

# In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist Church of  
Wichita

Founded 1887

## Continuity And Investment

- Ned Lakin

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November 2023

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Last month I wrote about our Mission as a Church and how we can assure continuity as a congregation by adapting to changes in our environment. This month I want to highlight how we can encourage and enhance change through various forms of investment.

Earlier this week, Holger sent out a very interesting update on the investment we made in solar panels for the Church six years ago! (You can read an edited version of his post elsewhere in this issue.) He reports that “... In these five and a half years we have avoided the emission of more than 40 metric tons of CO2 by generating 53660 kWh of electricity without burning coal or gas”. And he goes on to say that “... the panels are very nearly as efficient today as they were on day one.”

This is all good news, but he also suggests that, in order to maximize the use of energy generated by the solar panels when, for instance, the church is closed, we need to determine how to store this energy. And in an exciting idea that I was totally unaware of, in mentioning storage from batteries, he says “... These batteries could either be in a stationary system in the utility room, or the church could be upgraded to support bi-directional charging from electric cars in the parking lot. Those who arrive (with cars that support bi-directional charging) with an almost full battery in their car can power the church building while the need (for energy) exceeds the supply of the solar panels. Then after the service (as the demand for energy has dropped in the church), the energy from the solar panels could be used to charge the electric cars”!

The appropriate and beneficial changes made possible with that investment from six years ago can help provide continuity for our church – and its mission!

# In Touch

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

[www.firstuu.net](http://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](mailto:awelsbacher@gmail.com)

## Membership Committee

- Anne Bailey

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.

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.

We will schedule an Inquirer's Class for prospective members some time in November. If you are interested in joining our congregation, please sign up for the class and let us know when you would be available to attend. To do so, please call the church office at 316-685-3481. If you have questions, call Anne Bailey at 316-650-4905.

## Books for Book-a-Holics

-Melanie and Charlie Jenney

We have a large credit on our account at the Parklane Book-a-Holic that we'd like to share with First UU peeps. If you find a book you want to purchase, just tell the person at checkout that you want to use Melanie and Charlie Jenney's credit and that you're with First UU. They will apply a 50-percent credit from our account to your purchase, and you pay the other half. It cannot be combined with other offers.

## November and Beyond: Fall Movie Schedule

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

Join the First UU film group in the Adult Religious Education Room 1-3 pm on the fourth Monday of each month.

The film on November 27 will be Whale Rider, a magical story from New Zealand.

Next month, Holiday Inn, the seasonal hit with music by Irving Berlin and starring Fred Astaire and Bing Crosby, will be shown December 18, a week earlier than usual so as not to conflict with holiday plans.

Looking further into the new year: Our January 22 film is the hilarious clash-of-cultures comedy, The Gods Must Be Crazy, followed on February 26 by Dune—just in time for the opening of the new Dune 2 in March!

Come and join us for monthly movies and discussion. Popcorn and other movie munchies are always welcome. Contact John Findling at (502) 263-9619 or [jfindlin@ius.edu](mailto:jfindlin@ius.edu) or Vivien Minshull-Ford at 371-1949 or [yfminshull@gmail.com](mailto:yfminshull@gmail.com).

## From the Worship Committee

The theme for November is The Gift of Generosity. Services will explore the nature of a form of giving that is free from a quid pro quo mentality. We also dive into the definition of “wealth.” We’ll hear once again from Rev. Joe Mohr. And a very special service will offer a shared experience with our fellow-Kansan UUs in Manhattan.

On November 5, First UU President Ned Lakin will present “Gifts with Strings” by Rev. Sandra Fees, co-minister of the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg. Fees posits that attaching strings to our giving can change how we relate to one another, and “feeds into a consumerist culture in which relationships, love, looks, and everything else can be bought and sold and bartered for the right price. It’s like coming to church and asking, What’s in it for me? rather than How can I serve? She quotes UU Minister Richard Gilbert, who believed in “the importance of being good – for nothing.” Also for this service, we’ll hear special vocal music from Joe Mohr.

This week marks an important date for American citizens: Election Day is November 7. On November 8, 1897, social activist Dorothy Day was born. Veterans Day is November 11.

In November 12, First UU Zooms like it’s never Zoomed before. In a very special service, Rev. Isabel Call and members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Manhattan (Kansas) will join us via Zoom for a shared experience. Our friends in Manhattan have an impressive, multi-camera digital setup that promises a rich, textured experience – even for the Zoom-wary among us. We’ll be treated to a live sermon from Rev. Call, music from her Fellowship’s canon, and readings and other contributions from our Wichita church. Jointly, our two Kansas congregations will give and receive: generosity in action.

This week marks the birth and death dates of two important Unitarians. American theologian James Luther Adams, born November 12, 1901, is considered the most influential theologian among American UUs in the 20th century. (Visit [tinyurl.com/UUAdams](http://tinyurl.com/UUAdams).) Minister Francis David, whose words led to UU King Sigismund’s Edict of Tora, died November 15, 1588. (Visit [tinyurl.com/FrancisDavid](http://tinyurl.com/FrancisDavid).)

On November 19, Rev. Joe Mohr returns to the pulpit with “It Could Always Be Worse, and Other Platitudes to Make You Feel Guilty for Complaining.” Joe notes that many times, gratitude takes the form of shame. “You should feel grateful for,” or “at least I’m not as bad as…” Gratitude is so much more profound, sincere, and fulfilling when we spend more time looking at ourselves rather than others.

November 23 is Thanksgiving Day and also a National Day of Mourning, a day of reflection on Native American losses that have gone largely unacknowledged in American history books and in our Thanksgiving storytelling. (Visit [tinyurl.com/DayMourning](http://tinyurl.com/DayMourning).)

On November 26, Andrew Davis will present “*On Wealth*” by Rev. Emilie Boggis, Minister with the Beacon UU Congregation in Summit (New Jersey). Boggis suggests that “wealth” is defined by what we count. In her sermon, she cites the Fisherman’s Parable, in which the banker is rich, but the fisherman is wealthy. “We’re all blessed, and we’re all blighted, the old man tells Chief Inspector Gamache. Every day each of us counts our sums. The question is, what do we count?” Also this week, we’ll hear special music from Corey Swertfager.

## November Anniversaries

- Anita Culp

These members joined First UU Church during the month of November (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Nancy Milner (45), Charles Merrifield (37), Nancy Berube (32), Jennifer Hess (11), Tia Bivens (5), Miika (Sutter) Thorn (4), and Jerri Howell (4).

## From the Music Committee

- Jana Rambo

In our efforts to bring a variety of music to our services, some of us recently met for the first time to start a drumming circle. We thought we did pretty well for not knowing what we were doing. We'll want to practice a few (or a lot) more times before we try to play for anyone besides ourselves, though.

We continue to look for musicians, from both within and outside the church, who can play during the "special music" part of our service. If you can play or sing, or know someone else who can, please let us know.

Also, we're still looking for additional committee members, so if you're interested in joining us, please get in touch. We meet the fourth Sunday of the month after the church service. My contact info is (316) 992-5528 or jayrobo@aol.com.

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

## First UU Pagan Circle

The Pagan Circle will not meet in November. Please plan to join us on

December 16, when we will gather to celebrate the Winter Solstice a

few days early. Watch for details.

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

## Solar PV Update and The Next Big Thing:

A brief history of our solar panels, benefits we have reaped, and where we go from here.

—Holger Meyer, Social Action committee member

### Where We Stand Now

About six years ago we installed solar panels on top of the flat roof of the church building. The system has been tracking how much electricity it has been producing since the official commissioning on May 5, 2018. In these five and a half years we have avoided the emission of more than 40 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> by generating 53660 kWh of electricity without burning coal or gas.

Every morning in my email inbox I find an email automatically sent by the system that shows the performance over the last day. Once we had a lightning strike nearby that caused a failure of the inverter, the component that changes the direct current from the solar panels into alternating current suitable to feed into the building electrical system and back into the grid if the panels produce more electricity than the building is using.

The company (SMA in Europe) sent a new inverter before I even read the news that there was a problem. It took only an hour to replace the inverter once the replacement had arrived. That was the only issue we have had in six years of running the system. The panels are very nearly as efficient today as they were on day one.

### Next Steps: Batteries and Electric Cars?

As I am writing this, the morning sun is just rising. With just a few rays of sunshine hitting them, my home's panels generate enough power to run, for example, an electric toothbrush. Right after brushing my teeth I usually want a cup of coffee. But the sun is not up far enough yet to generate enough electricity to heat water for coffee or tea.

And, of course, I do these things at home, not at church. But I just want to illustrate the point that the electric power is not always available when it is needed, even if over the day enough electric energy is generated to make many pots of coffee.

At church we use a lot of electricity on Sunday mornings—and very little at many other times. Battery storage is one way to make more efficient use of solar energy.

These batteries could either be in a stationary system in the utility room, or the church could be upgraded to support bi-directional charging from electric cars in the parking lot. Although not all electric cars today support bi-directional charging, it is becoming more common.

Those who arrive at the church with an almost full battery in their car can power the church building while the need exceeds the supply of the solar panels. Then after the service, when the lights in the sanctuary are off and the dishwasher, coffee maker, and hot water heater are not running any more, supply by the solar panels will exceed demand in the building and those electric cars can charge again from the solar panels while Jennifer (Connelly) and Kent (Rowe), Charles (Merrifield), I, and others are participating in a social action committee meeting.

We don't yet know what church energy- and greening-related upgrade we want to pursue next. However, the last big item was six years ago.

We have upgraded lights to LEDs, an effort led by Jennifer, and done other little things, but maybe it is time to consider the next big thing, be it a more efficient way to heat or cool the building, more solar panels, battery storage, or something else! If you have opinions, please let us know!

# November 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	3	4
<b>5</b> 9:45a Adult Rel Explor (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	<b>6</b> 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	<b>7</b> 4p Worship Committee (Z) 7pm UU Craft Group (Z)	<b>8</b> 7p Leadership Council (Z)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 12p Fridays for the Future 6:30p Sierra Club	<b>11</b> 10a Caring Committee
<b>12</b> 9:45a Adult Re Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z)	<b>13</b> 6p Vegan Potluck 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	<b>14</b> 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry	<b>15</b> 6p Board of Trustees (Z) 7p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 11:30am Eclectic Readers	<b>18</b> 9:30a Gardening Group 6:30p Wichita Freethinker Humanists
<b>19</b> 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Social Action Group	<b>20</b> 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	<b>21</b> 11am UU Friends Lunch	<b>22</b> 7p Tech Committee	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:45a Adult Rel Explo (+Z) 11a Children's Rel Explo 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Music Committee	<b>27</b> 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	<b>28</b> 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>		

## 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 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.

There has been much loss in the past year or so. The anticipated or sudden death of a loved one is often devastating for those left behind. More than ever we need one another, If you are hurting, please reach out. In addition, as we face an ever increasing warring and hostile humanity our own sense of security is challenged. Reach out.

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, Thank-You in advance, you may donate through the church office.

Contact Jana Rambo at (316) 686-4215 if you can help with occasional transportation to medical appointments for congregants. If you are in need of medical transportation, likewise reach out to Jana.

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. Rev. Mohr 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. Please contact Magda Garrett (316) 765-3352.

What touches one of us touches us all.

## Thanksgiving First Sunday Lunch

-Debbie Wadman

Join us for an early Thanksgiving dinner on our First Sunday Lunch on Sunday, November 5. There will be roast turkey and a vegan entree. Check out the sign-up sheet in the kitchen and let us know if you can bring potatoes, rolls, veggies, salad, or a dessert. Perhaps you are not a cook and would rather help with set up or clean up. That is fine, too. It is more fun when everyone participates. Thank you!

## Tidbits from the Board

- Ned Lakin

- We must have really missed first Sunday Lunches while Covid was keeping us away, because in the first four months of our fiscal year we have already raised more money through them than we budgeted for the entire year. Yea, us! See you all on November 5 for more food and conversation.
- The Board approved paying for our participation in the Sedgwick County Multifaith Justice Organization through the rest of the fiscal year.
- We are still in the black. Thanks to everyone for keeping up with your pledges.

## Back by Popular Demand: Holiday Goodie Boxes

- Marcia Ellsworth and Vivien Minshull-Ford, Fundraising Committee Co-Chairs

November is election time, and the ballots are in: Our Holiday Goodie Box “drive-by” fundraiser sale returns on Saturday, December 16. Assembling and completing boxes will take place from 9 am to noon and box distribution will be 3-5pm. Each box of treats costs \$20. If arranged in advance, boxes may be delivered for an extra \$2.

Several bakers have already offered to make their holiday favorites, but if you would like to contribute your favorite cookie recipe, candy specialty, or savory items, please join us. We will also need volunteers on Saturday morning filling the boxes, tying bows, and sticking labels on the containers as well as a driver or two for deliveries.

Boxes are full of goodies and make great gifts. They do go quickly and there are a limited number available, so order early. Please call Marcia Ellsworth at (316) 208-3083 or Vivien Minshull-Ford at (316) 371-1949 to volunteer or order your box.



## The Profound Meaning of Gassho

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

The term “Gassho” has recently been added to the rotating roster of salutations at the end of our service, and some of our congregation want to know what it means. During the meditation sessions of Zen Friends of Wichita, we seldom say the word, but instead we make the gesture three times, before meditation, signifying the Dharma, the Buddha, and the Sangha. We also stand at the end of meditation and bow to the Sangha – in other words, to each other. You may see some members of the congregation make this gesture following the contemplation observation or even at the chalice during Joys and Sorrows.

Gassho originated in India and is used to greet a person, but it means many things: “Hello,” “goodbye,” “thank you.” It expresses deep honor and respect. It was used at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha more than 2,500 years ago, and when we think about this history, we can appreciate and feel the weight of this tradition. It is also the Buddhist equivalent of Namaste.

When we gassho, our hands are placed at the mid-chest level, palms together, fingers straight and pointed at a 45-degree angle upwards. The wrists should be close to the chest, and in this relaxed position, we bow. When we gassho, it is symbolic of the Dharma, the truth about life. When we place our right and left hands together, it is symbolic of putting together opposites: you and me, life and death, ignorance and wisdom. Our left hand represents our human realm filled with our self-centered attachments. Our right hand represents the world of awakening or enlightenment. When we put our hands together, we are saying they are not separate but really one. We are engaging both our body and mind in awareness. It is not just an intellectual exercise: it can be transforming.

Gassho is also an expression of our feelings of gratitude and our connection with each other. It symbolizes the realization that our lives are supported by all others.

# First Unitarian Universalist Church

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## Eclectic Readers - Anne Bailey

The book selected for us to read for November is *The Astronaut Wives Club: A True Story* by Lily Koppel.

This book describes what lives were like for a group of military wives, including Annie Glenn, Rene Carpenter, Betty Grissom, and Louise Shepherd, who were thrust into the spotlight when their husbands became Mercury Seven astronauts.

We will gather for discussion on November 17 beginning at 11:30 am for brown-bag lunch followed with discussion at noon. Copies of the book borrowed from the Wichita Public Library are available at the church. Please talk to Anne Bailey at (316) 650-4905 or Anita Culp at (316) 712-3843 if you would like to borrow one.