

JULY 2026



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*

Gift of Renewal



Inside News

by *The Chanticleer* Editors

Do you love gardening?

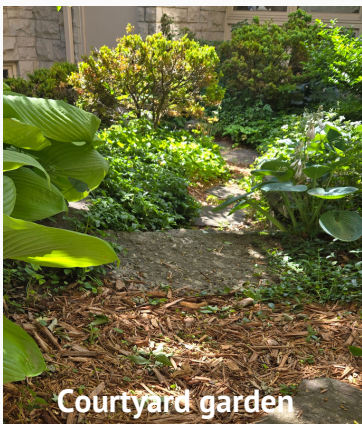
Our generous members have been improving the gardens around church and dreaming of new ideas to celebrate our connection to the earth.

Debra and Jack Klepp created a Spirit of Life tree outside our church door, memorializing Angelo Nelson (see picture below). There will be led tea lights you can turn on when you visit the tree. Dennis and Deborah Conta have improved the courtyard garden adding mulch and weeding.

If you have a passion and time to help with gardening at church, please contact Shari Wright for more information.



Tree of Life garden



Courtyard garden

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



Words on the Wind

by Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom

Dear First Church,

We are finally fully in the swing of summer in Wisconsin, and lush life is blooming everywhere. The seasons bring fullness to our lives, a natural rhythm that helps us understand life, death, and the incredible gift of renewal. There truly is a season for every purpose, a moment when that thing comes into fruition. When we are tired, lost, lonely, and heartbroken, we can trust that the wheel will keep turning and bring us to renewal once again.

In this lush month of beauty and sun, may you enjoy the pleasures of your life, both big and small. Savor the tiny delicacies of flower and hummingbird, the gentle drift of wisteria on the wind. Chew them slowly and return to them when you need a boost. Celebrate the big joys—the graduation, the birth, the anniversary, the home, the pet, the love, the friends. Dance and sing and laugh and play, dear ones.

All is temporary, and everything comes in its season. The pain will pass. And while the pleasure is here, delight in it. May this month renew your spirit.

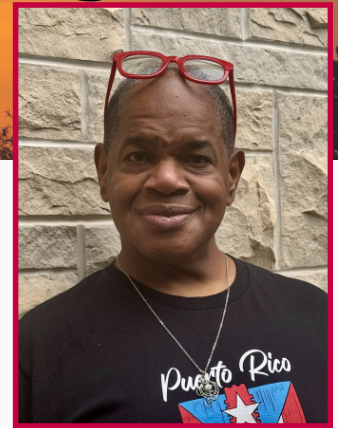
Love,

Rev. Jennifer

Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Senior Minister

Curiosities & Musings

by Rev. Chris Long



“Newness and Mystery”

It is delightful and difficult to believe that July 1, 2026 marks exactly one year since I moved into my apartment home here in Milwaukee. What a year it has been! I must start my reflections by sharing my abundant gratitude to the Board of First Church, to Reverends Jennifer Nordstrom and Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, the entire staff, and so many of you for your support during my needed short-term medical leave. The number of cards, a jar of olives, gifts of poetry, a meditation book, and many emails warmed my heart through what has been a trying time. I have never lost my voice for more than a few hours, so having it gone for nearly two months due to ulcerative laryngitis has been intense. I am grateful to have medical coverage, to the medical staff at Froedtert, to dear friends, to all of you, and for rest and time to make sense of what this has meant in my Ministry and Calling. I will share more in the coming weeks.

What does our congregational theme for July, “Renewal: Newness and Mystery,” mean for me, and for us all, during these still unprecedented times? Let’s do take some extra time this month to sit with and dig into this theme as individuals and together.

I would like to share just a bit of my journey over the last many weeks. I continue to heal through my doctor’s care and vocal therapy exercises. I am on the mend.

During the initial weeks of my extended cough and losing my voice completely, it was truly a

mystery even to my medical team as to what was going on. As you might imagine, as one who lives and makes my living through the use of my voice (preaching, singing, robust laughter, kikiING, chatting with people almost everywhere I go, and rooting for my UW Madison Women’s Volleyball team, etc.), it took some time to start to lean into the reality of what was going on. I learned quickly that I could not sing while engaging in my chores, yell at the television as I did unconsciously, nor connect with friends both near and far. All of this came to an abrupt halt, which impacted me on many levels, including a dip in my spirits.

Life questions began to creep in: Who am I without my voice; how can I possibly not speak for six to eight weeks; what about my life’s responsibilities and things I am accountable to and for; what if it never returns? After a few weeks, some rest, and acknowledging I had to follow the doctor’s and Reverend Jennifer’s advice to stop everything, I started to lean into what has become an unplanned Sabbatical. Here, “newness” crept in over the last several weeks. I had my 58th birthday on April 24, 2026. I took silent walks with a new friend. I went to the Milwaukee Museum of Art several times. I have read, read,

Rev. Chris continued page 6

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

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Holding These Truths: America at 250

Rev. Jim Foti

Teresa Drews, Collaborative Pianist
Jessie Diliberti, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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When Self-Renewal Makes the 'Next-Self' Possible

Rev. Chris Long

Tristan Strelitzer, Choral Director
Alecia Altstaetter, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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Why is Receiving Grace Sometimes So Hard?

Rev. Chris Long

Alissa Rhode, Lead Music Director
Austin Pawlowski, Worship Associate

[Click for info about this service](#)

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TBD

Rev. Elizabeth Harding

Teresa Drews, Collaborative Pianist
Nick Rummler, Worship Associate

Summer Services at 10:00 a.m. ONLY

2026 AUUMM Conference Hosted by First Church

by Tristan Strelitzer
Choral Director

As you may have heard and read in your announcements, First Church is hosting the AUUMM Conference this summer! The conference takes place from July 29 to August 2nd, with workshops being held at our church July 30 to August 1st. The conference will end with AUUMM musicians from around North America participating in our 10 AM worship service on August 2nd.

One of the major points of the conference is the keynote speaker, clinician and conference choir director, Melanie DeMore! If you remember, she did a virtual workshop with us back during the Covid lockdown. AUUMM and FUSM are excited to have her here again at First Church leading music on the August 2nd service.

We will need volunteers to help as greeters and with beverages and food during the workshop days of July 30 - August 1. So please sign up and bring a friend with you to help out! You can sign up to volunteer at the link [HERE](#).

The music ministry team here at First Church also invites everyone to attend the conference if they can. It's not just for music professionals! Choir members, member musicians, staff and clergy are all invited to attend. We are also able to offer team memberships to those folks to get the discount, so please contact Tristan and Alissa for the team membership for attendance.

More information about the conference and registration info for full passes and 1- or 2-day passes can be found [HERE](#).

Rev. Chris continued

and read books from my studies at Starr King School for the Ministry (2005 – 2009). And I rested. I also got to witness the mission and vision of First Church be lived through online worship, following you all in the justice work within and outside the church walls through Milwaukee media and with some the Church's Facebook posts.

As we enter the usual warmth of Midwestern summers, may we remember the basics of staying hydrated, as cool as possible, and trusting that mystery can be a blessing that leads to newness, even in the most difficult of circumstances. Again, I thank each and everyone one of you for your care, support and love during this time in my life and Ministry here at First Church. May we continue to allow our Unitarian Universalist values and the mission of this church to guide our feet through all that may come.

Sincerely and in possibilities
Rev. Chris Long

Meet the New Staff

Azaria Holliday

Admin and Tech Assistant

Azaria completed their Bachelor's at Macalester College with Religious Studies being one of their majors. There they met Unitarian Universalist classmates and became more interested in the religion. They have previously done social justice focused work as an intern at Pangea World Theater. The aspect that drew them to First Church the most was how welcoming everyone was, along with the amazing work that is being done for the Milwaukee community.



Hunter Raley

Facility Assistant



My name is Hunter Dustin Raley, I was born in Beaver Dam Wisconsin and spent my childhood moving around Dane and Columbia county's, I consider Columbus Wisconsin to be my hometown. I'm a student studying Sociology at UW-Milwaukee and plan on going into social work in the future. I love gardening and have a small vegetable garden that I defend from Milwaukee rabbits daily. As an Avid reader and lover of history I'm excited to learn more about this historic place of worship, its congregation and how they have grown and evolved in the context of the religious landscape of Milwaukee.

Yia Xiang

Facility Maintenance Technician

Born in Thailand but came to America in 2004 and grew up in California. Moved to Milwaukee around 2014 and lived here since. I enjoy fishing, outdoor activities like hiking and I always try to run a mile every day.



Staff Directory

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MINISTER EMERITA

Rev. Dena McPhetres

MINISTER EMERITUS

Rev. Andrew C. Kennedy, D.Min.

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Yia Xiong

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COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Teresa Drews
teresa.drews@uumilwaukee.org

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

Board of Trustees Officers

President.....Ryan Pawlowski
Vice President.....Kathy Donius
Secretary.....Amanda Panciera
TreasurerMark Bishop

Members

Mark Chambers
Deborah Conta
Sarah Fowles
Elizabeth Hayes
Adam Zaiger
Trudy Watt

How to Reach Us

414.273.5257

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1342 N. Astor St. Milwaukee, WI 53202



uumilwaukee.org

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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