

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

May 2024

President's Letter

- Ned Lakin

My April Letter was focused on envisioning “What If...” scenarios and planning for ways to turn the “What Ifs” into “When” as we grow our church. Those scenarios were directed towards the goals we set for having a successful Stewardship Campaign. I am happy to report that we are now about two-thirds of the way to reaching our financial goals, with members beginning to make follow-up calls to those who have not yet turned in their pledge forms.

What I want to talk about today are other aspects of supporting and growing our church besides financial stability: using our individual and collective talents and abilities towards the same end. These are the “time” and “talent” portions of support!

I was party to a conversation the other day in which two hard-working church members were talking about “burnout.” Being part of one committee can be time-consuming, but we have members who are involved with two or three of them. I am concerned that too few people are carrying too heavy a load, which is perhaps where you can come in.

Member Melanie Jenney from the Committee on Ministry has begun an initiative of contacting members who have not been in church for a number of weeks—just to find out if they are doing okay and to assure them of our interest and support.

Building and maintaining our community needs more of this kind of effort. We all have talents to share, so if you can help share the load, get in touch with me or other Board or staff members, and we can help you apply your talents towards our common good.

From the Worship Committee

- Annie Welsbacher

The theme for May is The Gift of Pluralism.

On May 5, Andrew Davis will present “*Is There Room at the Table – for Fascists?*” by Rev. Jone Johnson Lewis, who suggests that while the short answer to that question might be “no,” the long answer begins, “it depends on what table you’re talking about.” Carl Williams returns with his flute.

On May 12, Debbie Wadman presents “*The Danger of a Single Story*” by Rev. Gretchen Haley, whose son brought home a form about his family ancestry and said his class was learning about the Pilgrims and “the story of America.” Haley notes, “I thought about my friends—a two-mom family that includes a Native American adopted daughter. I wondered: how did Josef’s teacher imagine they would fill out this form?” We’ll also hear our monthly Story for All Ages.

On May 19, Rev. Joe Mohr returns to the pulpit. Violinist Sarah Jane Naillon will present special music.

On May 26, Dan DeMott will present “*To Share Their Burdens*,” in which Rev. Kaaren Anderson posits that Memorial Day “is largely about stories—about being visited by stories” and asks, “How does a congregation participate in a ‘true’ Memorial Day service?”

From the Children’s RE Director

-Anna Jenney

First UU Children’s Religious Exploration will learn about pluralism during the month of May. We will embrace how diversity of identities and ideas makes our congregation, and our faith community as a whole, richer.

We will talk about what pluralism is, how we need others to help us see the whole, how we are diverse in our roots, and how we can embrace inclusion.

We need you! We are looking for volunteers for lessons this summer. This is one of my very fondest memories growing up in our church. Many of you in the congregation taught me lessons during summer RE as I was growing up. Newer members have gifts to share, too. I’m asking you to extend your love to our RE program this summer. No experience necessary!

You can fill out the form by following either the link or QR listed below, or contact me about a paper copy.

<https://forms.gle/2YpqkZoh3XVVZxuCA>



First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita

President: Ned Lakin

Office Manager:
Jon M. Ramirez
office@firstuu.net
(316) 684-3481

Office Hours:
Mon/Wed/Fri 1-5pm
Tue/Thu 8am-12pm

Director of Religious
Exploration:
Anna Jenney
anna.jenney@gmail.com

Newsletter Staff
Editor:
Anne Welsbacher
awelsbacher@gmail.com

Proofreader:
Anne Bailey
annebailey@earthlink.net

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

Help! Jumbo Rummage Sale

-Marcia Ellsworth

Here are ways you can support our spring Jumbo Rummage Sale!

Donate gently used household items: small kitchen appliances, decorative items, toys (we always need more toys), tools, hardware, antiques, dishes, craft items, puzzles, furniture, clean clothing (no undergarments please), and art. Donations can be delivered from Monday, May 13 until the end of the sale, which runs Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, May 16-18. Items delivered after Tuesday, May 15, may not get put out for sale until Friday.

Donate baked goods for the bake sale. See Debbie Wadman for more information.

Donate craft items you have made for the craft table. See Lynn Way for more information.

Donate plants. These can be starters or mature plants. See Linda Jordan about plants.

Volunteer to help set up for the sale on Tuesday and Wednesday and/or work during the sale. Please text or call Marcia Ellsworth (316-208-3083) or Vivien Minshull-Ford (316-371-1949).

First UU Pagan Circle

The Pagan Circle will meet on Saturday, May 4, 6–9 pm for a belated celebration of Beltane, the Gaelic May Day Festival marking the beginning of summer. Beltane is traditionally held on May 1, about midway between the spring equinox and summer solstice.

We will enjoy a potluck meal at 6 before the ritual at 7. Please bring a dish to share; we will use paper plates to cut down on cleanup chores. Or just come at 7 for the ritual.

Call Anne Bailey (316-650-4905), Linda Jordan (316-512-6652), or Donna Morris ((316-573-9101) with questions.

From the Music Committee - Jana Rambo

The Music Committee has changed its meeting time and venue to a Zoom meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 4 pm. The committee plans special music for services and other matters as needed, and welcomes new members. Also, if you or other musicians you know would like to play for a service, we'd appreciate hearing from you. Contact me at (316) 992-5528 or jayrobo@aol.com.

Why I Belong to First UU

- Melanie Jenney

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles adapted from past Sunday service Stewardship Moments.

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita has been a home for me, my husband, Charlie, and our daughters Zora and Anna for more than 20 years. It embraces my highest ideals and acts on them in our community. Our sixth principle says it best: "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all."

Susan B. Anthony said, "The worst enemy women have is in the pulpit." My experience is that most organized religions espouse a male deity throughout their writings, hymns, services, and practices. I don't believe that God has a penis, and I cannot subscribe to a belief system that celebrates a "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" without any reference to the female divine. The first principle of Unitarian Universalism embraces "the inherent worth and dignity of every person." Every person.

I don't believe that God has a corporeal form at all. I believe that you don't have a soul; you are a soul; you have a body. The flame within a chalice is our faith symbol – with the emphasis on the flame, not the chalice that contains it.

A few years ago, our congregation had a cataclysmic challenge. We lost good friends and members, Charlie and me among them. But we finally returned: our principles are bigger than the issues of one time and place.

There is so much we don't understand. Our lives, our experiences, and the big picture of "Why are we here?" should not be limited by outdated thinking and antiquated experiences. Ours is a dynamic faith. We should continually expose ourselves to new and old and distant wisdom – but process those ideas in our own framework of experiences and expectations, growing deeper and wider as we learn more about our universe.

Continued on page 5

Eclectic Readers

- Anne Bailey

After our April 19 discussion of the Big Read book *There There*, we will skip the May meeting because at our regular meeting time the church will be filled with treasures for our Rummage Sale *May 18-20*.

Our June title will be announced in church, on the church website, and on our Facebook page in plenty of time for you to obtain and read a copy. We will meet next on *June 21* at noon for a brown-bag lunch followed by discussion at *12:30 pm*. Please note: this is a new time.

Why I Belong To First UU, continued

Here I can explore to my heart's desire without criticism, blame, or the threat of "going to hell." I used to parse my religious beliefs, explain them like this: I'm a little bit Christian and think Jesus should run for president, I'm a little bit Buddhist because of lovingkindness and being in the present moment, a little bit Humanist because our living experience is all we can really prove, a little bit Bahá'í that says, "The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female; so long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly." And I'm exploring Paganism because of my love of nature and mystery and its strong female component.

Then one day I had an epiphany. I can be all of these because I am a Unitarian Universalist—a label without labels. Now when people ask me about my religion, I simply say, "I am a Unitarian Universalist."

Most of my dearest friends are here. We have celebrated together, ranted together, done dishes together, carried banners in Pride parades, promoted peace, raised awareness of our environmental challenges, and stood up for social justice. Together.

Ours is not an easy way. It requires critical thinking skills and the willingness to use them. There are no black-and-whites, no rules to follow, no "get out of jail free" cards. There is doubt and despair, but also joy when we get things right and when good prevails.

In a time when it's easy to be disheartened by the actions of those who don't seem to act in the spirit of love, hope, or compassion, I am lifted by my own participation in and contribution to First UU. I cannot influence the global issues that often overwhelm me, but I can be part of a team that acts locally to make things better in the world.

There is no other religion like Unitarian Universalism, and First UU of Wichita is the only place in our region where we embrace those principles that mean so much. If you're able, I encourage you to step up your participation in our church with your contribution of time, treasure, and talent. Join me in ensuring that this place and this space will continue to be a home for people like you and me.

May 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
(Z) - Meeting via Zoom (+Z) - Meeting In-Person and via Zoom firstuu.net/events						
5 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	6 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	7 4p Worship Committee (Z) 7p UU Craft Group (Z)	8 7p Leadership Council (Z)	9	10 12p Fridays for the Future	11 10a Caring Committee
12 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 2pm Celebration of Life	13 1-5pm Garage Sale Donations 6p Vegan Potluck 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	14 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry 8am-12pm Garage Sale Donations	15 9am-5pm Garage Sale Donations 6p Board of Trustees (+Z) 11p Newsletter deadline	16 9am-5pm Garage Sale 11:30a UU Friends Lunch	17 9am-5pm Garage Sale	18 9am-1pm Garage Sale
19 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12:15p Social Action Group	20 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	21	22 4pm Music Committee (Z) 7p Tech Committee	23	24 6:30p First UU Film Group	25 9:30a Gardening Group 6:30p UU Humanist Group
26 9:45a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z)	27 OFFICE CLOSED 6:30p Zen Friends (+Z)	28 10:30a Renaissance Food Pantry	29	30	31	

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

The caring committee is recruiting new members. All that is required is a giving heart.

If you are interested, speak with a committee member or arrange to attend a monthly caring committee meeting on the second Saturday of the month at 10 am.

And always, be good to yourself.

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 monthly UU Friends lunch bunch day is the third Thursday of the month at 11:30 a.m. Plan to join when you can. 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 need 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.

UU Film Group

- John Findling

On Friday, May 24, at 6:30 pm, the UU Film Group will present *Ex Machina* (2015), a science-fiction film directed by Alex Garland, who also directed *Civil War*, now showing at movie houses.

Young computer programmer Caleb (Domhnall Gleeson) is given the opportunity to work with AI-created Ava (Alicia Verkander) in an isolated mountain cabin belonging to his boss. Caleb finds himself falling in love with her. What could possibly go wrong? The film won an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects and scored 92 percent on Rotten Tomatoes approval rating.

The film group will show the family drama/comedy *Little Miss Sunshine* on June 28, the classic Mel Brooks film *Blazing Saddles* on July 26, in recognition of Wichita's blazing summer heat, and on August 23 either *Kinsey*, a biopic about the noted sex researcher of the 1950s-'60s or *Hollywood an Empire of Their Own*, a documentary about the studio years. Please join us; our new meeting time has proven quite successful in luring more of you into our film room.

Tidbits from the Board of Trustees

April 17, 2024

- Ned Lakin

1. We had a Stewardship Campaign update. We have had about two-thirds of the target amount pledged and we have assigned volunteers to make reminder phone calls to those who have not yet completed their pledges.
2. We noted that the construction of the shading project in Betty's Place has begun. The shade will allow children to play outside without being exposed to hot sunshine during the summer months.
3. We had an update on First UU's participation in the Justice Together initiative. We want to be a part of the 2,000 people who will gather on May 9 at Century II to insist that our elected officials address the local needs of people who are homeless and/or suffer from mental illness.
4. We want to appeal to our members and friends with bookkeeping skills. Our treasurer, Corey Swertfager, will become our president at the end of June, so we need someone to shoulder the responsibility of being church treasurer. Support and assistance for training, possibly ongoing, will be available. Contact Ned Lakin, Corey, or Charles Merrifield, who chairs the Finance and Budget Committee.
5. We want to carry forward an initiative begun by Melanie Jenney, Chair of the Committee on Ministry, contacting church members and friends whom we have not heard from for a while. We need to be more active in relating our support and concern to these people to encourage their continuation as members of our community. We welcome volunteers from the congregation who would like to be a part of this work.

May Anniversaries

- Anita Culp, Membership
Committee

These members joined First UU Church during the month of May (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Ellen Oberle (23), Lara Pollock (23), Debbie Wadman (20), Dan DeMott (15), Magda Garrett (13), Masud Chand (9), Doug Wilson (8), Ed McCormack (6), Celestra Snyder (6), Michele Buschman (1), and Donna Morris (1).

Membership Committee

- Anne Bailey

The purpose of the Membership Committee is to promote and develop the growth of church membership and to strengthen and sustain our current members.

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.

If you would like to learn more about Unitarian Universalism or First UU and want an opportunity to officially join our church, we will offer an Inquirer's Class on site in the near future, probably on a Saturday. You may sign up for the class by calling the church office and we will let you know the specific time and date. The plan is to meet at 10 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 (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.

First Unitarian
Universalist Church
7202 E. 21st. St.
Wichita, KS 67204

First Sunday Lunch Request

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

The First Sunday Lunch team seeks team leaders to help generate food theme ideas. Plenty of us like to cook: being kitchen team leader is more about coming up with a theme, putting out the word, and coordinating the meal. The team leader also keeps an eye on the sign-up sheet to make sure there are enough entrees, salads, bread, or desserts.

Recent lunch themes have been brunch, Indian food, casseroles, baked potatoes, and soup-and-salad. The May lunch, on Cinco de Mayo, will be Mexican. (Cooks are welcome to bring any non-themed dish they like.)

To try coordinating a lunch, pick a theme you feel comfortable with. On lunch day, lots of people pitch in to help, so you are not alone in the kitchen. To see how a typical lunch works, come and help on May 5. Call Marcia Ellsworth (316) 208-3083 to volunteer or with questions.