



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

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**First Universalist
Church of Rochester**

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Sunday Services | February 2025

February 2 | *Waking Up to the World and Seeking the Queer Everywhere*

In the natural world, in our human experience, and in our communities—queerness is everywhere. An exploration of equity through the lens of queer theology and a reminder that we live in a both/and world. Let us explore expansiveness and how it can unlock our relationship to the divine.

— Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell

February 9 | *Salvation and the Super Bowl: a Game Plan for Moving Faithfully Forward Together*

Of our UU Values, Equity is one of the most challenging to imagine on a grand scale. It is easy to feel overwhelmed looking towards the future despite our commitment to keeping Love at the center. Sometimes we need a strategy, a framework to ground our efforts, energy and belief. Perhaps a sports tactic system like Total Football is just what we are looking for?

— Rev. Michelle Yates

February 16 | *A Theology of Equity*

Equity is one of the seven central values to Unitarian Universalism. What do our theological past and present have to say about this important core value?

— Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell

February 23 | *You Know That Little Drawing?*

You know the one! The one that illustrates “Equity” from the perspective of three people attempting to look over a fence. There have been many adaptations and edits—let's explore the metaphor together!

— Rev. Shari Halliday-Quan

❖ Services begin at 10:30am ❖

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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. ❖



A New Chapter

*A Message from
Rev. Lane-Mairedad Campbell*

It is with a heavy heart and a sure spirit that I want to share with you all that this will be my last year at First Universalist Church. I plan to remain your minister through the end of the church year (June 30, 2025) and will be leaving in July 2025. I know this will likely be a surprise for many of you and I know that this is a hard time for a transition. But I also know that it is time for a new chapter in ministerial leadership for First Universalist and that we have trusted leadership in place in this community who can steward this transition thoughtfully and graciously.

In the seven years that I have been with you all, I have seen this church grow and change, seen you all weather many transitions. I have seen a new invigoration of energy around welcome and around church growth. We worked together through the pandemic. We witnessed many instances of injustice in our community and found faithful responses to the moment. We have laughed together and cried together. It has been a joy to serve this community.

I will be remaining in Rochester, but will be taking a break from parish ministry. I feel a strong calling towards community work with earth-based traditions and have many plans to share my newfound calling with our beautiful city. With my decision to remain in Rochester comes a boundary of being away from and out of contact with congregants and staff at First Universalist for the next two years to make space for a new ministry with someone else.

I am remaining with you until the end of June 2025 to ensure a smooth transition in leadership and to be able to say a good, full goodbye. It is my hope that our church will benefit from a healthy leave-taking to make space for a full and robust welcome for your next ministerial leader. The days and months ahead will provide us plenty of time for sharing good memories and bringing this ministry to a close. I am excited for what is in store for First Universalist's future and will always be cheering you on.

Blessings,

Rev. Lane-Mairedad ❖



Equity versus Equality

*A Message from
Rev. Michelle Yates*

This month we are continuing to explore our value of Equity. Equity is so rich and interesting, because it's not Equality. We each need different things to participate in the fullness of life.

As some of you may know, my beloved mother-in-law died in December 2024. Each time the situation changed the Hospice staff offered us a new set of resources to help. These ideas on how to meet my mother-in-law's needs often came with the reassurance that her insurance would pay for it.

I can't tell you what a relief it was for the family not to have to question if the benefit of a hospital bed, oxygen, or different medicine was worth the cost; if she was worth the cost and effort to try something new. We could freely say "yes" or "no" to options based on if they would be helpful in making her comfortable and still feel included in family life.

I would wish that is most people's experience at the end of life here in Rochester, but I know it isn't. Death is hard, but life is hard, too. It was such a relief and a gift for my loved one to get what they needed, because that is not our usual experience throughout our lives.

I think about my neighbor who is struggling to access the same support my kid gets at school because of a language barrier and not understanding the system. Of people who don't go to the local church because they literally cannot get in the building without a ramp. Of those hesitant to reach out for community because they are unsure if they will be welcome because they are shy, poor, loud, neurodivergent, unchurched, have two partners, use an assistive device or use gender-neutral pronouns.

I know these systems are very complicated, but I encourage us to just start asking the question when we see someone struggling, or when someone new walks into our group, "What do they need in order to fully participate; to feel comfortable, welcome and included?" Let's ask them. Believe them. And do our best to make it possible.

Yours in the Journey,

Rev. Michelle ❖

What a Big Gay Wedding!

Submitted by Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell

Photos by Emma Barry

On Saturday, January 11, First Universalist joined with First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua to host a Big Gay Wedding. Options were available for couples to have a public ceremony or a private ceremony. Our congregations wanted to make this service available in advance of the inauguration, helping couples to get married who felt a sense of urgency around it.



Seven couples were married on January 11, with options for pictures of their ceremony, as well as couples portraits, cake-cutting pictures, and a variety of bouquets/boutonnieres. Dr. Brock Tjosvold, our Music Director, was available for piano accompaniment for weddings and provided the sound track for the day. Folks volunteered as photographers, witnesses, parents to walk down the aisle, and more.



We give special thanks to **Get Caked! Bakery**, who donated a glorious rainbow layer cake that was vegan and gluten-free. Flowers donated by **Midnight Moss**. Our photographers were **Victoria Torales**, **Elizabeth Chiang**, and **Alex Peterson**. **Jess Kszos** donated

services as an American Sign Language interpreter. **Sarah Coppola** and **Sam Waidl** donated sheet cakes. **Shelley's Sweet Shop** donated cookies. And so many First Universalist volunteers showed up to welcome folks and get our reception set up and cleaned up.



The hope is to keep having events at First Universalist that meet the needs of our larger community. January 11's Big Gay Wedding was an opportunity to boldly proclaim who we are and to live our values out loud. What a great way to start 2025! ❖

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 for in-person discussions. Contact DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org for the link, or look on uuroc.org!

Sunday, Feb. 2 | Trump Saves America? *In-Person*

Our country seems to be broken and unfixable. Could President Donald Trump be the medicine we need? Hank Stone will do a presentation and lead a discussion. We meet at 9:15am the first Sunday of each month through June 2025 in the upstairs Chalice Room. All are welcome!

February 4 | Presidential Pardons

The Constitution gives U.S. Presidents the “Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except cases of Impeachment.” Phil Ebersole will give some background information and lead a discussion on how this power may be used and abused.

February 11 | Open Topic Nite with Rev. Lane-Mairead

This month Rev. Lane-Mairead will begin by quickly reviewing our drop-in discussion covenants and then take questions, comments, and suggestions regarding the life and ministry of First Universalist of Rochester. All are welcome to gather in the spirit of a free and responsible mutual search for truth and meaning.

February 18 | Religion & Superstition—What’s the difference?

How many times have we heard the criticism that religion is merely a form of superstition? But is there more to this question that might benefit both the religious and the non-religious among us? Daniel Chadwick, professor of Religious Studies, will define terms and lead a discussion on this topic. All are welcome to participate.

February 25 | Open Topic

On the day in history when Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I, Enrico Caruso and George Harrison were born, and the Cold War officially ended, let’s have another Open Topic discussion about where we are and where we might be going. All are welcome to participate.

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



Finance News

Submitted by Brian Mumeey, Finance Chair

Since we’re midway through our fiscal year, I thought this would be a good time to review our current financial status. But first, some thank yous are in order.

First, as per usual, you were very generous with your contributions for the staff bonuses. Over \$8,100 was raised and distributed to the 10 staff members. It means a great deal to our staff to know how much they are appreciated!

And second, a special thank you to everyone who helped with or contributed to our “fun”d raising auction. I’m writing this before the auction itself but it’s promising to be a big success. Be sure to attend after the service on Sunday, Feb. 2. See ya there! Hope you win!

Speaking of upcoming events, planning for our annual Stewardship Campaign is well underway. Look for an article focused on the campaign in this issue of the *Outlook*.

Now on to our current financial status. Things are looking good. Pledges are running well ahead of plan (thanks for getting those in early) and expenses are running almost exactly as expected.

A rosy picture for sure but there are a few dark clouds on the horizon. Because people are paying their pledges more now we anticipate the rate of payment will slow sharply as the year goes by. Also, while our expenses overall are good there are a couple areas of concern, mostly in the personnel area. We’ll have to keep an eye on this going forward this fiscal year and as we prepare the budget for 2025-26.

If you have any questions about our current finances or would like to see our current financial documents, please email to finance@uuroc.org. ❖

Stewardship: Come, Come, Whoever You Are!

Submitted by Ann Rhody & Howard Spindler
2025 Stewardship Co-Chairs

We chose these words from Hymn 188 for our stewardship theme this year.

The poet Rumi invites us—All of Us—to travel onward in the spirit of Hope.

Here at First Universalist, we will have two stewardship events in the spring:

- **March 30: Celebrating the Dream:** A church-wide gathering right after the service; we will scrutinize our “dream list” from the past year, celebrating our many successes, while also considering our upcoming challenges.

- **April 13: Stewardship Sunday:** Another church-wide celebration event—with delicious pies! ❖

Eastman at Washington Square Concerts

Concerts are held at our church at midday on Thursdays. Each concert begins at 12:15pm and ends at approximately 12:45pm. Admission is free!

- **Feb. 6 | Hungarian Motifs**

Eastman Violin professor Mikhail Kopelman and pianist Anna Gourfinkel will perform music by Brahms and Hubal.

- **Feb. 13 | Love All Around**

Come and enjoy music from the heart as Jessica Ann Best and Irina Lupines present love songs from different parts of the world.

- **Feb. 20 | Violin and Piano Showcase**

Eastman professors David Bowlin, violin, and Tony Cho, piano, will perform music by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Debussy, and Sarasate.

- **Feb. 27 | Piano Extravaganza with Alexander Kobrin**

Professor Alexander Kobrin will join his students performing fabulous works for solo piano. ❖

Membership Committee

Submitted by Clinton Swingle

As a way of making our church a more welcoming space for all people, especially new people, the Membership Committee is asking that members consider placing a sticker on your name badge indicating your preferred pronouns. Displaying your pronouns is “ally-signaling”. It signals that we support all kinds of people, whether or not they conform to society’s gendered and/or binary expectations. How awkward and “othering” would it be if the only people walking around with pronouns on their name tags were the ones whose pronouns were not obvious and people who used gender-neutral pronouns. You can find small stickers with pronouns in a box attached to the name tag display wall. Also, we are getting new temporary paper name tags for visitors that provide a prompt for them to write in their preferred pronouns. Remember, growth requires change. How are you willing to change so our church can grow?



Why are pronouns so important? It’s kind of like asking, “Why are names so important?” Pronouns and names are important to all of us. Getting them correct is one of the most basic ways that we can show respect to a person. We would all notice immediately if people used the wrong pronouns for us. Using proper pronouns is the respectful thing to do. If you make a mistake on a person’s pronoun, the best response is something simple like “Excuse me” or “I’m sorry, I meant ‘they’.” Don’t make it too awkward by making a huge deal about overly apologizing. Think of it like bumping into someone accidentally on the street. A quick polite apology is best and get it right the next time. ❖

HFA: What Does It Take to House the Homeless?

Submitted by Chris DeGolyer

Nick Coulter, of *Person-Centered Housing Options* (PCHO) and of the *Chronic Homelessness Work Group* (CHWG) of *Partners Ending Homelessness* (PEH), shared this example of the many groups who must work together to get a homeless family into an apartment. Jerome and Lisa (not their real names) had lived outside in Rochester for 20 years, when, in 2023, volunteers from *Recovery All Ways* (RAW), befriended them. RAW brought the couple's case to the CHWG and requested that the Rochester Police Dept. (RPD) leave Jerome and Lisa's tent undisturbed while PCHO's outreach team began working with the couple on a housing plan.



Jerome and Lisa faced challenges; Jerome had no ID, a common problem for homeless folks. Also, Jerome had undocumented mental health issues. The lack of housing for the lowest income levels usually means a wait around six months after PCHO begins working with someone until they can find an apartment.

While Jerome and Lisa waited through the winter, RAW and *Rochester Grants Pass Resistance* provided them with food and warming gear.

PCHO helped Jerome get documentation, advocated for his housing, and provided updates to prevent his tent from being removed. In early summer 2024, Jerome and Lisa moved into an apartment. Monroe County's Dept. of Human Services (DHS) Emergency Housing staff and volunteers supplied furniture, kitchen supplies, and bedding. The couple remains in their apartment with the help of *HealthReach*, which provides their medical care.

Nick Coulter said, "This serves as a testament to what can be achieved when agencies and community members work together to overcome systemic barriers and provide holistic support." ❖

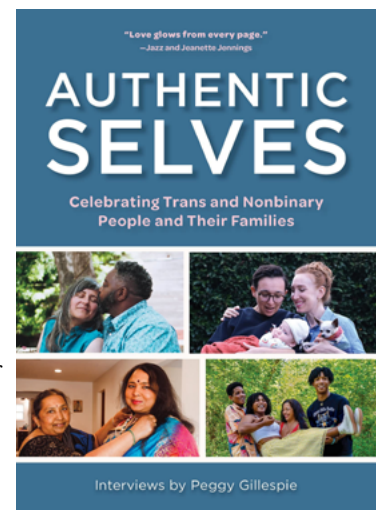


▲ Walter Yates and Trish Gallaher, fast new friends, sharing stories and building with dominoes till the end of coffee hour.

UU Common Read: Book Discussion Group coming in March!

Submitted by Rev. Michelle Yates & Rev. Peggy Meeker

This year's UU Common Read is *Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families* by Peggy Gillespie. Retired minister and member of the church, Rev. Peggy Meeker, has offered to facilitate a discussion of this important book, where we come to know the "real lives—revelations, challenges, joys, and networks of support" of trans and nonbinary peoples along with their families.



Starting March 6 or 7, we are looking at offering 3-4 sessions on Thursdays or Fridays either in the afternoon (1-2:30pm) or evening (7-8:30pm) on Zoom.

If you are interested or have questions please email Rev. Michelle at edu@uuroc.org with your time and date preferences. ❖

Garden Committee: *The History & Future of First Universalist's Gardens*

Submitted by Sarah Singal

Our church at the corner of Clinton and Court Street was built in 1908. The grassy area between our church and the lot now known as 3 City Center was an alley, and the strip between the west side of the church and the Clinton Ave. sidewalk may have had a few bushes.

In 2003 when I joined First Universalist the flower garden along Clinton Ave. was going strong. We think Ken Setera designed and installed it. He quietly kept it watered and added a plant if there was an empty spot. It was beautiful! There was a line of boxwood bushes at the back which gave us year-round greenery. Eventually, Ken left; we still miss him!

Over the years the boxwood bushes kept growing, filling most of the flower garden. After much discussion we finally decided to remove the boxwoods. Immediately the garden became significantly larger. The flower garden is full of bulbs and perennials. It needed watering, deadheading, cutting back dead growth, maintaining a balance between easily spreading plants and tentative ones, and dividing plants when needed. Anyone gardening there is likely to hear warm comments from passersby.



Time passed. The only spot of our campus that wasn't being fully used was the area behind the southwest alcove. It was uncared for and unattractive, covered with cracked cement and weeds. Rev. Lori Staubitz (our then Director of Religious Education), helped design a veggie garden to double as a memorial garden. It had benches for folks to enjoy the space, paid for with funds in memory of past church

members. We tried to crack the cement more to allow drainage, made raised wooden beds, and surrounded them with wood chips from a tree Connie Valk had recently had to cut down. After several years they turned to soil. We opted to add violets to make a ground cover we could step on. The veggie area has been inconsistently successful, partly because the Garden Committee couldn't keep it up.

We are so grateful to those who have answered our call for help! We will start with a brainstorming session, seeking new ideas and/or tried and true gardening practices. Would it work better to break the flower garden into three areas, each to be the responsibility of one or two people? Should we be more aggressive in adding native plants or pollinator-supporting plants? How do we want to use the veggie area? A combination of veggies and flowers?

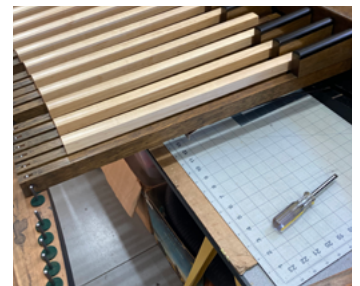
We also tend the annual flowers in the three Court Street planters. And in the spirit of No Mow May we have added a strip of hearty plants along the south length of the church. Is that too much? Ultimately, it depends on how many volunteers we get and how they envision the garden and the message our garden sends to our community.

The Garden Committee is a part of the House Committee. Additional volunteers are always welcome! Contact garden@uuroc.org. And thank you! ❖

Organ News!

Submitted by Charlie Courtsal

Did you know that when the pedals on our organ are played on our Hope-Jones organ, each pedal creates an electrical contact which allows air to flow in the organ pipe (and a sound is created). Our pedal contacts had not been updated since they were installed in 1908! They were becoming unreliable to say the least because of oxidation of the pedal contacts.



Happily, that has all changed! In October of 2024, David Peckham (of Peckham & Son Pipe Organ Service) took the entire pedal board to his shop and carefully renovated it over the course of a week. The pedals returned on October 25 and it is wonderful! David Peckham gave us beautiful craftsmanship and a very reliable pedal board once again! ❖



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.

Minister | Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell

Minister of Lifespan Faith Dev. |
Rev. Michelle Yates

Music Director | Dr. Brock Tjosvold

Office Manager | Mx. Emma Barry

Finance Admin | Maresa Carmody

Cong. Life Coordinator | Madi Russell

Nursery Care Providers |
Carol Williams & Lily Thatcher

Worship begins at 10:30am on Sundays

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More info is available on our website: uuroc.org

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