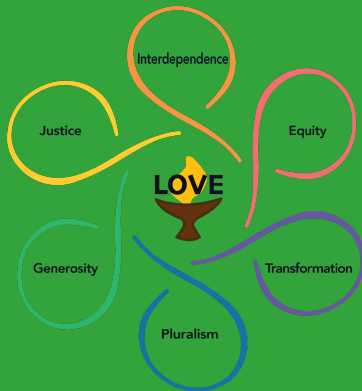


First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita

Founded 1887

In Touch is the
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Universalist Association

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

In Touch

September 2025

President's Letter

— Ellie Shore

You might have noticed signs on the doors to the sanctuary, the Children's Religious Education rooms, and the office. They all say that these are private spaces. But what are these lovely signs for? (Thanks to Melanie Jenney for creating them.)

With Board approval, Vivien Minshull-Ford and I have been looking at how houses of worship should react if ICE Police want to enter the building. It is legal for them to enter public spaces — that is, anywhere the public can go. The sanctuary becomes a private space when services are being held: members of the public can enter only if they are coming to join the worship service. For ICE police to enter the sanctuary during services, they would have to have a Judicial Warrant, a document signed by a judge.

In addition to putting up signs, we have been training the people who monitor the doors during services on how to handle a visit from ICE. Rule #1: Forget the hospitality; don't automatically open the door. Having glass doors allows the team to talk to ICE police in a safer way. (That team is led by Ned Lakin — thanks Ned.)

Some of us know people who might be in danger of being taken by ICE. Recently, we sent First UU members links, in English and Spanish, to a two-page document that tells people their rights and what to do and say if agents stop them in the street or at their home.

Frankly, I can't imagine ICE coming to First UU. But then there are a lot of things happening in our country that I never would have imagined. I hope we all can feel a bit safer knowing that, should they show up, we know what to do.



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From the Worship Committee

—Annie Welsbacher

With fall, Soul Matters returns, this month exploring Belonging.

September 7 is our Water Communion service. Vanessa Keeler will present “Taking the Risk of Belonging” by Rev. Tess Baumberger, who notes that people yearn for belonging but fear it, too, because it has risks of betrayal or abandonment: “The more we enter into the waters of community, the more we risk. But in my experience, it is well worth it.” Bring water representing something meaningful about your summer — your travels, back yard, home, or dreams. Josh Saxe will play special music.

On **September 14**, Magda Garrett presents “When We Don’t Belong, or Loneliness as a Doorway to Belonging” by Rev. Dr. Sandra Fees, who notes that loneliness can affect us all for all kinds of reasons, including when “our society conspires to keep us isolated” through new work patterns that can vary in schedules as well as pile on too many hours. “Loneliness can become a kind of prison,” but it also “can become a doorway to what we most want and need.” Anna Jenney Campbell is back with our monthly storytelling for all ages, and our First UU Choir returns.

On **September 21**, Joe Mohr presents “Everything I Learned About Belonging, I Learned (from my child) in Kindergarten.” In this, his child’s first year in kindergarten, “What struck me most was watching my child face the fear of stepping into a new space and figuring out how to belong. Children model a simple truth: belonging begins with showing up and taking small risks, even when the outcome is uncertain. Belonging isn’t about fitting in perfectly or earning approval. It’s about participation, presence, and curiosity. When we offer attention, kindness, and openness, we make space for others, and ourselves, to feel at home.” Ish Farid provides special music.

On **September 28**, Joe Mohr presents “Sustaining our Shared Harvest,” noting that at this time of uncertainty, when our congregation “has invested energy and care into outcommunity, from social justice initiatives to civic engagement, our work is a sacred planting. Each call made or act sustained adds to the harvest we hope to gather — for ourselves, our neighbors, and our democracy. Belonging is about persistence and patience. Every act strengthens the soil from which justice and community will grow. Let us honor what we have sown, continue tending it, and trust that the harvest will come.” Harrison Steele performs.

Profile: Joe Mohr —Vivien Minshull-Ford

Joe Mohr is First UU's lay minister and a chaplain with Wesley Medical Center. He speaks twice monthly at our church.

Joe grew up in Western Oklahoma, where church, Sunday dinners, and lots of cousins were part of his life. His parents taught him faith, humor, and how to laugh at himself, "essential for surviving adulthood."

What he liked most about his college years, he said, was the people: "the conversations, the chance to learn what made others tick, and the chance to follow curiosity wherever it led." He changed his major from music to political science: "Vocal scales are fun (hah!), but they didn't capture my heart the way political questions about justice and community did. I realized I was more excited about shaping the world around me than about mastering the piano."

Joe felt called to the ministry because "it brought together my love of people, my hunger for meaning, and my hope for a more just world." He first served as a Methodist minister, but later shifted into hospice chaplaincy and UU ministry when "I realized I needed a wider, more inclusive space where people could bring their whole selves." The strongest influences in his life have been faithful teachers, people he's met through ministry, and patients he's sat with as chaplain, "especially those at the end of life, who have more to teach about living than anyone else. Sitting with some at the edge of life is sacred work. It reminds me daily that presence matters more than perfect words."

His greatest challenges have been, as he puts it, "My own brain. Living with ADHD means time and focus don't always cooperate with me, but it's also taught me creativity, humor, and resilience."

On a typical day, Joe might preach, visit patients at the hospital, write, or be with his family. "Somewhere in there, I'll also get distracted, misplace my keys, and remember I still need to eat lunch," he says. "ADHD keeps life lively."

In his spare time, Joe paints Warhammer 40K miniatures — tiny sci-fi miniatures who make him laugh at his shaky brush strokes. He also loves classic cars, especially German ones and Corvettes. "It's not about the gasoline; it's about the artistry of motion," he says.

Joe and Jon Ramirez were our delegates at this year's UUA General Assembly. Joe is also on the Board of Trustees and is very much a part of our church life. In the future, he would like to continue serving communities that value honesty, imagination, and joy.

First UU Pagan Circle —Anne Bailey

Our next gathering will be on Saturday, September 20, from 5 to 7:00 pm. We will celebrate Mabon, or the Fall Equinox. This is a Pagan holiday celebrated around September 22, marking the second harvest and the balance between light and darkness.

Traditions include feasting, decorating with seasonal items, expressing gratitude, and connecting with nature. It's a time for reflection, releasing what no longer serves, and preparing for the coming winter.

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

The group will meet again on Saturday, November 1, to observe Samhain, Halloween, or the Day of the Dead, depending on your particular spiritual path.

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.

September Anniversaries

—Anita Culp, Membership Committee

These members joined First UU Church during the month of September (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life. Will Jordan (54), Greta Crosby (29), Charlie Jenney (23), Kathryn Vernon (3), Randall Keiter (1), Adrienn Pogue (1), and Jeremy Pogue (1).

Membership

—Anne Bailey

Our most recent Inquirer's Class was held on July 26, and several people joined the church that day. Our next class will be held on Saturday, September 27, beginning at 10 am and ending around 2 pm. These classes are for people who want to learn more about Unitarians, Universalists, and the history of the Wichita church. If you are interested in attending and possibly joining our Church, please speak to Anne Bailey or Anita Culp on Sunday, or call the church office at (316) 684-3481.

The Membership Committee ensures that there are Sunday morning greeters; we always seek people to perform this vital function, as well as to join our committee. Please talk to LaRilla Combs being a greeter or Anne or Anita about joining.

Music

—Jana Rambo

Thanks to Marcia's diligent work, special music for services is scheduled through October. That schedule includes monthly performances by our new choir. In July, we finalized an agreement with Joe Giat to serve as choir director and accompany the choir during practice sessions; Ish will accompany them when they sing for services.

The drumming circle met in July with a good number of people attending; all are welcome whether or not you have a drum — we have extra drums and other rhythm instruments. We meet the second Sunday of the month after the service.



We've been pleased to welcome Ned Lakin to the Music Committee. Ned spearheaded the organization of the choir and has been working with Joe and Corey Swertfager to get the financial arrangements set up. We're always happy to welcome new members, so please get in touch with me if you'd like to join us. We meet the fourth Wednesday of the month via Zoom at 4 pm.

Who was Mercy Ruggles Bisbee Jackson? See page 7.



Image courtesy of *Women.Words.Works* by Susan.Powers.Bourne.

From the Children's RE Director —Anna Jenney

Welcome Back to Religious Exploration! As September arrives, I'm grateful to be back with our children and youth for another year of Religious Exploration. Each fall feels like a fresh start, and I'm looking forward to a wonderful year of learning, growing, and sharing together.

Our RE program is a place where children can explore stories and lessons that nurture character, celebrate diversity, and support each child in developing a strong sense of identity and values — all while having fun in a welcoming community. If you have young people in your life, we'd love for them to join us this year!

This month's theme is Building Belonging, and our four September sessions will help children connect more deeply with themselves, each other, and the world around them:

Water Communion: Seek Truth and Nourishment from Many Sources!

Pluralism: Widen the Circle!

Generosity: Share What You Have!

Interdependence: Notice and Care for the Wider Web!

Together, these sessions will help us create a foundation of belonging that will carry us through the year. I can't wait to see how our children embrace these lessons with open hearts and curious minds. Here's to a year filled with stories, community, and joy!



Board Bits —Annie Welsbacher

- Board approved the social action committee's request to add Narcan and the day-after pill to our First Aid kit and encourages holding a Narcan administration training session.
- The building and grounds co-chairs are preparing to add a church sign to the back of the building.
- Kendra Brotherton will spearhead a Trans Day Of Visibility community outreach project culminating on March 31, 2026.
- Work is proceeding with the James Reeb award ceremony and recipient for this 60th-anniversary year.
- A task force will be created to revisit the church's building use agreement and marketing strategy.
- The parking lot resurfacing is complete for a cost of about \$10,000.
- The Pride Committee and its allotted budget will be folded into the Mosaic Committee.



Mosaic, with Pride —Annie Welsbacher

The Mosaic committee is proud to join with the Pride committee, a highly unusual merger because instead of crushing souls, it will enlarge them. Both committees will benefit from increasing membership and new energy, and all involved will receive equal pay and benefits: the positive feeling we get from making our world better. Projects in the works include visual enhancement of our gathering space and a spring outreach event. Stay tuned.

superhuman scam star:

The power of the glamour, I hit you with a hammer.

Soothsayer poker player, justice remains unaware.

Staying out of the slammer, encourage bits of clamor, i'm a superhuman scammer,
so you better mind your manners.

Government bailouts buying the sellouts, kicking the law out, billion dollar power pouts. Don't mind
the façade, I'm totally not odd. And I certainly won't betray you, "as long as you give me green too."

I work harder than a 1000 men, my genius knows no end, I would never buy my friends, you should
watch who you offend. I am a god, laws don't apply to me. I want your data your unchecked anger,
disrupt your power, the modern slaver.

It's not enough for me to have luxury, work harder you moron, you're too picky. Assault the oceans
for oil, steal land, gain spoils, tax the sand, kill the wild.

God forbid you have a soul when everything is being sold. God forbid I don't, my legacy is my hope.
By that I mean an assemblance of a heart when everything is falling apart.

What makes you human? Do you bleed? Why not forgive me while your consciousness is emptied.
The poor and the oppressed are the demons, and the others are agreeing, that amongst us who are
screaming, to call you the spiritually deprived.

Or don't believe I don't care. "Demonizing will get you everywhere." That's right fall for my snare.
And don't mind Saron's stare.

Forgiveness is a tool to hold onto power. Teach you to hate yourself so your mind will not flower.
Safety standards be damned. We'll swat your hand for wanting food, till you starve beyond the point
where there's nothing we can do.

Finally, when all is dead, I will stand at its head, with no regrets for placing bets with the livelihoods
of the dead.

Then there will be no one left to judge me, when this world is empty, I wonder if I could've ever
changed this behavior. how? I am the world's savior.

— Nathaniel Beyer, First UU Church of Wichita member

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Eclectic Book Group

—Anne Bailey

A third book set in Kansas has been chosen for us to read in September — *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*, written by Sarah Smarsh.

Smarsh was born a fifth-generation Kansas wheat farmer on her paternal side, the child of generations of teen mothers on her maternal side. In *Heartland*, she introduces readers to a compelling cast of characters from her own family — grandmothers who act as second mothers, farmers who work themselves to the bone, builders who can't afford their own homes, children who move from school to school.

Smarsh maps their lives against the destruction of the working class wrought by public policy: the demise of the family farm, the dismantling of public health care, the defunding of public schools, wages so stagnant that full-time laborers can no longer pay the bills. Readers will learn what Smarsh learned: Working hard in this country probably won't get you ahead after all. The complex, often brilliant people of Smarsh's story defy stereotypes amid a culture that embraces the term "white trash" suggesting that some lives are of lesser value and even dispensable. Part memoir, part social analysis, part cultural commentary, *Heartland* is an uncompromising look at class, identity, and the perils of economic hardship in a wealthy nation. We have 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 September 19. We gather at noon to enjoy our brown bag lunches followed at 12:30 pm with a discussion of the book.

Who is This?

—Annie Welsbacher

Unitarian and physician Mercy Ruggles Bisbee Jackson, born in 1802, earned her medical degree and pursued a career in obstetrics and gynecology — an apropos choice given her domestic circumstances — at a time when doing so was almost unheard of for women.

She and her first husband, Unitarian minister John Bisbee, lost their first of three children to scarlet fever before her husband and then their second child succumbed to pneumonia, leaving her a widow at 27. Bisbee married her second husband, Capt. Daniel Jackson, four years later, inheriting his four children. They had eight children together, only half surviving. In all, Bisbee Jackson gave birth to 11 children.

About 20 years into her second marriage, Daniel died of cancer. At that point, Mercy turned to formal study in homeopathy, in which she had become increasingly interested during her work as a gynecologist and researcher. She graduated with her medical degree at what is now Boston University School of Medicine, but when, a year later, she applied to join the American Institute of Homeopathy, she was rejected for not being a man. Admission came a decade later when the institute accepted her and three other women.

Among the medical concerns Bisbee Jackson had focused on were uterine hemorrhaging and displacement of the uterus. Traditional treatment for the former was putting ice on it and hoping that the bleeding would stop. For the latter, women received scarification (cutting or burning), electricity, cauterization, and abdominal binders. For her new work in homeopathy, she gained popularity among woman and frequent citations in international journals for her treatments. Along with eventually teaching at colleges and publishing in medical journals, she also supported temperance and women's suffrage. (Photo on page 4.)

UU Film Group

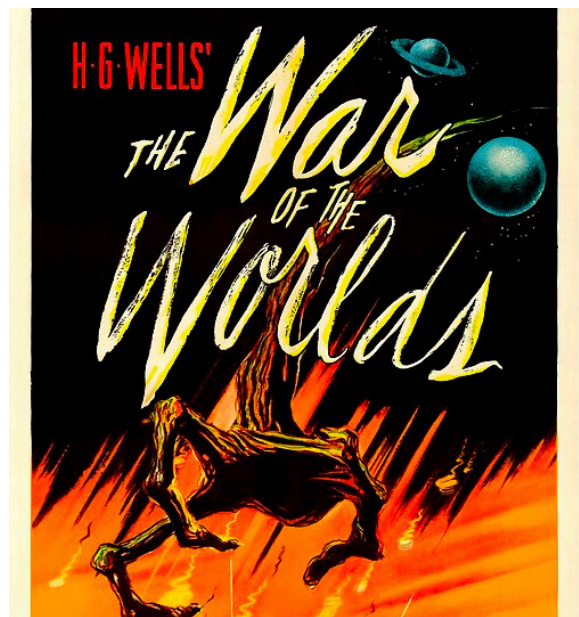
—John Findling

UU Film Group coordinators John Findling and Vivien Minshull-Ford have scheduled three fall films, each recognized by the National Film Registry and the Library of Congress as an outstanding contribution to American culture of its time.

Friday, September 26: *This is Spinal Tap* (1984). This “mockumentary” was written and directed by Rob Reiner, who stars in the film along with Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, and Harry Shearer as members of the heavy metal rock band, Spinal Tap, said to be “one of England’s loudest bands.” The film satirizes the behavior and pretensions of such bands and the overly praiseworthy tendencies of films profiling them. Critically praised but less successful commercially, it later was noted the first significant mockumentary and deemed culturally significant by the LOC in 2002. *Spinal Tap II*, with the same director and major cast members, is scheduled for release in September.



Friday, October 24: *War of the Worlds* (1953). Directed by Byron Haskin and starring Gene Barry and Ann Robinson, this was the first feature-length adaptation of H.G. Wells’ 1898 story. Martians invade southern California, and scientist Clayton Forrester (Gene Barry) sets out to find their weaknesses. The invading Martian space cylinder opens up and shoots a killer heat-ray. Reports grow of Martian space vehicles landing worldwide. This was among many Cold-War-related films of the 1950s using monsters, usually from another planet, as stand-ins in for the Russians. Critics have noted that this film’s special effects have held up well over 62 years, and it has received commendation from the National Film Registry. The release of a new version is expected later this year.



Friday, November 21 (one week early): *The Great Dictator* (1940). This political satire (ostensibly of Hitler and Mussolini) was written, directed, and produced by Charlie Chaplin, who also starred in it. He considered this film to be his most important work. Chaplin plays both a fascist dictator and a persecuted Jewish barber. *The Great Dictator* was regarded from its release as a great comedy and a great work of political satire. It was nominated for five Oscars, including Best Actor, Best Writing, Best Original Score, and Outstanding Production, but did not win any.

