

Summer 2026 Programs at First U

Registration forms are linked in this guide, which will be updated regularly online at:

<https://firstuniversalistchurch.org/spiritual-growth>. (Use your phone's camera to scan the code at right.)



FULL COMMUNITY CONNECTION POINTS

Pancake Breakfast and Game Playing for Trans and Gender Expansive Folx

Saturday, July 18; Breakfast 9:30-10:30 am, Games/conversation 10:30 am to noon, at First U | [RSVP Here](#)

Join us at a pancake breakfast open to individuals and families with trans and gender expansive identities. This is an opportunity to see how large and varied our community is. We build community by being together. You may even make some new connections. We will eat and then have time for games. Bring a game for all ages, if you would like to share! (If you prefer to hang out and connect with folks around the table, that is fine as well.) *This breakfast is open to transgender and gender expansive kids, youth, and adults, and to cisgender allies who are parents and siblings of trans and gender expansive children and youth. Otherwise, cisgender folks are not invited to the breakfast. However, they can be allies by spreading the word about the breakfast to trans and gender expansive loved ones in their lives and encouraging them to come! Please spread the invitation widely: church membership is not required for attendance.*

VISITORS AND NEWCOMERS/NEW-ISHS

Membership Classes at First U

This class is for congregants who have decided that they want to become members. Participants learn about First Universalist, the broader UU movement, and membership. Even if you're a lifelong UU interested in membership, we ask that you take the membership class at First Universalist as it helps orient folks to this congregation and helps build community.

We are offering three different membership class times this Summer:

[Class 1: Saturday, June 20, 9:00 am-1:00 pm \(potluck\) - Room 209](#)

[Class 2: Wednesdays, July 15 and 22, 6:00-8:00 pm - Room 201](#)

[Class 3: Wednesdays, Aug 26 and Sept. 2, 6:00-8:00 pm - Room 201](#)

Newcomers Circle - September

Wednesdays, Sept. 9, 16, 23, 30, 6:00-8:00 pm | [RSVP Here](#)

(Note: The first meeting will include sitting together at the Sept. 9 Community Dinner, then gathering in a classroom for the rest of the program that evening.)

Newcomers Circles create a rich, supportive environment in which to share and grapple with our emerging UU values, theology, identity, and sense of belonging. This 4-session gathering is a caring and structured group to dig deeper into Unitarian Universalism and further connection at church. This Circle is intended for members and non-members alike who are discerning if and/or how they will commit to and continue their spiritual journey at First U as Unitarian Universalists. Please plan to attend at least three of the four sessions. Registration is limited to 9. The first session is required for group cohesion and trust building. Newcomers Circle is not a replacement or prerequisite for the Membership Class—they are complimentary curriculums that may be done in any order. *Facilitated by Ginny Belden-Charles.*

FAITHFUL ACTION

Hiking, history and nature at Bdote-Ft. Snelling State Park

Saturday, July 11, 9:30-11:30 am | [RSVP Here](#)

Please join church member Cathy Geist and a park naturalist as we hike at Ft. Snelling State Park. We will walk to Bdote, where the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers converge. Dakota people consider this location as a sacred place of creation. Together, in the context of this area's indigenous history, we'll learn more about the amazing diversity of life here and why this spot is sacred. *We'll meet in the parking lot near the Visitor Center, where the park road ends. Stop at the entrance building to purchase a 1-day park pass if you need one.*



PASTORAL & COMMUNITY CARE

Grief Group (on Zoom)

First Sundays, June 7, July 5, Aug 2, Sept 6, 4:00-5:30 pm | [Register to receive Zoom link](#)

The Grief Group meets the first Sunday on Zoom. It is a gathering for those who are grappling with the web of feelings associated with the loss of a loved one. A group of souls who share, listen and care. A community interested in exploring new life invitations. Come as you are, when you feel moved to attend. (This is a drop-in group). We will be here for you. *Facilitated by Jen Keating, Seminarian at United Theological Seminary.*

Caregivers Support Group (on Zoom)

Second Sundays: 1:00-2:30 pm: June 14, July 12, Aug 9, Sept 13 | [Register to receive Zoom link](#)

This is a drop-in group Caring for a family member who needs special care is a demanding and often unseen or unacknowledged role. Whether you're caring for an aging parent, or a loved one with a chronic health condition, join the Caregivers group for mutual support, connection, and community building. When we gather, we'll light a chalice, have time for introductions, and share a reading, then move into deeper sharing, support, and reflection. *Facilitated by Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Care-Partner Support Group

Fourth Thursday of the month, 2:00-3:30 pm: July 23, Aug 27, Sept 24, Room 201 | [RSVP Here](#)

Caregiving for a spouse/partner has its own nuances and realities for the care provider. This group is an opportunity to confidentially share, learn from one another, and to receive support. *Led by Rev Laura Smidzik.*

Mild Cognitive Impairment: We are Holding it Together

(Time and format to be determined) | [RSVP Here](#) by July 4

Early mild cognitive impairment impacts our lives in a number of ways. This group is for people who are experiencing mild cognitive impairment with the goal of sharing stories, creating community, and reducing isolation. We will contact all who are interested and decide on dates, time, and if it will be in person or online. *Facilitated by Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Demystifying Dementia

Sunday, July 12, 11:30 am-12:30 pm, Room 209 | [RSVP Here](#)

Do you have a person in your life with dementia? Join congregant and Dementia Friendly Initiatives Program Manager, Maren Levad for an educational program that describes different types of dementia, helps normalize living with dementia, and shares effective approaches to communicate and care for someone living with dementia.



ARTS & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE GATHERINGS

Weekly Meditation Group

Tuesdays at 9:00 am on Zoom | Email Martha at ewellsm@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link

The Weekly Meditation Group is an ongoing group to which new members are always welcome. We meet on zoom every Tuesday from 9-10:15 with a rotating group of facilitators. People come with whatever experience they have and we learn from each other. *Facilitated by Martha Easter-Wells, Amy Marquart, Anne McBean, Julie Gottesleben, and Diane Torrance.*

Qigong for Liberation

Every Tuesday (no in-person meeting August 18), 4:30-5:15 pm in Room 201 | [RSVP Here](#)

Gather with us in person or online for an ongoing practice of the beautiful and healing movement meditation, Spring Forest Qigong, created by Master Chunyi Lin, who notes, “by harmonizing Qi, the body’s vital energy, Qigong supports physical vitality, emotional balance, and spiritual growth.” Come when you can. A recording is also included each week so you can practice when you choose. Movements are gentle and accessible for everyone. Spring Forest Qigong is a liberating practice that provides a way to return to who we have always been - energy beings, who, when given the space and time to heal, can bring more unconditional love, forgiveness, and kindness to ourselves, each other, and a hurting world. As our strength and resilience grow we become fortified to respond with courage and compassion to the intensifying fascism. Facilitator will reach out when you register so that you can get to know one another and she can better understand your needs for your qigong practice.

Journaling Club: Writing with The Book of Alchemy

Wednesdays, every other week, June 17, July 1, July 15, July 29, Aug 12, Aug 26, Sept 9, Sept 23 (Come to all eight or as many as you can make. Drop ins welcome.) 7:00 - 8:30 pm, in Room 209 | [RSVP Here](#)

What would you write if you weren’t afraid? This summer, we’ll gather every other Wednesday around one essay and one writing prompt from The Book of Alchemy — Suleika Jaouad’s New York Times bestselling guide to journaling as a practice of creativity, healing, and self-discovery. Each 90-minute session includes a reading, ten quiet minutes of writing, and an open conversation about what surfaces. No writing experience required. Just bring a notebook, a pen, and your curiosity. *Facilitated by Katie Stoecker-Strauss.*

Fiber Artists Circle

Every Wednesday, June 17 to September 16 (no meeting August 19), 3:00-5:00 pm, Room 207 | [RSVP Here](#)

Do you crochet, knit, or craft with yarn in any way? Want to learn how? Bring your projects and sit with us in a warm and friendly environment while we work and chat! *Facilitated by Jera Forrester.*

In the Weeds

Wednesdays, beginning June 24, 5:00-6:15 pm at church | [RSVP Here](#)

Spirituality is often found in small, routine tasks. If getting your hands dirty and pulling a few weeds (or picking up litter, or whatever is needed) in the company of others speaks to you, please join us. We’ll build new connections while keeping our campus looking its best and being a good neighbor to those who live nearby. Come once or come weekly, come alone or come with a friend, but come! *Facilitated by Lynn Broaddus.*

Crafting Group

Sundays, June 28, July 26, August 2, August 23, 12:00-2:00 pm, Social Hall near the Library | [RSVP Here](#)

Are you creative/crafty/artistic (or would you like to be?) and like to create in the presence of others? Let's meet up and be creative in community! Imagine: a drop-in space where you come with a project, or use materials from our pop-up free table (i.e., a spot where we can bring craft items to pass to someone else, or to find a new project or hobby). Joy is an act of resistance and connecting with creative folks can be inspiring! *Facilitated by Chris Chiros.*

First PolycUule: ENM & Polyamory Community Group

Sunday, July 12, 12:00-1:00 pm, Room 201 | [RSVP Here](#)

Looking for a welcoming space to connect with other ethically non-monogamous (ENM) and polyamorous folks at First U? Join us this summer for a very low-key, casual chitchat to say hi, share experiences, and build community together. We will be gathering right after the service to catch up and support one another in a relaxed, friendly environment. Whether you are new to the community or have been practicing for years, we would love to have you join the conversation! *Facilitated by Sherry Merriam*

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Together, we seek to expand our hearts and minds, make a difference in the world, mark important milestones, and explore big questions. We are a supportive, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multigenerational, radically welcoming religious community.

From May 17 through Sept. 13, Religious Education takes place in worship. There are no classes or formal curriculum in the summer. Kids and youth of all ages are invited to worship in the Sanctuary with their families. We will offer childcare as usual every Sunday for children in PreK and younger. Please reach out to Allison at allison@firstuniv.org with questions or for more information.

Youth Group Field Trip to Twin Cities Pride Youth Night

Friday, June 26, 5:00-8:00 pm in Loring Park | [Event Info](#)

Twin Cities Pride is hosting its third Youth Night this year! Join other First Universalist youth at Twin Cities Pride Youth Night! This will be a night of fun, activities, and entertainment for LGBTQIA+ youth ages 10-20, offering a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQIA+ youth to celebrate Pride.

First Universalist has taken a group to Youth Night for the past two years and everyone has had a sweet, age-appropriate experience. If you have a youth age 10+ who would like to attend Youth Night with our First Universalist crew, please email Allison at allison@firstuniv.org by Monday, June 15. Friends and siblings very welcome!

Join us for First Universalist Summer Camp 2026!

Monday, August 17 through Friday, August 21, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm | [Register here](#)

Our camp is open to rising 1st graders through rising 8th graders. High school students and recent graduates are invited to apply to serve as youth staff. Campers should bring a water bottle, sunscreen, and a nut-free lunch and snack every day. Camp will provide one additional nut-free snack.

The recommended donation to offset the cost of this program is \$150/child for the week. Each family has the opportunity to make a donation on the registration form.

EARLY ADULTS (20s and 30s)

Early Adults at First U are folks who are 18 years old - 39 years old (No High School Students Please 😊 High Schoolers are invited to take part in our Youth Group) | [Join the Early Adults Interest List](#)

SMALL GROUPS, BOOK GROUPS & CLASSES FOR ADULTS

***Take What You Need: Life Lessons After Losing Everything*, by Rev. Jen Crow**

Book discussion group

Thursdays, June 18, July 9, July 23, Aug 6, 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Room 209 | [RSVP Here](#)

Rev. Jen Crow's book reflects on the unexpected turns our lives can take--and all the ways we can pay attention to what we truly need to survive the painful moments and live lives of meaning. Described as a "Survival guide, spiritual companion, and a light in the dark, *Take What You Need* offers hope, humor, and real-life spiritual tools to meet the hardest moments of our lives." *Join a facilitated book reflection/discussion group led by Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Kate Tucker Sermon Circles

Circle 1: Thursdays, July 16 and 30, August 13, September 3 and 17, 7:00-8:45 p.m. on Zoom *Registration Closed*

Circle 2: Sundays, July 19, August 2, 16 & 30, September 13, 7:00-8:45 p.m. on Zoom *Registration Closed*

You are invited to five sessions of diving deeply into five Kate Tucker sermons, meeting every other week. Registration is open to all ages from twenty-somethings to seniors, whether or not you have personally experienced our beloved minister emerita's extraordinary sermons before. Kate's sermons have aged very well, because they delve into timeless yearnings and wisdom. Please join us in a commitment to personal and communal spiritual growth.

Let's not allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good; you are encouraged to register even if you have reason to believe that you will miss one, but not two, of the five sessions. Two groups will meet; choose the one that best fits your schedule. If both fit your schedule, please register for both, and you will be assigned to the one that will balance the numbers in each circle. The circles are limited to ten participants. *Facilitated by Margaret Manderfeld, Susan Hoffman, and Ray Dillon.*

BIPOC Group

[Fill out the interest form](#) for meeting details.

The First Universalist BIPOC Group is a sacred time of community, support, and joy. Come be, laugh, and connect with other Unitarian Universalists who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color. This is a closed space for BIPOC adults, including multiracial people. This is not a group for white people, including white people who have BIPOC family members.

SENIORS

Improv for Elders

Wednesdays (no meeting August 19), 10:00-11:30 am, Room 209 | [RSVP Here](#)

Come and join the laughter and fun. We who laugh, last. This is a group for games and teamwork, but not production or performance oriented. It's just for us. Participants say it is their favorite day of the week because we need joy now more than ever. *Facilitated by Rev. Meg Riley.*