

SEPTEMBER 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*

**BUILDING
BELONGING**



Inside News

by the *Chanticleer* Editors

Welcome to the New Church Year!

Ingathering Sunday, September 7, we move back to two worship services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service will be livestreamed on our **YouTube** channel and on our website.

Children's Faith Formation (formerly Religious Education) will again be at 9:00 a.m. with everyone starting in the Sanctuary. (pages 14-16)

Some highlights of autumn opportunities to come together in community.

- Get to know more about Rev. Chris Long and his ministry at First Church. (page 4)
- What is "Lifespan Faith Formation"? (page 5)
- So many Social Justice opportunities and much news this fall! (pages 7-11)
- Morter Lecture weekend with poet James Crews is coming. (page 11)
- Jean Johnson announces her retirement. (page 17)

**Subscribe to
Weekly Announcements.**

First Church Facebook Group

Share the Plate

Lynde Uihlein

Share the Plate Chair



WUUSAN is our September Share the Plate Recipient. WUUSAN seeks to bring the values and energy of UU's from across Wisconsin to bear on important issues of our times. They are building a network of UU activists to write coordinated letters to editors, to make coordinated phone calls to our Congressional and Legislative representatives, and to provide rapid response demonstration support for our partner organizations.

They also keep an eye out for effective partners they can support with these services. Their mission, grounded in UU faith, is to build and sustain a collaborative network where all voices are heard. Using an inclusive democratic process, they will employ their resources to support those efforts that UU congregations deem most critical to our state.

This year they plan to go to the next level and hire a part-time executive director to lead their day-to-day activities. The financial support they receive from congregations like ours encourages them to take this step. FUSM is at the forefront of that effort. Please take a moment to visit the website at wuusan.org and Join Us to receive their monthly newsletter and give generously on the link below or during services.

Donate to this STP Partner



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Dear First Church,

We want to build belonging at First Church this year: for you, for all our members and friends, and for new people arriving to join our community—including Rev. Chris Long, our new Acting Assistant Minister! Come meet Rev. Chris at church on Sundays and read his introductory Chanticleer column on the next page.

We are also saying goodbye to another pillar of First Church: our beloved Director of Administration Jean Johnson, who plans to retire in January of 2026. See more about that here: [\(link\)](#).

Church is a counter-cultural place, where we value human life, empathy, and practice caring for one another. Building belonging in human community is a key part of building resistance and resilience in the face of fascism, which aims to separate us and commodify our relationships. At church we weave our lives together instead, building strength and honoring the inherent value of life.

Come practice being human and living your values this year at church and be part of the ecosystem of resistance to fascist dehumanization. We'll see you soon.

Love,

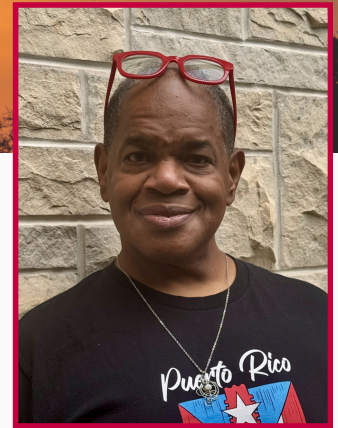
Rev. Jennifer

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister



Curiosities & Musings

by Rev. Chris Long



“Building Belonging: Take Me to the Alley”

A good day to you, all! I must start this month’s curiosities and musings with a deep sense of gratitude to Reverends Jennifer Nordstrom, Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, all the staff of the church, the Board, and all of you who I have had a chance to meet so far for the incredible, soul-felt welcome I have received since arriving in my position as the Acting Assistant Minister on August 1, 2025.

Additionally, in these few short days since arriving, encountering the deep dedication so many of you have to this church, its history and its mission has been inspiring. What might this all mean as a religious community? As we all find ourselves in this moment on political, social, and environmental landscapes how do we work to build a sense of belonging for ourselves and each other as we also continue to welcome the stranger?

How might we, together, explore when we have enjoyed authentic belonging in our lives? What has this entailed? Who was included? Maybe as important, who may have not been included in our community of belonging, with or without intention, and why? Furthermore, in what ways does this amazing church already practice what it takes to co-create environments of belonging in everything we do here? What more might each of us be willing and able to do to foster belonging here and in our lives beyond these walls?

One of the many ways this church builds on its

mission to provide opportunities to deepen our spirituality is through joining in its ongoing programming. One such program of this church is Theme Circles. As it is September, it is again time to register for this year’s Theme Circles. If you are a long-time member of Theme Circles, or if you would like to learn more and possibly register this year, please click the [link here](#) to learn more, and to find the registration form. Registration runs from September 1 through September 30, 2025.

On Sunday, September 21, 2025, please join Reverend Kimberlee, Lead Music Director Alissa Rhode, and Worship Associate Nick DaVia and I for my first time preaching in this historic pulpit as your Acting Assistant Minister. The title and theme for this service is: “Take Me to the Alley: Belonging as a Spiritual Practice.”

Lastly, as I continue to work to meet more of you with each passing day, if we have not already, let’s plan time for tea or coffee to get to know each other and to share how each of us may work to sustain ourselves and each other through these ever trying, yet promising times. Please feel free to email me at revchris.long@uumilwaukee.org.

Ashe! May it be so! Blessed Be, Shalom, Salaam and Amen!

Rev. Chris Long, Acting Assistant Minister



Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



Welcome to the thrill of September, a time that holds summer's end and plunges us headlong into autumn. For many, this season is all about returning—to classrooms and routines, to friends and familiar rhythms, with eager excitement and concern as we imagine everything the coming year might bring. How will we fit it all in, how do we fit into it all, where will we find belonging?

I too share this feeling of intensity, returning to First Church from the first part of my sabbatical this past summer in my new role as Minister of Faith Formation. I am grateful to return and belong to a faith community that centers love, connection, and purpose. Especially at a time when our Unitarian Universalist values call us to resist fascism.

How will we find belonging? Belonging is built together with intention, by practicing being fully human (flaws and all) and doing the next right thing through caring for ourselves and our community. When we share our wisdom at church we create opportunities for love, learning and connection. We know how to do this and we will continue, knowing we can persevere together. Our Faith Formation program, formerly Religious Education and Adult Spiritual Development, is one of the ways we build a path for one another at First Church.

Lifespan Faith Formation supports spiritual growth and faith development for people of all ages, as a lifelong process that offers holistic and diverse ways to nurture journeys of exploration, meaning making, and connection to the sacred. It contrasts with traditional religious education by focusing on integrated programs that foster personal transformation, critical consciousness, and a shared commitment to living out values within a supportive community.

Changing the name from religious education to faith formation more accurately reflects the shifts we have already made over the past few years in our First Church educational offerings.

Faith Formation encompasses our multigenerational services, shared learning experiences, as well as support for individuals at different stages of life. The goal is to nurture the exploration of spiritual life throughout a lifetime.

That is a lot! As we find our way together, I am eager to hear from you and learn what opportunities of connection you believe we can create together. If you have an idea, share it with me [here](#).

With a heart full of gratitude,
Kimberlee
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson
Minister of Faith Formation



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Building Belonging: the Home of Resistance

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Ingathering Sunday

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director, and the Chancel Choir
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Faith Formation
Rev. Chris Long, Acting Assistant Minister
Amanda Panciera, Worship Associate
[Click for info about this service](#)

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We Belong to the Water

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Water Ceremony

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Faith Formation
Jen Murray-Bentz, Worship Associate
[Click for info about this service](#)

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Take Me to the Alley: Belonging as Spiritual Practice

Rev. Chris Long, Acting Associate Minister

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Faith Formation
Nick DaVia, Worship Associate
[Click for info about this service](#)

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Unlocking the Heart

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

James Crews, Poet and Irma Morter Lecturer

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director, and the Chancel Choir
Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Faith Formation
Debra Klepp, Worship Associate
[Click for info about this service](#)

Sunday Services at 9 and 11 a.m.

Jean Johnson Announces Her Retirement

Dear First Church Community,

I am happy to share with you that I'll be retiring from my position as Director of Administration in January 2026.

I am filled with gratitude and joy for the honor of serving First Church for 27 years. First Church has done so much good for so many people over the years. I'm proud to have provided support for those programs, the container to hold the caring relationships and work.

Friends ask me how I could stay in the same job for 27 years! First Church is full of loving and creative people; I thrive working in community. Our dedicated staff and lay leaders are some of the best folks I've ever worked with. My work has also evolved and changed, from being the staff lead of a major renovation project at the beginning of my tenure to helping meet the challenge of being over-crowded, from changes in our staff team and ministers to transitioning financial activities from being completely lay-led to being the administrator's responsibility. There is never a dull moment! I am also grateful to the church for the equity and justice of our retirement contribution policy which has helped make retirement possible for me.

I'm happy I'll be retiring in good health at nearly age 67. I look forward to returning to some creative activities I have missed like pastel

painting and baking. I will savor gardening, hiking and biking. I'll spend more time with family and friends, far and near. I might tutor reading and will explore other volunteering too.

After being away from First Church about a year, I truly look forward to returning to First Church on Christmas Eve 2026 as a regular member of our community. It will be wonderful to attend church, join in programs, and see all of you again.

With heartfelt gratitude, Jean
Jean Johnson, Director of Administration

From Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom on Jean's Retirement

Jean's retirement announcement is another bittersweet moment in the life of our community, as we celebrate a long and amazing career of service to First Church. Jean is the first administrator our 180-year-old congregation has had, and she has become a pillar of our institution.

Over the years Jean has managed the building, the finances, personnel, and various aspects of leadership and operations. She has loved this congregation well, giving 27 years of her life in service to our community's thriving, for which we owe her a deep debt of gratitude.

In September, Rev. Jennifer is pulling together a small task force to search for a new Director of Administration. We aim to advertise the position in October, interview and hire in November, and train

From Rev. Jennifer continues on page 8

continued “From Rev. Jennifer”

the new person in December while Jean is still here. After taking a best-practice guided year-long break from the congregation to give the new person time to get situation, we will welcome Jean back to our congregation as a member in the pews Christmas Eve 2026.

We are so grateful for Jean’s dedication and excellence in her service to First Church for nearly three decades. Our congregation is the stable, grounded, steady, competent, clean and effective place it is because of her work.

We hope you will join us in celebrating Jean at a retirement party in late January, the details of which are forthcoming. Please take the time to share your appreciation with Jean when you see her at church this fall!

With you in gratitude,

Rev. Jennifer
Senior Minister

New Emergency Response Cabinet

by Jean Johnson, Dir. of Administration
& Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

We’re happy to announce that this summer we installed an emergency response cabinet with an automated defibrillator (AED), stop the bleed kit, and Narcan. It is located near the elevator on the ground floor so it can be easily accessed from any floor. There is an “AED” sign at its location at the end of the main corridor. Many of us have been trained on using an AED, and at some point, staff member and EMT Tristan Strelitzer will help train more folks.

In Memoriam

Robert Munnecke
May 23, 1935 - July 10, 2025

Robert Munnecke died peacefully of natural causes at Accent Hospice on July 10, 2025. Rev. Jennifer visited him earlier that day, as well as the previous day. In his final days, Robert was alert and clear about his wishes, kind and connected with his nurses, and in contact with his brother in Illinois.

Robert was 90 years old and a member of First Church for 34 years. We lit the Candle of Life in memory of Robert at the worship service on Sunday, July 27, 2025. Robert’s family is burying his ashes at home with the rest of his family in Illinois.

All in the Family

Our gentle care and condolences are with **Nicolo Onorato**, whose grandmother passed away.

We send our care and comfort to **Sue and Chuck Murphy Yerkes**, as they navigate Chuck’s entry into hospice care.

We hold **Pat Hidson** in our loving thoughts and she and her husband sort through the losses of the flood, including the near-total loss of 30 years of artwork.

We send our care and support to the **Murray-Bentz** household as they celebrate the end of Meighan’s cancer treatment and grieve Jen’s father’s July cancer diagnosis.

We send our healing thoughts to **JoAnn Bachar** who will have a heart procedure on Friday, Aug 29.

Milwaukee Social Justice Helped by General Assembly Adopted Statements

by Bruce Wiggins
Earth Justice Ministry Co-Chair

The three Actions of Immediate Witness (AIWs) adopted at the UUA General Assembly in June help support and guide our First Church social justice efforts. The three AIWs address authoritarianism, promote Gay and Trans Freedom, and address immigrant rights. All three statements passed with over 98% of delegates voting in favor. The three statements are titled:

- “We Declare and Affirm: All People Have Inherent Worth and Inalienable Rights”
- “Faithful Defiance of Authoritarianism, A Call to Action: Reaffirming Our Covenants for Democracy and Freedom.”
- “Funding Global LGBTIQ Freedom Amid Crisis: A Call for Immediate Action and Solidarity.”

AIWs are statements about a significant action, event, or development in the world that necessitates immediate engagement and action among UU congregations and affiliated groups. You can read the proposed statements here <https://www.uua.org/action/process>, but the final adopted language for the statements is not yet available on the UUA website. We have groups here at First Church working on these issues, so when the adopted statements become available, I will notify the appropriate social justice groups.



Social Justice Retreat ... to Advance

ALL ARE INVITED

Sunday, Sept. 14, 2:00 - 5:00, at church

Goals:

1. How our social justice groups can work together including 1-2 shared priorities for the year.
2. Engaging the congregation, including leadership development.

The Social Justice Council invites you to attend this "retreat" as we start our new church year. Congregants have concerns about fascism, racism, immigrant rights, trans people's rights, climate change, environmental racism, defending democracy, voting rights, housing, gun violence, Christian Nationalism, white supremacy, education, and more. Help our congregation and social justice groups develop positive actions on which we can work together and support each other.

Update on “Bad River”

by Terry Wiggins

Co-Chair, Earth Justice Ministry

Bad River is the title of the film shown by the Anti-Racism Team and the Earth Justice Ministry last summer. It documents how The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa believes that the reroute of the Line 5 (oil) Pipeline proposed by the Canadian company Enbridge still puts the Tribe's land, water, and ways of life at risk.

Line 5 has been trespassing on Tribal Land for more than a decade, after the tribe chose not to renew the easement. The proposed reroute would still lie within the watershed that impacts the lands of the tribe.

According to an article in the August 11 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (mjs.com), the contentious plan to reroute the Line is entering a critical new phase of legal and regulatory scrutiny. A contested case hearing began on August 12 and is expected to last seven weeks.

There was a chance on August 12 for the public to provide testimony in Ashland, and there will be another public hearing in Madison on September 3. A leak of this 70-year old pipeline would affect not only the tribe, but likely also the Great Lakes, which provide over 20% of the world's surface fresh water.



Follow the News on the Bad River Pipeline

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Senior Minister

Here are a few links to follow the news on Bad River and the proposed pipeline. If you want to get involved along with other church members, you can connect with the First Church Earth Justice Ministry team!

- Earth Justice website page [HERE](#)
- Midwest Environmental Advocates article: <https://midwestadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/Line-5-CCH-Explainer.pdf>
- 350 Wisconsin news on Bad River is [HERE](#)

What If We Get It Right? Book Discussion

by Jenny Abel

Earth Justice Ministry Member

Are you worried about climate change and feeling that the problem is too big to solve? Join members of the Earth Justice Ministry this fall to discuss the book *What If We Get It Right?* by Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. The book features Dr. Johnson's interviews with leading thinkers and activists like Bill McKibben and Leah Penniman and covers many aspects of addressing climate change, from policy and news coverage to finance and agriculture. Each interview ends with Dr. Johnson asking her subject what the future would look like if we get it right.

The group will meet via Zoom four times from September to December on the third Tuesdays, so September 16, October 21, November 18, and December 16 from 6:30-8:00. We welcome anyone interested in tackling the thorny issues centered around trying to prevent catastrophic warming on our planet and mitigating the consequences of current climate-related hazards.

Please email Jenny Abel for more information and Zoom link to join the discussions:
Jabel209@gmail.com.

Defeating Fascism One Book Club at a Time

by Elizabeth Martorell, Immigrant

Solidarity & Action Team Organizer

In the spring, our Immigration Solidarity & Action (IS&A) team hosted a five-week study of *On Tyranny* by Timothy Snyder. The book warns of the dangers we face today. Snyder urges readers to recognize and resist signs of hate, and to ensure symbols of loyalty are inclusive of all fellow citizens.

Recently, I noticed a disturbing flag across the street—an alarming symbol of our times. Nearby, an American flag flew, and its proximity felt unsettling. Through our IS&A work, we've come to understand the importance of reclaiming national symbols like the American flag, which has often been co-opted by the extreme right. Many now hesitate to display it for fear of mis-association.

Our mission calls us to nurture spirit and inspire action. In that spirit, the IS&A team invites members to take visible action. If you live in a home, place a positive sign outside—messages like “Hate Has No Home Here” or “Resist Fascism.” Avoid offensive language; we rise above that. If you're in an apartment, post the sign in a street-facing window. Most importantly, display the American flag alongside it.

We propose starting this initiative on September 11, 2025—a powerful date—and keeping the display up as long as needed. If you'd like to commit, please sign up at the Social Justice table.

Anti-Racism (AR) Training Offered

by Marisa Riepenhoff

AR Team Responds to Your Requests

At our Juneteenth service on June 15, Worship Associate Debra Klepp, who also co-chairs our Anti-Racism Team, invited everyone in the pews to write ways each of us would like to grow in our anti-racism efforts and how we want to see our church help us get there. Pulpit guest Reverend Marilyn Miller inspired us to imagine possibilities. All of us at church that day put slips of paper with our individual needs and longings related to anti-racism in baskets collected by the ushers.

After the service, I had the privilege of typing all the comments and sorting them by common themes. Thank you to everyone who participated! We received 112 separate entries. The largest category, with 52 entries, was a request for more education about anti-racism. The second largest category, with 16 entries, was a desire to build Beloved Community, both within our church and as part of Greater Milwaukee.

On Sunday, October 26, from 1:00-2:30 p.m., the Anti-Racism Team will offer training on uncovering unconscious bias and exploring anti-racist practices. We believe this training is a next step towards our church's

desire for both more education and building the Beloved Community we seek. Please save the date and look for further announcements. We are grateful for you.

Walk & Roll Washington Park

by Jackie Zandi

Earth Justice Ministry Member

Please join us on Saturday, September 13 from 10:30-noon at Washington Park, located on Milwaukee's Northwest side at 1859 N. 40th Street for our Walk and Roll on paved paths.

This park was designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted to offer a comfortable green space where people could interact with nature and each other. The park has a pond, orchards, and the Urban Ecology Center which has a dynamic new edition. It was the former home of the zoo. Please invite friends and family. We always see more together!

The meeting location will be in the e-announcements along with the reminder. Cheri Brisco will be our leader and Paula Anderson and Jacki Zandi will be your hosts.



Walk the Walk, the Jericho Walk

by Deborah Conta

Every Thursday at 9:00 a.m. a small number of people gather in front of the US Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) field office at 310 E. Knapp Street to engage in a 20-minute Jericho Walk. Carrying a variety of signs in visible support of immigrants and immigrant rights, the group walks seven times around the front of the ICE doorway in silent protest of ICE, its policies, its brutal tactics and the growing number of deportations it enforces.

As people drive by the ICE office, many honk their horns in support of the walkers and the signs they carry. As other people—immigrants—enter the ICE building for their appointments, they carry not signs but armloads of paperwork; they are silent and somber. And when they leave, they often are in tears but they always offer a thank you to the walkers.

One can wonder about the value of engaging in a short walk in front of an indifferent government office building. But to those who participate, it is a profoundly meditative experience, an opportunity to reflect on our current government and our responsibility to those who are being targeted, harassed and deported. The walk concludes with a brief, interfaith prayer—a prayer encouraging all to become sacred disrupters. If you are so inclined, please join the Jericho Walkers every Thursday morning. All are welcome.

Unlocking the Heart, with Poet James Crews

by Nancy Cross Dunham
Morter Lecture Team

In his poem, “When Fear Takes Over,” poet James Crews writes, “Let kind words wrap around you like a blanket so thick it soaks up the sound of every secret worry spoken to the air.” Please join us, alongside James, at this year’s Morter Lecture, as we explore how words of presence and compassion can help us face our fears in a troubled world. This year’s theme is, *Unlocking the Heart: Words for Presence, Connection & Compassion in a Grieving World*.

On Saturday, September 27, from 2:00-3:30 pm, James will share his journey with poetry, writing and spiritual practice, including thoughts from his books: *Unlocking the Heart, Love is for All of Us* (poems from the LGBTQ community) and *Turning Toward Grief*.

On Sunday, September 28, James will read poems during each service and from 1:00-2:30 pm, will lead a contemplative writing workshop for non-writers and writers alike.

Whether you never read poetry or read it daily, or are a novice or long-time writer, please join us as James helps facilitate our explorations to discover connection across differences, and to open our hearts to wonder and transformation.

In addition to his own books of poetry, James is the editor of several poetry anthologies, including *Kindness Will Save the World*. For more information about James, visit: jamescrews.net.

Want to Usher for Church Services? Now's your Chance!

by Fiona Higgins
Faith Formation Assistant

Our usher teams are members and active friends who volunteer to help with the flow of a service. They primarily greet people, hand out the order of service, help pass the collection plate, and a bit of straightening after. More detailed training can be done on the job by our team of head ushers.

Signing up is simple:

1. Use [this link](#) to look over the calendar and pick your date.
2. Click “sign up” and follow the instructions on the website
3. If you are a new usher contact Fiona at (email) so she can get in touch with a head usher.

We also have other volunteer opportunities that are part of the usher umbrella: Greeters and the Questions & Connections table. The Greeter is very straight forward. Before service a person is stationed at our greeter lectern who can welcome guests and members.

Our Questions & Connections table is staffed by volunteers during coffee hours and requires a bit more familiarity with the church as well as the items found on the table, however training is simple and can be done on the job as well.

You are not required to do both, however it is not uncommon since there isn't any conflict between two options. Use [this link](#) to the sign up for those positions.

A weekly email with the usher team is sent out by Fiona on Thursdays with information on the week's service, any guest speakers, or anything else important you may need to know ahead of time.



Journey to Membership

Saturday, Oct. 25, 9:00 am -1:00 pm

& Wed Oct. 29, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

In-person, at church

Join us for 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 Connections Table on Sundays to sign-up.

Volunteers Needed for Our Social Groups

by Barb Collignon

The Chronologically Gifted

If you have celebrated 55 or more birthdays, then you can count yourself Chronologically Gifted! The Chronologically Gifted have been meeting on the last Sunday of the month after the 11:00 service for a potluck in Otto Hall. We enjoy the conversation and company of our contemporaries. I have led the group for some time and am looking for a new leader. Could that be you? Contact Barbara Collignon at bjcollig@gmail.com

Senior Women are Naturally Social (SWANS)

The SWANS are looking for new leadership. We have met for lunch and fellowship on the first Sunday of the month for several years. In addition to enjoying the company of our contemporaries, we have visited museums and collected gifts for Sojourner Truth Family Center. Contact Barbara Collignon if you'd like to participate or would like to become the new leader. bjcollig@gmail.com

Delicious Fun-Circle Suppers!

by Eileen Teska

Sign Up Now!

Participate in one or four Saturday evenings of dinner parties on Nov. 8, Jan. 17, Mar. 7 and May 16. Circle Suppers are a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and deepen existing friendships in a relaxed setting. The small group dinners are held in participants' homes, with everyone bringing an assigned element of the meal: main dish, salad or dessert with the host providing the beverages and hors d'oeuvres.

Each of the four dinners includes a different mix of up to eight participants. The host person(s) and what participants bring are rotated for each dinner. You don't need a big dining room table to host; buffet style serving with informal seating is just fine.

Circle Suppers are open to all adult church members and friends. You can sign up as a pair/couple, as an individual, or as a substitute, if you aren't sure what dates you can commit to or would just like to try it out. Sign up deadline is September 27.

Faith Formation at First Church

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson

Our Children & Youth Faith Formation program brings each month's church theme to life through hands-on projects, interactive games, meaningful spiritual practices, and thoughtful conversations. Grounded in Unitarian Universalist values and history, every session offers a vibrant, enriching experience that nurtures curiosity, compassion, and connection.

Each Sunday, children ages 6–12 begin with Circle Time—a welcoming space for reflection and community—before choosing between UU Play or UU Maker Space, where creativity and exploration take center stage.

All-Ages Gatherings. Throughout the year, we host joyful, inclusive All-Ages Faith Formation events that unite children and youth across age groups. These special gatherings feature collaborative social justice projects, worship preparation, seasonal celebrations, guest speakers, and more. It's a dynamic space where community, creativity, and shared purpose flourish.



UU Maker Space (6-18 years of age)

UU Maker Space is all about unleashing creativity & exploration with a range of materials & activities children will learn through hands-on experiences.



UU Play (6-18 years of age)

Play is important in a child's development. In UU Play children learn through games that reflect our values and build strong relationships with their peers and the environment.



Childcare for Children (Birth-3 years of age)

Nursery Caregivers provide care for our youngest children during both Sunday services.



Soul Matters Preschool (3-6 years of age)

Early Childhood Coordinator Mariah Groshek guides our children in exploring our faith through ritual, story, and play related to the church's monthly theme during both Sunday services.



Youth Group

The Youth Group meets the first and third Sundays of every month in the Anthony Room. We explore our church's theme with "whole person" learning, focusing on the different ways we engage with the world: head, heart, hands, body, spirit/soul, and community. Youth are always welcome to join the activities found in our UU Play & UU Maker Space.



OWL Our Whole Lives

2025-2026: All Year: 7-9th Grade

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a special program that helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior by equipping participants with accurate, age-appropriate information.

Faith Formation Registration!

We warmly welcome guests to attend our Children and Youth Faith Formation (FF) program up to three times before registering. It's a wonderful way to experience our community and see if it's the right fit for your family. Each church year, we ask families to register their children for Faith Formation.

The annual registration fee is:

- \$50 per child for members
- \$100 maximum per family
- \$75 per child for guests

REGISTRATION LINK FOR FAITH FORMATION 2025-26

If your family would benefit from a full or partial fee waiver, please don't hesitate to reach out to Minister of Faith Formation Rev. Kimberlee. We're committed to making this program accessible to all.

Soulful Home

This year, we're excited to offer families a meaningful way to weave Unitarian Universalist values into everyday life. We know it's not always easy—between busy schedules and competing priorities, creating space for faith-filled moments can be a real challenge.

That's where Soulful Home comes in. It's designed to help families explore our UU monthly themes together in simple, enriching ways that fit naturally into daily routines. Whether it's a bedtime reflection, a dinner table conversation, or a weekend activity, Soulful Home makes spiritual connection more accessible—and more joyful.

[CHECK OUT SEPTEMBER SOULFUL HOME HERE!](#)

What You Need to Know About Faith Formation on Sundays!

- Everyone begins on Sunday by checking-in at the FF Table in the Leenhouts Common Room to receive a name & safety badge. Caregivers will receive a coded identity ticket to ensure safety of child retrieval.
- Faith Formation for children over 5 years of age begins in the sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. service only.
- After our time together in the sanctuary, Children, Youth and FF Volunteers will depart for the FF programs in the lower level.
- For children under the age of five, the Nursery and Preschool are open from 8:45 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. during the first service, and from 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. during the second service.
- Most Sundays, F.F. offers UU Play or UU Maker Space, until 10:15 am. Options such as All Ages Sunday and special workshops are available on some Sundays.
- Families are welcome to stay in the sanctuary or in the parlor.
- Worship Activity Bags are available in the sanctuary and FF Table for all ages to enjoy!



FF Volunteer Orientation October 5, 2025 11:15 am

Faith Formation at First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee is a shared effort—when each of us offers our time and care, we create a nurturing space where children feel safe, loved, and truly belong. Whether you can help one Sunday or many, *you* make FF happen!

Join us for the FF Volunteer Orientation as we kick off the new church year:

Sunday, October 5, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Young Room (Lower Level)

We'll cover:

- Overview of the Faith Formation program
- Child and youth safety practices
- Scheduling and volunteer opportunities
- Plans for the upcoming year

Registration & Background Checks

- If you registered as an volunteer last year, no need to re-register.
- New volunteers: please fill out the **FF Volunteer Form** to get started.
- Parents of registered children do not need to register—just sign up on the **FF Volunteer Schedule** and we'll follow up if a background check is needed.
- All volunteers working directly with children must be willing to complete a general background check to ensure the safety of our families.

• **FF Volunteer Schedule 2025-26**

• **New FF Volunteers Registration**



Parent Meeting OWL Sept. 14, 10:30 am

Required Parent Meeting on Sept. 14 from 10:30-Noon in the Reeb Room for caregivers of 7-9th graders who are participating this year in OWL. If you are a church member, your child may be eligible to participate in Our Whole Lives (OWL), the nationally renowned human sexuality curriculum. OWL 7-9th will be on Sundays from 9:00-11:00 am, the youth will always start in the sanctuary. OWL will begin September 21 through May 2026.

Faith Formation Weekly Update

Every Friday, we send out an email featuring:

- A full rundown of FF Sunday offerings
- Volunteer assignments for the week
- Upcoming events, groups, and workshops tailored for children, youth, and families

It's your one-stop update to stay connected and informed!

[LINK FOR THE SIGN UP HERE!](#)



SEPTEMBER EVENTS



Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, Sept 3 & 17, 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 Online

Sunday, September 14, 1:00 pm

[Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we discuss March's read, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande. Contact Eileen Teska or more information at eileenteska@gmail.com.

The Shawl Ministry Group

Sunday, Sept. 7 at 12:00 pm
At Church

The shawl ministry group plans to meet after the second church service on September 7 in the Common Room. Rev. Chris Long is interested in our work and may stop by to meet us all. Hoping to see you soon, Juliet Hills.

Chancel Choir

Every Thursday, 7:00 -8:30 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.

The Chronologically Gifted Potluck

Sunday, Sept. 28 at 12:15 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!

Poetry Contemplation Online

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.



Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE



SEPTEMBER 7

Risk and Reward: The Pursuit of Justice

Hannah Freeman, Lead Organizer/Executive Director for MICA Milwaukee.

For people of faith, the word justice is often a loaded term. Justice can be used to highlight the inherent injustice of the world around us or as a beacon of aspiration. This talk will focus on a third choice—justice as a spiritual practice in the here and now.

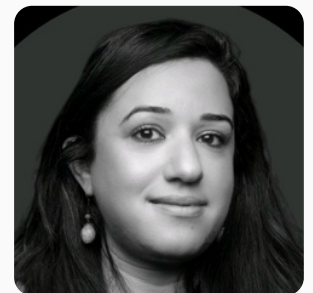
SEPTEMBER 14

Building New Beginnings: Refugee Resettlement & Community Empowerment

Sheila Badwan, Executive Director, Hanan Refugee Relief Group.

Sheila Badwan will discuss the future of refugee resettlement under the new administration and how these changes impact families in Wisconsin. The talk will highlight Hanan's expanding programs in ESL, youth leadership, and employment support, designed to help newcomers build skills and achieve independence.

Through stories of resilience and partnership, Hanan will share how refugees are overcoming challenges, strengthening their communities, and preparing for brighter futures. Attendees will gain insight into policy changes, the local impact of resettlement, and ways to join in supporting refugees as they navigate new opportunities and contribute to our shared community.





Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE



SEPTEMBER 21

Seeing Black Holes

Lia Medeiros, Associate Professor of Physics, UW-Milwaukee.

Join us as UWM's new Professor, Dr. Lia Medeiros discusses how telescopes all over the world came together to take the first ever image of a black hole and how she used this image to test Einstein's theory of gravity. She will also discuss how she used her new machine learning algorithm to make the highest resolution image of a black hole to date.

SEPTEMBER 28

Bringing Power to the People: Replacing We Energies

Alex Brower, Alderman, 3rd District Milwaukee.

Alderman Brower will speak about We Energies, southeast Wisconsin's privately-owned energy company, how its high prices and frequent rate raises affect working people, and what we can do in Milwaukee to make our energy supplier work for us rather than for shareholder profits.



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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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