

First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of
Wichita

Founded 1887

In Touch is the
newsletter of the First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of Wichita and
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Member of Unitarian
Universalist
Association

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

In Touch

March 2024

President's Letter Continuity and Investment - Ned Lakin

We will soon kick off our Annual Stewardship Campaign, asking for pledges of support to the church for Fiscal Year 2024–2025. Of course, we encourage all members and friends of the church to make a financial pledge during the campaign to the degree that each is able. And these decisions should be made after careful reflection on the importance of the mission and community of which we are a part, and what they mean to the larger world, as well.

As I have written before, financial giving is only one of many ways to support this church, but it is a critically important one. From our various speakers and music to our offerings of programs and staff for our Children's Religious Exploration classes to our mortgage and utilities payments to the costs of maintaining our building and grounds and paying the staff who keep our operations on an even keel, we require financial backing. It may not be flashy, but it is necessary!

In the near future, the Board of Trustees will look at the realities of how the size of our mortgage payments limits our opportunities to expand and diversify our mission; how our membership is aging and how that affects peoples' ability to give; and the reality of losing long-time members to illness or death.

We are thrilled with the increasing numbers of new visitors and younger families, some of them with children, who are checking us out – and staying! Help make them feel welcome. Like so much of life, we need to see our church in a life cycle of its own, so let's each make our part of that cycle a fun, exciting, and fulfilling one.

From the Worship Committee

- Annie Welsbacher

The theme for March is Transformation.

On March 3, Melanie Jenney will present “*No Struggle, No Progress*” by Rev. Andrew L. Weber, half-time minister with the Thomas Paine Fellowship in Collegeville, Pennsylvania. The sermon will explore how, as we look to renewing our national, congregational, and personal faith, we also acknowledge necessary struggles and hardships. Tom Page returns with a special music performance.

March 10 marks the start of our 2024 stewardship campaign. Andrew Davis kicks it off with “*Wealth*” by Rev. Emilie Boggis with the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Summit, New Jersey. Her sermon offers a new perspective on how we can use our money to support our principles. Also, Children’s Religious Exploration Director Anna Jenney reads a story for all ages.

On March 17, Rev. Joe Mohr is back in the pulpit.

On March 24, Guest speaker Melanie McLey presents insights on transformation, the unhoused, and her work with Family Promise of Wichita, whose mission is to empower families to overcome homelessness and housing insecurity. Charlie King presents special music.

On March 31, Linda Jordan presents a pagan spin on Easter with “*A Journey to the Gods and Goddesses Hall of Fame*,” in which Rev. Kaaran Anderson says her “favorite conversations come from hanging out with the Goddess Eostra and her good friend and transformational rabble rouser, Jesus.

From the Children’s RE Director

-Anna Jenney

March in Children’s Religious Exploration will center on transformation. We will learn about many religious spring holidays. Hand-on and crafty lessons will focus on celebrating change in our lives and in the world around us.

We are seeking volunteers to help in our classroom currently and would love to have you join us! Please scan this QR code to sign up or find Anna Jenney after church services on Sunday.

<https://forms.gle/MNiQFFHKzbkZTUhJA>



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Widening the Circle: UUA Mosaic

-Jon Ramirez

The Unitarian Universalist Association has created Mosaic (uaa.org/mosaic), an online hub providing resources and support for UUs addressing racism and oppression. The project grew following a 2020 report titled "Widening the Circle of Concern" with recommendations by the Commission on Institutional Change. Mosaic contains an anti-racism resource library that includes training guides, books, curricula, and more. It also offers "learning and practice" communities facilitating small group meetings with fellow UUs nationwide. Another of several more hub resources is "BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) UU Connections" to support these members within the UU community. Also available are a Mosaic Newsletter and blog.

Last year, I began participating in the national Mosaic "Skill-up Learning and Practice Community" (or L&P) These nationwide virtual small-group sessions support UU leaders enacting anti-racism/ anti-oppression/ multiculturalism (or AR/AO/MC) initiatives and meet twice monthly over three months. The small group sessions will include personal reflection, exploration of participants' UU environments, and creation of an "accountability plan." All sessions are conducted by trained facilitators.

The next round of Mosaic and Skill Up Learning and Practice Communities will start this March. A Religious Professionals L&P Group will meet on Wednesdays and a General L&P group will meet on Tuesdays. I will facilitate one of the March small-group sessions.

I hope to help other UUs develop Mosaic initiatives within their UU communities. I will also strive to develop and incorporate Mosaic initiatives within First UU and across the state through the creation of a State Action Network associated with the Coalition of UU State Action Networks. For more information on Mosaic, please contact me at mosaic@firstuu.net.



Eclectic Readers

-Anne Bailey

March 15 is the next meeting date for the Eclectic Readers. The book chosen for our discussion is "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens.

The book is a 2018 coming-of-age murder mystery. The author, an American zoologist, is a New York Times bestselling nature writer. One website says of the book, "Fans of Barbara Kingsolver will love this stunning debut novel about an unforgettable young woman determined to make her way in the wilds of North Carolina, and the two men that will break her isolation open." A film adaptation was released in July 2022.

We will gather on March 15 at 11:30 for a brown-bag lunch followed at noon by a discussion. Copies of this book borrowed from the Wichita Public Library are available at the church. Please speak to Anne Bailey or Anita Culp.

First UU Pagan Circle

- Anne Bailey

The Pagan Circle will meet on Saturday, March 23, from 6 to 9 pm for our celebration of the spring equinox, or Ostara. The word Ostara comes from the Anglo-Saxon goddess's name, Eostre. Eostre represented spring and new beginnings. The celebration of spring is present in many ancient customs across all cultures.

We will enjoy a potluck meal at 6 before the ritual, which will begin at 7. Please bring a dish to share; we will use paper plates to cut down on the cleanup chores. Or if you prefer, just come at 7 for the ritual. We will have an interesting craft project to help celebrate the return of spring.

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.

Syrian Dinner Fundraiser

-Debbie Wadman

Do you enjoy meeting people from around the world and eating delicious food? You can do both at a special dinner prepared by me featuring authentic Syrian foods. The dinner will be at the church on March 9 at 6 pm.

I have been helping a Syrian refugee family get adjusted to life in Wichita and learn how to find services they need for a family of nine. At dinner, you will meet Maher, Nesren, and their seven children. We will enjoy such dishes as stuffed grape leaves, hummus, Syrian baba ghanouj (unlike the Lebanese version!), zaa'tar pizza (seasoned flatbread), stuffed zucchinis, falafel, chicken, rice, dessert, and more! Download Google Translate or DeepL Translator if your Arabic is lacking; this will aid communication.

The cost is \$20; the funds go towards the family's debt to the International Rescue Committee for the flight from the Middle East to Wichita. Call me to reserve your ticket at 316-651-3359.

Music

-Jana Rambo

Thanks to everyone who helped with the February 17 Tom Neilson concert. We learned a lot from the experience and hope to put it to use for future concerts. This was Tom's third concert here, the last having been prior to Covid. We put in quite a bit more effort on publicity, with the result that we approximately tripled attendance over the last concert. Although still a modest crowd, we had a good time, and Tom called us as "a good audience."

Now that the concert is past, we will return to holding regular practices for the drumming circle. We will let you know the time once it is set. This would be a good activity for all ages; RE has a number of rhythm instruments that can be used if you don't have one.

As always, we will continue to work with our pianist and to schedule special music. If you know anyone we might contact about providing special music, please let us know.

First UU Film Group: New Date & Time

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

We have moved our movie time to the fourth Friday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in hopes of attracting more people. We have lined up our next three titles.

Our March 22 film is Stanley Kubrick's classic satire "Dr. Strangelove (or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb)," featuring an all-star cast including Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden, Slim Pickens, James Earl Jones, Keenan Wynn, and Peter Bull.

On April 26, we'll show Barry Levinson's "Diner," starring several actors when they were very young or making their first appearances: Kevin Bacon, Mickey Rourke (before the plastic surgery), Steve Guttenberg, Ellen Barkin, Tim Daly, and Daniel Stern. It features a bunch of guys in a diner talking about life. It's funny, moving, and never boring, trust me.

Our May 24 movie is "Ex Machina," about the creation of AI life and what it might look like. Domhnall Gleason, Alicia Vikander, and Oscar Isaac deal with profound questions about "trust, deception, and the blurred lines between human and machine." "Ex Machina" has been hailed as a science fiction classic.

Please join us for an evening at the movies – and bring movie snacks if you like. If you would like to suggest titles, let us know: John Findling (jfindlin@ius.edu) or Vivien Minshull-Ford (vfminshull@gmail.com).

March

2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p>(Z) - Meeting via Zoom (+Z) - Meeting In-Person and via Zoom firstuu.net/events</p> <p>3</p> <p>9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p First Sunday Lunch</p> | <p>4</p> <p>6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)</p> | <p>5</p> <p>4p Worship Committee (Z) 7p UU Craft Group (Z)</p> | <p>6</p> <p>1:30p Justice Together Research: Humankind</p> | <p>7</p> | <p>1</p> <p>12p Fridays for the Future 6:30p Sierra Club</p> | <p>2</p> <p>10a Caring Committee 6:30p Syrian Dinner</p> |
| <p>10</p> <p>9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z)</p> | <p>11</p> <p>6p Vegan Potluck 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)</p> | <p>12</p> <p>10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry</p> | <p>13</p> <p>7p Leadership Council (Z)</p> | <p>14</p> | <p>15</p> <p>11:30a Eclectic Readers</p> | <p>16</p> <p>9:30a Gardening Group</p> |
| <p>17</p> <p>9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Social Action Group</p> | <p>18</p> <p>6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)</p> | <p>19</p> | <p>20</p> <p>6p Board of Trustees (+Z) 7p Newsletter deadline</p> | <p>21</p> <p>11:30a UU Friends Lunch</p> | <p>22</p> <p>6:30p First UU Film Group</p> | <p>23</p> <p>6p Pagan Group</p> |
| <p>24</p> <p>9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Music Committee</p> | <p>25</p> <p>6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)</p> | <p>26</p> <p>10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry</p> | <p>27</p> <p>7p Tech Committee</p> | <p>28</p> | <p>29</p> | <p>30</p> <p>6:30p UU Humanist Group</p> |
| <p>31</p> <p>9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z)</p> | | | | | | |

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

Ripples from the Caring Committee

-Magda Garrett

If in this time of year you are having trouble making ends meet, local programs can assist with utilities.

LEAP (1-888-369-4777 or Google "LEAP energy assistance")
Project Deserve (316-267-3999 or Google "Project Deserve")
H2O Care Fund (Google "H2O Care Fund")
Share The Warmth (Google "Share the Warmth")

Call United Way (211) for additional assistance.

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.

Please note that the monthly UU Friends lunch bunch day has changed to the third Thursday of the month at 11:30 a.m. effective March 21, location TD. Lunch turnouts have been great and the food and fellowship most enjoyable. Watch for updates about this and other events in the weekly e-newsletter Update, the UU email listserve, and Sunday service bulletins.

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 to 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, Magda Garrett, at (316) 765-3352.

What touches one of us touches us all.

Tidbits From the Board of Trustees

February 21, 2024

-Ned Lakin

1. The proposed budget for FY 24-25 was approved by the congregation at the Mid-Year Meeting on February 18, 2024.
2. The revised church bylaws, with a few minor changes to be made before the final printing, were approved by the congregation at the Mid-Year Meeting on February 18, 2024.
3. The Stewardship Campaign for next fiscal year will kick off on March 10, 2024. Andrew Davis is the chair.
4. The board approved funding for the Social Action Committee that will reflect First UU's support for both the Justice Together effort and the Kansas Inter-Faith Action (KIFA) initiatives on social justice.
5. The Technology Committee seeks budget support for updating church computers and hardware/software to improve use of our electronic sign.
6. We plan to create a committee to work on a community event and financial award to commemorate the murder of James Reeb, the Unitarian minister killed in Selma, Alabama in 1965. The 60th Anniversary of that murder will be on March 11, 2025.
7. We will brainstorm ideas from the Board about how we might free up additional space in our budget to accommodate the anticipated loss of larger and older donors, our ongoing mortgage payments, and increasing costs overall.
8. We will continue to track developments within the UUA regarding the proposed changes in their bylaws and the fallout from those opposed to the changes.
9. We want to reach out to other UU congregations and fellowships in Kansas to connect with our counterparts in other parts of the state for sharing, learning, and socialization.

From the UU Principles:

3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

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.

If you are interested in joining our congregation or learning about Unitarian Universalism, we will probably have an Inquirer's Class on a Saturday in March at the church. You may sign up for the class and we will let you know the specific time and date. The plan is to meet at 10:00 AM 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 in the afternoon. Please call the Church office at 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.

Longtime church member Nancy Milner has offered to host dinners at her home for our community newcomers. It has been several years since these dinners have been conducted. In the past, the custom was to invite four new people and four familiar faces. Watch for an invitation, probably sometime in March, to see if you are one of the lucky ones.

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.

March Anniversaries

- Anita Culp

These members joined First UU Church during the month of March (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Sigrid Trombley (38), Peter Ninemire (23), Melanie Jenney (20), Jana Rambo (15), Miranda Crouse (15), Vivien Minshul-Ford (15), and Billie Knighton (7).

First Unitarian
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Renaissance Food Pantry

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

First UU's Renaissance Food Pantry, founded by Jennifer Connelly and Kent Rowe and managed by Carla Patton-Jackson and others, started providing meals in 2020 when Jennifer spent one of her Covid government stimulus checks to buy a supply of meat. Its founders plus additional helpers (including Debbie Wadman and Rob Williams) have intentionally kept it small so that they can manage it from Jennifer and Kent's home. Donated food is still available on the shelves at the back of the church, and Jennifer often has meat or cheese available in the fridge.

Seven households from Northeast Wichita are signed up for meals including two large families, a disabled couple, and elderly or disabled people living alone.

"I still enjoy meeting people and getting to know them," Jennifer said of the program, now more than three years old. "Some of them are old friends. It's delightful." To everyone who has donated money or food, she added, "Thank you so much."

To donate to the Renaissance Food Pantry in kind or with cash, find the donate button on the First UU website or give or send your donation to the church.