

JANUARY 2025



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*

Stories

THANK YOU **Christmas Eve** **Share the Plate Donations**

We give away our entire Christmas Eve offering every year. This year, we collected for these three worthy organizations. Thank you for your generous contributions!

\$2,382 Interchange Food Pantry

A food pantry that First Church founded in 1971 along with a group of neighboring churches, is committed to helping provide healthy food to low-income residents of Milwaukee in a compassionate and supportive environment.

\$2,382 Walkers Point Youth & Family Center

This organization provides youth in crisis with an inclusive and stable space where they are empowered to create a safe and healthy life through counseling, case management, shelter for youth, and housing for young adults.

\$2,457 Guest House of Milwaukee

The Guest Hour provides shelter, housing, education, and services to Milwaukee's homeless who seek to transform their lives with dignity and purpose.

Forward Scholars

Share the Plate **January 2025**

by Lynde Uihlein,
Share the Plate Team Member

Forward Scholars is a community volunteer tutoring program that is focused on helping K-3rd graders who are not yet reading at grade level.

Initiated by Common Ground, a 15-year-old community organizing group with a track record of success in a number of areas, tutors are serving more than 180 MPS students in 7 schools this school year. In 2022, the first year of the program, the tutored students gained an average of two grade levels in reading accuracy and fluency after eight months of tutoring. The program is flourishing and plans to grow for the 2024-2025 school year. You can learn more at www.forwardscholars.org

Volunteer opportunities for tutors are available and volunteers are welcome.

In the past, Milwaukee Public Schools has been a source of financial support for the program. Forward Scholars is currently relying on donations to keep the program operating. Please give generously.

[Donate to this STP Partner](#)



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

When I was a little girl, I loved gathering around the campfire to tell stories. The warm crackling fire against the dark night sky helped my imagination roam as the elders' voices filled the air.

The stories we tell narrative our lives. Stories frame our understanding of what matters, who matters, how we matter. They make meaning of fact, stringing together our lives' events like pearls.

This month, we will explore the practice of Story in worship, religious education, and small groups. On January 19, the poet laureate of Milwaukee and Wisconsin, Dasha Kelly Hamilton, will join us for our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday and tell us stories about cake!

Join us this January as we snuggle in and gather round the fire to tell stories, dream, and make meaning of our lives.

With love,
Jennifer
Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Happy New Year
First Church Friends,
Families, and Members!



Dena's Digressions

by Rev. Dena McPhetres



I am a story glutton. I love hearing people's life stories, I love reading stories, I love telling made-up or real stories or something in between. I have loved stories since I was a wee child. We were a family of books—my mother was an English teacher, my aunt a librarian, and later my sister became a librarian. Our favorite babysitter helped us act out stories and told us her own made-up stories at bedtime. In junior high, I found my niche in speech and theater where the immersion in stories continued. As I grew through the predictable life cycle developmental crises of becoming an adult, I struggled to find my own story amidst those my family, small town, and broader culture told me about myself. Finding my voice was intertwined with claiming my story. Perhaps that is true for you, too?

Rev. Scott Tayler wrote in the theme circle packet for January: "Are you an actor conforming to the scripts of others? Or have you found your way to becoming the director and screenwriter of your life? How are you struggling right now to regain control of your storyline? How are you and your friends working to regain control of the storyline of your community, and our country? No matter which question is ours, the answer is the same: Don't give the storyline away."

In many small groups and conversations at church, we make meaning of our lives by discovering our storylines—both the challenging constricting storylines and the liberating ones. We are inspired by each other's stories and grateful for the healthy vulnerability that happens when we give and receive our truths. As the months unfold toward my retirement at the end of June, I am keenly aware of your stories each time that I see you. Sometimes the knowledge of your stories lifts me up; sometimes the memory of a story you've shared fills my eyes with tears. I'm so grateful for the stories you've shared. I treasure them all, as I treasure you.

The more we share our authentic stories and script our future stories together, the tighter the weave of our fabric of community, which we know we'll rely on ever more heavily as 2025 unfolds. May we be a good story for each other.

Yours,

Dena

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister



Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



Do you know where your grandparents grew up?
Do you know the story of something really terrible
that happened in your family, like an illness or a
fire? Do you know how they got through it?

Often, family stories of struggle are not shared.
Our culture tends to encourage us to move on and
families focus on the hope and promise of the
next generation. While parents try to find ways to
give children the strength, will, resilience to
embrace life and all its loveliness and ugliness.

One way is surprisingly simple—tell the hard
stories. Stories of struggle, confusion, being lost,
feeling alone, reconnecting with our people, and
finding our way to new places.

Dr. Marshall Duke and Dr. Robin Fivush,
professors of psychology at Emory University
research the qualities of resilience in families and
children by tracking conversations. Asking those
“Do You Know” questions that I begin with and
testing the children’s psychological health over
the years. It turns out, knowing your family story
makes us more competent and understanding our
roots gives us a stronger sense of ourselves, our
purpose, and resilience to continue even when
life does not seem to make much sense.

Humans need story. We tell stories to give life
experiences shape. The narrative organizes our
experiences. Stories help us connect the
landscape of our consciousness with the

landscape of action, by integrating our internal
world into our external world.

This research teaches us that having a family
narrative builds an identity inside of us, an
intergenerational self. The intergenerational self
is created when we internalize the stories of not
just the good things, but the hard times, that our
family has endured. Making sense of our
ancestors, by examining their lives, lives we are
connected to, offers us models of how to endure.
Most importantly, they show us how we belong to
something bigger than ourselves.

Family narratives contain collective wisdom that
is a tool of stability, helping to protect our
children from anger and anxiety. In each story
there is a plot with instructions to keep
stretching, learning, and hoping. The story of us
is a powerful gift, the ups and downs endured,
retold to them again and again, refined for each
generation.

The best single predictor of children’s emotional
health and happiness is knowing their roots—who
they come from. It shapes their wings and their
belief in who they can become.

Be brave and tell the hard stories.

May we remember the roots that hold us close,
grow our wings and stretch them, we will need
them in the wild world before us.

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Why Do We Tell Stories?

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Nick Davia, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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It's Complicated

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Religious Education

Jeremy Koenen, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Makin' Cake

Dasha Kelly Hamilton, Pulpit Guest

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director with the Chancel Choir

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Religious Education

Amanda Panciera, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Repetition Is Our Friend

Rev. Dena McPhetres, Associate Minister

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Religious Education

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Tom Hester, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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

Pledge Drive 2025-26 Together We Fan the Flame

by Adam Zaiger

Pledge Team Chairr

Our annual pledge drive will kick-off on February 2. Our 2025 Pledge Team invites you to consider how First Church helps you kindle the fire in your heart by reflecting on these Chalice Lighting words written by Rev. Laurel Sheridan:

*Take from life its coals, not its ashes.
Fan the flames of love and justice;
join hands and hearts in common endeavor;
and there will be no limit to what we can achieve together.*

One way we all help fan the flame is by making an annual pledge to financially support First Church. Our annual pledges are the primary source of income to support essential church operations and enable us to come together, to fan the flames of peace, love and justice within one another, our community and the world.

Our annual Pledge Drive will run from February 2 through March 2, and you will be hearing more from us in worship and church communications, inviting you to make your pledge. Please review the pledge materials we send out in January, so you are ready to pledge during our pledge drive. Our budget planning process relies on the results of our annual Pledge Drive. By timely submitting your pledge

before March 2, you will ease the workload of your fellow members on the Pledge Team and ensure that your pledge is included in our projected income for the coming church year. Every pledge matters and is gratefully received.

Testimonial by Benedict LeFort

In a sermon not too long ago, Rev. Jennifer shared research that consistently shows that strong social connections can significantly contribute to our wellbeing. First Church is one of the places I rely on to connect with a caring, intentional community of seekers like myself. It's impossible to put a price on that, but I'd encourage you to support our community as much as you can. First Church is more important now than ever!



Youth Group Plans 2025

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Religious Education

The Youth Group will have a special schedule with many exciting events in the beginning of 2025! Be sure to save these dates to your calendar!

January 5: Youth Group-Planning our overnight!

January 19: Youth Overnight at First Church!

January 26, 9:30 a.m. Storytelling Workshop with the AMAZING Dasha Kelly Hamilton. This will be a key part of preparing our February 23 Youth Worship!

January 26- February 23: Youth Group meets every Sunday in preparation for Youth Service on February 23 at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.



*Wishing You
A Great New Year*




YOU ARE INVITED TO A MAGIC & MYSTERY PARTY



MAX OTTO HALL FEB. 7, 6-8PM

Volunteer to help with decorations, food, games, and more. Sign up online, QR code below or at the RE Table to make this a magical event!

Come one, come all for a magical,
All-Ages night of fun and sorcery!



A time for witches, wizards, and all
manner of magical creatures to wear
costumes, delight in magic, play games
& enjoy each other's company!

Click Here: [Sign Up LINK](#)



EVERYONE IS INVITED

Membership Makeover

by Dave Hoover

Welcome & Belong Team Member

The Membership Team exists to foster a welcoming atmosphere for UU visitors and members alike, helping to integrate new members into church life. While its purpose remains unaltered, its name has changed to better reflect the purpose. As our understanding of membership in the 21st century evolves and broadens, we discover that guests, members, and friends are all seeking deeper belonging on their journeys.

Thus, our Membership Team is now the Welcome and Belonging Team, and the member services table at social hour is now the Questions and Connections table. The table will continue to serve everyone and be staffed at each social hour by a team member. Our team goal this year is to “make things obvious!” You may identify team members by their yellow name tags. Be sure to introduce yourself and ask any questions on your heart or mind.

Journey to Membership

Winter 2025

4 Wednesdays, January 8 – 29

6:30 – 8:30 p.m., on Zoom

Spring 2025

4 Wednesdays, April 9 – 30

6:30 – 8:30 p.m., in-person

Join us for either class this new year either online or in person to participate in our Journey to Membership class. Led by our ministers and staff, this series explores Unitarian Universalist beliefs, history, values, and social justice framework, as well as the meaning of membership and how to make connections at First Church.

The class is a prerequisite to membership, but joining is not a requirement. Register if you are interested in UUism, want to meet others, or just want a deeper understanding of intentional community as we strive to practice it here at First Church. Learn more about membership and register at uumilwaukee.org/get-involved/become-a-member/ or stop by the Membership table on Sundays to sign-up. Questions? Email Rev. Dena at: dena.mcphetres@uumilwaukee.org.

Legal Action on Line 5!

by Terry Wiggins

Co-Chair, Earth Justice Ministry

On Sunday, October 13, the Anti-Racism Team and Earth Justice Ministry showed the film *Bad River*. We have an update on the project depicted therein.

On December 12, the Wisconsin Sierra Club, 350 Wisconsin, and League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, with legal representation by Midwest Environmental Advocates, filed a lawsuit. This suit challenges the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permits for Enbridge Energy to build a new 41-mile segment of its Line 5 oil pipeline near the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin.

Enbridge's 71-year-old pipeline cuts across the Bad River Reservation, where it has been trespassing on Tribal land for more than a decade. Enbridge sought and obtained DNR permits to build a new segment around the Reservation. This pipeline would simply move the risk and harm to the region's wetlands and waterways, perpetuating reliance on fossil fuels and delaying the transition to clean energy.

The DNR itself has acknowledged that the reroute would facilitate the continued use of fossil fuels and would contribute to negative impacts associated with fossil fuel production, transport, and consumption.

The message is clear: the era of endangering our environment, our climate, and Native Americans must end.

Organize In Solidarity with Immigrants

by Michael Pointer Mace

Are you concerned about how our country treats immigrants and recent arrivals to the United States?

Do you see recent arrivals and immigrants as integral members of our community?

Do you think that Milwaukee is improved by contributions made by those who have recently arrived?

First Church members who recognize the importance of preserving the contribution of immigrants and recent arrivals have started to organize. If you are interested in joining a delegation of First Church members who will be attending the Annual Assembly of Voces de la Frontera on Saturday January 25 at South Division High School or would like to help (re)create a First Church social justice group focused on immigrant and workers rights please complete this google form [HERE](#) or reach out to Michael Pointer Mace at michaelpointermace@gmail.com



Reflecting on Anti-Racism Team's Year

by Myles Pointer Mace

Youth Member Anti-Racism Team

As a youth representative of First Church's Anti-Racism Team, I am grateful to contribute to a team rooted in compassion and perspective, working to dismantle barriers and foster unity. Our collective efforts create spaces for meaningful dialogue and inspire actionable change within our congregation and the wider community. From Reverend Naomi Tutu's inspiring training session to Dasha Kelly Hamilton's recent workshop, our work shows the power of conversation in cultivating understanding of justice.

On Indigenous People's Sunday, we organized a screening of Bad River. This documentary chronicles the Wisconsin-based Bad River Band and its ongoing fight to save Lake Superior, the largest freshwater resource in America. Members and guests contributed to a stimulating Q&A session with Bad River Band members, collecting \$1,578 in donations to Save the Bad River fund.

Last month, Dasha Kelly Hamilton led a workshop using the creative process to facilitate open dialogue, repair social disharmony, and appreciate individuality. Our members filled Max Otto Hall with chatter over Dasha Kelly's stirring conversation. Working with our wonderful Anti-Racism Team has expanded my connection to our church community, achieving a greater appreciation for our intrinsic role in Milwaukee.

In 2025, the Anti-Racism Team will be working hard to help Milwaukee progress toward cultural cohesion. To stay up to date with our work, including a special service project on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, please reference our website and the weekly announcements in service. Through collective action, we can embrace our shared humanity and lead Milwaukee into the future.

EJM Walk & Roll Mayfair Mall

by Jacki Zandi, EJM member

Join us on Saturday January 11 at Mayfair Mall, 2500 N. Mayfair Road in Wauwatosa for our indoor Walk and Roll. This thriving mall has few vacancies, a unique center court design, and old school food court. Let's meet inside in front of the Barnes and Noble entrance, accessed from the store's outside entrance which is near the south end of the mall, facing west towards Mayfair Road. From there we will circle about. Jacki Zandi is your host. Please bring friends and family. We always experience more together! The mall is serviced by MCTS buses 22 and 66.

Splinters from the Board

by Amy Wilbourne

Member of the Board of Trustees

The November Board of Trustees meeting was held on the 19 of the month. After a positive discussion about Ends five and eight, the board unanimously passed a motion that we are making sufficient progress toward both. Evidence from the congregational survey, and congregational data, show that we are both promoting our shared values in the world, and creating accessible, and courageous welcome. That's good news!

After a presentation from church member Amanda Panciera about fair compensation, the board unanimously passed a motion for a compensation package for ministers in the coming 2025-2026 church year. First Church is offering a competitive package to attract a new Acting Associate Minister this Spring

We discussed updates to our Feast For Funds event happening on February 8th. We will be hosting a chili cookoff with the BOT. If you did not get a chance to grab a ticket, more tickets will be made available closer to the event. It has come to light that a few of us have a competitive streak when it comes to making chili! We look forward to seeing folks there.

New Checking Account for the FUSM Endowment Fund Trust

by Jean Johnson, Director of Administration
Shari Wright, Office Manager

The endowment trustees have created a separate checking account for the endowment.

Beginning January 1, 2025, endowment contributions will be deposited in the new checking account.

There are numerous ways you can contribute to the endowment. They are found on this web page <https://uumilwaukee.org/ways-to-give/> with details to help you decide which method suits your contributions best. Please indicate that your contribution is for the endowment with each method.

See the sidebar on page 14 for details for how to pay your pledge as of January 1, 2025.

Please check your statement to be sure it agrees with your intentions and records. We send endowment pledge statements quarterly and operating pledge statements monthly.

As always, please reach out to us if you have questions or concerns. We trust this transition will be simple for you.



Endowment Fund Task Force Update

by Ron Oshima
Endowment Trustee

Here's the latest on the FUSM Endowment Fund Trust:

Endowment fund trust checking account

The endowment trust checking account is now open and ready for contributions! For ways to contribute to the endowment, see the sidebar on this page.

Endowment Investment Manager

The FUSM Endowment Funds will be managed by the UU Common Endowment Fund, which handles investments for other UUA congregations. Trustees are setting up the account, and we're on track to be fully operational by January 1, 2025.

Thank You!

Your incredible support has already raised \$1.9 million toward our nearly \$3 million goal. Every pledge counts, and we're so grateful for your generosity as we continue this journey together.

How to Pay Your Forge Our Future Endowment Fund Pledge in 2025

Checks

Make checks payable to:
FUSM Endowment Fund Trust

Website Form

Text Giving

MyFirstChurch (member portal)

Continue to choose "Forge Our Future Endowment" when using any of these digital giving methods. Routing your gift to the new checking account is accomplished on the backend.

Automatic Monthly Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

If you already use this method, the authorization form we have on file still works. The changes will happen on the backend. If you would like to begin to use this method, the form [HERE](#) has a place to choose the endowment.

Donations of Appreciated Stock

When contacting RBC Wealth Management, per the info document on our church website [HERE](#), please indicate to RBC that this is for the endowment fund.



Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, Jan. 8 & 22, 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.

Book Discussion Group

Sunday, January 12
[Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we discuss January's read, *The Language of God* by Francis S. Collins. Contact Barbra Lancelot for more information at uubarbra@gmail.com.

Chancel Choir

January 9 & 16, 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 Tristan Strelitzer: for more information or to join at tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org.

The Chronologically Gifted Potluck

Sunday, January 26 at 12:30 pm
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! For more information, please contact Barbara Collignon at bjcollig@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. Contact Diane Horne for more information.

SWANS (Seasoned Women Are Naturally Social)

Saturday, February 1, 10:30 a.m.

If you'd like to join us in Feb. at the Black Holocaust Museum, please contact Barbara Collignon at 414-614-8141 or by email bjcollig@gmail.com. We generally meet on the first Saturday or Sunday of the month to socialize.



Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE

JANUARY 5

Immigration History, Myths & Challenges

Polly Ellingson, Attorney practicing business immigration law 2002-2023.

Ellingson will provide general facts about the current immigration climate in the U.S. as well as a historical perspective. They will also debunk common myths about immigrants and immigration and discuss barriers to legal immigrant status and the prospective Trump administration's deportation plans.

JANUARY 12

Milwaukee's Climate & Economic Equity Plan

Jennifer Evans, President, Our Future Milwaukee.

In the summer of 2023, the Milwaukee Common Council passed and the Mayor signed, the Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan. The Plan sets out a pathway to dramatically reduce climate pollution in our community and has received national attention for its focus on reducing racial and economic inequality. A coalition of organizations, which now includes First Church, came together to form Our Future Milwaukee to support implementation of the Plan's Ten Big Ideas.



JANUARY 19

Viewaukee

Mike Barera, Assistant Archivist at Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Mike will talk about the Milwaukee County Historical Society initiative to place binoculars on stands to view ten local sites of historical interest within Milwaukee County.

JANUARY 26

Wisconsin for Environmental Justice

Dean Muller, President of Wis. for Environmental Justice.

Wisconsin for Environmental Justice (WEJ) works to get the state, cities, and counties to pursue litigation against the fossil fuel industry for climate damages. Dean will update us on national litigation and our efforts here in Wisconsin. The overriding goal of WEJ is to protect the planet for future generations. Wisconsin has a rich history of environmental justice, from John Muir to Gaylord Nelson. We must live up to that tradition.



Staff Directory

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

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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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