



Our Outlook



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First Universalist
Church of Rochester

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Sunday Services | January 2024

January 7 | *Burning the Old, Inviting the New*

On the precipice of a new year, join in a ritual of burning away the old to embrace the new—First Universalist's annual Fire Communion. To make space for all this year holds, we will release what is no longer serving us.

— *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

January 14 | *The Call of the Soft-Hearted Towards Justice*

Let us hear the continual call towards softening our hearts as the call towards justice. In this time, many of us have felt the pull towards numbness and overwhelm. Where can a soft and loving heart teach us to act for justice?

— *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

January 21 | *Letting Compassion In*

The hymn of contemplation for the month of January is based off of a lovingkindness meditation, inspired by the Heart Sutra in the Buddhist tradition. How do we embrace compassion for ourselves and others? How does compassion help us to remain soft in these times?

— *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

January 28 | *TBA*

TBA

— *TBA*

❖ **Services begin at 10:30am** ❖

Inside	Page
Rev. Lane-Mairead	2
Rev. Michelle Yates	2
Finance: Auction	3
Lifespan Faith Dev.	3
GA 2024	3
Drop-In Discussion	4
Membership	4
Housing For All	5
EcoJustice/Animal Ministry ..	5
Brave Souls Wanted	6
Transposing Voices	7

Worship will be online and in-person at First Universalist Church. Check our website for more updated info! Please join us – Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/131764422>; Phone number: 1-646-558-8656 with Meeting ID: 131 764 422. ❖



Hardened and Staying Soft

*A Message from
Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

Each winter, as the harsh weather begins to descend and the cold winds blow through my heavy layers, I find myself hunkering down. A tightness in the shoulders, the jaw—a tension that I hold in so many muscles to shield myself from the elements. It is a state of body that I’m not even aware of until I find myself in a warmer spot, with muscles and joints aching at the release of it all.

The theme First Universalist shares with our Unitarian Universalist sibling congregations this season is Staying Soft and I imagine this will be good for those of us who remain quite guarded at this time of year. Softness is an invitation towards openness, towards compassion, towards allowing what can come alive in us to continue to be alive. When I think of staying soft, I think of allowing the tense walls I have built up out of a sense of protectiveness (from the elements and otherwise) to soften just a little, to open up.

With all that we are experiencing globally and locally, as we head into an election year, as we deal with our own personal sorrows and difficulties, it is easy to become hardened. Hardened by certainty, hardened to protect against the pain, hardened to continue to believe that everything is okay. I wonder what remaining soft might have to teach us. I wonder what it would look like to enter into 2024 with a commitment to stay soft. Let’s spend some time exploring this together.

In Faith and Courage,
Rev. Lane-Mairead ❖



Spiritual Practices for “Staying Soft”

*A Message from
Rev. Michelle Yates*

Staying soft; keeping our minds and hearts open, might feel countercultural during the coldest time of year, but that is actually one of the things I value most about being a UU. We are encouraged and supported in living our values in countercultural ways. “But how?” you ask. Here are practices you may find helpful with the January and February theme.

First, **Melting**: Settle yourself and your breathing into a comfortable position. Put your attention on your whole head, and with your next exhale feel all the muscles in your head melting (relaxing). Continue breathing out and melting your body through your neck and shoulders, arms and hands, upper and lower torso, hips and seat, thighs and knees, calves and feet.

Second, **Five Finger Prayer plus Compassion Exercise**: Settle yourself and your breathing into a comfortable position. Press your hands together in a prayer position. With each finger you will focus on a different person or group while going through the Compassion Exercise.

Start with the thumb for yourself, index finger for your “go to” people, middle finger for a person or group you conflict with, ring finger for a person/group you are committed to, and pinky for the wider world/community. This could be your family, congregation, city, country, or the world. With attention on each person/group, repeat to yourself:

- “Just like me,
- this person is seeking happiness for their life.
- this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life.
- this person has known sadness, loneliness, despair.
- this person is seeking to fulfill their needs.
- this person is learning about life.”

When focusing on you, change the wording to, “Just like everyone else, I am/have....” Please reach out if you have any questions, feedback or just to share your experience.

Looking to explore this theme more deeply? Join us for a Cozy Night Supper on Friday, Jan. 19, 6-8pm.

Yours in the Journey, Rev. Michelle ❖



Finance News: *The Service Auction is back!*

Submitted by Ann Rhody, Finance Chair

It's Back! Our Service Auction will be on February 4, 2024! Be sure you have the date marked on your calendar! We'll stay after the service and have fun while raising funds for the church. The 2024 Service Auction will have something for everyone, including:

- No-cost door prizes and raffles
- Items in every price range
- Fun and entertainment
- Real-time presence for our online community!

Key dates:

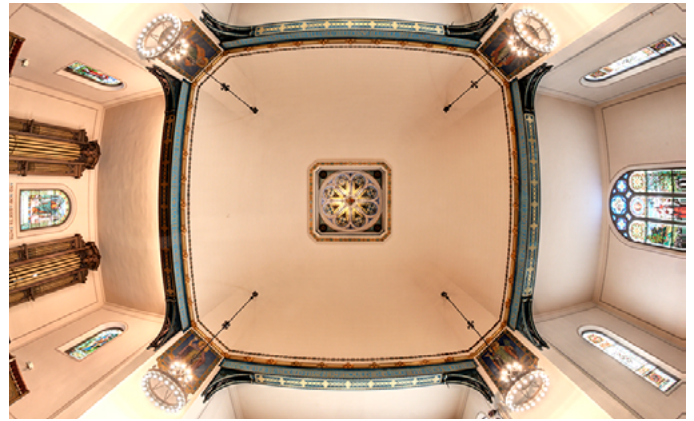
- Early January: The online donation form is active! Donate your event, service or item using the form at uuroc.org
- January 23: Deadline for donations
- January 28: Catalogue of items available
- February 3: Deadline to submit proxy forms
- February 4: The BIG DAY!!

We need YOU!

We have many volunteer opportunities in the following areas:

- Proxy team
- Raffle organizers
- Lunch (bringing food, set up, and clean up!)
- Tech support

To volunteer, ask questions, or get more information about the Service Auction, contact Ann Rhody at finance@uuroc.org ❖



Lifespan Faith Development Offerings!

Submitted by Rev. Michelle Yates

Cozy Night Supper: Potluck and Discussion Friday, January 19, 6-8pm

We will explore our Seasonal Worship Theme of "Staying Soft". Families are welcome and don't need to bring food to participate! RSVP by January 15 for childcare. RSVP with what you intend to bring to edu@uuroc.org or sign up in the Clara Barton Lounge.

Welcoming Neurodivergent Children Video and Discussion Part II, Sunday, January 21, 12noon-1:15pm in the Sanctuary

Please join us to view, consider and discuss the second part of "Welcoming Neurodivergent Children," a webinar from the UUA. You don't have to have attended Part I to participate! Rev. Michelle will facilitate. ❖

UUA: *General Assembly Registration is Now Open*

Registration is now open for GA, which will be held online June 20-24, 2024! Adult registration is \$280, and includes access to GA 2024 in the Whova app, as well as on-demand programming, featured speakers, and major worship. Register through February 29 with a down payment of \$50 by selecting the Early Bird Payment Plan at checkout. Delegates participating only in General Sessions may use the "business only" registration option. A donation is strongly encouraged to offset production and labor costs for livestreaming content. Registration rates increase March 1. ❖

Drop-In Discussion

Submitted by John Lukes

Drop-in discussions are held Tuesday evenings from 6:30-7:30pm via the church Zoom account, and in-person on the first Sunday of each month in the Chalice Room at 9:15am. Phil Ebersole is the contact about in-church drop-in discussions. Contact DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org for the link, or look on uuroc.org! Sometimes discussions are based on books/articles, but you don't have to do any prep to participate. Just drop in!

Sunday, January 7 | Living in a SciFi World

In-Person

We live in a world in which science fictional tropes (space colonization, artificial intelligence) are now actual goals. Can yesterday's science fiction become tomorrow's reality? Phil Ebersole will lead the discussion in the Chalice Room at 9:15am.

January 2 | Life-Changing Anecdotes from my Peace Corps Experience

After sharing two anecdotes from her Peace Corps experience that changed her worldview, Connie Valk will lead a discussion about how travel to other cultures may have influenced our worldviews. And we can discuss whether there are ways to connect with other cultures that don't require world travel?

January 9 | Lifespan Faith Development Series—Welcome to Belonging

Rev. Michelle will facilitate a discussion inviting us to consider ways our community culture might need to adapt or prepare for adding more members so that we all might belong.

January 16 | Who or What Killed General Electric?

Using General Electric as a case study, Phil Ebersole will lead a discussion on the deindustrialization of America.

January 23 | 19th-Century Rural Public Education in the Genesee Region

Drawing from her experiences staffing the schoolhouse at the Genesee Country Village and Museum, Janus Mary Jones will lead a discussion on what rural education was like in the the 19th century.

January 30 | Open Topic—Serendipity?!

John Lukes will lead an open-topic discussion, starting with the concept of serendipity!

Have a topic for us? Contact our team with your proposal at DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org. ❖

Membership Committee: Happy New Year!

Submitted by Donna Anderson & Richard Reed

We're busy organizing for the upcoming year. Look for details on an upcoming *Getting Connected* event this winter.

This month Richard Reed has written his story of being a member of the church. Thank you, Richard!

“Hi, my name is Richard Reed. I started attending services in May 2013 and joined First Universalist in April 2017. The church plays a huge part in my life. Not long after I started attending services, I was invited to join the choir which continues to be important to me. I've also become involved in other committees and activities within the church. By being involved, I've developed relationships which I otherwise would not have. The church has a huge heart for outreach to both the congregation and the community. Our church is also a very caring and supportive place. I've been involved with both the giving and receiving aspects of these traits. These are some of the reasons that I love First Universalist.

I'd now like to address the importance of the Church Directory. In the past year I've had 2 major surgeries which have sidelined me from attending services in person until this past month. I've been able to communicate and stay in touch because of the Directory and Zoom. Our directory contains the names of our members and friends and their contact info: addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. The ability to access this info has been invaluable to me, especially being a Board of Trustee member. This info has also recently been a huge plus in dealing with and going through the COVID pandemic. You are also able to find contact names for our Social Justice outreach and committees, and other significant contact names within our church. I sincerely hope that if you haven't already done so, that you will consider adding your contact info to our directory.

In closing, I hope that you find First Universalist Church an important part of your life as it continues to be a huge part of my life.”

Our new brochures will be ready after January. The Communications Committee and Membership Committee collaborated on the brochure. A huge thank you to Marcy Klein, as she is editing it for us.

We meet once a month on the the second Thursday of the month at church at 1:30pm. Please get in touch with us if you have any questions or concerns at membership@uuroc.org. ❖

Housing for All News

Submitted by Chris DeGolyer

We Filled Santa's Sleigh for FPGROC Family

What an abundance of gifts our congregation provided for a family of eight, one of many FPGROC guest families! Many thanks to everybody for the outpouring of gifts, all tailored to the family's wishlist and beautifully wrapped and labeled. Although we couldn't gather all the donors and gifts together at once, at least some of both are shown here.



Let's Advocate with The Children's Agenda (TCA)

Marti Eggers and I met with Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda, an organization which researches how to improve the welfare of children and advocates for changes that help children to succeed in school and life. One of TCA's research areas is the effect of housing instability on children's education.

According to TCA's report "A Place to Call Home" (thechildrensagenda.org/publications/housing-instability-a-place-to-call-home/), "Over 55% of renters in Rochester paid more than 30% of their household income on housing costs in 2021" (page 17). And 38% of the students in the RCSD moved over the last two years. In the 2018-19 school year, 8% or 2,417 students were homeless. "Research indicates that children who experience housing instability and homelessness are more likely to struggle academically, face mental health challenges throughout their lives, [and] become involved in the criminal legal system as adults" (page 4). "Formerly homeless children whose families were relocated to



subsidized housing showed demonstrable academic improvement...studies show that more time spent in public or voucher-assisted housing benefits children from low-income backgrounds later in life, specifically by earning more income and being less likely to face incarceration as adults" (page 23). The report states "we must ensure every child has a place to call home" (page 4).



TCA is advocating for many changes, including reducing child poverty by bringing back the earned income child credit. Last spring, TCA took three buses of parents and others to Albany to lobby. We're welcome to join them this coming spring. Sign up at thechildrensagenda.org/advocate/ to receive email Action Alerts which describe actions under consideration and who to contact.

Let's Read This Book

The Book Group has chosen *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder for the book discussion at 12 noon on Sunday, January 14. It is a very readable and inspiring account of Dr. Jim O'Connell's work with Boston's homeless community, and it's an easy way to learn about the homeless experience. Please read it and join us in the discussion. ❖

Message from EcoJustice & Animal Ministry

Submitted by Sarah Singal & Lois Baum

You don't want to miss this! This year's Service Auction will include a vegan meal at church. Date, time and all details are going to be determined by the Animal Ministry and EcoJustice Social Justice Circles. Come for fun and togetherness, come for delicious food, come for education and trying new recipes, come to get a vegan recipe you can bring to social gatherings and be proud of, come for some surprises, and eat to care for our animal friends and for climate and sustainability! Stay tuned and save the date for the auction, Sunday, February 4, after the church service. ❖

Brave Souls Wanted:

**Dare to live with compassion,
acceptance, and reverence.**

Show up for social justice, state your truth, and wrestle with the biggest questions on life's spiritual path.

Defy society's stereotypes, stigmas and systems used to separate us. Let your light shine.

Journey with people who are united in love, fueled by community and committed to justice.

Your fellow travelers await.

uua.org



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALISTS

Ready Hands

Open Mind

Loving Heart



TRANSPOSING VOICES OF ROCHESTER

**A community choir open to all levels
of musicianship!**

We have a focus of creating a safe
and exploratory space for trans and
gender non-conforming people to
learn or relearn the use of their voices.

Every Saturday 3:00-5:30
@ First Universalist Church of Rochester - 150 S. Clinton Ave.

Contact Us! transposingvoicesofrochester@gmail.com



First Universalist Church of Rochester

150 South Clinton Avenue
Rochester, NY 14604



First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

Nurture the spirit and serve the community.

First Universalist Church is a member of the *Unitarian Universalist Association*, a liberal religion with historical roots in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

**Worship service begins at 10:30am on
Sundays**

Minister | Rev. Lane-Maired Campbell

Minister of Lifespan Faith Development |
Rev. Michelle Yates

Music Director | Dr. Brock Tjosvold

Office Manager | Emma Barry

Nursery Care Provider | Carol Williams

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Clinton Swingle (*Pres.*), Bridget Watts (*Vice-Pres.*)
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Reed

Editor, monthly newsletter, *Our Outlook*, & *This
Week at First Universalist* (digital): Emma Barry

More info is available on our website: uuroc.org

The usual deadline for all submissions to
Our Outlook is the 15th of each month.