

FEBRUARY 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*

**Justice &
Equity**



Inside News

by the *Chanticleer* Editors

Welcome to Winter!

Featuring:

Annual Pledge Drive

“Generosity Creates Community”

Kick-off Sunday on February 18

The Pledge Team invites you to reflect on what you value about our First Church community. (p. 10)

Building Multicultural Community training.

The Anti-Racism Team is hosting a training at First Church led by Milwaukee’s Nurturing Diversity Partners. Join us on our journey towards anti-racism in everything from worship to religious education to finances to pastoral care. (details on p. 11)

Silent Retreat Sign-Up Deadline is February 16
(more information on p. 12)

Community Valentines. Join the creative caring fun on February 4 during Coffee Hours. (p. 9)

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



As a Unitarian Universalist Congregation with no geographical boundary, the Church of the Larger Fellowship creates global spiritual community rooted in profound love, which cultivates wonder, imagination, and the courage to act.

This month, First Church is honored to support the Worthy Now Prison Ministry program of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF). It includes individuals, groups, and communities of faith called to recognize the worth and dignity of incarcerated peoples. Everyone is inherently Worthy Now of love and justice.

The over 3000 members of the CLF include more than 1700 people who are living in prisons across the United States. Some were already UUs, but the majority learned about Unitarian Universalism by being connected to the CLF by their peers. The Worthy Now Network shares its goals with the whole of the CLF: to Connect, Deepen, and Act on our Unitarian Universalist values. Worthy Now provides resources through five main programs, the Letter Writing Ministry, correspondence faith development classes, Reading Packets, monthly publications, and a pastoral care correspondence program. This is the link for those who would like to become a Worthy Now Pen Pal www.clfuu.org/penpals.

Donate to this STP Partner



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

As we consider our theme of Justice and Equity this month, I invite us to do it faithfully, from the ground of our being. Justice is often spoken of as fairness, balance, or even a matter of accounting, to the point of using scales as its symbol. We must consider resource distribution, logic, and fairness when we consider issues of equity and justice.

For Unitarian Universalists, however, justice and equity are also matters of the heart. We believe our shared humanity is sacred and we are committed to human beings' mutual thriving. Injustice gets in the way of that, so we want to be part of removing systemic obstacles to peoples' full human expression. We are especially attuned to the systemic obstacle of racism during this Black History month (see more information about the Anti-Racism Team's March 9 training on page 11).

Resources support thriving individuals, families, and communities. Our own First Church pledge drive launches this month, and we will reflect on how we can each contribute our fair share to support our spiritual community. You will hear

more from the 2024 Pledge Team in worship, small groups, and through church communications, and I hope you'll help support a thriving First Church in the coming year.

With love,
Jennifer
Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



I recall with deep gratitude the times that a friend truly listened to me. Those experiences make me feel loved and accepted. When someone holds space for me while I process challenging life situations, I feel like I matter in all my complexity and vulnerability. I am a firm believer that listening helps create trust in the community.

Do you enjoy listening to someone tell you about their life? Can you simply be present to someone going through a hard time without giving advice or trying to fix them? Are you aware of cultural differences and open to connecting across difference? If so, you might be who we are looking for as we gather a new team of Pastoral Care Associates this spring.

The ministry of listening is one way that our community cares for each other. Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) are members of our congregation who are trained listeners committed to maintaining strict confidentiality. The PCA team works closely with the Associate Minister for support, consultation, spiritual development and accountability.

If you are curious about this important way to grow your soul and serve our congregation, please let me know or contact one of our current PCAs to learn more. (Current PCA photos are on the wall as you enter the Common Room). We'll offer information sessions and accept applications this spring. Applicants will be interviewed and those chosen will need to permit us to do a background check.

We require new PCAs to participate in a 20-hour training in September and October in-person at church. I look forward to hearing from you if serving as a PCA seems like your next calling. This opportunity arises every three years.

Yours,

Dena

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

4

Justice Is an Issue of Faith

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Dave Umhoefer, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

11

Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm

Steve Sieck

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director and the Chancel Choir

Jeremy Koenen, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

18

Fight Despair with Community

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

The House Band

Bizzy Schultz, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Asking the Big Questions

Annual Youth Service

The Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

The First Church Youth Group

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

[Click for info about this service](#)

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



In Formation

by Steve Sieck
Ministerial Intern

It takes a community to make a worship service. It takes a prophetic sermon, a resonant message for all ages, a thoughtful Worship Associate story, beautiful music, enthusiastic congregational singing, and more. And those are just some of the aspects of a Sunday service that we name in the order of service. Here I would like to take a minute to honor some of the work that happens 'behind the scenes'. I want to take this opportunity to celebrate our ushers.

Our Sunday usher teams arrive 30 minutes before each service in groups of four. They check out the sanctuary to make sure that hymnals and tissue boxes and new visitor cards are all in place. They set up signage outside, put greeters at every door, and welcome everyone who comes in with a friendly face and an order of service. They assist folks with activity bags and large-print hymnals and hearing assist devices. They direct new visitors to the welcome station in the hallway – thank you, Deb Solis, for welcoming visitors! The ushers go through training for how to navigate medical emergencies or disruptive behaviors. They collect and deliver the offering to a secure safe. They keep track of the attendance. And, they do this so smoothly that you might not even notice their work.

Every Sunday, two teams of four ushers serve First Church, living out their love for this religious community in quiet service. 32 folks serve in this way once a month, with others ready on standby if needed. If you are a newer member wondering how you might want to 'dip your toes' into helping out at First Church, or if you are taking a break from your volunteer work here and want to start back sometime soon, ushering at one service a month next year might be a perfect fit for you – please drop me a line at steve.sieck@uumilwaukee.org.

We give thanks to our ushers and celebrate that they are part of what makes our Sunday services at First Church so special.

In gratitude,
Steve Sieck, Ministerial Intern



In Memoriam
Janet Fitch
February 4, 1946 ~
December 20, 2023

Janet Fitch died peacefully, without pain, at Froedtert Hospital the morning of Wednesday, December 20, 2023. Janet went into the hospital on Sunday, December 17, after she had a stroke due to a blood clot in her brain. She had meaningful connecting time with her kids in the days before her death. Janet had been receiving chemotherapy treatment since a late October 2023 cancer diagnosis and was being cared for by her daughter-in-law Wendy.

Janet was 77 years old and had been a member of our congregation since 2005.

We lit the Candle of Life for Janet during the worship service on Sunday, December 31, 2023. We will share information about a Memorial Service for Janet as soon as we have it.

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 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 at 414-265-1729 or fuspcprovider@gmail.com.

For personal financial assistance, please contact Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom for the Ministers' Discretionary Fund at jennifer.nordstrom@uumilwaukee.org.

Pastoral Care Leadership Transition

by Rev. Dena McPhetres
 Associate Minister

I am happy to announce that as of January 1, 2024, Lynn Connolly is serving as our Pastoral Care Associate Coordinator. If you are a First Church member and would like the care of a trained listener to accompany you through difficult life situations, please contact Lynn at fuspastoralcare@gmail.com or 414-573-9823. Lynn will match you with one of our Pastoral Care Associates, who will then reach out to you for a phone conversation or visit. Please join me in thanking Jeri Pearcy who served in this role for three years and who continues to provide back-up for Lynn.

Membership Update

by Rev. Dena McPhetres

Associate Minister

No matter what the groundhog says on February 2, our month at First Church begins with a beautiful emergence when we celebrate our newest new members at both worship services on Sunday, February 4 at our New Member Ceremony.

We had more than 20 people register for the Winter Journey to Membership class and look forward to officially welcoming many of them into membership. Look for the folks wearing flower boutonnieres and please give them a hearty warm handshake at Coffee Hours on February 4. There will be some treats to share near the Membership Table, and hopefully, a poster of their photos so we can get to know their names and faces.

Big thanks to the Membership Team volunteers Laurie Petersen, Dave Hoover, Jeanne Kowalski, and Paula Anderson who make our Journey to Membership classes and New Member receptions such friendly events.



New Members joining in fall 2023.

Journey to Membership Spring Membership Classes

Four Evening Classes on Wednesdays Four
Wednesday evenings April 3 - 24; 6:30 - 8:30
p.m. In-person, at First Church

Led by our ministers and staff, this series explores our theology, history, principals and social justice framework, as well as the meaning of membership and connection at First Church.

The class is a prerequisite to membership, but joining is not a requirement to take the class. Learn more about membership or register at uumilwaukee.org/get-involved/become-a-member/. For questions? Email dena.mcphetres@uumilwaukee.org.

Share your Experience of Religious Education

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

At First Church, we believe in the importance of providing a robust and enriching faith formation experience for our community. That's why we are have our mid-year Religious Education survey, designed to gather feedback from our members and focus our resources where they're most needed. Your input is essential to help us improve our program and meet the needs of our congregation's Ends.

We understand that this year has been challenging, and our faith formation program has evolved to adapt to the changing times. That's why we're eager to hear your thoughts and ideas on how we can continue to improve and provide the best possible experience for our children, youth, and families.

Our short survey consists of ten questions and takes only a few minutes to complete. By participating, you'll have a direct impact on shaping our faith formation program and ensuring that it meets the needs of our community. Your feedback is invaluable to us, and we appreciate your time and effort in sharing your thoughts.

Don't miss this opportunity to help shape the future of our faith formation program. Take our mid-year survey now and let your voice be heard!

[Click here for the survey](#)

Community Valentines

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

Each year, First Church sends Valentines to elders and others in our community who could use a smile, to let them know we're thinking of them and sending love.

All are invited to come get crafty and make valentines on February 4 in the Common Room. Our children will be making valentines during religious education, and the adults can join in during coffee hour in the Leenhouts Common Room after both services.

Come help us spread the love!



Generosity Creates Community

by Kathy Donius
Pledge Team Chair

Our Annual Pledge Drive kicks off in February and our 2024 Pledge Team invites you to reflect on what you value about our First Church community. While the answer to this question is probably as varied as our members, one way we all help create community is by financially supporting First Church.

Our annual pledges are our primary source of income to support essential church operations. Everything you love and value about First Church is sustained by pledges. This year our goal is to increase our annual pledge income by 10%. Our Forge Our Future campaign successfully built a principal protected endowment and we are so grateful for everyone's generosity to that effort. The endowment's profits provide an additional source of revenue for annual operations. Those profits, together with expense reductions, have enabled us to reduce our budget deficit by about 75%. Meeting our pledge goal will help us close the remaining gap and move us closer to our larger goal of becoming a pledge sustained community.

Our pledge drive will run from February 18 to March 10, and you will hear more from us in the coming weeks. Please consider increasing your pledge. Our collective generosity is what creates our First Church community. Every pledge matters and is gratefully received and deeply appreciated.

Join the Upcoming Pledge Events

February 18 - Stewardship Kickoff

Look for your US mail for First Unitarian Society pledge material and a message from Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom.

During the stewardship events in February to March, each Sunday join with your church community to create a fun activity during Coffee Hour.

February 18 - Sunday Testimonial

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director, will give us his generosity testimonial.

February 25 - Sunday Testimonial

Max Larson will give us his generosity testimonial during the Youth service.

March 3 - Sunday Testimonial

Anne Alexander will present a generosity testimonial.

March 10 - Sunday Testimonial

Jeff Percy will present a testimonial for the closing of the stewardship celebration.

March 10 - Stewardship Celebration

Deadline to turn in your pledge card.

Join us in the Common Room to celebrate with your friends and families. More details coming soon.

Earth Justice Ministry Updates

by Bruce Wiggins
and Barbara Leigh, Co-chairs

The Environmental Justice Ministry invites you to join us for our next installment of Food, Fun and Future on Sunday, February 4 from 12:30-2 p.m. in the church Parlor. Bagels will be provided.

In December, eighteen of us gathered and, after bagels and a couple of fun warm-up games, we discussed our various interests. This month, we will develop a few small groups to focus on ideas that could involve the Earth Justice Ministry and the congregation. Interest areas in addition to elections include Plastic Free, Rights of Nature, renewable energy, and more! Come and join the discussion!

We are following the Social Justice Council lead to focus this year on elections. So, we joined in on Defend Democracy Day at First Church on Jan. 7. In coming months, we will provide information on the Environmental Voter Project to highlight environmental issues during this year's elections.

We are continuing monthly "Walk and Roll" opportunities for church members to get to know each other and enjoy or learn about nature. This cold winter month, we are scheduling an indoor tour. See elsewhere in this newsletter details of the Great Lakes Institute/School of Freshwater Sciences tour on Tuesday, February 13.

Build Healthy Multi-Cultural Community with Us!

by Anti-Racism Team &
Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

The First Church Anti-Racism team is hosting a training on "Building Healthy Multicultural Community" on Saturday, March 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at First Church, led by Milwaukee's Nurturing Diversity Partners.

This "Building Healthy Multicultural Community" event will build our understanding of racial injustice as a social determinant of community and individual health. Together, we will learn how UUs can champion prevention and healing in the church and other institutions to which we belong. The training will include a lecture presentation as well as facilitated small groups for you to explore the content with other First Church folks who care about these issues and want to help our church learn and grow together.

To join us on our journey towards anti-racism in everything from worship to religious education to finances to pastoral care, please apply to attend by answering three simple questions here on this [RSVP form](#). Space is limited, and the deadline to apply is February 15.

We are excited to journey together towards anti-racism and building healthy multi-cultural community!

House Band Concert Greatest Hits & Hidden Gems

Friday, March 8
7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Tickets available at:
<https://FUSMhousebandconcert.eventbrite.com>

Let's raise the roof and raise some funds! The First Church House Band presents their first ever concert for your listening, singing and dancing pleasure. Don't miss this rare opportunity to spend an evening with the band. We'll share some favorites, some surprises, some secrets, some laughs, and one heckuva good time.

This event is a fundraiser for the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee. Performers donating their time include: Sarah Richards, Nick Hayes, Elizabeth Hayes, Bob Porter, Mark Miller, and Alissa Rhode.

Sign Up Soon For the Silent Retreat!

by Sarah Fowles
Silent Retreat Team Member

Time to take action. The deadline to sign up for the First Church Silent Retreat is Friday, February 16.

Join us for an opportunity to relax, reflect, contemplate life changes, nurture the spirit, and enjoy beauty.

The First Church Silent Retreat returns April 26-28, 2024 at the Cedar Valley Center in West Bend, which boasts 100 acres of natural beauty with hiking trails, gardens, a pond, rolling hills, and panoramic views.

The event fee includes lodging and meals (which are delicious!), and is \$320 per person for single occupancy rooms and \$290 per person for double occupancy rooms.

To register and pay the event fee, please visit the registration page [HERE](#).

Questions may be directed to Sarah Fowles at tiredandwired@gmail.com, Lynda Cipov at lyndacipov@aol.com, Rollie Hanson at rollie@hansonlaw.net, or Chris Aiken at chrisaiken2@gmail.com.

Memorial Service Receptions

by Sharon DePue

Several years ago, I became aware that First Church lacked what I thought could be an important ministry and one that I could see my loved ones availing themselves of in the future – offering to provide food and host memorial service receptions at our church.

For several years thereafter First Church offered just that. Only the COVID pandemic caused the suspension of these services. What I didn't realize at the beginning was how fulfilling it would be for me personally to provide this ministry. At age 84, I am no longer the coordinator, and passed the baton to Jacki Zandi. Jacki would like a co-coordinator. Please consider the description below and contact Jacki if you are interested.

What does coordinating a reception entail?

1. Being contacted by our ministers when a family would appreciate our services at a reception following a memorial service.
2. Contact the deceased's family spokesperson to discuss what types of food: finger foods, sweets only, small bites, simple buffet?
3. Decide how much food is needed, based on the family's estimate of attendance;
4. Contact members on our list with requests for food donations;
5. Organize and set up the food on the day of the memorial service.

Jacki is updating the list of church members who are potential food donors for this important ministry. Please contact Jacki Zandi at jackizandi@yahoo.com or 414-453-1897 with your thoughts and offers of assistance. Let's make 2024 the year when we revitalize this ministry!

EJM Walk and Roll Indoors Great Lakes Water Institute

by Jacki Zandi
Earth Justice Ministry Member

Come join us for a tour of the Great Lakes Water Institute on Tuesday February 13, 10:30 a.m.- Noon, located on the south side in Milwaukee's Harbor District at 600 E. Greenfield Ave.

The Institute is the freshwater research center of the University of Wisconsin system, and the only major aquatic research institution located on Lake Michigan, as well as the largest of its kind in the Great Lakes region. Our tour will be led by Liz Sutton, the Outreach Program Manager, who will offer insights into the research and importance of this institute.

You can park on the street or in the lot west of the building. If you have any questions, contact your hosts Jacki Zandi at 415-265-8619 or Paula Anderson at 414-550-8808.

Splinters from the Board

by Sarah Richards

Board of Trustees Vice President

In December, the Board of Trustees revisited nuanced legal questions regarding the draft Endowment Trust document language. Elizabeth Lentini and Dave Becker of the Endowment Fund Task Force (EFTF) were present and reiterated that to act in the best interests of the church, the Board and the EFTF must work together to establish a collaborative culture between the Board and the endowment trustees. The Board approved the language of the working draft of the Endowment Trust document in principle. We extend deep appreciation to the EFTF for the time and effort they have invested in the process.

In other business, based on the evidence presented, the Board determined compliance with the limitation policy covering asset protection. Our gratitude goes to Director of Administration Jean Johnson for her extensive work pulling together pertinent information and data.

During discussion of the Senior Minister's report, we heard about the Pledge Team's work on the annual stewardship campaign and learned that average weekly attendance at Worship Services is over 300 (in-person & online).

Additionally, we are exploring questions around the intersection of Board procedures with white supremacy culture, as well as scheduling a Board-specific anti-racism training. Much of the struggle lies in continuing our necessary tasks while engaging in generative work.

The Annual Congregational Meeting is set for May 19. Finally, Board Members reported on various task group involvement and miscellaneous business.

Endowment Fund Task Force (EFTF) Update

by Ron Oshima

EFTF Member

Amidst the holiday cheer and Winter Storm Gerri, the elves at EFTF, the Board of Trustees (BOT), and the Nominating Committee have been hard at work. Here's a quick update:

- In December, the BOT gave the nod to a nearly final Trust Agreement. The EFTF will add the finishing touches based on BOT feedback.
- Nominating the three initial Trustees is in full swing. Interviews happened during the latter part of December. The Nominating Committee is proceeding with the process and will be working with the BOT.
- Looking ahead, the EFTF will focus on effectively communicating the entire governance structure to the congregation once everything is in place.

Members on the EFTF team: Dave Becker, George Bledsoe, Tom Briscoe, Elizabeth Lentini, Ron Oshima, and Kathy Rivera.



Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, February 7 & 21, 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.

The Chronologically Gifted Potluck

Please join on February 25, 2024
At Church

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, February 11
[Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we discuss January's read, *Howard Thurman and the Disinherited: A religious Biography* by Paul Harvey. Contact Barbra Lancelot for more information at 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.



Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE



FEBRUARY 4

Humanism: In Command or In Crisis?

**Michael Schuler, Humanist, former Senior Minister,
First Unitarian Society of Madison.**

Schuler will draw on life scientists, public intellectuals, technologists, religious and philosophical writers, novelists, and poets. This wide-ranging survey will help the listener determine whether humanism makes sense for them.

FEBRUARY 11

What's New in Astronomy?

Dr. Alison Klesman, Senior Editor, Astronomy Magazine.

We'll discuss the latest discoveries and upcoming events in the field of astronomy! Topics will include the upcoming April 8 total solar eclipse, listening in on the background hum of the universe, bringing asteroid pieces back to Earth, and more.



FEBRUARY 18

What Is a Fair Map? The latest on legislative redistricting in Wisconsin.

Dr. Matt Petering, Associate Professor of Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering at UW-Milwaukee and owner of District Solutions LLC.

Dr. Petering will discuss political redistricting in Wisconsin in 2024. What is redistricting and why is it important? What is gerrymandering? Is it a problem? He'll explain technical challenges faced by mapmakers and show why drawing a fair Wisconsin map is so difficult. Dr. Petering advocates using advanced computer algorithms to generate near-optimal maps based on objective criteria. A set of Wisconsin maps created by his FastMap algorithm, which were recently disqualified by the Wisconsin Supreme Court on procedural grounds, are compared to the maps currently before the Court.

Staff Directory

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

Board of Trustees Officers

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Vice President.....Stacy Koenen
SecretaryJoe Riepenhoff
TreasurerTom Briscoe

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Dana Brooks
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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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