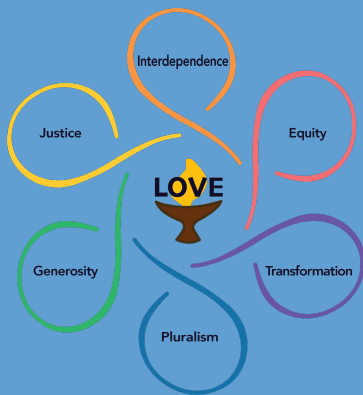


First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita

Founded 1887

In Touch is the
newsletter of the
Unitarian Universalist
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Member of the Unitarian
Universalist Association

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

In Touch

January 2025

President's Letter

Getting Involved —Corey Swertfager

As another year begins, we may be tempted to set ghastly goals, where nothing short of total transformation will do. When that conversion crumbles, we can feel dejected or downright defeated.

A better approach could be to scale back and leave room in our days to play it by ear.

Are you thinking this is the year to get more involved with First UU? Here are some ways you can dip your toe or dive in:

- Attend worship services.
- Break bread at First Sunday Lunch and/or our monthly Meatless Monday vegan potlucks.
- Bring a dish to share at one of our gatherings.
- Check out one of our regular get-togethers (for dates and times, see the calendar in this issue, Sunday order of service, or *Weekly Update* email): Humanists, Pagan Circle, Zen Friends, Gardening Group, Craft Night, Adult Religious Exploration, Eclectic Readers, Film Group, Fridays for the Future, Social Action Meetings... and more.
- Volunteer to be a worship service leader, speaker, or musician.
- Make coffee or clean up after service.
- Help out at one of our annual events, such as the Valentine Tea, rummage sale, or holiday cookie sale.
- Write an article for *In Touch*. (*Editor's note: hear hear!*)
- March with us in the Wichita Pride Parade.
- Join a committee: Worship, Music, Caring, Social Action, Building & Grounds, Technology, Finance, Mosaic, Fundraising... Stayed tuned for a committee-centered worship service and fair early this spring.
- Become a Justice Together network member.
- Run for the First UU board or nominating committee.
- Become First UU's next president-elect!

From the Worship Committee

—Anne Welsbacher

The theme for January is Story. What stories get passed down and shared, how do we hear them—and who gets to tell them?

On January 5, Annie Welsbacher presents “Telling Stories” by Rev. Rod Richards, minister with the Unitarian Universalists in San Luis Obispo. Richards quotes the challenge from Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie “to consider the power of stories to influence identity, shape stereotypes, and build paths to empathy.” As Adichie shares in her Ted Talk, from which Richards draws, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.” Pianist Joe Giat performs special music.

On January 12, Vivien Minshull-Ford presents “Getting the Story Right” by Rev. Vanessa Southern, senior minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco, who says, “we owe it to the subject to find a version responsible to as full truth-telling as we can do, to wonder whose version of the story we have, and to be accountable for whatever version we choose to repeat.” Anna Jenney reads a Story for All Ages: “The Storyteller.”

On January 19, Rev. Mohr presents “You Are the Main Character,” asking us to consider the story we tell with our lives. “Are you the hero, the explorer, the healer? We’ll explore how to take ownership of your story, embrace transformation, and author a life that aligns with your deepest values. Don’t miss this opportunity to reimagine your journey and step boldly into your role as the protagonist of your own tale.” Ish Farid performs special music.

On January 26, Rev. Joe Mohr presents “New Chapter, Same Book,” noting that family generations are chapters building on what came before. Joe will explore “the continuity of life, the legacy we inherit, and the challenges and opportunities each generation is called to embrace.” Daniel Baird performs special music on the handpan drum.

From the Children’s RE Director

—Anna Jenney

First UU Kids will learn and embrace storytelling as a tool to build bonds with others and build our own identities. Lessons will center around using stories to build your own identity, build and sustain meaningful connections with others, build the future we hope for, and build our UU identities. Join us for creative storytelling, listening, crafts, and games to build our understanding of this month’s focus!

**First Unitarian
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Church of Wichita**

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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.*

**Notes from the Gallery:
Curators Needed**
—Vivien Minshull-Ford

We're looking for one or two members of the congregation who would like to take over the curatorship of the UU art collection and quarterly exhibits. If you are an artist, visit galleries, know of artists—or are just interested in art—you will be perfect.

Don't worry—there is nothing grandiose about this part of church life. Vivien and Marcia have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with the art at First UU for the past five years.

Now it is time for us to hand the role over to someone else. All that is needed to keep our art program going is a volunteer or two to coordinate the projects.

Your task would be to find and put up exhibitions three to four times a year, to cycle works around, and to occasionally sell a piece to a visitor or member of the congregation. We have lots of arty contacts who will help you.

Currently we have a collection and exhibition of art by the late Hermine Greywall, a well-known Wichita artist whose works were donated to our church after her death. Her beautiful landscapes are already displayed in much of the church.

When you're daydreaming during the sermon, take a good look at Steve Miner's beautiful landscapes hanging on the walls of the sanctuary. All his paintings are for sale.

In addition, we're also hoping to make our exhibits part of the UUA Mosaic program, promoting diversity on First UU walls—in both the Gathering Space Gallery and the Sanctuary.

If you are interested, or if you'd like to know prices for Miner's works, contact Marcia Ellsworth, mjelsworth@aol.com, 316-208-3083, or Vivien Minshull-Ford, vfminshull@gmail.com, 316-371-1949. We'll be happy to meet with you and tell you all about it.

UUs Do Art: Alinda Lord

—Annie Welsbacher



Alinda Lord's rescue rabbit
Oxymandia

This is another in a series profiling First UU friends and members who create art in their lives.

Alinda Lord, poet and rabbit-lover, is new to both First UU and Wichita, where she and her husband Art recently moved from Los Angeles—but not until they'd done a thorough due diligence.

“My motto is that everything can be reduced to a spreadsheet,” Alinda says. They factored in everything from “culture” to “not too much snow” and visited the city twice before making their final decision. Wichita met all the top criteria save one: its politics.

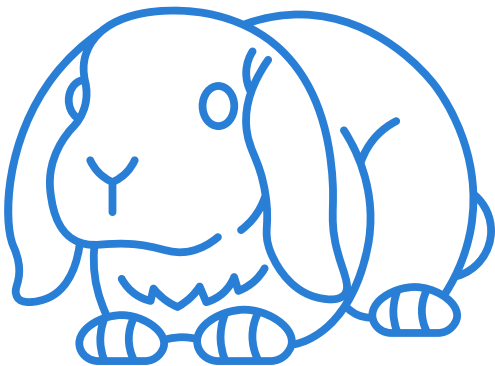
As to First UU Church, no spreadsheet was required. Already a Unitarian Universalist, Alinda had attended a Fellowship outside of LA that shares a few commonalities with our Wichita church. Like First UU, it weathered a major split at one point in its history. (Wichita's physical split occurred in the 1960s, and there have been splinters in our more recent history.) And also like our current congregation, it has no minister. Services are prepared and presented on a rotating schedule by each of the approximately 30 members.

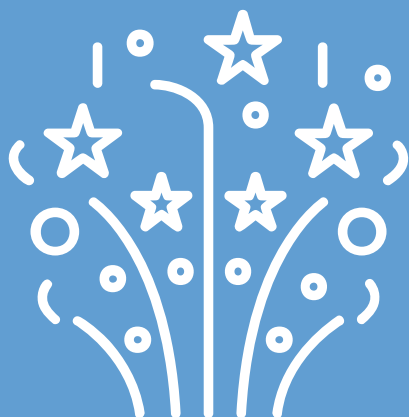
Alinda taught at-risk kids but eventually burned out. “I loved the kids individually, but as a group, they can be dangerous,” she says. An L.A. native, she had also experienced the Watts riots in the 1960s and the aftermath of the Rodney King beating in the 1990s, factors in the decision to move.

It was while going through a long clinical depression that began in 2000 that Alinda began writing poetry. During that very difficult two years, she suffered disassociation and says she “saw the terrible beauty” of reality. Writing helped as a coping mechanism.

She became a serious bunny lover after adopting a rabbit “by accident.” Helping that rabbit helped Alinda, too, and before long she had founded and was managing a rabbit rescue organization. “I was doing something that mattered,” she says. “For the rabbits, it was life-and-death.”

Alinda's love affair with *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (aka rabbits) continues. Today, two rescues round out her family: Calpurnia and Ozymandia.





Book Club Madness!

—Anne Bailey

The Eclectic Book Group's selected book for January is *The Professor and the Madman* by Simon Winchester. This extraordinary tale of madness, genius, and the obsessions of two remarkable men led to the making of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Copies of the book borrowed from the Wichita Public Library are available at the Church. Please ask Anne Bailey or Anita Culp if you would like to borrow one.

Everyone is welcome. We meet on the third Friday, which this month is January 17. We gather at noon to enjoy brown bag lunches, followed at 12:30 pm with a discussion of the book. Come at noon or at 12:30 for the discussion.

Auracast for New Hearing Aids at Church

—Charles Merrifield

Auracast is a new Bluetooth system that has been installed to allow you to listen to our church services directly from your hearing aid. Auracast is built into many, but not all, new hearing aids. If you have purchased a new hearing aid within the last year, your hearing aid might have Auracast. Check with Charles Merrifield when at church to see if your system is compatible.

January Anniversaries

—Anita Culp, Membership Committee

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 (55), Kent Olmstead (45), Anne Bailey (40), Marcia Ellsworth (22), Corey Swertfager (18), Anne Welsbacher (18), Frank Ruf (16), Kent Rowe (16), Linda Jordan (14), Ellie Shore (5), Kerry Dobbins (5), and Kirk Mitchell (5).

January

2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
(Z) • Meeting via Zoom (+Z) • Meeting in-Person and via Zoom first events			1	2 7p Committee on Ministry	3	4
5 9-15a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12-15p First Sunday Lunch	6 8-30p Zen Friends (+Z)	7 4p Worship Committee (Z) 7p UU Craft Group (Z)	8 7p Leadership Council (Z)	9	10 10a Caring Committee	11
12 9-15a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z)	13 8p Vegan Potluck 8-30p Zen Friends (+Z)	14	15 8p Board of Trustees (+Z) 11p Newsletter deadline	16 11:30a UU Friends Lunch	17 12p Eclectic Readers 9-30a Gardening Group	18
19 9-15a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12-15p Social Action Group	20 8-30p Zen Friends (+Z)	21	22 4pm Music Committee (Z)	23	24 8-30p First UU Film Group	25 10am Inquirer's Class 8-30p UU Humanist Group
26 9-15a Adult Rel Ed (+Z) 11aa Children's Rel Ed 11a Worship Service (+Z) 12-15p Mid-Year Mtg	27 8-30p Zen Friends (+Z)	28	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 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.

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

The Membership

Committee is responsible for seeing that there are people to greet visitors each Sunday morning. We are always seeking new people to perform this vital function.

Please talk to Anne Bailey or LaRilla Combs about getting on the schedule to be a greeter.

Ripples from the Caring Committee

—Magda Garrett

The Caring Committee wishes fellow UU members and friends a safe and peaceful New Year. This month will be difficult on so many levels. Please, let's look out for one another other, especially by taking care of ourselves. Stay connected to support groups and safe people—and keep on living.

As this year comes to a close, caring committee members extend sincerest wishes for peace and equanimity in 2025. It will be imperative for folks to be aware of the changing culture, maintain sound judgment, and stay connected to safe people who offer support. We are not alone: we have each other.

The monthly UU Friends lunch bunch day is the third Thursday of the month at 11:30 a.m. 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, the UU email listserv, and Sunday service bulletins. On occasion this lunch time might change to accommodate locations that are busy and loud during the noon lunch hour. We will let the congregants know ahead of time so folks can plan accordingly.

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 at 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.

Braille Literacy Month: Links for Kids

Your kids might enjoy this [4-minute Academy Adventure video](#) about the life of Louis Braille from [Paths to Literacy](#). (Their parents will enjoy the French characters speaking English with corny “French” accents.) The site has lots of other kid-friendly stuff.

Braille Literacy Month: Reading List

Seeing Home: the Ed Lucas Story: A Blind Broadcaster's Story of Overcoming Life's Greatest Obstacles
—Ed Lucas and Christopher Patrick Lucas

Flying Blind: One Man's Journey Out of Darkness
—Lou Briganti

Inside My World
—Larry P. Johnson

Do You Dream in Color? Insights from a Girl Without Sight
—Larie Rubin

Louis Braille: Windows for the Blind
—Alvin J. Kugelmass

January Focus: Braille Literacy Month

—Annie Welsbacher
(adapted from cited websites)

Braille Literacy Month encompasses the January 4, 1809, birthday of Louis Braille, who invented the reading code for use by people with visual impairments. Braille, who became blind from an accident early in life, invented it when he was 15. (This is one of six “fun facts” about Braille found at this [blog](#) inside the Perkins School for the Blind website.)

Advice gleaned from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services on interacting with people who are blind include these Do-Don't bits:

Do:

- Identify yourself, especially when entering a room. (Don't say, “Do you know who this is?”)
- Give specific directions: “The desk is five feet to your right.” (Not, “The desk is over there.”)
- Touch them on the arm or use their name when in a group to let them know you are speaking to them.
- Introduce yourself if a person seems to need help, ask them if they do, and respect wishes stated.

Don't:

- Shout when you speak.
- Be afraid to use words like “blind” or “see”; even if their eyes don't work, it's fine to say, “Nice to see you.”
- Insist on helping someone who has declined your offer to help.
- Pet, feed, or distract a guide dog. (Animal lovers might find this one difficult!)

Now that technology has opened up other “reading” options, do we still need braille? Although usage has declined, [Paths to Literacy](#) responds by asking if folks think that sighted children should still learn to read print, now that audio books are available.

And speaking of reading, this [reading list](#) of “talking books” includes an enticing and varied collection about and by folks with visual and auditory disabilities, like [Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law](#), an autobiography of the first deaf-blind graduate of Harvard Law School.

First UU Pagan Circle -Anne Bailey

The Pagan Circle will not meet in January. The circle will meet on Saturday, February 1, from 5:00 to 7:00 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 enjoy a potluck meal beginning at 5:00 p.m. before the ritual, which will begin at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share; we will use paper plates to cut down on the cleanup chores.

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



UU Film Group —Vivien Minshull-Ford

On Friday, January 24, at 6:30 p.m., join us for a viewing of *White*. (Due to technical difficulties, the film, which was described in the October 2024 issue of *In Touch*, was postponed to this month.)

In *Three Colors*, Krzysztof Kieslowski’s trilogy of psychological dramas, the colors blue, white, and red flock together to proclaim the bold and perennial values of the French Republic: liberty, equality, and fraternity. The theme was established in a nod to the country of France, which funded the productions. The trilogy also featured three stars of French cinema: Juliette Binoche, Julie Delpy, and Irene Jacob.

Each film stands alone, but characters and themes recur. For example, in *Blue*, Juliette Binoche’s character never notices that an older woman is struggling to put a bottle through a receptacle. An elderly man attempts to recycle a bottle in *White*, while another elderly woman attempts to recycle a bottle in *Red*.

In *White*, which is lighter but more political and grittier than *Red*, Karol Karol, a Polish immigrant hairdresser working in Paris, finds himself out of a marriage, a job, and a country when his French wife Dominique (Delpy) divorces him after six months of marriage due to his impotence. Forced to leave France after losing the business they both owned, Karol enlists the help of a Polish expatriate to smuggle him back to their homeland.

How Karol survives, rebuilds his manhood and self-esteem, and plots his revenge on Dominique is a tale intricately told and brilliantly acted and filmed.

Bring movie munchies—especially chocolate!—to share if you like.



First Unitarian
Universalist Church
7202 E 21st ST
Wichita, KS 67206

Thinking About Joining the Church?

—Anne Bailey

The next Inquirer's Class for those interested in learning more about Unitarians, Universalists, and the history of the Wichita church will be held on January 25. We will meet at the church beginning at 10 a.m. to learn about the history of Unitarian Universalism and First UU. We will break for lunch around noon; bring your own lunch and something to drink. After lunch we will talk about membership and tour the building. We will finish about 2 p.m. Please speak to Anne Bailey or Anita Culp at church on Sunday or call the church office if you are interested in attending the class.



If you are
more fortunate
than others,
build a
longer table,
not a taller fence.