



First Universalist Church of Rochester

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**First Universalist
Church of Rochester**

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Sunday Services | December 2025

Dec. 7 | *When Hope is Hard to Find: A Blue Christmas Service*

As we enter the time of Advent and the holiday season, some of us have a hard time making space for all the cheer and merriment. When we're carrying grief, anxiety, fear for ourselves or the world, how do we also prepare for hope? How do we tell stories of love and joy with all this sorrow to hold?

— *Patti Goodwin*

Dec. 14 | *Preparing a Sanctuary*

How do we, in this season of waiting and preparation, drop our expectation of perfection and embrace the call to be imperfect sanctuaries for joy? Can we allow ourselves to invite in hope and love and delight, even when nothing is Just Right? Even when we weren't ready?

— *Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell*

Dec. 21 | *Stories in the Dark: A Solstice Celebration*

We humans have, across the world and through all our time of human-ness, gazed up at the big, scary, dark of the night sky and reached for one another through story and song. Join us to share in a solstice celebration for all ages as we tell ancient stories and new ones.

— *Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell*

Dec. 24 | *Christmas Eve Service - Love Shows Up*

When we say Love is at the center of our faith, what does that mean? Our faith has always claimed that Love shows up, in our ordinary lives, with extraordinary saving power. Tonight we tell stories of Love showing up even when it wasn't expected. † *This service begins at 7pm*

— *Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell*

Dec. 28 | *Cleansing Fire*

At this multigenerational New Year fire communion service, we will tell stories of light, hope, and belonging. Let us gather together to celebrate the risk and gift of beginning again in love.

— *Tom Williams & Kitty Forbush*

❖ **Most Services begin at 10:30am** ❖

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. ❖



Showing Up in Love

*A Message from
Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell*

Dear Ones,

December is a time when ministers love to wax poetical about the embodiment of Love. Love, the ancient texts and traditions we inherited tell us, is not some otherworldly force but a real and material quality of life. It shows up in the least expected places in the body of the web of life. As I prepare for this season, I am asking myself what part I am called to play in the ever-unfolding pageant of Love. Will I say yes to giving birth to love? Will there be room at our inn? Can I stand in awe of every child of Love, singing praises to the holiness within?

It's easy to look around our downtown neighborhood, from the warmth and security of our sanctuary, and feel compelled to make ourselves into saviors. I hope the age-old wisdom of this season will remind us that we are called into solidarity, not saviorism. There is a homelessness problem in Rochester, and there is one solution to it—housing people.

Our role, as witnesses to this problem who do not have the power to house people all on our own, begins with relationship. Along with a team of congregants, I've gotten to know a young woman veteran who regularly seeks safety under our eaves at night; she has been waiting a heartbreakingly long time for the federal support she is entitled to. I have been privileged to talk with a man who had access to housing but not transportation and whom we were able to help move to permanent housing. I've shared a cup of coffee with a young neighbor who just stopped by once before finding safer shelter in the morning.

We're building relationship on the side of power as well. We've met with the city's new Action Team, a police alternative for community care. They'll be visiting our property, as well as Washington Square Park, weekly to offer resources to our neighbors like stable shelter, food, storage for belongings, foster programs for pets, and mental health support.

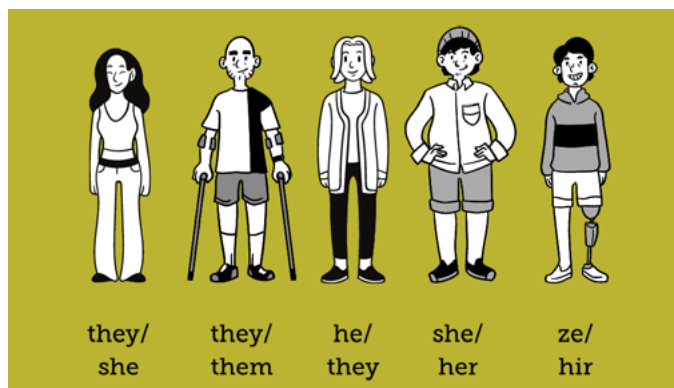
Relationship is also what allows us to set boundaries with our neighbors. We have asked

neighbors not to use our garden as a restroom. And we have invested in a portable restroom for the last few months, knowing that there is no overnight access to public bathrooms downtown. We have promised not to leverage police violence or interfere with neighbors overnight unless we fear imminent harm. And we've asked that no belongings be left in church doorways in the daytime, for safety and ease of use. Our unhoused neighbors have responded with understanding and gratitude, especially as church members have shown up to help them move their belongings in the morning.

I cannot pretend that my heart isn't broken by the way our wider community has neglected the needs of its most vulnerable citizens. I cannot pretend I'm not utterly frustrated that, in thousands of years, we haven't learned how to build a world where there is room at the inn for all of us. But I do trust in the wisdom of the ancient story—if we show up for one another in love, Love shows up for all of us.

With care,

Rev. Eileen ✦



Pronouns and Creating Safe Space

Submitted by the Communications Committee

For more than six years, our congregation has been supporting our trans and nonbinary community members by adding our pronouns to our name tags. It's really easy to do! We have provided stickers with pre-printed pronouns (and some left blank to personalize further) in boxes by the name tag board, and at both greeter tables. We can also ask visitors to write their pronouns on their temporary name tags. By having everyone's pronoun preferences on our tags, we create a true sanctuary for everyone who enters our church. ✦



Staff Bonus Time!

Submitted by Brian Mumey Finance Committee Chair

The staff at First Universalist is as hardworking and dedicated as they come! Once a year, church members and friends have the opportunity to show their appreciation in a special way: with a Holiday Bonus. We have 10 staff members: Rev. Eileen, Rev. Michelle, Brock, Emma, Albert, Maresa (finance admin), Carol, Lilly'anna (new childcare), Justin (Congregational Life Coordinator) and Oliver (tech).

This year's staff bonus collection started during the service on Sunday, November 30. You are welcome to donate in the offering basket, online, or by sending a check to the church. You can donate today online (select "Staff Holiday Bonus" in the purpose selection box) or send a check to the church (write "Staff Bonus" on the memo line).

Be sure your donation reaches us on or before December 7, to ensure that we can include your contribution in the bonuses before the December holidays. Happy Holidays! ❖



Handmade Holiday!

Submitted by Justin Wilson, Congregational Life Coord.

The economy. A vague, all-encompassing word for that complicated group of systems of exchange in our current capitalist society. Perhaps now more than ever, it is difficult to ethically engage in exchange, with so many necessities and modern conveniences produced by corporations that do not share our UU values. So many of these opaque conglomerations and matryoshka chains of corporations focus more on their bottom line and stock price than truly humanist values. Affordability is also increasingly out of reach, as the expectation of giving more and more during the holiday season grows each year.

This winter, we invite you to disengage from the trappings of tabulated productivity and purchasing. Presenting: the Handmade Holiday!

Support your fellow congregants' crafty endeavors while giving to good causes. From November 23 to December 21, bring in your handmade crafts to donate by placing them on the designated table in the library with a suggested donation value. Whether you knit it, carve it, print it, fold it, sew it, paint it, glue it, or a verb that hasn't been invented yet, bring it in!

On Sundays starting November 30 through December 21, you can purchase any of the handmade items by making a thoughtful donation, which will be used to fund church social justice projects in the coming year.

Looking for more ways to get involved? Contact me at conglife@uuroc.org. ❖



Immigration Issues Harvesting Justice Circle: Documentary Screening at Dryden Theatre

Submitted by Beth Ares

Our Harvesting Justice Circle invites you to join us for a screening of *Running To Stand Still—Migrants Search for Hope in the Promised Land*, which seeks to put a human face on the realities of immigration today by telling stories from migrants themselves. The purpose of *Running To Stand Still* is to encourage dialogue, educate the public about the injustices of our current system, and identify pathways to humane immigration reform.

The screening will be held on Monday, December 8, 7-9:30pm at the Dryden Theatre. The film will be followed by a town hall meeting with leaders from the community. Free admission, space is limited, registration required at runningtostandstillfilm.com. ❖

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, Dec. 7 | The Low-Level Trauma We All Live With *In-person*

Joy Lecesse will do a presentation on dealing with trauma—not just the “Big T” trauma of catastrophic events in our lives, but the “little t” trauma of the background of fear and uncertainty we all deal with in these troubled times.

Dec. 2 | Close To Home for the Holidays

What can we do this holiday season to keep our community's resources from migrating to the pockets of the world's wealthiest? Let's talk about withholding support from extractive capitalism and increasing support for our neighbors. Led by Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell.

Dec. 9 | Incarceration 101

Recently, so-called “antifa” activists, congressional candidates, and even our state's Attorney General have faced criminal prosecution. Animal Ministry member Adam Durand discusses how he ended up sentenced to six months in jail for protesting Wegmans' treatment of egg-laying hens, and how to pull through it.

Dec. 16 | Recent Trends in Scams, Frauds, & ID Theft

Tonight Daniel Lyon will cover trends that he's been dealing with in this area over the past five years as Manager of Lifespan's 'Scam Protection Program'. Daniel is a retired officer and will cover signs of a scam as well as resources for folks victimized this way.

Dec. 23 | Open Topic & 2026 Planning Session

Tonight we'll discuss what is on our minds as 2025 draws to a close as well as continue our discussion around suggestions for topics and presenters for our Zoom group sessions in the coming year. John Lukes will lead.

Dec. 30 | Our 2025 Joys and Concerns' Wrap-up

Let's share joys and concerns we all experienced this year. This may help us be more prepared to embark on the coming year's journey. John Lukes will lead.

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



New Social Justice Circle: Immigration Justice

Submitted by Bridget Watts

At its 2025 General Assembly, the Unitarian Universalist Association approved an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW), titled “Immigrants are People Who Have Inherent Worth and Inalienable Rights.” It said, in part:

“Our faith compels us to uphold the inherent worthiness and dignity of all people, including immigrants, and to insist they be treated with love, compassion, and justice. We reject policies and practices that deny immigrants their basic human rights—especially the right to due process protected under the U.S. Constitution and international law.”

In keeping with the AIW, and our Unitarian Universalist values, members of First Universalist have formed a new Social Justice Circle, Immigration Issues—Harvesting Justice, to promote and defend the rights and dignity of all our neighbors, particularly those who were not born in the US. We will do so by educating ourselves and others about immigration-related issues, and by identifying and taking actions, in collaboration with others, that further these goals.

Our first steps have been to share information and work with our sister congregation at Winton Rd. to promote the boycott of Avelo Airlines (which flies shackled prisoners to inhumane prisons for ICE).

To be added to our email list to be informed of opportunities for learning and action, email Beth Ares. Join us at our next meeting, Wednesday, Dec. 3, at 7pm, via Zoom (link in church calendar). ❖



Library Additions

Submitted by Justin Wilson, Congregational Life Coord.

In addition to the wonderful work of our Library and House teams in creating our new seating area in the library, we have new titles that have been added to the library!

- **Youth Ministry Advising**—A great guide if you would like to become more involved in stewarding and religious education of our growing number of youth congregants.
- **BLUU Notes: An Anthology of Love, Justice, and Liberation**—A collection of poetry, prayers, and more, the first publication from the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU).
- **A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism, Volumes 1 & 2**—Primary sources from our lengthy history, including sources of inspiration from ancient history and contemporary materials.
- **Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies**—Collected by UUA President, Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, featuring writings and inspiration from two dozen leaders describing how love is at the center of our faith.
- **Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection**—The annual UUA Common Read, this guide “is a powerful road map for individuals and organizations who are ready to deepen their commitment to social justice from racial justice advocate Deepa Iyer.”

These books can be found on the Unitarian/Universalist shelves (288-289) in the library. All library books may be checked out by any member or regular attender for up to four weeks—simply follow the instructions at the library desk.

The Library team is looking for more volunteers and supporters. If interested, email Marcy Klein! ✦



2026 Service Auction!

Submitted by Ann Rhody

2026 is coming—and so is the 2026 Service Auction: February 1, 2026!

Do you have a special talent or skill? Maybe you're a great cook—or you can host a lunch with flair. Perhaps you love to work in a garden or clean a house—or to teach someone what you know about these things.

These are just some of the talents, services, and skills shared by our church members and friends as part of our Service Auction! You offer up a service by donating it to the Auction, and other folks bid on it. The proceeds of these transactions go to raise money for the church's programs—from Music to Social Justice to Coffee Hour and beyond.

The 2026 Service Auction is scheduled for February 1, but the time to plan for your offering is NOW! Donor forms will be available by January 1, so please do some thinking, collaborate with friends, and get ready for fun and fellowship!

More detailed information about the Service Auction, including volunteer opportunities, will be available mid-December, but if you have questions before then, please contact Ann Rhody at auction@uuuoc.org. For now, please get those 2026 calendars out, and plan to stay after the service on February 1 for the Service Auction! ✦





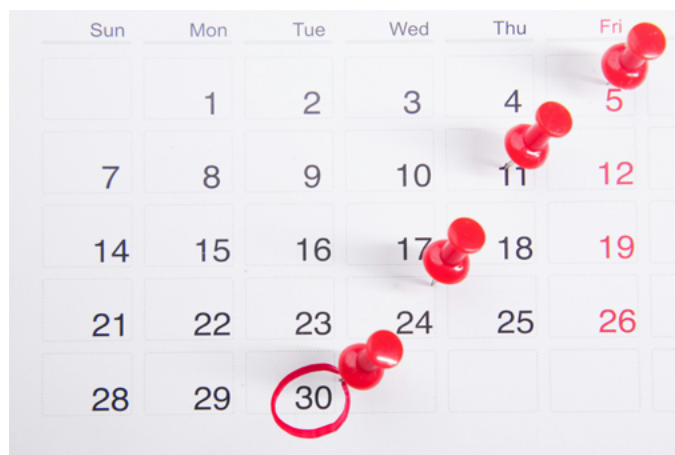
Open Listening for All: Sponsored by the Rochester Theater Organ Society

Submitted by Charlie Courtsal

Bring yourself, family and friends to listen and watch members of the Rochester Theater Organ Society practice some of their favorite pieces on the pipe organ in our sanctuary.

From 1:30-4:30pm on Sunday, December 7, community organists will sign up to play the Hope-Jones, just for fun. Usually they play on the Wurlitzer organ at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, but it is under renovation at this time. So, we invited them to come to First Universalist. Church members are welcome to come and go, walk up to the console and speak with the organists, and listen as well for this free event.

They will probably be back on February 16 and March 16, so mark your calendars. Contact Charlie Courtsal with any questions. ❖



Room Reservations

Submitted by Justin Wilson, Congregational Life Coord.

Just a friendly reminder that our church can be – and frequently is – rented out to committees, groups, and other community members. But to make sure there are no conflicts or misunderstandings, follow these simple guidelines!

First, whenever you want to use a church space, check our online calendar on our website: uuroc.org, then click 'Calendar.' Make sure the space you want to utilize is not already booked.

Second, fill out the appropriate reservation form online, through the same page. While you will not receive an automatic confirmation email, your reservation is entered in the calendar within a few business days. Double check the calendar to confirm. You can also reserve a Zoom virtual room or our OWL camera for meetings this way.

Lastly, make sure when you utilize a space that you have reserved the space for the correct day and time. Don't assume a space will be free, even if you usually meet at that time. If you have not properly reserved the space, you may find somebody else has and you are not be able to use it!

Using this calendar helps prevent double-bookings and other problems. It also makes it easier for congregants to find events and meetings they may want to attend.

If you have questions, email our Office Manager, Emma Barry, at office@uuroc.org. ❖



Standing, left to right: Howard Spindler, Moritz Wagner, Michael Scott
Seated, left to right: Marcy Klein, Tom Ruganis, Sarah Singal
Bottom row, left to right: Adam Durand, Ed Deller, Karen Dau

Spotlight on Committees & Groups: *House Committee*

Submitted by Moritz Wagner, Chair

In our UU community, so much of the heart and hands-on work happens behind the scenes — in our committees. That's why the Communications Committee is presenting *Spotlight on Committees & Groups*, a regular newsletter feature that celebrates the people and purpose behind these vital teams.

Each month, we'll lift up one committee's (or group's) mission, share what they're working on, and highlight ways you can get involved. Whether you're passionate about justice, music, spiritual exploration, care and connection, or the logistics that keep us running smoothly — there's a place for your gifts. Whether you're new to our congregation or have been here for years, we hope *Spotlight on Committees & Groups* will inspire you to get involved in a new way.

We hope this series will deepen your understanding of how we live our UU values through shared leadership and collaborative service — and maybe even spark your curiosity to join in!

Let's build beloved community, together.

Current Chair & Members: Moritz Wagner (chair), Marcy Klein (vice-chair), Michael Scott, Karen

Dau, Ed Deller, Sarah Singal, Howard Spindler, Tom Ruganis, and Adam Durand

Your committee's mission or purpose: To keep our church building in shipshape.

Committee responsibilities: Building-related repair and maintenance.

Something you wish people knew about your committee: The Garden Committee is a subgroup of the House Committee.

One big/special project your committee has been working on lately:

- New screens and storm windows for Clara Barton Lounge, volunteer office, and Court Street entrance.
- Refinishing doors to sanctuary
- Beautification project
- Summer cooling ventilation project.

Are you looking for new members? Yes!

Are members voted on by the congregation or do they volunteer? Volunteer

How often do you meet? Monthly

How do you meet? Hybrid

Are there any special qualifications/talents required to serve on your committee? Good communicator to work with contractors, for some projects ability to walk stairs, ability to fix things desirable.

What is the Committee email? House@uuroc.org. ❖





Membership Committee

Submitted by Donna Anderson, Membership Chair

What a bustling time for our church community! Welcoming our new minister, Rev. Eileen and our Life Coordinator, Justin Wilson, 10 new members and children, and many new visitors each week! Adam is a new member who has jumped in with both feet: taken over the the garden in front and helping with folks living in our alcove as well as joining the board, and has joined the choir. Adam is also in process of fixing the window in the Clara Barton Lounge!

I asked Adam to write an article for the December *Outlook*. Without further ado, here is Adam's story. May it resonate with you! Welcome, Adam!

"In 2008 I was in desperate need of community. Politically, I was struggling with the Obama Administration falling fall short of the "Hope" they had promised. As a noted local activist, I was losing inspiration as my dearest radical friends were moving away. And my love life was, frankly, a mess.

A friend invited me to attend a service at a local church: First Unitarian Church of Rochester on Winton Road. And the service was life-changing. The fact that so many people gathered in that space to celebrate life in this world instead of worrying about the next grew my heart and made everything seem right in that small part of the world.

As I was starting to enmesh myself with the church, I also made sure to check out First Universalist. And although it was lovely, I was more drawn to the 30-something cuties who were populating First Unitarian at the time. The only person I remember from my 2008

visit is Michael Scott, who I came away thinking was the Reverend.

Although I regularly attended First Unitarian's services over the years, even running A/V and joining the staff as a audio and video editor, I kept occasionally attending First Universalist and liking the different vibe. And although First Unitarian felt almost like a home, it never felt quite right enough to sign the book and become an official member.

During the initial COVID lockdowns, I caught some First Universalist services over Zoom and found connection during that disconnected time. And when in-person masked services came back, I was there, attending a very notable service in March of 2022 when Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell came out as gender non-conforming and using they/them pronouns. Their vulnerability and empathy as a minister made me feel a new connection to the church.

Then Tom Williams found me and latched on. He recruited me to attend the Mark's Gathering of Men at Camp Unirondack that year. As someone who struggles with my own gender identity, I was skeptical that I'd fit in, but Tom assured me I'd be welcome and he was right.

Now there are so many aspects of First Universalist that I couldn't imagine my life without. I've been leading the Garden Committee, which due to community necessity has become a unique way to support our unhoused neighbors. Our Director of Music, Brock Tjosvold, welcomed me into the choir and week after week we sing inspiring songs. And I've become close with so many folks here at church who accept me not in spite of our differences, but because of them.

I'm so proud to be a member of First Universalist Church of Rochester, to have a community space that is a spiritual home and so much more. I'm beyond happy to serve, to love, and to explore alongside all of you."

Adam Durand, November 2025

Thank you, Adam, for sharing with us, and happy holidays, everyone! ❖



Finance Rerun: *Pledge Payment via Automatic Debit*

Submitted by Brian Mumey, Finance Chair

Are you tired of writing a check every month to pay your pledge? Tired of forgetting to write your pledge payment check? Want better control when funds will be pulled from your bank account than your bank's Bill Pay allows? We have a solution for all these issues: Automatic Debit!

First Universalist is now able to set up recurring transactions to automatically debit your checking account every month. Set it up once and the transactions will occur on the first day of every month in the amount you specify. You can change the amount or cancel your automatic debit at any time.

If you are interested in subscribing to automatic debit, please send an email to finance@uuroc.org. We will send you the required form.

Please note the following:

- Automated debit processing will begin the first of the month following submission of the form.
- You can submit the form by mailing it to: Finance Chair, First Universalist Church of Rochester, 150 S. Clinton Ave, Rochester, NY 14604, by dropping it in the collection plate on Sunday, or by scanning the form to a PDF and emailing it to finance@uuroc.org. Don't forget to include a voided check (scanned if using email).
- Your account will be debited the first of the month unless the first occurs on a holiday or week-end. In those cases, the debit will occur the next business day.
- To cancel or change the amount of your automatic debit, email finance@uuroc.org. We will make every attempt to process your request prior to the first of the next month, though this cannot be guaranteed.

If you have any questions about this, or other pledge payment options, email finance@uuroc.org. ♦



Fall Work Day Participants Cleaned Up!

Submitted by Ed Deller

A work day was held Nov 1, 2025, to spruce up the church and prepare it for the winter season. Coordinated by our House Committee, the event had 15 dedicated and caring volunteers who, among other things, installed storm windows, checked the fire safety equipment, fixed loose pews, deep cleaned all over the church, winterized the garden and moved furniture.

Thank you to those who participated: Adam Durand, Heather Jones, Marcy Klein, Newcomb Losh, Jim Milch, Dwight Montague, Marty Muggleton, Brian Mumey, Tom Ruganis, Michael Scott, Howard Spindler, Moritz Wagner, Justin Wilson, Michelle Yates and Ed Deller. ♦

**HERE'S A COMPLETE LIST
OF ALL THE TIMES IN THE
BIBLE, JESUS CONDEMNS
ANYONE FOR THEIR GENDER
IDENTITY OR SEXUAL
ORIENTATION:**

I HOPE THIS LIST HAS BEEN HELPFUL.

johnpavlovitz.com

Puzzles & Pumpkins Event on 10/29!

Submitted by Justin Wilson



Blessed Are We

Blessed are we who gather with open hearts,
together, in this space, today.

Blessed are we: the chalice-lighters of resistance,
justice, love, and faith.

Blessed are we: the heretics, the outcasts,
the walkers of our own way.

Blessed are we: the border-crossers, the refugees,
the immigrants, the poor, the wanderers who are not lost.

Blessed are we: the transgressors, the trespassers,
the passers-by, the cause-takers, the defiant, the compliant.

Blessed are we: the hand-extenders,
the sign-makers, the protestors, the protectors.

Blessed are we: the trans women, the trans men,
the non-binary, the cisgender, the multigender, the no gender.

Blessed are we: the friend, the stranger,
the lonely, the hidden, the visible, the authentic.

Blessed are we who rise in solidarity,
blessed are we who cannot, blessed are we who do not.

Blessed are we for this is our Beloved Community,
and this is who we are.

- by Andrea Hawkins-Kamper

WHERE DO YOU FIND TRANQUILLITY?



IN NATURE?



IN SELF-REFLECTION?



IN ART?



IN GRATITUDE?



IN SOLITUDE?



IN FAITH?



IN REST?



IN DECLUTTERING?



IN SELF CARE?

gemma CORRELL (FOR) WELLCOME COLLECTION 2021

YEARLY resolutions

20 **THIS YEAR** *i will* _____

JAN **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

FEB **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

MAR **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

APR **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

MAY **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

JUN **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

JUL **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

AUG **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

SEP **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

OCT **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

NOV **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

DEC **THIS MONTH** *i will* _____

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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. Eileen Casey-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 | Justin Wilson

Nursery Care Provider | Carol Williams

Worship begins at 10:30am on Sundays

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2025–2026

Michael Scott (*Pres.*), Heather Jones (*Clerk*),
Shelley Adams, Bridget Watts, Howard Spindler,
Adam Durand, & Clinton Swingle

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.**