



Our Outlook

First Universalist Church of Rochester

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**First Universalist
Church of Rochester**

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Sunday Services | October 2023

October 1 | *A Prayer and a Promise*

In a world that demands so much from us, how do we discern which opportunities to embrace and which to set aside? Together we will explore how we offer our energy as individuals and as members of a greater human community.

— Rev. Margaret Weis

October 8 | *The Paradox of Toleration: Who is Out and Who is In?*

Who belongs together in church? In a community? In a country? How can we be pluralists who welcome diversity and honor freedom, while protecting the safety and flourishing of all?

— Rev. AJ van Tine

October 15 | *Daring Greatly*

Often, our fear of failure can get in the way of trying new things or showing up in our community. How do we find a way to show up as our whole (sometimes messy and broken) selves and feel like we belong?

— Rev. Margaret Weis

October 22 | *A Beginner's Mind*

How do we open ourselves to possibility and new learnings as spiritual seekers? If we are to commit ourselves to lifelong learning we must also strive to have a beginner's mind. With humility, openness, and wonder we might learn more about ourselves and the world.

— Rev. Margaret Weis

October 29 | *Choosing Family*

Reflecting on the ways we acquire our "people". Who is in our web and how do we connect with them? Is our family only the group we are born into, or the people we gather along the way?

— Rev. Margaret Weis

❖ **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. ❖



On Being a Neighbor

*A Message from
Rev. Margaret Weis*

In Pittsburgh, there is a museum that features some of the original sets from *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. There you can see the tree, castle, some of his original sweaters, sneakers, and more. There is even a stole made up of some familiar characters and visuals because, as you may or may not know, Mr. Rogers was a Presbyterian minister.

I had the chance to see these artifacts in a recent trip to the city and was transported to a time when life felt a lot more simple than it does now.

As a child, I knew that the world could be a scary place and I knew that things were sometimes difficult, but these realities didn't seem as present in my life as they do now.

As much as I try to remember the wisdom and the kindness of Mr. Rogers and his neighborhood, it's not always easy.

Being in community and striving to live an authentic life alongside others is a challenge and can be stressful. Stress isn't always bad—even good events and circumstances can create stress in our lives. When these events and circumstances include people we love or communities we care about, it can start to feel overwhelming.

This is why our theme of **Belonging Together** is so important—because we are all practicing how to be a source of love in a world that so sorely needs it. Each of us will do that in our own ways, and we might step on each other's toes in the process. The task then is to lean into the discomfort, own our part of the issue, and find a way forward. Then, after practicing with our fellow UUs in religious community, maybe we can also find a way to do so in other realms in our lives. Maybe then we can practice these things at home, at school, at work, on the bus, or at that big family gathering.

They say practice makes perfect, but I prefer to say that practice makes progress—which is the ultimate goal.

May we all strive to practice being love.

May we be good neighbors.

May we continue to lean in, own when we harm others, and collaborate to find a way forward.

Stay well, Rev. Margaret ❖



What Do We Do When We're Scared?

*A Message from
Rev. Michelle Yates*

One of my favorite “minister geek” pastimes is musing about the “theology” present in scary, sci-fi/fantasy and post-apocalyptic movies or shows. Frequently visiting the Strong Museum of Play, I've come to understand that we don't stop playing as a way of exploring, processing, and expressing as we grow up. It just looks different than when we were children. What more perfect time to explore, process, and express what scares us than October.

In a quick internet search for the “lessons of scary movies” I found four: Don't go anywhere alone in the dark. Be good to Mother Nature. Don't pick up hitchhikers. Do your cardio.

While I want to theologically wrestle with the one about “hitchhikers,” it was the “don't go alone”/“don't split up” one that I was looking for. One of the best things about not being alone in the scariest part of a movie is not doubting your senses or sanity. You have someone to ask, “Did you see/hear that?” You have someone to cling to and watch each other's back. Having a partner or group makes you all stronger, safer, and more likely to reach the other side of the hardship. It's the same in the scariest parts of life. It's also one of the reasons some of us come to church; to find and be with our group. To find our sense of “Belonging Together.”

If you are interested in having time with a small group of church friends to have deeper conversations and connections consider joining one of our Small Group Ministry groups. Each group is led by a trained facilitator and generally meets twice a month, whether in-person or virtually. Current groups meet every other Monday at 10:30am, Wednesday at 1:15pm, or Wednesday at 7pm.

Members covenant to share, listen, and build beloved community while exploring topics both thoughtful and light-hearted to achieve greater self-awareness and spiritual growth, and to support each other in our respective life journeys. For further information, find the SGM description on our website uuroc.org by clicking on the “Connect” tab, then “Small Group Ministry” or email SGM@uuroc.org.

Yours in the Journey, Rev. Michelle ❖



Finance News: *Fun, Fellowship, and FUNDS!*

Submitted by Ann Rhody, Finance Chair

This summer, many of us enjoyed the “fruits” of the Slow-Rolling Auction fundraiser we had back in January.

I had a lovely tour of the Memorial Art Gallery; and was treated to the gardening and weeding prowess of Peggy Meeker as she helped me make the most of my tomato plants.

I also deepened connections with the two congregation members who purchased the voice lessons that I offered in the auction.

Connection. That’s an important goal of fundraisers like the treat sale and our auction events. And last year’s events DID provide that connection!

BUT this year, we are looking to do a fundraiser that better meets two other important goals:

- generate the budgeted amount of income
- provide opportunity for the full involvement of the online community

There was a feeling that last year’s fundraisers did not generate the excitement and church-wide participation we’d like to see. Although there were written announcements and blurbs in the weekly email, more visible announcing and “cheerleading” is clearly needed.

And I’m confident that we can do it! Is it time to return to a more “traditional” Service Auction? Shall we look at some kind of ongoing online event? How

can we ensure the widest level of participation? And what kind of event will provide the most FUN for all—including the hardworking folks who plan the fundraiser?

We are ready for your ideas! Please email us at finance@uuroc.org, and don’t be surprised if you get a phone call or email asking for your input.

We will also need volunteers to help with whatever we do! We have seasoned fund-raising veterans willing to coach you and work with you. It’s a short term and limited commitment, so it’s an ideal opportunity to become involved. Let’s get creative together! ❖

House News

Submitted by Ed Deller

Our building and grounds provide us with inspiration and solace but need ongoing attention from us to tend to them. Fortunately, our House Committee and others do just that. In the past few months we had a spring work day with many cleaning and repair tasks. Michael Scott fixed several issues with the Clinton/Court Street doors. Howard Spindler repaired and painted the Little Free Library. Tom Ruganis, Moritz Wagner and I completed a lead paint mitigation project in the exit stairway at the back of the Clara Barton Lounge. We moved furniture, dealt with fire alarm system maintenance, replaced lighting and did numerous small repairs. If you are interested in finding out more about our committee contact Ed Deller!

It's soon Fall, time for changing leaves, too much pumpkin spice, and...fire safety and elevator inspections! Every Fall we have mandated inspections for our elevator, fire alarm system and fire extinguishers and a visit from the fire marshal. These inspections are critical to the safety of the congregation and we have been diligent in supporting them.

Save The Date: We will have a Fall work day on Saturday October 28 to spruce up the church and prepare it for the colder months. All are welcome to pitch in. More details to come.

Submitted by Ed Deller on behalf of the House Committee: Michael Scott, Sarah Singal, Tom Ruganis, Marcy Klein, Moritz Wagner, Karen Dau, Shirley Bond, and Howard Spindler. ❖

Drop-In Discussion

Submitted by Beth Ares

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, October 1 | The Future Is Now **In-Person**

We'll share thoughts on the biggest, unexpected, and most beneficial changes that have occurred in our lifetimes. Phil Ebersole will facilitate. All are welcome.

October 3 | Rochester Housing Authority

An overview of RHA's purpose and functions, how the agency responds to needs, and how they fit into current priorities recently promoted by the Mayor's office. Perhaps we will touch on the intersection of racism, poverty and housing, as our church's social justice focus is "Housing for All." Melissa Berrien, Family Self Sufficiency Supervisor presents.

October 10 | What do we have in common with Trump?

Based off the Biblical injunction "Do not judge, for with the judgment you make, you will be judged," let's explore how we have said/done things similar to what we critique about Trump. What may we learn when we consider the 'logs' in our own eye, after decrying the 'splinters' in another's? John Lukes presents.

October 17 | What Is Private Equity?

"These Are the Plunderers" by Gretchen Morgenson is about how so-called "private equity" firms buy companies, then lay off employees and cut costs, services, and benefits in order to expand profits. Phil Ebersole will review the book and lead a discussion.

October 24 | What Floats Your Boat?

From Noah's Ark to cruise ships, what is this compulsion we have to travel by water? We will discuss ways and reasons people have historically had for traveling via boat and share some of our own boating experiences. Beth Ares will facilitate

October 31 | Open Topic

An opportunity to share thoughts!

Do you have a topic for us? Contact our team members with your Drop-In Discussion proposals: DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org. ❖

End Fossil Fuels March

Submitted by Connie Valk

First Universalists joined the community rally to end fossil fuels. A march began at City Hall ending with a rally at Washington Square. At the request of the organizers, First Universalist's restrooms were available for those who participated. ❖



Housing For All Update!

Submitted by Chris DeGolyer and Marti Eggers

After the congregation voted to make *Housing for All* a church-wide project, Marti and Chris have been meeting with leaders of various organizations working on housing issues. We are amazed at how many local organizations are working on this; for example, more than 60 member organizations and agencies belong to an umbrella organization called *Partners Ending Homelessness*. REACH is one impressive organization that First Universalist members have worked with, and we plan to continue and increase our involvement. Andy Carey, co-founder of *MC Collaborative* and co-chair of REACH, along with volunteers, makes outreach visits to each quadrant of the city weekly, asking homeless people what they need, and bringing food, supplies, and medical care. Rev. Peter Peters is working with a REACH Advocacy group to write an advocacy plan to advocate for solutions at local, state, and federal levels. We at First Universalist could contribute greatly to both of these efforts.

Both Andy and *Family Promise* staff have told us that the lack of low-income housing in Monroe County is the worst it has ever been. The Department of Social Services has not increased housing allowances since 2002-2003, but rental prices have increased tremendously, much more than wages. According to the *Rochester Beacon*, “roughly 40 percent of Rochester renter households earn no more than \$20,000 annually.”

Eric Van Dusen, currently manager of community impact at *ESL Federal Credit Union*, educated us on the current status of affordable housing in Rochester. The definition of affordable housing is rent that costs 30% or less of the renter's income. He said that there is a mismatch of renters' income levels and the levels of affordable housing available. For households making less than \$20,000 a year, there is a lack of 15,000 affordable housing units. But for households making \$20,000-\$53,000, there are more affordable housing units than needed. This mismatch results in many low-income households renting housing that costs a major share of their income. Eric said a poverty level of 20% in a neighborhood is a danger point; when the poverty level exceeds 30%, it has only an 8% chance of recovering. Rochester now has a 37% poverty level. Eric is hopeful that the city can recover if the community works together on a shared vision.

The Rochester Police Department collaborates with various social service agencies and faith-based groups in a *Homeless Outreach Team* (HOT) that visits various homeless hangouts in the city on Thursday mornings to talk with people, find out what they need, and offer them services. Chris DeGolyer and Elizabeth Osta attended several outreach visits and have found it eye-opening. In June, HOT hosted an ice cream social where, in addition to free ice cream, people could get free sandwiches, water, personal toiletries, and clothing. They could also talk with social workers and legal advisers. So many people attended that all the food and freebies were completely gone by the end of the event. One family even asked to take the ice left in the coolers! HOT also plans to provide a lunch at Nick Tahou's at the end of September.

Here's an educational opportunity—on October 10 at the Rochester Public Library from 12:12-12:52pm, Megan Norris will review the book “*Poverty, By America*” in which the author, Matthew Desmond, argues that poverty persists in the U.S. because “the rest of us benefit from it.” See you there? ❖



Library Committee: *Look , Look, Look!*

Submitted by Johanna Connelly for the Library Committee

As you enter the Clara Barton Lounge in October, please take a look at the library's Banned Books display, to see what books children in Florida, Texas, and elsewhere are being “sheltered from”. After the display the books will become part of the library's collection, and available to borrow. Don't miss this important and eye-opening display! ❖

Membership News

Submitted by Clinton Swingle

The membership committee is interested in hearing stories about what motivates people to come to church. If you are interested in sharing yours please let the committee know. Shirley Malone shares her story below.

How Did I Get to this Place?

“My church life started when I was 8 years old. My family began attending a Presbyterian Church, the church my mother had always attended.

I became a good Presbyterian girl, and thought that after I graduated with my teaching degree I would research becoming a missionary.

Instead, I met my husband David, taught in public school, and a year later we moved from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Rochester, New York where he was finishing college.

It was a period when a lot of families were moving here for the father to work at the new business, Xerox, that was hiring. An employee there was telling co-workers about the Unitarian Church and that is how we ended up there for 50 years.

After those 50 years we found ourselves missing so many of our friends. People had moved to be with grown children who now lived elsewhere. Some simply were not around church any more, and some had passed. We were less committed, and we decided to take a hiatus from church.

During that hiatus we did visit other churches, including our sister church, the Universalist Church downtown. We met people, felt in tune with the services, and one Easter after the service, we looked at each other and said “We miss this.” We never looked back or continued being unchurched.

David died in January 2021. Unknown to this congregation, he had been sick beginning in 2002 with the first of 19 years of one serious medical problem after another. I very much yearned for a community where I could actively support activities and where I could find solace someday. All of that has happened.

The love, the caring, the commitment, the

service are so powerful. This is a message we send to all who come through our doors. It can be felt when people enter this space. This is my forever home.”

–Shirley Malone

The membership committee will be meeting October 19 at 1:30pm at the church. Anyone interested in working on membership is welcome. ❖

Animal Ministry Welcomes You!

Submitted by Lois Baum

Come join us! As an educational advocacy SJC, Animal Ministry covers a lot of ground. At our monthly Zoom meetings, we talk about various issues such as: puppy mills, feral cats, wearing leather/fur/wool, how eating animals affects climate change, contemplating nonhumans as persons vs property, and more. We share stories about our animal companions. Some of us have posted their photos to be part of the upcoming Zoom of our national UUAM “Celebration of the Animals” on Sunday 10/1/23 at 4pm. You can Zoom in for this annual service, it's easy to pre-register at this link: uuam.org.

Our group also enjoys sharing vegan meals together at local restaurants, potlucks, and events of other vegan organizations. When weather and health permit, we visit nearby animal sanctuaries like *ASHA*, *Savannah Pig Rescue*, and *Farm Sanctuary*. Carpool with us to the annual event in Byron NY at *Mockingbird Farm Animal Sanctuary* on Saturday 10/7/23, from 1-6pm (mockingbirdfarmny.com)!

You do not have to be vegan to join! We work to embrace the practice of non-cooperation and non-participation in anything that exploits non-humans, humans, or the environment. Leader, Lois Baum, may be contacted for more info. Join our 13-year-old SJC: Animal Ministry! ❖

EcoJustice: Eco-tip!

Submitted by Sarah Singal

Do you know of wild meadows or tiny bits of unmowed ground? Get some milkweed seeds to sprinkle there! See Sarah Singal for more info! ❖

Marvin Mich Memorial Lecture

Rev. Jim Antal

**“Living in a Climate Crisis World:
A Call to Hope and Action”**

Thursday, October 19, 2023

St. John Fisher University

Hermance Family Chapel

3690 East Ave, Rochester NY 14618

7:00 pm



Rev. Dr. Jim Antal is a denominational leader, climate activist, author, public theologian, and the author of “Climate Church, Climate World”. Jim has preached on climate change since 1988 in over 300 settings and has engaged in non-violent civil disobedience on numerous occasions. He currently serves as Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.



To REGISTER for in person attendance, OR to watch via Zoom, Click this link: <https://forms.gle/r9Luxxt5jmojPcRB8> or use the QR Code:



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**

Sabbatical Minister | Rev. Margaret Weis

Minister of Life Span Faith Development |
Rev. Michelle Yates

Music Director | Dr. Brock Tjosvold

Office Manager | Emma Barry

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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.