

AUGUST 2026

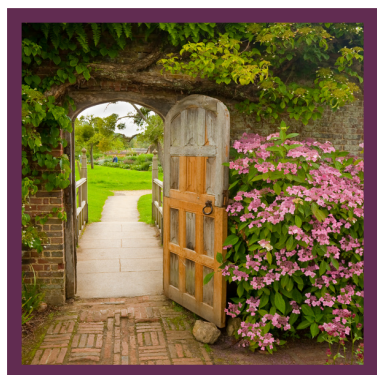


THE

CHANTICLEER

The First Unitarian Society
of Milwaukee

nurture. engage. inspire.



Monthly Theme

*What does it mean
to be a people of*

Invitation

This Issue:

Curiosities & Musings	3
Sunday Services	4
Theme Circles	5
Social Justice	6
Get Involved	9
Contact Us	10

Inside News

by *The Chanticleer* Editors

THE AUUMM Conference is Here.

The Association of Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries (AUUMM) Annual Conference begins July 30 at First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee.

More than 280 Unitarian Universalist musicians from across the United States, along with several guest musicians, will gather for workshops, worship, and collaboration throughout the conference.

Everyone is invited to join us for a special worship service on Sunday, August 2, at 10:00 a.m. Rev. Chris will be joined by Melanie DeMore, Vocal Activist, and the AUUMM musicians for what will be a powerful and inspiring musical celebration.

Fire Alarm Upgrades Are Coming.

Beginning in early August, the church's fire alarm system will be upgraded to an integrated fire detection and emergency communication system.

As work progresses, you may notice new devices being installed throughout the building. These will improve fire detection and provide enhanced audible and visual alarms during fire or other emergency situations.

Thank you to the Board of Trustees, the Building & Grounds Team, and the Information Technology Team for their year-long collaboration in planning and implementing this important safety improvement.

The Ministers Return in August.

Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson and Rev. Jennifer Norstrom will be returning from leave in August. The entire staff is looking forward to the new church year and the opportunities for our shared work together in worship, engagement, and seeking justice in the community.

preserve the parks

Share the Plate Summer 2026

by Lynde Uihlein
Share the Plate Team

Preserve Our Parks, Inc. is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of parks and green spaces. Their mission: To advocate for and promote Milwaukee area parks and open spaces and to strive to protect the tenets of Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine. For more than 25 years, they have been a leader in advocating for the protection of Milwaukee County parklands, halting many proposals to develop, privatize, or sell local parkland and lakefront spaces.

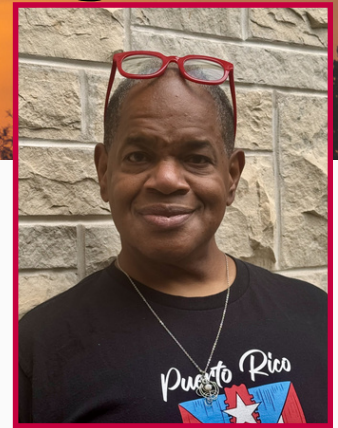
Preserve Our Parks works to ensure every park remains public, welcoming, and sustainable. They advocate for fairness in access, champion the health and environmental benefits parks provide, and stand up for the principle that our parks belong to all of us.

To learn more about the issues facing Milwaukee's parks, add your voice to protect them, and help ensure these community treasures remain safe, green, and open for everyone, access the website at www.preserveourparks.org

Donate to this STP Partner

Curiosities & Musings

by Rev. Chris Long



“Invitation”

Our congregational theme for the month of August is “Invitation”. Just reading the word brings up so many feelings for me. From extending, receiving and preparing to respond to an invitation brings up a level of excitement, nervousness, and vulnerability. For example, what might be expected when receiving an invitation? Is it for a social, political, religious or family event?

As individuals and as a church, in what ways are invitations extended and received?

As August 1, 2026, is my one-year anniversary of serving as your Acting Assistant Minister, I have humbly been able to observe any number of ways the members and friends of First Church extend and receive invitations within and beyond our walls. Personally, one year ago, I only knew one person here relatively well for more than twenty-five. That is Reverend Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, our Minister of Faith Formation, as we were both deeply involved in the young adult and campus ministry out of the First Unitarian Society of Madison (Wisconsin). I know have come to know so many more of you.

Also, throughout this past year, I received invitations to have meals in some of your homes, attended activists, political and social events in the community, and I have extended personal invitation to have tea in my office and in the community. For which I am forever grateful.

As members and friends of this church, and as summer continues to heat up, the month of August will continue to demonstrate the many ways this church extends and receives invitations as we continue to build more of the Beloved Community with each passing day. From the Pulpit Guests that have come so far this summer, to those yet to come, I have heard nothing but examples of your generous spirit with the variety and depth of services that have been provided. Each Pulpit Guest shared how welcomed they felt into this sacred community.

With never wanting to wish the joy and fun of Milwaukee summers away, its never too early to start to extend invitations for you, members and friends of First Church, to know that you are invited to start to plan to register for our 2026 – 2026 Theme Circles, and to fill up our many Affinity Groups. These are some of the many ways we are all invited to be in deeper community with members and friends of First Church.

In closing for this month’s offering, again thank you for the year we have had together and I look forward to continuing to grow in the many ways we work to embody our Unitarian Universalist values, all centered in the ever expansive nature of “love”.

Sincerely and in gratitude,
Rev. Chris Long

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

2

When Leading with Love gets Complicated

Rev. Chris Long

Melanie DeMore/AUUMM folks

Mrs. Debra Klepp, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

9

Rebuilding a Love Based Morality

Rev. Mark Richards

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Amanda Panciera, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

16

Keeping the Welcome Table Open

Rev. Chris Long

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director

Nick DaVia, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

23

Broken Hearts and Mosaic Healing

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Tom Hester, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

30

TBD

Honorable Rev. Everett Mitchell

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director

Summer Services at 10:00 a.m. ONLY

Theme Circles - Are They for You?

by Diane Horne & Laurie Foss

Are you seeking connection and belonging? Consider joining a Theme Circle. August provides opportunities for you to learn more, starting with this article. Some key points:

- Registration will begin on September 1.
- There will be an opportunity to try a Theme Circle after the Sunday services on August 30, from 11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
- Folks will be in the Common Room those Sundays as well to answer questions.

Theme Circles are small groups of six to eight participants that reflect together on our congregation's monthly worship themes. Each month, participants receive a packet of materials on the theme with questions to live with, readings to ponder and spiritual exercises to enrich your daily life. Then we gather once a month with a trained facilitator to share our experiences and reflections. Theme Circles begin meeting monthly during the third week in October either in-person at church, online via Zoom, or a combination.

"It was my first theme circle, and I believe it is a crucial part of getting the most out of the services as well as offering tremendous support for my spiritual life." ~ *Pat Hidson*, participant

Maybe this could be your story next spring. Come check it out.

THEME CIRCLE Participant Comments

"Definitely the ability to more deeply experience the monthly themes from our services in a more intimate way. Theme Circles are such a great way to both get to know other folks and process the themes on a more personal level. It's great to have a whole month to ponder the themes on my own and then discuss them in a small group. It is very spiritually nourishing."

"Listening to others stories and sharing my own has helped me to grow and learn different perspectives. I didn't realize that the greatest value of this group wouldn't just be the self-reflection of my core values, but the profound learnings, inspiration, connections made along the way."

"As a new member, it was so valuable to have this intimate experience."

~ *Tina Nap*

"I felt more connected to the Sunday services because of the opportunity that my Theme Circle gave me to engage with the themes both individually and in community."

~ *Mariah Kauder*

"The whole experience was incredible. Laurie and Andrew were kind, respectful, intentional and so good at facilitating connections through deep listening. I feel a deeper connection with my fellow UUs and I feel so heard and seen and held by this community."

~ *Evan Maruszewski*



Solidarity over Charity and Accompaniment over Rescue

by Michael Pointer Mace
Immigrant Solidarity & Action

Spring 2025 was still really winter. I saw images on the news of teachers, children, and families singing and chanting in the still dirty and frozen snow. They held signs of support for a Milwaukee educator who was being forced to self-deport to El Salvador by a new US administration that relied on brutality, coercion and the cruel exploitation of scapegoats.

“Why am I not there?” was my first thought.

Being on the news, the gathering had happened the day before. Time travel was not an option. Perhaps I was not asking the right question.

“Why wasn’t I invited?” I tried again.

But who was I? I didn’t know these people and they didn’t know me. I felt called to contribute but absent any kind of relationship, the educators in the snow had no reason to trust me. Once more, I was just one person. Alone, my contributions would never amount to more than that of one.

“Why weren’t we invited to help?”

Almost a year and a half later, I received a text message from Norma at Voces de la Frontera. After a year in exile in El Salvador, Yessenia Ruano and her twin daughters were coming home. Norma was in a

Continued on page 7

“Solidarity over Charity...” continued from page 6

flurry of preparations. The family would be staying with cousins but there were no extra mattresses. Could the FUSM provide air mattresses, sheets and pillows so that the family could spend its first night back in a bed? My reply was as different from the previous spring and as it was simple.

“Of course.”

The next day, the lobby of Voces de la Frontera was festooned with balloons and a homemade sign that said, “Welcome Home.” FUSM members clapped and Yessenia and her daughters smiled ear to ear as coffee and orejas were passed around. VDLF’s Christine Neuwmann-Oritz asked our Rev. Chris Long if he would offer a prayer. The small group formed a circle. Rev. Chris began to speak. Embedded in the community, we bowed our heads.

That same week an email came from the national Unitarian Universalist Association. Our congregation had been awarded the Bennett Award for action on Human Justice and Social Action. The UUA highlighted a founding choice our congregation had made two winters ago. At its essence it was the same choice I had wrestled with as an individual congregant. By choosing solidarity over charity and accompaniment over rescue, action rooted in moral clarity became possible.

Like two winters ago, as a congregation, we still grapple to ask the right questions. The answers, however, are ever clear. When we act collectively in community, and insist on the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we see the interdependency that recognizes the divine in others and the greatness within ourselves.

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.

We hold **Scot Henry and Laura White** in the loving embrace of our First Church community. Scot's Mother, Donna Henry, passed away since our last publication.

May we continue to keep **Pammela Wright** and family in the loving embrace of this community as she continues to heal from a recent hospitalization.

Let's continue to send good vibes, thoughts and prayers to **Meighan Bentz, Jen Murray**, and the children as they continue engage the health realities they are facing.

Make a Difference as a Forward Scholars Tutor

by Kristi Davis

President, Forward Scholars Board of Directors

Forward Scholars is preparing for the 2026-27 school year - its fifth year of operation! And First Unitarian Church has been instrumental in supporting Forward Scholars with both volunteer tutors and funding since its inception.

Forward Scholars needs willing volunteers to tutor children in kindergarten through third grade in reading. Fellow church members have found this work very rewarding. In fact, this past year students in the program gained, on the average, over two years of reading achievement in eight months of tutoring!

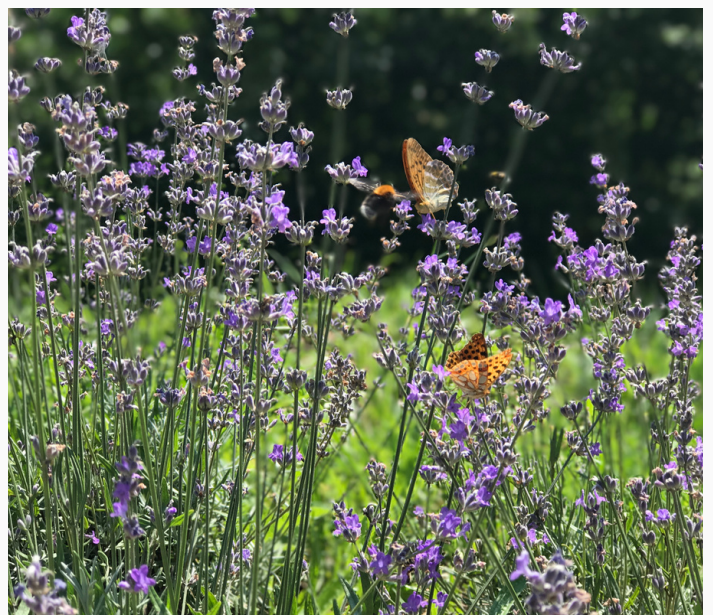
You can learn more about being a tutor at our virtual information session on August 4th at noon. Just email admin@forwardscholars.org to register. And if you're not available for the information session, but are still interested, use that same email address to express your interest or ask questions.

EJM Walk and Roll Lincoln Park

by Jacki Zandi

EMJ Member

Please join us on Saturday August 22 from 10:30-noon at Lincoln Park 1301 W. Hampton Avenue, Milwaukee for this month's Walk and Roll which features birding. You can park along the Milwaukee River Parkway which is at the first bridge north of Hampton. We will meet at the Pollinator Gardens (on the Milwaukee River across from the boat launch) where Laura Herzig will talk about the pollinator gardens and how it provides food for the birds. From there we will Walk and Roll guided by John Plummer. Binoculars will be provided! Invite friends and family. We always see more together! Paula Anderson and Jacki Zandi (yellow t-shirt) are your hosts.



Chancel Choir Rehearsals Resume for 2026-2027

by Tristan Strelitzer
Choir Director

The Chancel Choir will be starting up again for the 2026-2027 Church year with our first rehearsal on Thursday, August 20 from 7 - 8:30 PM in Max Otto Hall at Church.

A new change for the choir this year is returning to weekly rehearsals. Instead of taking off some Thursdays, we will now meet mostly Thursday evenings, with some Wednesday evenings. Fully detailed schedules are given to choir members once joining and exact rehearsal dates are also posted in the "Getting Together" section of the Chanticleer. Rehearsal time will be 7 to 8:30 PM for both Thursdays and Wednesdays.

Choir membership is open to all members and friends of the church, high school age and up. The choir sings about one Sunday a month for 9 and 11 AM services from September to June and for the 6:30 PM Christmas Eve service. Previous knowledge/experience with music is helpful, but not necessary. All are welcome who want to sing!

If you are interested in joining or have questions, please contact Choral Director, Tristan Strelitzer at Tristan.strelitzer@uumilwaukee.org

Beer Garden kickoff gathering August 13

The Chancel Choir will have a kickoff gathering to socialize before the rehearsal schedule begins. We will meet at Hubbard Park Beer Garden (3565 North Morris Boulevard, Shorewood, WI) at 6 PM on August 13. Rainout location will be Lakefront Brewery (1872 N Commerce St, Milwaukee, WI).

This is a great opportunity for new folks to meet fellow choir members and learn more about the Chancel Choir!

Staff Directory

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Rev. Dena McPhetres

MINISTER EMERITUS

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Tristan Strelitzer

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COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Teresa Drews

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Staff members have varying hours.

Please contact them directly to set up an appointment.

Board of Trustees Officers

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How to Reach Us

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Follow Us



Summer Church Building Hours

Sundays: 9:00 am - 1:30 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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