doesn't do this, but I pray." A light bulb went on. I realized that I was not sufficient. I was not enough to conquer my grief, nor were those who loved me. There had to be something more and I needed to cast myself upon its mercy, upon its liberating love. I needed to find a way to connect with something larger than myself and what I needed from other humans.

I'm not advocating giving away our human power to love each other and humanity into liberation. I'm not advocating relinquishing our individual agency. I'm offering a suggestion, as it was offered to me, that when we reach our limit of being able to solve problems, heal wounds, and create specific change, we could 'turn it over' – to the universal energy of love, to nature, to god, goddess or other divine entities, to something that is larger than us, the spirit of life moving through all beings.

Atheists, agnostics, humanists can 'pray' by admitting that the power to save the world is not entirely up to us as individuals. We need other people, other ideas, Earth's elements and creatures, and the mystery of what we do not know or control.

My new year's resolution is to 'pray' more often, whatever that means. To admit my limits and accept help from beyond the edges of my skin.

Yours,  
Dena

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister





# Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



"Your children are not your children." Kahlil Gibran famously wrote in his poem. "They are... Life's longing for itself." This poem hints at a liberating love approach to parenting. A love that holds but does not smother, that guides but does not oppress, a love that affirms but does not pander. I have heard varied and complex responses to this poem. As a child, we tend to embrace the poem, feeling a deep longing to become ourselves, certainly not our parents. As we grow, there are certainly times we want parent's "love but not your thoughts." Yet parents of children also respond, "they certainly feel like MY children."

The Pew research center tells us that 43% of U.S. parents are actively trying to change their approach to parenting from the way they were raised. What overall change do they want to make? Their parenting goal is focusing more on love and their relationship with their children. These parents are seeking to increase honest conversations, open affection, active listening, supporting their interests, spending quality time together, showing unconditional love, offering verbal affirmation, setting thoughtful boundaries and accepting their children for who they are.

It is heartening to see, we know that children who receive affection from their parents become happier as adults, according to a study from the University of Notre Dame. Adults who report

receiving more affection in childhood displayed less depression and anxiety and are more compassionate overall.

This is a tall order, especially as many of us were acculturated with the tools of authoritarian parenting, parental/societal control and punishment. The tools of gentle parenting are connection, communication, and consistency. It embraces the idea that children do not defy for the sake of defiance, but that their behavior is a physiological response to stress. As an educator, I have come to understand that children often communicate their emotions by trying to make others feel the same way they do. Children have a human instinct for evoking emotions, from silliness to rage. Caregivers' human instinct is to be reactive to those emotions, and it takes patience and practice to respond thoughtfully.

Liberating love takes practice and patience, with ourselves and with our children. It is not a magic formula; it is a journey with an intention. Since Kahlil Gibran had no children of his own, perhaps this poem is not just about your children, it is about our children, all children.

May we all be on a journey of intention and kindness together.

Happy New Year!  
Rev. Kimberlee



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## **Love Is a Field of Diplomacy**

**Rev. Dena McPhetres**

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Bizzy Schultz, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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## **What If All Children Are Our Children?**

**Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom**

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Erik Alexander, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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## **What's Love Got to Do with It?**

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

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

The Chancel Choir

Nancy Spransy, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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## **A World of Mutual Thriving.**

**Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister**

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Desiree Pointer-Mace, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

Sunday services at 9:00 & 11:00 a.m.

## In Memoriam



### Loren Robert Leys

October 20, 1939 ~  
December 8, 2023

Loren Leys died peacefully on Friday evening, December 8, 2023. His wife Adele Kaferly was holding his hand when he passed. All four of his children plus Adele's best friend Maureen, were present during the week before he died.

Loren had a rare neuro-degenerative disease. Lovingly cared for by his family, he entered home hospice care in November and transitioned to inpatient hospice in early December. Loren was 84 years old and a member of our congregation since 1996.

A Candle of Life was lit in Loren's memory during our Sunday worship services December 10, 2023. A memorial service was held at First Church on Saturday, December 16, 2023, with the Rev. Dena McPhetres and Steve Sieck, Ministerial Intern, officiating.

Memorial donations can be given to:

#### Hunger Task Force

<https://www.hungertaskforce.org/>

#### Meta House

<https://www.metahouse.org/>

## 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 condolences are with **Mary Spyers-Duran**, whose sister Nancy Dorsey died unexpectedly on Monday, December 4, 2023. May you be comforted by good memories and the companionship of family and friends.

## Pastoral Care Resources

If you would like to talk to a Pastoral Care Associate for a listening presence, please contact PCA Coordinator Lynn Connolly at [fuspastoralcare@gmail.com](mailto:fuspastoralcare@gmail.com) or 414-573-9823. If you'd like to talk to the Ministers, please call our Pastoral Care Emergency line at 414-216-3113.

For practical help, grocery shopping and delivery, or contactless meal delivery, contact Liz Irwin Moore, Pastoral Care Provider Coordinator at: [fuspcprovider@gmail.com](mailto:fuspcprovider@gmail.com) or 414-265-1729.

For personal financial assistance, please contact Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom for the Ministers' Discretionary Fund at [jennifer.nordstrom@uumilwaukee.org](mailto:jennifer.nordstrom@uumilwaukee.org).

## Why Journey?

by Rev. Dena McPhetres  
Associate Minister

Unitarian Universalists recognize that individuals, couples, and families are each on their own spiritual and practical journey through life. Sharing those journeys by joining a community is a big step and we want you to have the opportunity to learn more about UUism, our church, our staff, and the multitude of ways you can connect with your new community.

We offer “Journey to Membership” classes three times a year, Fall, Winter and Spring, in a series of four weekday evening gatherings. Once a year, we try to offer a Saturday session for those who can’t make it on a weekday evening. The Fall session is typically a day-long Saturday session held in-person at church, followed up by one weekday evening. The Winter session is held entirely online via Zoom, because: winter in Wisconsin! The Spring session we return to in-person.

Deadline to register for Winter Journey is January 7 at <https://bit.ly/Journey2Membership>. We’ll gather online four Wednesday evenings 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. January 10 – 31.

The Spring session runs for four Wednesdays, April 3 – 24, at 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in-person.

Questions? Email Rev. Dena at:  
[dena.mcphetres@uumilwaukee.org](mailto:dena.mcphetres@uumilwaukee.org)

## Meet David Hoover and Laurie Petersen

By David Hoover and Laurie Petersen  
Co-chairs Member Engagement Team.

Laurie is a long-time member of First Church, and previously of the Olympia Brown UU Church in Racine. This is her second year on the Membership Team. “I’m drawn to the work of creating a warm and welcoming presence for our friends and visitors, in our large and sometimes intimidating church. Equally important is for new members, once they join, to feel a real connection to our community. Connections frequently need to be fostered and encouraged, and we create opportunities for that to happen -- like our popular New Member Pizza Nights!”

Dave joined First Church just a year ago. “We’re members and owners, not customers. It’s up to each of us to get involved and build the community life that we want to live.” Dave values supporting the Membership Table during coffee hour and the Journey to Membership classes but, for him, “Our most impactful work is simply being present, saying ‘Hi’ and getting to know each other.” Everyone can do that, so join us—your ideas are welcome!



## Hearts on Fire

by Rev. Kimberlee  
Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Religious  
Education



Hearts on Fire is a faith development opportunity for seniors to meet with our minister and church staff to explore their faith and examine their credo.

The Latin root word *credo* means “believe.” A credo translates to: “what I set my heart to.” Creating a credo helps our youth examine and clarify what they have faith in, what they ultimately value and what greater purposes they believe life offers. It is a unique and powerful Unitarian Universalists rite of passage, a time to reflect on who we are and hope to become, one we hope our young people will continue throughout their lives.

This year we will be offering this program in spring. There are three small group sessions and then personal coaching with Rev. Kimberlee to complete the credo process.

It is our tradition to recognize our High School seniors on RE Sunday as they bridge into adulthood. For Seniors who wish to speak in front of the congregation on RE Sunday, Hearts on Fire participation is required.

If you'd like to participate, please let Rev. Kimberlee or Deb Solis know by March 28.

## Youth Overnight in January

by Deb Solis  
Youth Program Coordinator

Save the date for the Wis-CON-sin!  
Youth “cons” are events planned by youth with adult support for youth ages 14-18. At its heart, a youth con is an experience in building covenantal community. Each con has a different theme and focus, but they all incorporate community building, fun, worship, spirituality, and youth leadership.

Our youth are planning this overnight event on Sunday, Jan. 14 to Monday, Jan. 15, which is Martin Luther King Day. Join youth from all over the region for a time to be social, crafty, thoughtful, and meet young UU's from area Midwest churches. Youth ages 13 and above are eligible to attend!

If you are interested in helping out with food or chaperoning, please let Rev. Kimberlee or Deb Solis know! More information on our webstie [here](#).

## Join Mystery Friends

by Kaitlin Barron

Religious Education Assistant

There's nothing like getting a real letter! We are thrilled to offer the annual Mystery Friends program again, starting February 11. During Mystery Friends, children and youth ages 5 and up are matched with adults in the church community as pen pals. Once you sign up, RE staff will pair you with a friend, and you will exchange short letters and notes each week for a month. We will offer letter templates with questions and prompts to help you get started. On Sunday, March 17, we will celebrate with a party allowing friends to meet face to face and have some mystery-solving fun!

Any adult members and friends of First Church may participate— you don't need to have a child in RE. Adults will go through a simple and secure background check to ensure Mystery Friends is safe and fun for everyone! For more information and to join Mystery Friends, follow this link at

<https://bit.ly/41Hr6k8>.



We are grateful to the children, youth, parents, musicians and many "elves" behind the scenes who made our holiday pageant, The Mystery of Holiday Lights happen! Lots of love, a bit of craziness and heaps of grace!



Thanks to everyone who contributed to our holiday giving tree this year! Together we provided over 50 gifts to the children at the Northside YMCA!

## Kick-Off 2024

### Take Action to Defend Democracy

by Juanita Mast

The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee is proud to host Defend Democracy Day on January 7, 2024, where we will welcome non-partisan community organizations to discuss how we can enable and encourage voting to direct our efforts to defend democracy in Wisconsin.

Come to hear from the representatives of Milwaukee Election Commission, the League of Women Voters, MICA/ We All Belong, Souls to the Polls, Supermarket Legends, and Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist Social Action Network.

The kick-off will be held on Sunday, January 7 after the 11:00 a.m. service. Enjoy snacks and beverages before you join the program which starts at 12:30 p.m. in Max Otto Hall. Bring friends and neighbors too. If you cannot attend, [RSVP here](#) to receive the Zoom information.

First Church members are gearing up for the 2024 elections by forming teams to assist with voter registration, education, and protection in the Milwaukee area. This is a great opportunity for anyone who wants to get involved in the democratic process and make a difference in their community.

Whether you are a seasoned volunteer or a first-timer, free training is provided to help you get started. You can even do some of the work from the comfort of your own home or at your local church.

For more information contact Pete Koneazny, Pat McFarland, Juanita Mast, Dave Umhoefer, Andrew Whitver of the Defend Democracy team.

### Vote Your Conscience and Protect the Climate

by Terry Wiggins

Co-Chair Environmental Justice Ministry

Rumi said, "Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground."

Earth Justice Ministry suggests that, at the "Democracy Day" event in January, we become more fully aware of some organizations that combine our interest in kneeling and kissing the ground, i.e., protecting the environment, as we vote ourselves, or by encouraging others to vote.

Check out these organizations providing good information:

**Environmental Voter Project** identifies inactive environmentalists and transforms them into

[Continued on Page 12](#)

## Join the Anti-Racism Team at a Dr. MLK Day

by Debra Klepp  
Anti-Racism Team

First Church's Anti-Racism Team wants you to know we've been delightfully busy. We have been in conversation with one another and many of you to get more thoughts and ideas for how we at First Church can continue to be proactive in combatting racism in any form.

While taking on this serious endeavor, we find ourselves having belly-laughs and fun, because we have bonded with each other and find ourselves in a trusting comfort zone that allows us to "keep it real" and discuss hard truths that face us all. That's why I sometimes think of us as the "Anti-Racism Social Club!"

For 2024, we are planning fun and participatory learning activities, for adults, families, and kiddos, in which we hope our First Church community will participate. The first activity is: A Dr. Martin Luther King Day Holiday Celebration is at "The Table," January 15, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. 5305 W. Capitol Dr.

"The Table" is the name of the space envisioned and created by Venice Williams (Alice's Garden, Fondy Market) to engage conversations around topics that enhance our spirituality and our lives.

Please put Monday, January 15, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, on your calendar. Join me, Reverend Jennifer, George Bledsoe, Marisa Riepenhoff and others at this Celebration in honor of Dr. King's legacy in pursuing anti-racism in our country.

We will gather in front of "The Table" at 9:45 am on Dr. King Day. Meet us then, or feel welcome to join us at any time during the activity!

Look for more cool Anti-Racism activities coming in 2024! For more info or questions feel free to contact me: Debra Klepp @ [debraklepp@gmail.com](mailto:debraklepp@gmail.com)

### Continued from page 11 "Vote your Conscience"

consistent voters to build the power of the environmental movement. It uses data to identify existing environmentalists who don't vote and applies cutting-edge behavioral science to nudge them into being more consistent voters.

**League of Conservation Voters** is involved at national, state, and local levels of government.

**Wisconsin Conservation Voters** has a lobbyist in Madison, frequently talking to legislators about clean energy, the Line 5 Pipeline, Forever Chemicals in our water, or democracy for all. The organization also produces voter guides at the national and state levels.

**Climate Hawks Vote** identifies, trains, and elects climate hawk leaders, while generating a political environment in which those leaders have the power to advance policies needed to address climate change. As a PAC, they also raise campaign funds for climate hawks.



## Splinters from the Board

by Tony Panciera

Board of Trustees Member

In our November meeting, the Board of Trustees spent significant time discussing the formation of the new endowment. The Endowment Fund Task Force had made significant progress and returned to the Board seeking further guidance. The Board discussed three core topics:

- The Board voted unanimously to have the Nominating Committee select individuals to be Trustees of the endowment, for the Board to then consider.
- The Board directed the Endowment Fund Task Force that we are in support of two of the options offered of where to house the endowment: the UU Common Endowment Fund or Greater Milwaukee Foundation.
- Finally, there were outstanding questions on the legal nuance of the draft Trust document. We will revisit this component at our next meeting.

As well, we discussed progress monitoring towards Ends 5 and 8, pertaining to promoting UUism and our values, as well as creating welcome and belonging, respectively. In our discussion of the Senior Minister's report, we grappled with the pivot from the capital campaign, back to a focus on membership. We are getting many in-person and online visitors, particularly compared to societal trends. Our largest issue at present is early membership drop off (around two-year mark). This is where energy is being refocused.

Finally, Board Members reported on various task group involvement and miscellaneous business.

## Make Plans for a Special General Assembly in June

by Bruce Wiggins

Denominational Affairs Coordinator

In a world filled with division and challenges, this year's General Assembly (GA) is a reminder of the principles that unite Unitarian Universalists. The "Love Unites, Stories Ignite" theme celebrates the profound impact of love as a binding force and the power of stories to unite us.

Rev. Jennifer calls this GA a special one, to which First Church should send our full complement of 13 delegates. It is special because delegates will vote on new wording for our UU principles and purposes – what we say we exist to do and be. At last year's GA, proposed revisions were hotly debated then approved tentatively. This year, a supermajority of delegates must approve proposed new wording. The final draft of the proposed revision to Article II of the UUA Bylaws is now available. The deadline for submitting an amendment is 11:59 p.m. Eastern on February 1, 2024.

This GA will also be special because delegates can register for "business-only" attendance and pay a free-will donation for registration. The full online registration fee for others (adults and youth) increases Feb. 29. For further information, contact Rev. Jennifer or Denominational Affairs Coordinator Bruce Wiggins and see the GA webpage: <https://www.uua.org/ga>



## Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, January 4 & 8, 6:30 pm  
At Church

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 [gatheringwaterssangha@gmail.com](mailto:gatheringwaterssangha@gmail.com).

## The Chronologically Gifted Potluck

Please join on January 27, 2024

Reconnect with old friends and make some new ones. Bring a dish and join your contemporaries for a potluck after the Sunday service, in Otto Hall. We may even have some entertainment! Plan ahead! Show up! Enjoy!

## Book Discussion Group

Sunday, January 14  
[Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we discuss January's read, *Black Cloud Rising* by David Wright Falade. Contact Barbra Lancelot for more information at [uubarbra@gmail.com](mailto:uubarbra@gmail.com).

## Poetry Contemplation

Every Wednesday, 9:00 am  
[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.

## Chancel Choir

Every Thursday, 7:15 -9:00 pm  
At Church

Sing with us on Thursdays as we prepare to perform for Sunday services. Open to all singers high school age and up (no previous experience or audition required). Contact Teresa Drews: for more information or to join at [teresa.drews@uumilwaukee.org](mailto:teresa.drews@uumilwaukee.org).



# Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE



**JANUARY 7**

## A Marshall Plan for Tutoring

**Bill Holahan, Emeritus Professor of Economics and  
Molly Shiffler, Cardinal Stritch University Dept of Language and Literacy, retired.**

Our speakers will focus on the reality and consequences of today's critical literacy needs and the potential of tutoring, at both national and local levels, to meet those needs. They will specifically describe two exemplary programs then summarize strategies essential to maximizing the impact of tutoring.

**JANUARY 21**

## Monarch Conservation

**Understanding the Issues, How you can help**

**Barb Agnew, Director Friends of the Monarch Trail.**



Although much is being done, monarchs were recently listed as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Given the current downward trajectory of the monarch population, how long do we have to ramp up our efforts? Barb Agnew of the Monarch Trail organization will discuss what can be accomplished: At home: Planting ideals and basic practices to help pollinators. In your neighborhood: Connecting gardens and commons with "paths" of plantings and community plantings. In your City: Policy changes within your community for large businesses' parking areas, mowing, herbicide policy, planting medians and swales.

**JANUARY 28**

## ThriveOn Collaboration: A model for Community-Centered Change

**Cydney Key, ThriveOn Collaboration Sr. Dir. Strategic Partnerships and  
Laura Glawe, Greater Mke Fdn VP Marketing & Communication.**

[Find more information on our church website.](#)

# Staff Directory

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Staff members have varying hours.

Please contact them directly to set up an appointment.

## Board of Trustees Officers

President.....Pat Geenen

Vice President.....Sarah Richards

Secretary .....Joe Riepenhoff

Treasurer .....Tom Briscoe

## Members

George Bledsoe

Dana Brooks

Stacy Koenen

Tony Panciera

Stacey Thieme

Amy Wilbourne

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1342 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202



uumilwaukee.org

## Follow Us



## Church Building Hours

Sundays: 8:00 am - 2:30 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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