

In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist Church of
Wichita

Founded 1887

Mission and Continuity

- Ned Lakin

October 2023

I have been thinking quite a bit about “continuity” lately, particularly as it relates to our mission as a church.

And speaking of “mission,” I was brought up short the other day when talking about a “mission statement” for our Church! To refresh memories for all of us, and for those who have joined us in recent years, in 2017, the board authorized a new, streamlined mission statement crafted by our Committee on Ministry. We are “A welcoming community with diverse beliefs united for positive change.”

We may all use this now, as I will, whenever we are asked about what makes First UU special (or different) from other churches.

After having designed our mission statement, though, how do we now put flesh on the bones of this simple statement? And, beyond that, how do we decide if and when we may need to modify or re-create our church’s mission?

These things are what I am talking about when I think of “continuity.” People change, times change, and I believe that, as part of a larger community, we all need to be open to periodically reviewing our fundamental documents and our ways of operating if we wish to keep up with the times and forge a church that adapts to changing times and circumstances.

As I understood the effort, during this year’s General Assembly, to change and “modernize” some statements and formal tenets of our Unitarian Universalist denomination, I could see some positives – even if simply in bringing us all to look at our church in, perhaps, a new way.

History, I believe, shows us that staunchly and stubbornly refusing to try (let alone accept) change ultimately leads to stagnation, ineffectiveness, and irrelevance.

We have all heard it said that “Change is the only constant.” To the degree that this is true, our “continuity” - as a Church, a species, or a planet - is to reckon with change!

In Touch

The newsletter of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita is published monthly.

www.firstuu.net

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The deadline for In Touch and for the monthly calendar is the third Wednesday of each month. Please send submissions to awelsbacher@gmail.com

First UU Pagan Circle

The Pagan Circle will meet on Saturday, October 28, from 6 to 9 pm for Samhain observance. Come join us to celebrate the final harvest. We will enjoy a potluck meal before the ritual, which will begin at 7 pm. Please bring a dish to share and your own table service to keep clean-up chores to a minimum.

Feel free to call Anne Bailey at (316) 650-4905 or Linda Jordan at (316) 512-6652 if you have questions about this gathering.

Membership Committee

- Anne Bailey

An Inquirer's Class for prospective members will be held at the Church on Saturday, October 7, beginning at 10:00 am. Please bring your own lunch; dessert will be provided. We will be finished by 2:00 pm. To sign up for the class, please call the Church office at (316) 685-3481. Call Anne Bailey at (316) 650-4905 if you have questions.

The Membership Committee is responsible for seeing that there are people to greet visitors each Sunday morning. We are always looking for new people to perform this vital function. Please talk to Anne Bailey or LaRilla Combs about getting on the schedule to be a greeter.

The Membership Committee is an important part of the First UU's ministry. The purpose of this committee is to promote and develop the growth of church membership and to strengthen and sustain current membership.

***First UU Mission Statement: We are
"A welcoming community with
diverse beliefs united for positive
change."***

Tidbits from the Board

September 20, 2023

- Ned Lakin

1. The Board of Trustees approved the construction of a shading project for Betty's Place, to be completed in spring 2024.
2. First UU of Wichita is receiving a bequest from long-time member Fern van Gieson, some of which will be used to advertise our church to the public.
3. The James Reeb Endowment Fund, maintained for us by the Unitarian Universalist Association, will provide some donations to local (non-church) worthy causes, to be decided upon by our Board of Trustees.
4. The repair of damage to some parts of the stucco exterior of the church will begin soon.
5. Anita Culp, our long-time Office Manager, who retired this month, was recognized at the church service on September 10, with cards, a cheesecake, and gift card. She will continue on the Buildings and Grounds Committee and was most appreciative of the recognition she received.
6. Church Member Jennifer Hess has been hired by the church as our new Custodian. Magda Garrett will fill in during Jennifer's absence.
7. The Committee on Ministry has been reorganized, with Melanie Jenney selected as the Committee Chair.
8. The Sister Church Program has been discontinued by the Unitarian Universalist Association. The funds in this account will be put in the Money Market Account.
9. Our Treasurer reports that we are right on track with pledges being sent in for this point in the year.

From the Music Committee

- Jana Rambo

The Music Committee continues to recruit members and others to provide special music for services. If you are a musician and would like to play or sing, or know someone who would, please get in touch with us.

Another of our responsibilities is to hire and supervise the pianist. Recently pianist Laura Black moved on to other responsibilities. We're very happy to have hired Josh Saxe for the position. In addition, we have a few alternates to play when Josh is away on business, notably Ochi Boldsaikhan, who has stepped in last minute several times. We're fortunate to have so many talented musicians in the community to enhance our services.

It would be nice to have a few more members on the committee. We meet on the fourth Sunday of each month after the service. Please contact one of our committee members if you'd like to join us. Members include Anne Bailey, Marcia Ellsworth, Lynn Kientz (on temporary leave), Mitch Kientz (on temporary leave), Charlie King, Charles Merrifield, Vivien Minshull-Ford, and myself, the chair.

September and October Anniversaries

- Anita Culp

These members joined First UU Church during the months of September and October (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life.

September: Will Jordan (52), Greta Crosby (27), Charlie Jenney (22), and Kathryn Vernon (3).

October: Porter Marshall (28), Jamey Findling (19), Jenny Findling (19), Sheri Barnes (28), Linda Shriver (18), Charlie King (15), Deborah Burnham (10), Connie Pace (8), Eric Ford (8) and Kim Ford (8).

Fall, Leaves, Fall

- Emily Bronte

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

Lights, Camera, Action

The film group will resume its monthly showings in October. We meet at the church at 1 pm on the fourth Monday of each month. Stay tuned for information on October's film.



Unitarian Universalist Association Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- * The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
 - * Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
 - * Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
 - * A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
 - * The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
 - * The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
 - * Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- (Adopted by the 1984 and 1985 General Assemblies)

Who's Who @ First UU

FIRST UU OFFICERS & BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President—Ned Lakin

President-Elect—Corey Swertfager

Board of Trustees—Jim Bucchorn, Andrew Davis, Celestra Snyder, Magda Garrett,
Charles Merrifield, Louis Goseland, and Vivien Minshull-Ford

Treasurer—Corey Swertfager

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Adult Religious Exploration—Charles Merrifield

Aesthetics—TBD

Building & Grounds—Bruce Roby (Building) and
Anita Culp (Grounds)

Caring—Jayne Henry and Magda Garrett

Children's Religious Exploration—Anna Jenney

Chalice Book Store—Joe Lozano

EcoFest—Holger Meyer

Finance—Charles Merrifield

Fundraising—Anne Bailey and

Annie Welsbacher

Green Sanctuary—Linda Jordan

Kitchen Mavens—Magda Garrett and

Debbie Wadman

Leadership Council—Corey Swertfager

Librarian—TBD

Membership—Anne Bailey

Music—Jana Rambo

Nominating—LaRilla Combs, Jana Rambo
and Kent Rowe

Social Action—Ellie Shore

Stewardship—Andrew Davis

Worship—Anne Bailey

Committee on Ministry—Peter Ninemire

GROUP CONTACTS

UU Craft Group—Anita Culp

Eclectic Readers—Anne Bailey

Movie Group—Vivien Minshull-Ford and
John Findling

Gardening Group—Anita Culp and Linda Jordan

Holiday Party Group—Anita Culp

UU Humanist Group—Charles Merrifield

Pagan Group—Anne Bailey and Linda Jordan

Zen Friends of Wichita—Bob Feleppa and
Vivien Minshull-Ford

STAFF

Custodian—Jennifer Hess

Office Manager—Jon M. Ramirez

Pastoral Care—Joe Mohr

Director of Children's Religious Exploration—Anna Jenney

Assistant Director CRE—Gabby Garrett

Nursery—Stephanie Davidson

October 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	2 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	3 7pm UU Craft Night	4	5	6	7 10am Inquirer's Class
8 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z)	9 6pm Vegan Potluck 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	10 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry	11	12 7p Leadership Council (Z)	13 12p Fridays for the Future 6:30p Sierra Club	14 10am Caring Committee
15 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Social Action Group	16 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	17 11am UU Friends Lunch	18 6p Board of Trustees (Z) 7p Newsletter/Calendar Deadline	19 8am Private Event	20 11:30am Eclectic Readers	21 9:30a Gardening Group 6:30p Wichita Freethinker Humanists
22 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Music Committee	23 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	24 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry	25 7p Tech Committee	26	27	28 6p Pagan Circle
29 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z)	30 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	31			(Z) - Meeting via Zoom (+Z) - Meeting In-Person and via Zoom Call church office at 316-684-4581 for Zoom information.	

Ripples from the Caring Committee

The Caring Committee is the arm of the church that responds to events in the lives of the congregants.

We acknowledge birthdays and other special celebrations with cards and kudos. In times of sorrow, we acknowledge and seek to bear witness to the pain. Volunteers associated with the Caring Committee can, at times, provide transportation to medical appointments, church services, and other church-associated events. Light meals and light housekeeping can be provided as needed due to illness, bereavement, or other factors. Reasonable requests for assistance will be accepted and support provided, always contingent on available people power.

The Caring Committee maintains a small emergency fund used to provide cash assistance to church members in need. In addition, a person in need may occasionally show up at our front door. For them we usually provide a Dillons gift card. If you are able to donate cash or a card, it will be distributed as needed. The Caring Committee is a good steward of your donation. You may donate through the church office.

In addition, as you are harvesting the ends of your gardens, please consider donating extra produce to the Caring Committee to be sold after service, with proceeds going to this emergency fund.

Contact Jana Rambo at (316) 686-4215 if you can help with occasional transportation to medical appointments for congregants.

Thank you in advance for assistance with donations, produce, or time.

Watch for monthly reminders of the UU Friends lunch bunch. Turnouts have been great, and the food and fellowship most enjoyable. We meet the third Tuesday of the month.

The church is fortunate to have in our service Rev. Joe Mohr. Rev. Joe is available to church members for confidential counseling at no cost. With recent losses, illnesses, and everyday stressors, needs for Joe's services might be higher than ever. Please reach out; we care about you. Contact him directly to schedule at (580) 729-0781.

We as the Caring Committee are interested in the joys and sorrows members wish to include in this newsletter. To share, please contact Magda Garrett at (316) 765-3352.

What touches one of us touches us all.

Rampant Red Wrigglers

First UU members Melanie and Charlie Jenney have worms. Not the intestinal kind, the composting kind.

One of our projects is vermiculture, using certain worms that compost food scraps into nitrogen-rich castings. Those castings make excellent fertilizer that you can add to potted plants, a container garden, or an in-ground garden. The extra moisture can be drained off; gardeners consider the resulting worm tea to be “liquid gold.”

It’s pretty easy to start a bin with some shredded newspaper, organic matter, and red wigglers. If this sounds like something you’d like to try, we will give you a batch o’ worms to get started. Feel free to contact Charlie at CBJenney@gmail.com or either of us after church some Sunday.

It’s fun – messy, but fun. The hardest part is keeping up with all their names



*Photo of Bettys Place, photo by
Anne Welsbacher*

From the Worship Committee

October brings darker and shorter days, and with them, interfaith observances acknowledging the approaching change of seasons. The month's theme is heritage, and in this five-Sunday month, we also enjoy two guest speakers addressing topics highlighting their own areas of expertise. We close out the month with a return appearance by the UU Pagans with a presentation on another holiday in the Wiccan wheel of the year.

On October 1, guest speaker Jay Price will share his research on the changing religious demographics of Wichita between 1950 and 2000. His research helps in understanding this transformation and how it has changed the city and society more generally today. Price is professor of history at Wichita State University and director of the Local and Community History Program.

During this week, faith tradition days of note include Sukkot: The Feast of Tabernacles (Jewish) September 9–October 6 and the Feast of St. Francis (Christian) on October 4. Secular observances of interest include Vegetarian Day on October 1 and Banned Books Week October 1–7.

On October 8, Rev. Joe Mohr returns to the pulpit with another of his monthly presentations.

Days of interest during this week include Indigenous Peoples' Day October 9, National Coming Out Day October 11, and the birthday of notable Unitarian poet e.e. cummings on October 14.

On October 15, guest speaker Rabbi Moti will offer a presentation about White Christian Nationalism. Vocalist (as well as Reverend) Joe Mohr will provide special music.

On October 22, Andrew Davis will present "*Why Can't I Read That?*" by UU Rev. Kaaren Anderson. In this year when book bannings are at a nearly unprecedented high in both number and nature of titles, this sermon explores the forces of and possible responses to the phenomenon. Special music will be provided by guitarist Tom Page.

Faith tradition days of note this week include Ayudha Puja (Hindu) on October 23 and the death of doctor and humanist Michael Servetus October 27, 1553. Servetus was burned at the stake for heresy and is informally considered a UU martyr.

Secular days of interest this week include UN Day October 24 and Intersex Awareness Day October 26.

On October 29, Linda Jordan will bring us "*A Samhain Celebration: What is Beyond the Veil?*" reflecting the Pagan holiday, this year occurring October 31–November 1.

Faith tradition days of note this week include Reformation Day (Christian) on October 31; Samhain (Wiccan) on October 31–November 1, Halloween (multiple faith traditions) on October 31, and Día de los Muertos (mixed faith traditions within Latinx communities) on November 1–2.

On October 31, 1959, Unitarian and Universalist representatives voted to merge; the formal merge occurred May 12, 1961.

First UU's Adult RE classes meet at 9:45 every Sunday before church in person or via Zoom. Topics have included diversity and diversity training, humanism, racism, and interpersonal analysis. Contact Charles Merrifield at chasmerrifield@gmail.com or 316-371-3960 or Ellen Burd at burde740@gmail.com or 316-308-8890 for more information.

* * *

Worship Committee members are Anne Bailey, Kay Davis, Marcia Ellsworth, Melanie Jenney, Linda Jordan, Charles Merrifield, Debbie Wadman, and Annie Welsbacher.

First Unitarian Universalist Church

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Eclectic Readers - Anne Bailey

The Eclectic Readers Group will meet as usual on the third Friday, October 20, for lunch at 11:30 am with discussion to follow at noon. The book chosen for October is *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* by Lisa See.

This book is an evocative story of friendship set against the backdrop of a 19-century China in which women suffered from foot binding, isolation, and illiteracy. It follows an elderly woman and her companion as they communicate their hopes, dreams, joys, and tragedies through a unique secret language.

Copies of the book checked out from the Wichita Public Library are available at the Church. Please talk to Anne Bailey at (316) 650-4905 or Anita Culp at (316) 712-384 if you would like to borrow one.