

In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist Church of
Wichita

Founded 1887

President's Thoughts: Honoring Those Who Have Invested

- Ned Lakin

December 2023

In keeping with my themes of "Continuity" and "Investment," I wanted to share recent thoughts and observations I have identified that have enhanced my awareness of all the investments that have gone into assuring the continuity of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita. After all, we have been around for more than 135 years!

But let me be clear. I am talking not only about financial investments that have kept us going (though these are important and necessary, of course), but also about the investments of communication, time, and talent, which have been every bit as important in sustaining our way of understanding and believing how to live ethical, open, peaceful, and meaningful lives.

Several recent revelations have made me think that we need to do a better job of recognizing and expressing appreciation for the efforts of the pioneers and personalities who have sustained our varying but shared views of how to live a "good" life on planet Earth. And this history could go all the way back to Michael Servetus, who was martyred in 1553 for his challenges to church teachings, and right up to the present days of longtime members whom we have recently lost.

I have just learned that a local agency that serves people with disabilities decided to establish a special "History Room" to remember and honor past and current individuals who have made significant contributions to their agency. It occurred to me that perhaps we here at First UU should consider doing something similar!

Please let me know your thoughts about this idea. Find me at church or contact me at 316-214-0968 or nedlak@msn.com.

In Touch

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

www.firstuu.net

Member

Unitarian Universalist Association

President: Ned Lakin

Office Manager:

office@firstuu.net

(316) 684-3481

Jon M. Ramirez

Office Hours:

Mon/Wed/Fri 1-5pm &

Tue/Thu 8am-12pm

Director of Religious Exploration:

Anna Jenney

anna.jenney@gmail.com

Newsletter Staff

Copy Editor:

Anne Welsbacher

awelsbacher@gmail.com

Layout Editor:

Rolando Gomez

shadoe7@mac.com

The deadline for In Touch and for the monthly calendar is the third

Wednesday of each month.

Please send submissions to

awelsbacher@gmail.com

Alternative Gift Market 2023

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

First UU was well represented at this year's Alternative Gift Market in November. Jennifer Connelly and Kent Rowe organized UU regulars and other volunteers to work on an art project for a good cause. Volunteers strung beads and attached them to "smiley rain clouds." These tokens could then be purchased, with proceeds going to pay for water wells for South Sudan.

The Alternative Gift Market raised \$24,000 this year. First UU came in fifth in the amount raised, bringing in \$1,127 to go to the South Sudan project. Since 2005, 600 wells have been drilled, each producing 15,000 to 18,000 gallons a day and serving about 750 people.

The people are linked to local supply chains to help carry large containers of water from an average of as far as 2.5 miles away. The goal is to create 40 new wells each drilling season to rehab old damaged wells and to provide hygiene education. Before the wells project, there was no clean, fresh water in South Sudan.

Hearty thanks to everyone who helped.

First UU on KMUW

Listen for First UU spots on KMUW radio, the local NPR outlet at 89.1 FM. Thanks to a generous bequest given by the late Fern Van Giesen and curated by her nephew, Charles Merrifield, we have secured a contract with KMUW to run radio spots periodically over one year and digital ads on the KMUW website over a six-month period beginning in early 2024. Thank you, Fern and Charles!

From the Worship Committee

The theme for December is Mystery. Services will explore Hanukkah, the “monomyth” concept, the inherent mystery in the tension between two of our UU sources, and a special exploration of “unboxing.” We’ll also hear again from Rev. Joe Mohr. We have a rich selection of special music gifts this month, and back by popular demand: our multifaith display tables reflecting various faith traditions, which goes up after First Sunday Lunch and remains through December.

Arriving in 2024: Storytime for All Ages returns. This Children’s RE element will take place on the second service of the month beginning in January.

On December 3, our own Ellie Shore will offer a presentation exploring the meaning of Hanukkah. We’ll enjoy special music from flutist Carl Williams. December 3 is First Sunday Lunch.

Lots of faith tradition observations begin this week, including UU’s Chalice (visit tinyurl.com/uuachalica), which starts the first Monday in December and lasts seven days. Others: Advent (Christian, December 3), Hanukkah (Jewish, December 7), and Bodhi Day (Buddhist, December 8).

On December 10, Annie Welsbacher will present “*Transcending Mystery*” by Rev. Sarah C. Richards. Richards observes, “ ‘A covenant with mystery,’ says the cell biologist. That seeming contradiction really resonates with me, because it demonstrates the interconnection between our human drive to understand and the experience of mystery. We need to be scientists and mystics to live in this world fully.” Also, Laura Black returns with a special violin performance.

On December 17, Rev. Joe Mohr is back in the pulpit with another of his monthly presentations, and we’ll have special fiddle music from Sarah Jane Naillon.

On December 24, Andrew and Kay Davis take a “*creative service*” idea from our Soul Matters packet and run with it. Come join us to discover the secrets of their Mysterious Unboxing Day!

On December 31, Debbie Wadman presents “*I Love a Good Mystery*” by Rev. Doug McCuster, who notes that “Right there, between the first and fifth sources, you have the innate tension that drives us as a religious community. The first one is calling us to be open to the mysterious forces that create and uphold life. But the fifth source says to heed the guidance of reason and science. In other words, operate on what you can prove, but always remain open to new knowledge.”

December Anniversaries

- Anita Culp

Rachel Rutledge joined First UU Church during the month of December (18 years). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life.

UU Art Notes: Surrealist Photography by Jim Hammer

Gathering Space Gallery

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

Jim Hammer has lived in Wichita all his life apart from studying physics and engineering at K.U. His formal art training consisted of two short courses in drawing and public art. He was a pilot but no longer owns a plane. He retired from the aviation industry in 2017 and now works for a start-up part-time. He volunteers as a docent at the Kansas Aviation Museum and is leading a team repairing the B-52D. He's also a longtime member of First UU and was one of the first people I met when I first attended services decades ago.

Jim was first given a camera when he was 8. He has always been interested in the technical aspects of cameras and film. His first published image was shot on film, but the advent of digital cameras helped him to expand possibilities. He learned a lot from other photographers online, especially on Flickr. He uses various digital cameras, some modified for infrared or astronomy.

Jim started attending Burning Man in 1998 and has continued going to it for the 24 years that it has been held since, initially drawn to it partly because of the extremely surreal setting and art. A photo he took at Burning Man in 2002 was published in *Modern Painters*, and this inspired him to do more intentional photography, then to start painting and doing assemblage/sculpture.

Jim has always been drawn to Surrealism. The juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated objects, ideas, or imagery that "seems dreamlike or a product of the imagination is very compelling to me," he says. "I think humor has always been a part of the Surrealist movement as well, which I enjoy."

Many of his images involve objects staged and/or constructed by him or, as Jim says, "some intervention by the artist, rather than something that exists in the world. A few are images of the work of others at Burning Man, which I tried to present in an interesting way. I hope that these images may inspire wonder, amusement, and joy."

First UU Pagan Circle

The Pagan Circle will meet on Saturday, December 16, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. for our Winter Solstice celebration. Come join us to observe the shortest day of the year—a few days early. We will enjoy a pot luck meal before the ritual, which will begin at 7:00. Please bring a dish to share; we will use paper plates to cut down on the cleanup chores. Call Anne Bailey (316-650-4905) or Linda Jordan (316-512-6652) if you have questions about this gathering.



In November, Anita Culp (right), welcomed new members Jesse Borosky, Joshua Saxe, Ksenya Gurshtein, and Donna Morris.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is an important part of 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.

We would like to schedule an Inquirer's Class for prospective members some time in December. If you are interested in joining our congregation or learning about Unitarian Universalism, you must sign up for the class and let us know when you would be available to attend. We are flexible—the first session could be held on Zoom with the second one in person at the church. Please call the church office at 316-685-3481 to let us know you are interested in joining, or 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 and be a part of our committee. Please talk to Anne Bailey or LaRilla Combs about getting on the schedule to be a greeter.

December 2023

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

Ripples from the Caring Committee

-Madga Garrett

The Caring Committee is the arm of the church that responds to events in the lives of the congregants. We acknowledge birthdays and other celebrations with cards and kudos. In times of sorrow, we acknowledge and seek to bear witness to the pain. Volunteers associated with 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. Reasonable requests for assistance will be accepted and support provided, always contingent on available people power.

During the up-and-coming holiday season, being alone or feeling depressed may have us seeking help. United Way of the Plains has a community resource information hot line: call 211. Otherwise, celebrate the festivities in moderation. Too much of anything is not good and can intensify feelings such as depression.

Going into the New Year might have you looking for a way to become more involved in the church community. Consider becoming a member of the Caring Committee. We meet the second Saturday of each month at 10 am in the church library. If you are not ready to join but can help out with occasional transportation to medical appointments for congregants, please let us know that as well.

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; please donate through the church office. The Caring Committee is a good steward of your donation. Thank you in advance.

Watch for monthly reminders of 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, who is available to church members for confidential counseling at no cost. With recent losses, illnesses, and everyday stressors, you may find that you need Rev. Mohr's services more than ever. Please reach out; we care about you. Contact Joe directly to schedule at (580) 729-0781.

To offer transportation help, or if you are in need of transportation to medical appointments, please contact Jana Rambo at (316) 686-4215. If you wish to include a joy or sorrow in this newsletter, please contact Magda Garrett (316) 765-3352.

What touches one of us touches us all.

Tidbits From the Board

November 15

- Ned Lakin

1. We have finalized the review and revision of the Church Bylaws. They will be made available to the Congregation before the Mid-Year Business Meeting, which has been scheduled for January 21.
2. Because of time constraints, Andrew Davis has resigned from the Board of Trustees. The Board will seek a member to replace him for the rest of Andrew's term, which ends June 30, 2024.
3. Andrew will seek new/additional members for the Stewardship Committee, which will be beginning its meetings in January. Please contact Andrew if you are interested/willing to serve on this committee.
4. First UU is now a member congregation with the "Justice Together" organization (formerly the Sedgwick County Multi-Faith Justice Organization).
5. We have had our first "shared" service on Zoom, with the Manhattan UU Fellowship on November 12. We welcome feedback from the Congregation on the experience!

Holiday Cookie Boxes Are Back

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

We've already had four orders and as of this writing we're only half through November! Cookie drive day is December 16. We'll put out more information about ordering and picking up your treats. To place orders, call Vivien Minshull-Ford, (316) 371-1949; Marcia Ellsworth, (316) 208-3083; or the church, 316-684-3481.

New Year's Eve Party

- Anita Culp, Holiday Party Group

Join the Holiday Party Group to usher out the old year and celebrate the new one at a Cheese, Chocolate, & Cheer Party, December 31, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the church. Bring something that is or contains cheese or chocolate, or bring a bottle of cheer, alcoholic or nonalcoholic. We'll have good conversation and maybe a fun game.

Easy Home Fix You Might Not Have Considered

- Holger Meyer, Social Action Committee member

Many of the things we do to become carbon neutral involve expenses. However, there is one easy thing we can all do that does not cost any money.

Several years ago, I bought a house that had been renovated. The bedroom was always a little cool, even when the other parts of the house were heated well. So, I climbed into the attic and saw that some of the insulation had slid down on the sloped part of the vaulted ceiling, exposing the thin ceiling material and causing a huge heat leak. I redistributed the insulation and within hours the bedroom was more comfortable.

Two weeks ago, Randall and I ran a new network cable at the church to improve the slow wireless network coverage where the adult religious exploration class is held. We noticed two places where the insulation had detached from the wooden beams and settled down on the ceiling tiles above the foyer. The large open gaps they left in that insulation barrier rendered most of the insulation above the foyer essentially useless.

It was easy to lift the insulation back into place and re-secure it to the beams. The materials needed – some wire and staples or nails – cost less than a coffee shop beverage. I have no doubt that our heating bill will be lower this winter due to this simple fix.

Find it to Fix It

These are two examples of simple improvements with big payoffs. The first step is to identify such opportunities. The previous owner of my house had never looked into the attic. At church, the insulation drop could have been recent or years old.

If such easy, cost-free improvements don't get done at a green-minded church, I wonder how many other spaces there are with insufficient insulation. So, I appeal to you to inspect your attic. You don't need to be an energy efficiency auditor or professional building inspector to notice these kinds of issues. Simply stick your head in the attic or above the ceiling tiles and look around.

Fix It or Get a Pro to Fix it

Maybe you will find a bare pipe that looks like it should be insulated. Or you find that the insulation appears to be in the right place, but there is not enough of it. Or you see water damage and realize that your roof needs to be patched.

If any of that is the case, please follow up with qualified professionals. If you are in doubt, you can also talk to me or any of the other usual suspects on energy efficiency issues here at First UU.

However, maybe you'll see something quite obvious and easy to fix. You will be able to do it yourself and feel good about the lower utility bills and better comfort in months ahead. You can then pat yourself on the back and write a column like this for the newsletter at your workplace! (Editor's note: Or tell us here in a future issue of In Touch.)

First Unitarian Universalist Church

7202 E. 21st
Wichita, KS 67206

www.firstuu.net

Eclectic Readers - Anne Bailey

The Eclectic Readers Group will meet as usual on the third Friday, December 15, for brown bag lunch at 11:30 am with discussion to follow at noon. The book chosen for December is “Kindred” by Octavia Butler.

The first science fiction written by a black woman, “Kindred” has become a cornerstone of black American literature. This combination of slave memoir, fantasy, and historical fiction is a novel of rich literary complexity.

Having just celebrated her 26th birthday in 1976 California, Dana, an African American woman, is suddenly and inexplicably wrenched through time into antebellum Maryland. After saving a drowning white boy there, she finds herself staring into the barrel of a shotgun and is transported back to the present just in time to save her life. During numerous such time-defying episodes with the same young man, she realizes the challenge she’s been given: to protect this young slaveholder until he can father her own great-grandmother.

Copies of the book borrowed from the Wichita Public Library are available at the church. Please talk to Anita Culp or Anne Bailey if you would like to read this one.