

MAY 2026



# THE CHANTICLEER

The First Unitarian Society  
of Milwaukee

*nurture. engage. inspire.*



## This Issue:

Words on the Wind	3
Rev. Chris' Curiosities & Musings	4
Kimberlee's Contemplations	5
Sunday Services	6
Children & Youth	7
Get Involved	8
Church News	9
Monthly Events	11
Social Justice	12
Forum	14
Contact Us	15



## Monthly Theme

*What does it mean  
to be a people*

## Awakening Curiosity

# Inside News

by the *Chanticleer* Editors

## MAY 17 SPECIAL SUNDAY SCHEDULE

**10:00 a.m. Faith Formation (FF) Sunday**

**11:00 a.m. Potluck in Coffee Hour**

Consider bringing a food item to share with everyone after our one service at 10:00 a.m. Sweet treats and savory snacks are most welcome for everyone participating in this big day at First Church.

**Noon: Annual Congregational Meeting**

Learn more and prep for the annual meeting: check our church [website page](#) for candidate bios, the agenda, list of eligible voters, annual report, and more, as these become available.



In solidarity and partnership with Voces de la Frontera, we invite you to join Us on the May Day March !

**10:00 am Rally Meetup:**

First Church Meeting spot is the north west corner of 7th and Historic Mitchell street. This is near the Voces de la Frontera office. 733 w. Historic Mitchell. Look for FUSM protest captain Pete Hill.

## Share the Plate May 2026

by Lynde Uihlein  
Share the Plate Team



La Famiglia de Arte, May Share the Plate recipient

The goal of La Famiglia de Arte is to create meaningful change through art. They install lasting public art in Milwaukee's underserved communities. They accomplish this by actively involving their neighbors in helping design and create the art, hiring and training the most committed participants to work as artists. Hope, pride, and fellowship will grow in underserved neighborhoods through the beauty and vibrancy of enduring art installations.

La Famiglia de Arte states that "home is where the heart is, and our hearts are here in the center of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It's here that we neighbors share our passion for art and take pride in the work we do. We feel the public art we create helps all of the community thrive by spreading hope, beauty, and love in our neighborhoods." La Familia de Arte's mission is simple: use art to help our community flourish.

[Donate to this STP Partner](#)



# Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Dear First Church,

When I feel curious, I feel awake, playful, and interested. My mind is attentive and my heart is open.

How does curiosity make you feel? Where does it land in your body?

I enjoy being curious. It is a leading emotion for learning, wonder, and sometimes delight! Curiosity can lead to connection with other people, with animals, plants, even the land itself.

Has curiosity ever led you down a rabbit hole of discovery about an unknown-to-you community, place, or species? Curiosity opens us up to learn new things, which connects us to people and places in new ways.

Practicing curiosity can also awaken places within. It arrests boredom and awakens us to the pleasures of our own mind. Sometimes, if hope and joy are out of reach, curiosity can drive you out of despair and into a land of interest, if not happiness. This month, we will follow our children and youth's curiosity in our Faith Formation Sunday at 10 a.m. on Sunday May 17, followed by our 12 p.m. Annual Meeting—about which I am sure you are endlessly curious! With a potluck in between, it should be a delightful Sunday of community.

If you're curious about how we are celebrating Alissa Rhode's 20 years of service with First Church next year, see her column here: [LINK](#).

In faith,

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom  
Senior Minister



# Kimberlee's Contemplations

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson



As we wind down this church year, May brings First Church traditions and transitions that honor our families, youth, and children. Faith Formation Sunday will take place on May 17 at 10:00 a.m. This year, two of our beloved high school seniors will offer their Senior Credo Statements and be recognized for the gifts they have shared with our community. We will lift our voices in song and celebrate the accomplishments of our children and youth. The service will include ceremonial recognition for 7th–9th Grade OWL graduates, all FF and OWL volunteers, and our Kindergarten graduates.

I hope you will join us in recognizing the contributions of so many during this joyful culmination of our Faith Formation year. This multigenerational service will be held at 10:00 a.m. only, followed by a potluck, and then our First Church Annual Meeting at noon.

I will begin the second half of my sabbatical immediately after Faith Formation Sunday, from May 20 through August 1, 2026. The Children's Faith Formation Team and our dedicated volunteers have stepped forward with generosity and care to cover most teaching roles during my absence. Fiona Higgins will lead a curriculum I adapted that uses LEGO builds to explore the UU Sources in our summer FF sessions, and she will also guide the administrative aspects of the program.

Summer offers a beautiful opportunity to support our families by volunteering in Faith Formation. We would welcome a few more friendly folks to help downstairs each Sunday.

I remain deeply grateful to serve a Unitarian Universalist faith and congregation that understands self-care and wellness as essential to sustainable ministry. Thank you for your patience and encouragement during my time away. I look forward to returning renewed and ready to continue our shared work of nurturing faith, courage, and compassion in a time when they are urgently needed.

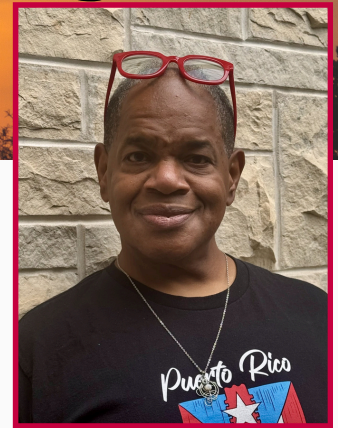
Blessings,  
Rev. Kimberlee

P.S. Thanks to everyone who made our butterfly signs come to life—see you at the May Day march!



# Curiosities & Musings

by Rev. Chris Long



## “Awakening Curiosity:

### Is it Enough to be Tolerated”

As April wanes and we welcome what May weather brings, imagine my shock when I opened the blinds of my apartment home for the morning to find although the sun was beaming brightly, a noticeable layer of frost on the tops of all of the cars in our parking lot. On top of that, it is thirty-one degrees so far today with a high only in the mid-forties promised. Even still, to be able to welcome the multitude of birds as they sing, the budding of trees, the greening of the grass and the smell of hyacinth and other spring delights is so awe inspiring, amen?

Friends, what does it take to awaken your curiosity? Is it automatic? Found in poetry, music, simply in nature or in being with other people? What about spiritually, or religiously? For me, I find Unitarian Universalists to be a very curious people. From the ways we continue to work at welcoming the stranger into First Church as authentically and culturally sensitive as possible, to the authentic welcome that can be found in the ways we engage our justice efforts through individual and collective study, one can feel the First Church difference through this expression of authentic curiosity. Why, you may ask, is this important? I believe this is critical when we work to take our Values out into the world, this requires genuine curiosity to ensure we “see” the other, as we also hope to be seen, as we honor each other’s wholeness as we journey.

Adversely, have there been times or situations in your own life when you have felt as though you were being “tolerated” or felt pushed to the margins in a particular situation? Sadly, as we all know, way too many people in our society endure being tolerated as they find themselves at the margins of what is acceptable to be fully included. Are there signs that you or others are being tolerated in any particular situation? Also, how might awakening our individual and collective curiosities be, or become pathways to deepening our spiritual, religious practices in becoming more of Beloved Community we desire. Please join Reverends Chris Long (Acting Assistant Minister), Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson (Minister of Faith Formation), Alissa Rhode (Music Director) and Hanna Fox (Worship Associate) for May 3, 2026, services where we will explore the theme and topic that day of “Is it Enough to “Tolerate” the Other”. Hope to see you there!

Rev. Chris Long  
Acting Assistant Minister

# SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

3

## Is it enough to “Tolerate the Other: Especially Now”

**Rev. Chris Long**

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Hanna Fox, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

10

## I Wonder...

**Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom**

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, Minister of Faith Formation

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Katie Kegel, Worship Associate

Mother’s Day Service with Child Dedication

[Click for info about this service](#)

17

## 2026 Faith Formation Sunday 10 a.m. only

**Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson**

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Youth & Members of the F.F. Community

[Click for info about this service](#)

24

## A Drink from the Well of UU Wellspring

Diane Horne, Laurie Foss, Ryan Pawlowski, &

UU Wellspring Leaders

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

[Click for info about this service](#)

31

## Where Do We Come From?

**Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom**

Teresa Drews, Collaborative Pianist

Austin Pawloski, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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

## Faith Formation Summer Fun with Legos and UU Sources!

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Faith Formation

We are embarking on a season of learning and fun, using LEGO builds to represent the many sources of inspiration that shape us as UU's. Before my sabbatical, we are adapting a curriculum that brings this hands-on, imaginative approach to First Church. Fiona Higgins and the Children's Faith Formation team are looking for a few extra volunteers to help make the LEGO magic happen!

This is a wonderful opportunity for our congregation to nurture young minds and strengthen connections between adults and children. It can be a season of creativity, learning, and community building for everyone involved.

During the summer, Faith Formation programs for children over five begin at 10:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. During the offertory hymn, Children and Youth participants, along with RE Volunteers, will depart for the Faith Formation program, beginning in the Leenhouts Common Room and then moving to the lower level. For children under five, the Nursery and Preschool will be open from 9:45 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

If you would like to support this joyful summer program, we would love to have you join us.

**SUMMER SIGN UP**

## Child Dedication

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Faith Formation

On May 10, a Dedication of Parents and Children will take place during our 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. The Child Dedication Ceremony is a time for celebrating the birth or adoption of a child in a ceremony of naming and dedication. It is a time for welcoming our children into the world, into the family, and into the church community. It is a time for acknowledging that each child's life is sacred and holding that truth in the light of our faith.

This simple ceremony is related to the Christian "baptism" or "christening," though the meanings we attach to it are significantly different. Please read our [UU Child Dedication website link](#) for a full description.

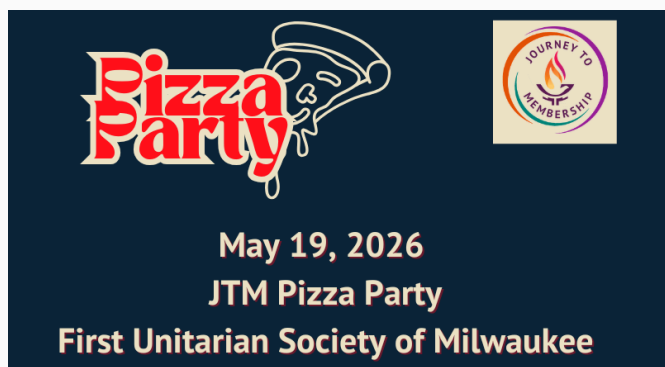
The ceremony is a public declaration by parents dedicating themselves to faithfully nurturing and supporting their children. The congregation recognizes your child's original blessing, and we dedicate ourselves to nurturing your child and you. Because of the promises our congregation makes to the family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

If you are interested in having your child dedicated on May 10, fill out [this online form](#) by Sunday, April 26. Please contact Rev. Kimberlee if you have any questions.

## Annual Church Potluck!

Faith Formation Sunday wouldn't be complete without food and fellowship! Join us on May 17 for our annual church potluck during the 11:00 a.m. coffee hour, following our one joyful worship service at 10:00 a.m. and just before the Annual Meeting.

Bring along a favorite dish to share, sweet treats, savory snacks, and everything in between are welcome! Let's gather to celebrate another year in community, faith, on this exciting day at First Church. [Sign up here](#) to share the yumminess!



Calling all 2025-2026 Journey to Membership participants: we're celebrating you! If you joined the church or went through the class in 2025 or this year, please join us for community, connection, and pizza from 5:30 to 7:30 pm on May 19! We'll bring the pizza, and you bring yourself, family, and an optional item to share.

Board games and building tours are also available. Children are absolutely welcome at this casual event. (no separate childcare provided). Please see details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

## BLESSED AT PRIDEFEST



## Get Blessed at Pridefest

by Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson  
Minister of Faith Formation

Blessed at Pridefest is a powerful street ministry that First Church leads each year here in Milwaukee. Our local clergy & congregations are returning to spread love, joy and affirmation at the Blessed at Pridefest booth, June 5-6, 2026 in the Health and Wellness Common area. The Blessing Booth hours are **Friday, June 5 from 3-9 p.m. and Saturday, June 6 from 12-9 p.m..**

This year's booth will include a photo station, stickers, and a Blessing Gate—a collaborative art piece where everyone is invited to write blessings on ribbons that will adorn a rainbow archway. We are seeking both clergy and lay volunteers to help make this ministry possible.

Clergy volunteers will offer personal blessings using our blessing menu. Lay volunteers will welcome visitors, share the blessing menu, and guide people to art build & clergy.

[Click here for Blessed Info & Sign UP!](#)

## All in the Family

*Life is hard sometimes. We experience sickness, job loss, broken hearts, and broken bodies. We want to support you through those difficult times.*

It has been wonderful to have **Chris Linder** join us for Worship in April. We continue to hold her and her family into and through this time of great transition.

**Sue Murphy Yerkes'** husband Chuck continues to be treated for cancer and is coming home after a recent hospitalization. We send the family our continued prayers during this tender time.

**Pat Hidson** was recently in a car accident that totaled her car. She is continuing to heal through ongoing pain. We continue to hold her and her family in our hearts.

**Juliet Hills** recently broke her arm, needing surgery. She is home from surgery now and on the mend. She does not want any phone calls but welcomes essential emails. We hold her in care as she heals.

## Endowment Update

by Ron Oshima  
Endowment Trustee

Some good news to share: in 2025, the endowment received \$565,000 in contributions and closed out the year on December 31 with a total balance of \$2.6 million across our investments and bank accounts. That figure reflects investment gains (realized and unrealized), minus expenses and distributions to FUSM. The First Unitarian Endowment Fund Trust Agreement was officially recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit on May 30, 2024.

Our first nonprofit tax filing – covering 2024 – took longer than we'd hoped. The endowment's tax ID hadn't been properly entered into the IRS system, so our return was rejected in late 2025. It was finally accepted in early 2026. And while we don't owe taxes as a 501(c)(3), we're still required to file annually with the IRS and the state of Wisconsin.

Contributions are still coming in, and every pledge truly counts. One of our biggest goals is to use the endowment to chip away at our operating deficits and eventually close that gap as the endowment grows. Thank you for your generosity – we're glad to be on this journey with you.

## Annual Meeting May 17

Notice is hereby given of the Annual Meeting of the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee to be held Sunday, May 17 at 12:00 p.m. This year's meeting will be held in person in our Sanctuary and will also be available simultaneously via Zoom. To receive the Zoom link, signup with your email at <https://bit.ly/FUSMAnnualMtg>

Join us to hear the first draft of our First Church five-year goals, called "the Ends", learn about significant First Church accomplishments over the 2024-25 church year, hear from the Endowment Trustees, and learn about our financial condition. Vote on new Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee members for next church year and use the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions.

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

**Potluck** On May 17 join us for a church potluck after Faith Formation Sunday Service! Please consider bringing a food item to share with everyone for the 11:00 a.m. coffee hour after our one service at 10:00 a.m. and before the Congregational Annual Meeting. Sweet treats and savory snacks will be most welcome for everyone participating in this big day at First Church.

**SIGN UP IS HERE!**

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### Buddhist Study Group

Wednesday, May 6 & 20, 6:30 pm  
At Church

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

### Book Discussion Group

Sunday, May 3, online  
[Join Us Online Here](#)

Join us as we discuss May's read, *Birnam Wood* by Eleanor Catton. Contact Contact Eileen Teska at [eileenteska@gmail.com](mailto:eileenteska@gmail.com).

### Chancel Choir

May 7, 14 & 28, 7:00 -8:30 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 at [tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org](mailto:tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org) to join.

### 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.

### Being UU, Being Male

May 3 , 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Meet us this month a Estabrook Park, near the Beer Garden. This is a group that is open space for dialogue, connection, reflection, and community on the first Sunday of each month. Contact Andrew BoddySpargo for more information.

### The Chronologically Gifted Potluck

May 31, 12:00 pm at Church

Contact Barbara Collignon for more information or see the church website group information [HERE](#).

### The Shawl Ministry Group

Sunday, May 3 at 12:00 pm At Church

The shawl ministry group plans to meet after the second church service on May 3 in the Common Room.

## What We Can Do about Data Centers

by Amy Monahan and Jenny Abel  
Earth Justice Ministry

There are about 50 hyperscale AI Data Centers proposed in Wisconsin, some already under construction, many of them right in our backyard. Many of these were approved before people were aware of their potential negative impacts, e.g. water and air pollution, threats to wildlife, noise pollution for those who live close to the centers, increased utility rates for residential customers, and increased climate change risks due to the burning of fossil fuels to supply the massive amounts of energy needed to run the centers. No regulations are in place, state or federal, to guide or limit their impact. Initially, the perceived potential of new jobs and revenue was met with enthusiasm by some municipalities, and some even offered incentives to AI companies wanting to build. Now those bright promises have paled beside the possible cost to communities in terms of resource scarcity and environmental degradation.

Earth Justice Ministry will begin a project in May to provide FUSM members with ways to take action on stopping the spread of hyperscale data centers. Stay tuned for talking points, further background on the threats posed by these structures, and ways that you can get involved.

## EJM Walk and Roll Lakefront Veterans Park

by Jacki Zandi  
EJM member

If you aren't going "up north" this Memorial Day Weekend, please join us on Saturday May 23 from 10:30-noon for our EJM Walk and Roll along the lagoon in Juneau and Veterans Park, Milwaukee.

We will experience the War Memorial Center's Field of Flags which honors each Wisconsin's fallen service member since the Civil War! You can park along E. Lagoon Drive by access from 1300 N. Lincoln Memorial Drive or the Kite Center's lot. We will meet on the west edge of the lot. Invite friends and family. We always see more together. Jacki Zandi (wearing yellow shirt) is your host.



First Church with Milwaukee Riverkeepers cleaning

# OUR PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITY



First Church with Milwaukee Riverkeepers cleaning our parks and helping create a World Record!



UU Being Male Retreat

Silent Retreat April 2026





# Sunday Morning Forum

10:00 AM IN-PERSON & ON YOUTUBE

**MAY 4**

## The Current Administration and The US Supreme Court

**Walt Kelly, Constitutional Law Practitioner and Scholar**

Walt will address the first 16 months of the current administration and its relationship to the Supreme Court during that period, 2025-2026.

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**MAY 10**

## Religious Women: Nuns and Sisters in the Roman Catholic Church

**Sister Rose Sevenich, OSF- Vernacular Historian**

Sister Rose will be highlighting the beginnings, sense of call, works, life style changes and more of the Sisters of St Francis of Assisi located in St Francis Wisconsin.

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**MAY 24**

## Tricklebee Cafe: Cheerful Hearts, Continual Feast, Cozy Chapel

**Rev. Christie Melby-Gibbons, Executive Director of Tricklebee Cafe.**

Tricklebee Cafe—a ministry of the Moravian Church in America—is a pay-what-you-can community cafe that offers healthy meals, food service training, and spiritual nourishment. We will celebrate our 10th anniversary this November. Come learn about how Tricklebee Cafe really has become a place of cheerful hearts, continual feasting, and a cozy chapel. Hear of how God continues to feed the multitudes through our cafe.

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**MAY 31**

## Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council

**Fessahaye Mebrahtu, Program Services Coordinator II Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council**

Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council is connecting with faith-based organizations to raise awareness of housing discrimination that may impact people because of the country where they are from or because of their religious beliefs or cultural affiliations. Red flags of discriminatory practices include denying someone housing because they are from another country or speak a language other than English, refusing to allow someone to wear religious clothing or engage in cultural customs, or harassing someone because of their religion or national origin.

# Staff Directory

## SENIOR MINISTER

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## MINISTER EMERITA

Rev. Dena McPhetres

## MINISTER EMERITUS

Rev. Andrew C. Kennedy, D.Min.

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VACANT

## FACILITIES ASSISTANT

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

## Board of Trustees Officers

President.....Mark Chambers  
Vice President...Ryan Pawlowski  
Secretary.....Kathy Donius  
Treasurer .....Mark Bishop

## Members

Dana Brooks  
Deborah Conta  
Elizabeth Hayes  
Stacy Koenen  
Stacey Thieme  
Sarah Fowles

## How to Reach Us

**414.273.5257**

first.church.office@uumilwaukee.org

1342 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202



uumilwaukee.org

### Follow Us



## Church Building Hours

Sundays: 8:00 am - 2:30 pm  
Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:30 pm  
Monday - Wednesdays: 5:00 - 8:30 pm

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

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