

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita

Founded 1887

In Touch is the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita and is published monthly.



Member of the Unitarian
Universalist Association

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

In Touch

July 2025

President's Letter

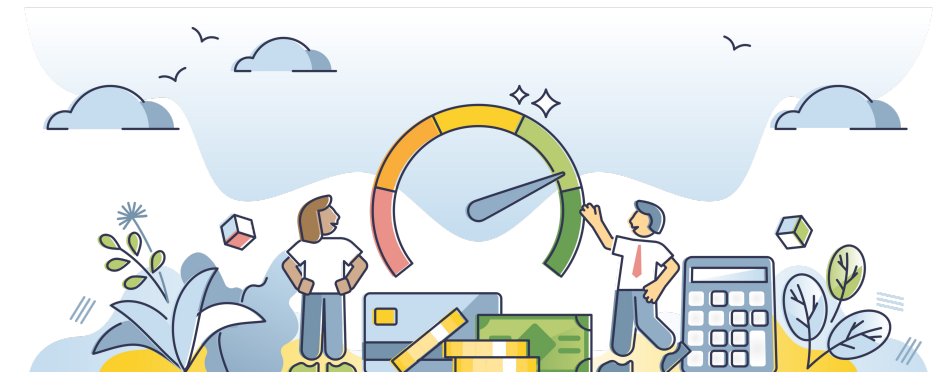
— Ellie Shore

The problem with being President-Elect is that you spend a whole year knowing that you're gonna be President – inevitable, unavoidable, scary. Then it happens, and the first thing you have to do is write something for *In Touch*.

This is a good time for us at First UU. We just celebrated Billie Knighton's 90th birthday, and then we paid off our mortgage and had a party for that. Now, feeling kind of rich, we have ideas about how to use the money that used to go to the mortgage. One such is to expand the parking lot. We got an estimate, and now some of us feel kinda poor. Estimated cost: \$100,000. Nope.

Why was extending the parking lot a high priority? Because we have many new members and visitors, bringing diversity and youth, and some days we run out of spaces. So, welcome, new members — bring your friends and family! It might be tight outside, but there's plenty of room inside.

Back to me. Now that it's here, I'm ready to be president — simply because I will be working with a congregation filled with kind, caring, good-humored people who will be a pleasure to spend time with. Welcome to President-Elect Kendra Brand, Board of Trustees members Jennifer Hess and Annie Welsbacher, and Nominating Committee members LaRilla Combs, Melanie Jenney, and Ned Lakin. Good people.



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Universalist Church
of Wichita**

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*The deadline for In Touch
and the monthly calendar
is the third Wednesday of
each month. Please send
submissions to
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From the Worship Committee

—Anne Welsbacher

Summer is here! Our services will offer up a dose of freedom, a dash of inspiration, and the humor and wisdom of a returning guest speaker.

On July 6, Debbie Wadman presents “Freedom and other Ineffable ‘F’ Words” by Rev. Joshua Berg, who writes of having “faith in the power and ability to love sufficiently to effect change that is progressive and revolutionary enough to sustain a society that has hit a giant roadblock but, ultimately, is ever-moving forward toward more and equal freedoms. Joining together in great numbers with love, I have faith we can succeed.” Joshua Saxe returns to perform special music.

On July 13, guest presenter Bob Minor returns to the pulpit. Minor speaks about everyone’s inherent right to “Just Say No,” noting that “No” is enough, even if others expect us to explain ourselves. No is a clear setting of our boundaries. No is saying we disagree with the very ask, the assumptions it makes, any need for buying into an argument that that we’re the ones who need to justify ourselves.” Special music this week features the monthly appearance of our new First UU Choir.

On July 20, Joe Mohr presents “The Good Guy Glitch,” asking, “What happens when the hero narrative no longer fits? For generations, America has cast itself as the protagonist of the global story — brave, free, just. But more and more, it feels like the mirror is cracking, revealing long-silenced truths about colonization, racism, empire, and myth.” With Joe, we’ll explore the discomfort — and spiritual necessity — of telling the truth about who we’ve been as a nation and who we might still become. A sermon for the disillusioned and the awakening-hearted, full of tenderness, reckoning, and hope. Ish Farid will sing special music for us.

On July 27, Joe Mohr presents “How to Stay Sane When the World Goes Mad.” When the noise of the world becomes deafening, how do we keep our peace? This week, we explore practices of inner stillness rooted in Stoic philosophy and Buddhist wisdom — tools to help us remain clear-minded and whole when everything around us feels distorted or dangerous. Detachment not as apathy, but as spiritual clarity. Boundaries not as walls, but as compassion in motion. Join us for a service of breathing space, perspective, and deep restoration for the soul. Thor Bonner will perform on his guitar.

First UU's June 8 mortgage payoff celebration



Outgoing and incoming presidents Corey Swertfager and Ellie Shore



Jayson Guengerich, Debbie Wadman, Deion and Izzy Granger, Sarah Guengerich, and Ellie



Izzy, Sarah, Ellie, Sherry Skillwoman, Magda Garrett, Rick Welsbacher, and Vivien Minshull-Ford



Jayson and Sarah, Izzy, and Ellen Burd

From the Children's RE Director — Anna Jenney

In July, Children's Religious Exploration features lessons from congregation members. Volunteers teach a one-hour session on a topic of their choosing — whether it's a hobby, a life skill, or something wonderfully unexpected. Join us!

Past lessons have included everything from music to gardening to making friendship bracelets. We'll typically have between one and six kids, ages 4–12, and they're always up for something new and fun.

The board will determine soon whether or not to close RE for August pending volunteer recruitment.

If you're interested in volunteering, please contact President-Elect Kendra Brotherton at klbrotherton27@gmail.com to pick a Sunday. While lesson plans are available, we especially love when volunteers share something close to their heart.

Thank you for helping us build a nurturing and joyful space where kids can grow, explore, and celebrate who they are. Gabby and I will return in September.

July Anniversaries

—Anita Culp

These members joined First UU Church during the month of July (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Lynn Way (5), Gary Gimpel (1), and Alinda Lord (1).

Music

—Jana Rambo

Thanks to the leadership of Ned Lakin, First UU now has a choir. It performed for the first time June 8 and will continue to practice on Thursday evenings, with monthly church performances slated for second Sundays. If you enjoy singing, please join them. Ned has joined the music committee to help coordinate communication among the choir, the Music Committee, and the Worship Committee.

We plan to resume drumming circle meetings July 13, the second Sunday of the month, after the church service. Everyone is welcome to attend. We have plenty of drums and other rhythm instruments if you don't have one of your own.

The Music Committee meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at 4 pm via Zoom. If you're interested in becoming a member, please let me know.

Ripples from the Caring Committee

—Magda Garrett

The Caring Committee maintains a small emergency fund used to provide cash assistance to church members in need. Please note that these monies are given on an as-needed basis, with guidelines to assure fair distribution and minimize their overuse.

The monthly UU Friends lunch bunch day is the third Thursday at 11:30 a.m. Watch for updates about this and other events in the weekly e-newsletter, the UU email listserv, and Sunday service bulletins. On occasion the noon lunch time might be adjusted; we will let congregants know ahead of time.

The church is fortunate to have in our service Rev. Joe Mohr, who is available to church members for free and confidential counseling. Contact Joe at (580) 729-0781. If you can help with or need occasional transportation to medical appointments or church-supported events, contact Jana Rambo at (316) 686-4215.

Consider donating through the church office at (316) 684-3481. We are interested in joys and sorrows members wish to include in this newsletter. Please contact me, Magda Garrett, at (316) 765-3352.

Consider joining the Caring Committee. Meetings are the second Saturday of the month at 10 am in the church library.

What touches one of us touches us all.

Membership

—Anne Bailey

Our next class Inquirer's Class has been scheduled for July 26, the final Saturday in the month. It will begin at 10 am and last until about 2 pm. These classes are for people interested in learning more about Unitarians, Universalists, and the history of the Wichita church. Please speak to Anne Bailey or Anita Culp at church on Sunday or call the church office at (316) 684-3481 to let us know you are interested in attending the class.

In addition to offering the Inquirer's Class, 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.

Profile: Ish Farid –Vivien Minshull-Ford

After a recent service, an admiring visitor complimented Ish Farid, our pianist, on his eclectic mix of music, calling it “a mixture of churchy and non-churchy.” Ish does fulfill the churchiness required as far as he can, but he’s not that kind of pianist. What if he once played “The Lady Is a Tramp” during Joys and Sorrows? Or “Begin the Beguine” as the postlude? It all fits with our humanist core.

Ish was born in Singapore, the only child of parents who loved music. His father listened to classical music while his mother, who preferred contemporary music, took Ish to lounges to listen to bands.

Ish started learning to play the piano with Vincent Hoisington, a gifted artist who died young. Ish then experienced uninspired teachers in the “regimented British system of education,” which all but stifled his love of music, although he continued to experiment with jazz and pop: As he put it, “I ventured into the dark side.”

His music education really began at the Wooster School in Connecticut, where students are inspired to excel in academics as well as the performing arts. His first public performance was in 1984 while he was in active service in the Singapore Armed Forces. He sang with a band at a concert for Ethiopian aid.

His influences are Barry Manilow, Billy Joel, and Elton John for their song writing and improvisational style of accompaniment. But he goes to old masters of popular music like Cole Porter “because of the melodies, chord progressions, and voicing.”

Some of Ish’s tendencies creep into his hymn playing from time to time. His special music solos (the third Sunday of the month) range from Gerry and the Pacemakers to Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Ish enjoys playing at the church because, “I get to play my kind of music, which almost all First UU folks appreciate and can relate to.”

Board Bits

- Volunteers are being recruited to teach Children’s Religious Exploration in July. The status of August classes is to be determined.
- Planning for ICE preparedness training is under way.
- The Money Market account will be slowly rebuilt following large miscellaneous maintenance and repair expenses.
- The Worship Committee is formally authorized to make all final decisions over Sunday service elements and space.
- The Caring Committee is discussing formal policies.
- Parking lot:
 - expansion has been postponed indefinitely due to high costs.
 - Posting No Parking signs in the drive will cost approximately \$500.
 - The gate lock has been changed to a clasp so that it can be opened without a key.

Eclectic Book Group

—Anne Bailey

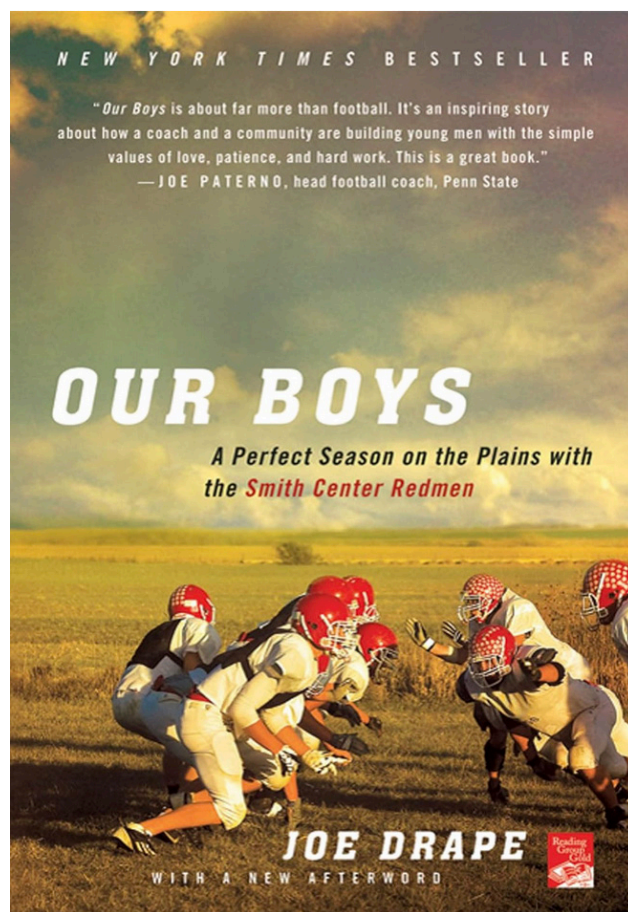
The book chosen for July is *Our Boys: A Perfect Season on the Plains with the Smith Center Redmen*, an account by sportswriter Joe Drape of an extraordinary high-school football team whose successes sustain its hometown in the heartland.

The football team in Smith Center, Kansas, has won 67 games in a row, the nation's longest high-school winning streak. They have done so by embracing a philosophy of life taught by their legendary coach, Roger Barta: "Respect each other, then learn to love each other, and together we are champions."

In fall 2008, team members embarked on a quest for a fifth consecutive title. But they faced a potentially destabilizing transition: the greatest senior class in school history had graduated, and Barta was contemplating retirement. In Smith Center, population 1,931, this changing of the guard was seismic. The story of the central place "our boys" held in this town, hours removed from the nearest city, goes to the heart of what America's heartland is all about.

We will have several copies of the book loaned by the Wichita Public Library. Please speak to Anne Bailey or Anita Culp if you would like to borrow one.

Anyone is welcome to join our discussions. We meet on the third Friday, which this month is July 19. 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.



First UU Pagan Circle

—Anne Bailey

Our next gathering will be held Saturday, August 2, from 5 to 7 p.m. We will celebrate Lammas, or Lughnasadh, a day late. This Gaelic festival marks the beginning of the harvest season. Historically, it was widely observed throughout Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man. Traditionally it is held on August 1, or about halfway between the summer solstice and autumn equinox.

We will enjoy a potluck meal beginning at 5 p.m. before the informal ritual, which will begin at 6 p.m. Please bring a dish to share; we will use paper plates to cut down on cleanup chores.

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.

Who is This?

—Annie Welsbacher

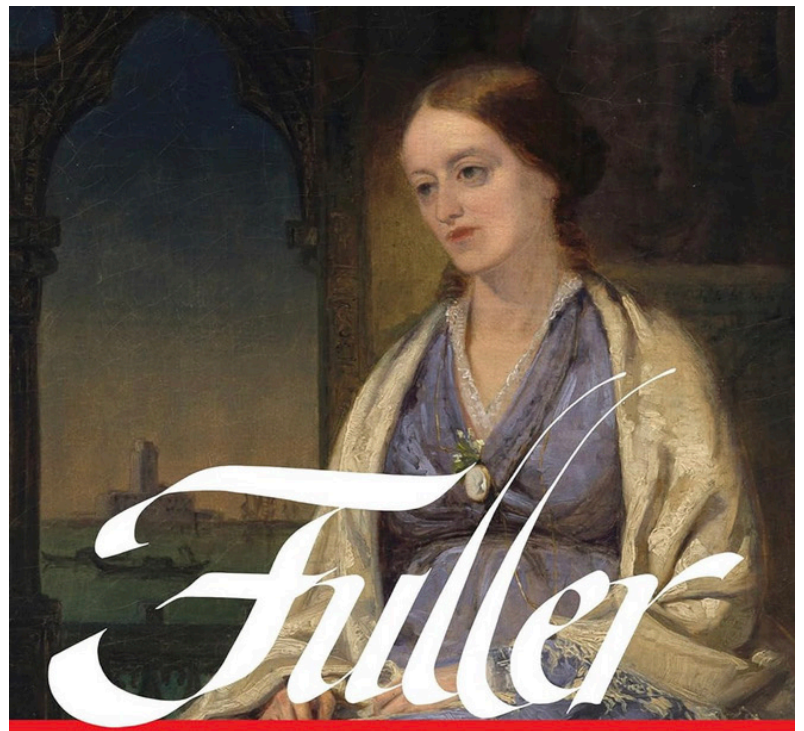


Margaret Fuller is likely a familiar name to many UUs because of her involvement with the Transcendentalists and her spot, as she put it, “on the fringe of the Unitarians.” She might warrant a fresh look in light of the 2025 book *Margaret Fuller: Collected Writings*, published by the Library of America. (A recent *New Yorker* article also cites the 2013 release, *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life*.)

Born in 1810, Fuller was rigorously schooled (from age 3) by her father in such areas as classic languages, history, music, philosophy, and more. She fell in with Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Transcendentalists and later created, edited, and contributed to the movement’s magazine *The Dial*.

Strapped for cash — men could go on paid speaker circuits, but not women — she created “Conversations,” meetings of 25 or so women who paid handsomely to hear her speak. The 13-week series drew 200-plus people over a five-year period. Conversations began with discussions of mythological or historical topics but inevitably came around to gender concerns. Randall Fuller, an historian and distant relative, called these “the foundation of what we now call the women’s rights movement.” But unlike symposia or lectures, her meetings were lively and charismatic: Fuller “opened the book of life and helped us to read it for ourselves,” one listener said.

Fuller became the first full-time book reviewer in American journalism as a literary critic at Horace Greeley’s *New-York Tribune* and later its first female editor; she also served overseas as a foreign correspondent.



UU Film Group —Vivien Minshull

On Friday, July 25, at 6:30 p.m., we will show *Wings of Desire* (1987), a fantasy drama directed by Wim Wenders depicting life in divided Berlin as seen through the eyes of two angels wandering invisibly around West Berlin. As guardians of human beings, the angels provide comfort or help where they can, although their powers are limited. Bruno Ganz's ordinary, kind face is perfectly suited for Damiel, who spends some of his time perched on a high spot above the city dressed in a long black overcoat. Otto Sander plays Cassiel, handsome and a little aloof. Cassiel and Damiel listen to humans as they think about their hopes and fears; occasionally, the angels meet with other Berlin angels in the public library, where they can escape from the thoughts and consult with one another. It is a test of eternal life vs. finite life when Damiel falls in love with a sad and lonely circus trapeze artist and longs to know what it is like to be human.

The story's second thread is Peter Falk playing himself — playing an actor who has come to Berlin to play an actor in a film about World War II. Falk broods about whether he fully understands the character he is playing. He was once an angel himself and occasionally meets up with Damiel or drinks coffee with Homer, an old storyteller who wanders among the ruins of post-war Berlin. On the film set, Falk draws sketches of people and carries on his own monologue on human folly. In one scene, as Colombo, he tries on hats, one after the other, considering the setting, time, and person the hat would fit.

The veteran cinematographer Henry Alekan, who worked with Charlie Chaplin, Abel Gance, and Jean Cocteau, created the magic of this film: The angels' world is black and white while the real world of humans is in color.

Come and join us for *Wings of Desire*, movie treats, and discussion.



Preparing for ICE —Vivien Minshull

In January this year, the Trump administration rescinded a Biden-era policy that protected churches, schools, and hospitals from immigration enforcement. While we think the chance of a visit from I.C.E. (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is unlikely, unusual and untoward events are happening all over the country, and we should be prepared. We have consulted with the UUA and the ACLU to determine the following steps.

- 1) Some areas of the church will be labeled “Private”: the Sanctuary when a service is in progress; the Children’s RE, the nursery, the office, and the minister’s office. For immigration enforcement personnel to enter, they must present an official court-issued warrant signed by a federal judge or magistrate. An ICE Administrative Arrest Warrant will not be valid. We will also have handouts available for anyone who might be at risk in the event of an ICE raid.

- 2) We will arrange training for those church members who are in and around the gathering space when the church is open, including greeters and the security post person who stays in the space after the front door closes and the service begins. The Children’s RE and nursery staff also will be trained.