



# Our Outlook

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**First Universalist**  
Church of Rochester

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## Sunday Services | December 2024

### Dec. 1 | *Oh, We Give Thanks*

How can gratitude be a transformative force in our lives, both in daily, small ways and in large ways too? What does it mean to ask for gratitude in a season that so often celebrates genocide? A service to embrace this spiritual concept in light of the Thanksgiving holiday. — *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

### Dec. 8 | *Prepare, Discern, Joy*

How do we prepare for and recognize God's presence and how do we discover joy that will not be robbed by current events? We will lift up the work of REACH that First Universalist has supported. — *Rev. Peter Peters*

### Dec. 15 | *Faith, Hope, Love, Truth*

First Universalist's sanctuary is marked by four figures: Faith, Hope, Love, Truth. The Bible quote on the wall behind the pulpit refers to the reading that the greatest of these is love. How have our Universalist ancestors left a theological trail for us in the present day? — *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

### Dec. 22 | *Let There Be Light!*

A celebration of the Winter Solstice and the sun's return. In story, song, and ritual, let this morning remind all of the hope of light returning, even in places like Rochester. In a place and world whose weather patterns are changing due to impending environmental collapse, how do we celebrate a return of the sun? — *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

### Dec. 24 | *Be Not Afraid † This service begins at 7pm*

On Christmas Eve, let us explore the changes of heart that had to take place throughout the story of old. Places where, as the Grinch movie describes, people's hearts had to grow ten times. As we examine the transformative power of this holiday, let us embrace the changes of heart in the Christmas story. — *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell & Rev. Michelle Yates*

### Dec. 29 | *Do We Desire to be Transformed?*

Search your heart for the places and spaces you would like to change. Search your heart and get honest about the parts of you that are hard to let go of. As we prepare for the New Year's arrival, this service will be an annual Fire Communion, a time to surrender to the changing year and release what no longer serves life and growth. — *Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

❖ **Most 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. ❖*



## Do We Desire to Be Transformed?

*A Message from  
Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

A lot has been changing around First Universalist this fall—not only within the walls of the church, but also in the larger context of our community and our country.

We have a new President of the United States. Election results came through. The church is making changes to move towards better welcome and active congregational growth. Beloveds of this church have been sick and have returned to health. Some have had surgeries. Some of us have faced difficult and seemingly impossible circumstances. It has all been a lot.

First Universalist’s Committee on Ministry has been working on a covenant and a new procedure for how to handle and address conflict. Covenant as in agreements about how we are going to be together, promises we make to one another as a community. These two documents couldn’t come at a better time.

With so much change, conflict is inevitable—normal, even. And it is good to be reminded of our shared values, of ways we seek to address conflict and repair harm in times like these. Please keep an ear out in the New Year for ways to learn more.

What I continue to ponder is how hard transformation and change can be. And having that difficulty rub up against the reality that things are always changing, we are ever-transforming. I wonder sometimes how much I actually want to be transformed.

It feels so comfortable to do things the way I know how, to hold the beliefs I think are correct. I wonder if you too wrestle with this, struggle with it. Do we actually desire to be transformed? Does First Universalist hope to change in the ways our faith calls us to? I am interested to know what you think.

In Faith and Courage,  
Rev. Lane-Mairead ❖



## Embracing Transformation

*A Message from  
Rev. Michelle Yates*

I don’t know how much snow we will get this year, but the longer darkness tells us we are at that time filled with reflection, connection, and transformation. In Unitarian Universalism, we embrace the idea that change is a vital part of existence. The winter holidays offer us an opportunity to explore this theme of Transformation in our lives and communities.

December invites us to pause, to look inward, and to consider the changes that have shaped us over the past year. Just as the earth rests and rejuvenates during the cold months, we too must allow ourselves the grace to reflect. This is a time to let go of what no longer serves us, shed old habits or grievances, and make space for new growth.

The winter holidays each have their own rituals that speak to the heart of transformation. From the lights of Hanukkah symbolizing hope in the face of adversity, to the Winter Solstice celebrating the return of the sun and the promise of longer days ahead, these traditions remind us of resilience of the human spirit. They teach us that even in the dark times, there is potential for rebirth and always hope.

I invite you to engage in practices that foster Transformation this month. Check out the Worship Theme packet in our This Week email. Consider the act of lighting a candle to symbolize the illumination of hope and the warmth of community. Share stories of personal transformation during gatherings, allowing the experiences of others to inspire your own journey. Engage in service projects that uplift those in need, reminding us that our collective efforts can create a ripple effect of positive change. As we gather with family and friends, let us also remember those who may be experiencing difficulty or loneliness. Reach out to others, to offer support and compassion.

Let us celebrate not only the joy of the season but embrace opportunities for connection, and the spirit of transformation that is at the heart of winter holidays and our Unitarian Universalist faith. Wishing you a warm and transformative holiday season!

Yours in the Journey,  
Rev. Michelle ❖



## Finance News: Staff Bonus Time!

*Submitted by Brian Mumey, 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 our appreciation in a special way: with a Holiday Bonus. This year we have two additional staff members, which brings us to a total of 10: Rev. Lane-Mairead, Rev. Michelle, Brock, Emma, Albert, Maresa (Finance Admin), Carol, Lily (Childcare), Madi (Congregational Life Coordinator) and Oliver (Tech).

This year's staff bonus collection will take place during the service on Sunday, December 1. You are welcome to donate in the offering basket, online, or by sending a check to the church. **If you send a check or donate online, please indicate that the donation is for the Staff Holiday Bonuses.**

**Be sure your donation reaches us on or before December 8, to ensure that we can include your contribution in the bonuses before the December holidays.** Happy Holidays! ❖



## Save our Garden Committee!

*Submitted by Sarah Singal*

Our Community Garden will end if no one steps up to lead it. The Garden Committee, part of the House Committee, has been aging out and our remaining members are limited. If you would like to discuss the future of our gardens contact Sarah Singal or Ed Deller. All options are open! ❖

## Two Queer Community Events Coming Up!

*Submitted by Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell*

### Naming Ceremony and Legal Clinic

Saturday, December 14, 2024, at First Unitarian Church of Rochester.

- Legal Clinic from 10am-4pm
- Naming Ceremony at 4pm

First Universalist will join with First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua to host a public **Naming Ceremony** for transgender and gender non-conforming people in the greater Rochester area. The ceremony will be preceded with a legal clinic providing support for name changes, sex changes, and second parent adoption. An LGBTQIA+ resource fair will also be provided during the day. Areas for support: providing food for a potluck lunch, attending the ceremony at 4pm, serving as a notary or legal advisor. Please contact Rev. Lane-Mairead to participate at [minister@uuroc.org](mailto:minister@uuroc.org). This event will be hosted at First Unitarian Church.

### Save the Date: Big Gay Wedding Jan. 11!

First Universalist will host a Big Gay Wedding alongside First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua to provide wedding ceremonies for the LGBTQ+ community free of charge! Exact times and ways to offer support forthcoming—keep an eye on church communications. ❖



# 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](mailto:DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org) for the link, or look on [uuroc.org](http://uuroc.org)!

## **Sunday, Dec. 1 | Global Warming \*In-Person\***

Dwight Montague will present on climate change: how to think about and respond to it. We meet together at 9:15am the first Sunday of each month through June 2025 in the upstairs Chalice Room. All are welcome.

## **December 3 | A Future That Works**

Our country has had great successes in the past, and continues to act as though, with modest adjustments, our future success will be assured. The USA and the world have a lot invested in the status quo. But times have changed, and new thinking, policies, and actions are needed. Hank Stone will present.

## **December 10 | Founding Fathers vs Christian Nationalism**

Many “founding fathers” were deists and active in Unitarian churches in the Revolutionary era. They experienced the complexities of persecution from church and state entanglement. Let's consider this issue from the viewpoint of historical figures who were there, and consider the confusing and manipulative statements that you might be hearing from the Christian Nationalist movement. Rev. Michelle will facilitate.

## **December 17 | Rochester Education Foundation**

Phil Hounshell from the *Rochester Education Foundation* will present on their ‘College Access & Success Program’ working with Rochester high school students.

## **December 24 | \*\*\*Christmas Eve Church Service\*\* (No Zoom Drop-in Tonight)**

## **December 31 | New Years Resolutions or “Best-By” List**

There are ways to be and things to do while “making our way” into our 70's, 80's and 90's and do so living well in the meantime. Joy Leccese will be our NYE presenter.

Have a topic for us? Contact our team with your proposal at [DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org](mailto:DropInDiscussion@uuroc.org). ❖

# Service Auction: Start Planning Now!

Submitted by Ann Rhody

Do you have a special talent or skill? Can you make a favorite dessert that everyone just raves about? Does pulling someone else's weeds or cleaning someone else's house give you a great feeling? Do you love hosting a dinner party with flair?

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.

The 2025 Service Auction is scheduled for February 2, 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 info will be available mid-December. If you have questions please contact [auction@uuroc.org](mailto:auction@uuroc.org). ❖

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# Membership News

Submitted by Donna Anderson, chair

The Membership Committee met recently to discuss the first module of our training program from the Unitarian Universalist Association. At the end of each section were questions to discuss. Examples of the questions were: ways that give us the sense of belonging in a group, what stories do we tell about our church, what will we want our new stories to be and what skills make a good leader/elder? These are interesting questions. If you would like to discuss these please reach out! Committee members: Donna Anderson, Grant Fish, Shirley Malone, Kevin Parkes, Karen LoBracco, Clinton Swingle and of course Rev. Lane-Maired and Madi Russell, our Congregational Life Coordinator.

There was a brief brainstorming session on ways to involve new folks and visitors. We will keep you posted as these ideas get put into action. Please share any ideas you might have about this!

This is an exciting time for us. If you'd like to get in on it, join our committee! Happy Holidays to all! ❖



# HFA: Community Forum on Homelessness

Submitted by Chris DeGolyer

In case you missed it, First Universalist hosted a forum on November 9 to discuss homelessness in Rochester, featuring several leaders who are implementing solutions locally. Andy Carey, founder of MC Collaborative and board member of REACH, spoke about their services. MC Collaborative makes outreach visits to homeless people all around the city, bringing food, health care, and offers of other services. REACH operates shelters and plans to build a tiny home village in the city. Andy spoke about how the current system often works against getting people into housing. Patrick Hanna, also a REACH board member, explained the cost of homelessness, noting that Monroe County is spending \$12.2 million, or about \$67,500 per homeless person per year on crisis services (ambulances, emergency rooms, jail, courts) that act only as short-term bandaids, not as off-ramps from homelessness. He pointed out that Rochester has about 5,000 empty houses and over 1,000 people needing housing.



Captain Gabriel Person, head of Community Services for the Rochester Police Department (RPD), described H.O.T. (Homeless Outreach Team), a collaboration of the RPD, non-profit organizations, and faith-based groups who together visit homeless people around the city every Thursday, building relationships and offering services. Two of our church members, Bill Schubmehl and Elizabeth Osta, are active H.O.T. volunteers. Tonia Jones of the Forensic Intervention Team (FIT) described how FIT evaluates unhoused people for mental health and addiction problems and can legally intervene to get them into treatment, as well as making follow-up visits.



left to right are Marti Eggers, Patrick Hanna, Andy Carey, Tonia Jones, and Captain Gabriel Person.

Both Andy Carey and Captain Person spoke about treating homeless people without judging and with respect. They emphasized the importance of patiently building relationships with people who have been traumatized so that they can trust enough to use the services offered.

Over 50 people from First Universalist and elsewhere in the community attended and asked questions that sparked lively discussions, such as the Department of Social Services' use of sanctions, which prevents many people from receiving assistance.

Many thanks to the speakers who inspired us to think, serve, and advocate for change and to the staff and volunteers who made the forum possible. ❖

**Erratum:** The numbers listed in November *Outlook's* HFA article showed the numbers of known homeless people in Monroe County over a year, rather than the one night Point-In-Time Count that takes place every January.

Here are the correct numbers for the Point-in-Time count:

Fiscal Year	In Shelters	Unsheltered	Total
2023.....	803	• 42	• 845
2024.....	992	• 67	• 1,059

## 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!

- **Dec. 5 | Music from 100 Years Ago**

Pianist Tony Caramia presents a sampling of wonderful popular songs from 1924, that have become standards. Guest performers include students from the studio of Sara Gazarek, Professor of Jazz Voice.

- **Dec. 12 | Daphne Piano Trio**

Graduate Eastman students violinist Chihiro Kakishima, cellist Hannah Sohn, and pianist Huiping Cai perform trio by Ravel. ❖



## EcoJustice News

*Submitted by Sarah Singal*

The next meeting of the EcoJustice group will be on January 5, 2025, at noon in the Chalice Room. No meeting in December, but come read our bulletin board at coffee hour and we can talk! ❖

## From the Nominating Committee

*Submitted by Nancy Gaede*

Our congregation is fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented people in its midst. That's what it takes to keep a church alive and vibrant.

It also takes leadership. The congregation gets to elect individuals for these leadership positions at the annual meeting in June: Board of Trustees, Committee on Ministry, and Nominating Committee.

The Board of Trustees oversees the business of the church. To be on the Board, an individual must have been an active congregation member for one year. The term of service is three years. A trustee can be elected for two consecutive terms.

The Committee on Ministry keeps an eye on the overall health of the congregation and works with the Minister, the Board, and lay leaders to further the mission of the church. To be on this committee, a person must have been a member of the congregation for three years. A committee member may serve for up to three years.

The Nominating Committee is tasked with developing a pool of candidates for each open elected position. The committee also works to find delegates for official denominational meetings. To serve on this committee, you must have been congregation member for two years. The term of service is two years, and a committee member may serve two consecutive terms.

Each of these positions requires a commitment to the congregation, the ability to problem-solve,

and a willingness to work collaboratively to further the mission of the church.

If you have any questions or if you might be interested in being considered for one of the open positions, please contact the Nominating Committee at [nomcom@uuroc.org](mailto:nomcom@uuroc.org) or get in touch with any nominating committee member: Nancy Gaede, Janus Mary Jones, Micky Toker, Grant Fish, or Dwight Montague. ❖



## House News

*Submitted by Ed Deller*

Seventeen members and friends joined our Fall Work Day when we spruced up our church building and grounds and prepared for the winter season. Many thanks go to Clinton Swingle, Karen Dau, Jim Milch, Brian Mumej, Connie Valk, Moritz Wagner, Heather and Bill Jones, Rev Michelle Yates, Eileen Fernandez, Grant Fish, Kitty Forbush, Tom Ruganis, Marcy Klein, Sarah Singal, and Newcomb Losh.

The House Committee also recently completed some big projects. Railings have been installed at the Clinton and Court Street church entrance, the Court Street railings leading to the train room were scraped and painted, new storm windows were installed in the Clara Barton Lounge, Court Street and 2nd floor bathroom windows, wi-fi thermostats were installed. Thank you to Marcy Klein, Newcomb and Evan Losh, Moritz Wagner, and Michael Scott for their work on these respective projects.

A sub-group of the House Committee, along with Charlie Courtsal, has been evaluating plans for improving ventilation in the sanctuary to make the space more comfortable in the hot days of summer. More details will be brought to the congregation in the near future.

Fall is also a time for fire system and elevator inspections, steam system start up, and more. All these are coordinated behind the scenes by the House Committee so that our sacred space remains safe and cozy. If anyone is interested in joining our team please contact Ed Deller. ❖

# New York State Convention of Universalists 2024

Submitted by David Damico

I often hear the puzzling statement, “I didn't know there were any Universalists around these days.” If you are a Unitarian Universalist, then by default, you are part of our denomination which includes traditions from both Unitarianism and Universalism. It should not be surprising that the two play a huge role unifying and defining our denomination. It is in this spirit that the 199th Annual Meeting of the *New York State Convention of Universalists* was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, in Williamsville, NY, on October 25–26, 2024.



This year's keynote speaker was The Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto, minister and activist, living in the Pacific Northwest. Their message to those attending was “The Precious Light We Carry.”

Rev. Soto's keynote included ministerial and personal experiences, poetry, and stories, all with heartfelt messages of hope and activism.

The opening event on Friday was held at the convention hotel, where many attendees gathered to meet up with distant friends and socialize. That event was well attended with over 35 people.

Saturday morning the church parking lot was full. The cozy confines of the 1960s Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst was bright and cheerful. The church is built with exposed timber and curved structural ribbing, giving a sense of intimacy of space and embracing its inhabitants, a very welcoming place.

The Amherst church was prepared for visitors and had a professional chef/congregant making and serving meals. Saturday morning's breakfast was nutri-

tious and plentiful. Yum!

The convention opened with opening worship lead by UU Church of Amherst minister, Rev. Michelle Buhite. A table set up with small votives and a chalice served as a symbol for unity as all attendees were invited to light a candle amongst the others.



The keynote started at 9:15am when Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto spoke to the theme of the event. Since the entire keynote will be present in the *Universalist Herald* in early 2025, I will sum it up to say they spoke about the right we have to take a rest, giving ourselves permission to pause for reflection and solace. Rev. Soto is a well spoken advocate for justice and a poet of note. The variety of original and quoted works and messages were tightly woven with enthusiasm and zest for sharing their message.

The keynote was followed by the annual business meeting in which I had a chance to speak about how the *Herald* has served as messenger and printed “town square”.

Last on the agenda were the workshops, led by various ministers and Ann Rhody, president of NYSCU. The titles were, “You May Not Know” (resources for individuals and groups), “Allyship Across State Lines,” “Membership Development,” “and “Nature Spirituality Practice—Church of the Wild.”

Closing worship was lead by Rev. Sally Hamlin, member of the UU Church of Amherst and former minister of our congregation.

My takeaway is that I want more! The event was embracing, informational, encouraging, and spiritual. If you're feeling a call to share your UU values in a friendly space with UUs from distant locations, you'd enjoy everything NYSCU has to offer. Although “Unitarian” is not in the name, its values are reflected in the tone and message of the weekend and has much to offer new members and seasoned alike.

NYSCU is held annually and will be celebrating its 200th anniversary on October 24–25, 2025, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton. More info at [nyscu.org](http://nyscu.org). ❖





**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**

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2024–2025**

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More info is available on our website: [uuroc.org](http://uuroc.org)

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