

# In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist Church of  
Wichita

Founded 1887

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January 2024

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## President's Thoughts: Matters of Concern for UU Members and Friends

- Ned Lakin

I am digressing this month from the themes of "Continuity" and "Investment" to share some concerns that are bubbling up among a number of UUs and UU congregations. These are related to the current efforts being made to change the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association. These changes include eliminating the Seven Principles, which have set out the foundation of our churches since the UUA was created. They also include other changes which – at least in the opinion of some UUs – will threaten not only to detach our "religion" from its history, but also to destroy the independence of the individual congregations' self-governance structure.

In the somewhat limited reading and studying I have done on these issues, my concerns are that the UUA is using some rather harsh and high-handed methods to push through an agenda in which ... "Antiracism itself is the hinge issue, the justification for everything else in the UUA" (from "Don't be Guilted into Giving Up the Seven Principles: Reflections and a Strategy," by Dr. Kenneth Christiansen, November 2022. Updated July 2023.)

As concerned UUs, I encourage all of us to learn more about these conflicts. We will be studying and discussing them in upcoming Adult Religious Exploration classes. Resources also are available online. On the UUA site, find the proposed changes at [UUA](#). Find information and links to additional resources at [fifthprincipleproject.org](http://fifthprincipleproject.org).

# 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)

## Save the Dates: Tom Neilson February 17-18

Tom Neilson will give a concert at First UU on Saturday, February 17, at 7:00 pm. On Sunday morning, he will deliver his special brand of sermon – a mixture of music, political satire, and social commentary.

Tom has visited our church twice before, and it's always a memorable and eye-opening experience. Watch the February issue of "In Touch" plus social media, the weekly "Update" newsletter, and church bulletins for more information.

## Membership Committee

-Anne Bailey

We will hold an Inquirer's Class at the church on a Saturday in January for anyone interested in joining our congregation or learning about Unitarian Universalism. You may sign up for the class and we will let you know the specific time and date.

We plan to meet at 10:00 a.m. to learn about the history of the Wichita Church and UU history, take a break for lunch, and then watch a video, learn what it means to be a member, and take a tour of the building. Please call the Church office at (316) 685-3481 to let us know you are interested in joining the class, or call Anne Bailey at (316) 650-4905 if you have questions.

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 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 Anniversaries

- Anita Culp

These members joined First UU Church during the month of January (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Sally Ross (54), Kent Olmstead (44), Anne Bailey (39), Marcia Ellsworth (21), Corey Swertfager (17), Annie Welsbacher (17), Frank Ruf (15), Kent Rowe (15), Linda Jordan (13), Ellie Shore (4), Kerry Dobbins (4), Linda Walter-Swygert (4), and Kirk Mitchell (4).

## From the Worship Committee

- Annie Welsbacher

The theme for January is the Gift of Liberating Love. Storytime for All Ages, featuring Director of Children's RE Anna Jenney and the kids, returns on the second service of the month.

On January 7, Kay Davis presents "*Love Your Enemy*" by Rev. Darcey Laine, who notes, "The culture around us shows us, day after day, what happens when we lash out at our enemies with hate. Perhaps it's time to break that vicious cycle of retribution and violence and turn instead to the slow, vulnerable work of cultivating compassion." We'll enjoy special music from Maya Gurshtein, the daughter of Joshua Saxe and Ksenya Gurshtein, who recently starred in a school production of Annie. January 7 is also First Sunday Lunch.

January 1 is New Year's Day. It's also the day in 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. January 5 and 6 are, respectively, the Christian observances of Twelfth Night and Epiphany. And January 7 is the birthday of perhaps our least memorable U.S. president, and a Unitarian, Millard Fillmore, probably best known for the role he played in passing the Fugitive Slave Act.

On January 14, Ksenya Gurshtein presents "*A Listening Heart*" by Rev. Amy Russell, who notes, "Learning how to listen is learning how to love," and posits that "if we learned how to listen without an agenda, without preparing ourselves for our response, without judgment, we could love better." Carl Williams returns with a special flute performance and Anna Jenney presents Storytime for All Ages.

January 15 is Martin Luther King Day. Also on that date, UUA's "*Thirty Days of Love*" begins; visit [tinyurl.com/UU30days](http://tinyurl.com/UU30days).

On January 21, Rev. Joe Mohr is back in the pulpit with another presentation. We'll also hear Charlie King playing guitar in the latter half of the month.

January 21 is the Baha'i faith's World Religion Day. January 24-25 is Tu BiShevat, one of four New Years on the Jewish calendar. And January 24 is Belly Laugh Day; to learn when and how to join in, visit [global-belly-laugh-day](http://global-belly-laugh-day).

On January 28, Jesse Borosky presents "*Fractals, Universalism, and Liberating Love*" by Rev. Sara Smalley, who teases, "Love, real love, transformational love, truly Universalist love, means we change fractal patterns. This is dangerous to the status quo, in our lives, in our communities, in our nation, in our world."

January 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. January 31 is the birthday of monk philosopher Thomas Merton.

\* \* \*

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

## Ripples from the Caring Committee

-Magda Garrett

Happy New Year from the Caring Committee! In the coming days, when sunlight seems to be in short supply, be mindful of opportunities to be involved with church activities.

- Sunday Services
- First Sunday meals
- Movie Mondays (fourth Monday)
- Tuesday lunch bunch (third Tuesday)
- Eclectic Readers book club (third Friday)
- Garden group (third Saturday; seasonal)
- Pagan gatherings (seasonal)
- Social action opportunities (ongoing)

There is no need to be alone and isolated. Come into the fold – we care about you. Watch for updates for these and other opportunities in the weekly e-newsletter Update and in Sunday service bulletins.

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 card, it will be distributed as needed. The Caring Committee is a good steward of your donation. Thank you in advance.

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.

If you can help with occasional transportation to medical appointments for congregants, or if you are in need of medical transportation yourself, contact Jana Rambo at (316) 686-4215

Donate the committee's emergency fund through the church office at (316) 684-3481.

We as the Caring Committee are interested in the joys and sorrows members wish to include in this newsletter. Please contact me at (316) 765-3352.

What touches one of us touches us all.

**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 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 needs. Reasonable requests for assistance will be accepted and support provided, always contingent on available people power.

## Poetry Group Starts January 13

-Skyler Lovelace

Since 2020, the Zoom Poets of Wichita have been writing and discussing poetry using virtual tools. Starting in January 2024, we'll offer in-person meetings that are also Zoom-accessible. The first meeting will be held January 13. This session is open for enrollment until January 10.

Every week, inspired by a new topic, we post our original poems in our private online classroom and then gather on Monday afternoons to read and discuss the week's work.

In January, we're exploring ideas from "Wingbeats II: Exercises and Practice in Poetry." For the first 10 weeks, our topics are:

- Getting Unstuck
- Junk Drawers
- Beyond Story
- Sentimental Immunity
- The Foodie Response
- Things (One)
- Things (Two)
- Scars
- When Good Advice Turns Bad
- The World Without Us

There is no charge for this workshop. Participants are expected to share an original poem each week and to write a couple of sentences in response to other poets' new work. To participate fully in this group, you need to be comfortable using your own computer to access an online discussion board and Zoom. The in-person meetings happen at The Studio School near Lincoln and Grove and require climbing five steps to the building entrance.

If you'd like to join this group, please leave Skyler a message at (316) 519-4822.

# January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
(Z) - Meeting via Zoom (+Z) - Meeting In-Person and via Zoom firstuu.net/events	Office Closed	4p Worship Committee (Z) 7p UU Craft Group (Z)				
7 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	8 6p Vegan Potluck	9 10:30a Food Pantry	10 7p Leadership Council (Z)	11	12 12p Fridays for the Future 6:30p Sierra Club	13 10a Caring Committee
14 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z)	15 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	16 11a UU Friends Lunch	17 6p Board of Trustees (+Z) 7p Newsletter deadline	18	19 11:30a Eclectic Readers	20 9:30a Gardening Group
21 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Social Action Group	22 1p First UU Film Group 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	23 10:30a Food Pantry	24 7p Tech Committee	25	26	27
28 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Music Committee	29 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	30	31			

## Tidbits From the Board

December 20

- Ned Lakin

1. The Board has approved a proposed budget for FY 2024-25, which will be presented to the congregation at the Mid-Year Business Meeting on Sunday, January 21, 2024.
2. The Board has appointed a board member to fill Andrew Davis' remaining term (June 30, 2024). Announcements will be made soon.
3. We are continuing to monitor Covid rates, although the County Health Department has changed its tracking method that we were using to implement masking, food and drink, etc. for the Sunday services.
4. We will be reviewing our Policy and Procedure Manual over the next few months and will be adding policies and procedures, as needed, to clarify or enhance the ways we manage Church business.

## Eclectic Readers

The choice for our January book discussion is any book by Cormac McCarthy.

Cormac McCarthy (July 20, 1933–June 13, 2023) was an American writer who authored 12 novels, two plays, five screenplays, and three short stories spanning the [Western](#) and [post-apocalyptic](#) genres. He was known for his graphic depictions of violence and his writing style, recognizable by a sparse use of punctuation and attribution. McCarthy is widely regarded as one of the greatest American novelists. Among his books are "The Road," "No Country for Old Men," and "All the Pretty Horses."

We will gather on January 19 beginning at 11:30 a.m. for brown-bag lunch and followed at noon with discussion. Copies of his books may be borrowed from the Wichita Public Library and are probably readily available at local used book stores.

## Lila Arnold: Thank you

—Sigrid Trombley

Lila's children (Laurie, Jay, and Gregg) and their spouses (Judy, Stacy, and Ginny), the rest of the family, and I (Lila's partner) thank everybody who participated in and all who attended, in person or via Zoom, Lila Arnold's Celebration of Life on December 2. We especially thank Lara Pollock, who led the Celebration. While a sad day, we think we gave Lila a wonderful sendoff that she would have enjoyed. Holger Meyer created a YouTube video of the service. Let me know if you would like a link to it. Lila was a wonderful poet, and I'd like to share one of her poems, "Graduation," which was read at the Celebration of her Life

### Graduation

Earth has been my classroom.  
The term has ended.  
I go from here to summer  
among constellations,  
to another classroom invisible.  
I leave to you that of my spirit  
which I can spare,  
the love part that is  
eternally yours.

The human is a marvel of intricacy,  
I cannot envision the creator  
of such a piece of work but  
when I have been through  
the steps, have walked  
beyond the Milky Way  
or flown with spirits far advanced

When I have made my way  
through futures of learning  
in a million years or more  
then I will know  
how it came to be.  
Thus, it came to me that  
Now  
Is but one classroom  
Flowing through time  
until Earth-time runs out.

The flow goes on  
beyond clocks and calendars.  
But this I know,  
the love part I leave with you  
is tethered to the soul who leaves you  
and I will see you again  
not as you and not I as I, perhaps  
but known to one another.  
There is no future so far  
That I would not wait for you.



# First Unitarian Universalist Church

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*www.firstuu.net*

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## First UU Pagan Circle

The Pagan Circle will meet on Saturday, February 3, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. for our Imbolc celebration. Imbolc symbolizes the halfway point between the winter solstice (Yule) and the spring equinox (Ostara).

The word “imbolc” means “in the belly of the Mother,” because the seeds of spring are beginning to stir in the belly of Mother Earth. We will make “Seed Bombs” to help Mother prepare for spring.

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.

Feel free to call Anne Bailey (316-650-4905), Linda Jordan (316-512-6652), or Donna Morris (316-573-9101) if you have questions about this gathering.