Fall 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

Fall Sign-Up Sunday

Sunday, September 20; 11:00-12:00 noon in the Social Hall
Learn about the variety of ways to get involved and get connected at church this season through volunteering, justice teams, and other opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth. Team leaders and small group facilitators will be excited to chat with you about what they've got going on and how you can join.

Community Dinners

Wednesdays, October 14, November 11, December 9, January 13; Dinner 6-6:45; Breakout Groups 7:00-8:15 pm
RSVP REQUESTED | Menu will be posted on the RSVP form about one week in advance
Every second Wednesday of the month, join us for a delicious home-cooked meal at 6:00 pm in the Social Hall. After dinner, choose a drop-in breakout group to connect with others and learn about opportunities to get involved at church this season. All are welcome and there is no charge. Childcare will be available for younger kids (ages 6 months-Grade 3), and breakout groups will be available for older kids, teens, and adults. We ask that people RSVP so we can have enough food for all who attend. We always offer vegan, vegetarian, gluten free, nut free and kid-friendly options. All church events are alcohol-free.

Pancake Breakfast and Game Playing for Trans and Gender Expansive Folx

POSTPONED - *DATE TBD*; Breakfast 9:30-10:30 am, Games/conversation 10:30 am to noon, in the Social Hall | 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.)

PLEASE NOTE: 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-ISH

Welcome Newcomers Table

In Social Hall immediately after Worship
Look for the "Welcome Newcomers" sign and join us at a table hosted by staff and volunteers in the social hall. Meet others and join in the conversation. A host will invite introductions, provide brief information on how to get started at First U, and answer your questions. All are welcome!

Membership Classes at First Universalist

Register for <u>one</u> of the following:

Membership Class 1 Saturday, Oct 31, 9:00am-1:00 pm, Cummins Room (Potluck)
Membership Class 2, Tuesdays, Nov 17 (Room 209) & 24 (Cummins), 6:00-8:00 pm
Membership Class 3, Wednesdays, Jan 20 (Room 207) & 27 (Chancel Room), 6:00-8:00 pm

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.

Newcomers Circle

Sundays, 11:30-12:45 pm: November 1, 8, 15, 22, Room 207 | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*

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. 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.

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Our programs for Children, Youth, and Families run from September through May.

All families—new and returning, with babies through high schoolers—must register each church year. Register your family today.

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.

Visit the **Families section on our website** for detailed information about this Fall's programming, and to view the most current calendar of events. *Please email our Director of Children, Youth, & Families Ministry, Allison Connelly-Vetter (allison [at] firstuniv.org), with any questions or for more information.*

Sunday Morning Religious Education

On most Sunday mornings from September through May, children in Kindergarten through 9th grade have the option of attending **Religious Education (RE)** with their peers. Kids and youth in Kindergarten through 8th/9th grade **Our Whole Lives (OWL)** participate in Religious Education during worship, while our **9th grade Coming of Age** youth meet after the service.

Kids from Kindergarten through 7th grade begin worship together in the sanctuary, and then are dismissed to their classes early in the service. Our 8th/9th grade OWL youth begin in their room at 10 am. ***Children of all ages, along with high school youth, are always welcome to remain in worship with their families.***

There are Sundays during the program year on which we do not offer regular Religious Education. **Please check the church calendar for details on what is offered on a particular Sunday.**

Childcare During Worship

Childcare is provided by attentive adult staff and youth volunteers during Sunday morning worship services for children ages 6 months to PreK. We enfold our youngest members in the warmth of our community, encourage their explorations, and share in their joy and wonder. To ensure adequate space and staff to provide a safe and positive experience for all, **registration is required**.

Childcare After Worship

Drop-in childcare is provided by attentive adult staff on Sundays after worship beginning at 11:30 am. Pick-up from childcare is between 12:50-1:00 pm. This space is available for children ages 6 months to 5th grade, and makes it possible for parents and caregivers to participate in adult programs during the same time frame. Groups with childcare available are noted.

Parenting as Spiritual Practice: Parent and Caregiver Groups

"Parenting as Spiritual Practice" groups are offered throughout the church year for parents and caregivers. These groups are an opportunity for parents and caregivers to gather, get to know each other, and reflect on their experience. These groups are drop-in; no registration required. Childcare is offered during all parent and caregiver groups.

This Fall, dates and times for Parenting as Spiritual Practice Groups are:

- **Wednesdays October 14, November 11, and December 9, 7-8:15 p.m. after Community Dinner**
- **Wednesdays September 23 and October 28, 7-8:15 p.m. after Family Night** *(note: at least one parent/caregiver must stay with any child participating in Family Night activities)*
- **Sundays October 4, November 1, and December 6, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. after worship**

Family Nights: *New This Year!*

Fall Dates: September 23 and October 28, Potluck Dinner: 6:00 pm; Activities and youth groups: 7:00-8:15 pm
Family Nights are a new opportunity for families to gather at church on the fourth Wednesday of most months (skipping November and December). Family Nights begin with a potluck dinner at 6:00 pm for all families. From 7:00-8:15 pm, family-focused activities will be offered for children in 5th grade and younger and their parents and caregivers. Youth groups are available for middle and high school youth.

In support of our efforts to include all members of our community, including those with serious allergies, ***potluck dishes must not contain the following ingredients:***

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Sesame (including hummus)

We will have cards to label all homemade or unlabeled dishes. Any dishes which contain peanuts, tree nuts, or sesame will not be served. The church will provide a food option for those with allergens or dietary needs to ensure they can participate in the meal. Thank you for helping us welcome all families to our table.

Middle School and High School Youth Groups

First Universalist offers two youth groups: a Middle School Youth Group for youth in grades 6-8 and a High School Youth Group for youth in grades 9-12. Both youth groups meet on most Sunday mornings from 11:30 am-12:45 pm and on the second and fourth Wednesdays of most months (skipping the fourth Wednesday of November and December) from 7:00-8:15 pm.

These gatherings are led by trained adults and include time for checking in, playing games, learning new skills, service projects, fun activities, and exploring the big questions of life, all while deepening relationships with peers. There is no church membership requirement or Sunday morning attendance requirement. Bring a friend or a neighbor—all are welcome!

High School Youth Group Retreat

Friday, Sept. 18 at 5 pm-Sunday, Sept. 20 at 12:45 pm, at Camp Friendship **RSVP Here**
All high school youth (9th-12th grades) are encouraged to join our Fall retreat! The retreat includes fun and meaningful activities like teambuilding, games, campfires, and more. More information on schedule and a packing list will be emailed to participants in advance.

Middle School Youth Group Overnight

Our Middle School Youth Group Overnight will be September 25-26 at the church! RSVP here.
All middle school youth (6th-8th grades) are welcome. Drop off is 5:00 pm Friday and pick-up is 9:00 am on Saturday. We'll have lots of fun and games and treats and make good church memories.

Common Ground Sundays

Over holiday weekends and/or school breaks, we will offer **Common Ground Sundays** a program for all grade levels (kindergarten through high school) in lieu of our regular Religious Education programming. These Sundays are intended to gather and ground our children and youth in a shared project of liberation, resistance, and care for our congregation and our wider community.

Each Common Ground Sunday will include a mix of:

- brief opening ritual
- multiple relevant hands-on projects options (with multiple learning styles and development ranges reflected)
- representation from a First Universalist committee, ministry, or justice team
- resources from local community organizations
- connections to our monthly worship theme

Common Ground Sundays for the 2026-27 church year:

- October 18 (MEA Weekend)
- November 29 (Sunday after Thanksgiving)
- December 20 (Sunday before Christmas)
- January 17 (Sunday before MLK Day)
- February 14 (Sunday before Presidents' Day)
- April 4 (Spring Break)
- May 9 (Mother's Day)

Saturday Sprouts for Families

September 26 and October 24, 10:00 am-12:00 noon, Drop-in
Saturday Sprouts is a monthly opportunity for families to build relationships with one another, be energized in community, and explore spirituality and our Unitarian Universalist values as a whole family. Saturday Sprouts includes time for snacks and socializing, along with family worship, a parent support group, and childcare for kids.

Saturday Sprouts is oriented towards young children from 6 months through 5th grade, along with all parents and caregivers (with or without kids in tow).

"Big Questions With Little People" - A Conversation with Rev. Dr. Molly Housh Gordon

CANCELLED: Sunday, Oct. 11, 11:30 am-12:45 pm, Room 201, Drop-in - *Childcare available*
When it comes to the big questions that shape our lives, Unitarian Universalists understand that we cannot give our children certainty, but we can give them beauty. Join Rev. Dr. Molly Housh Gordon for a conversation with parents, caregivers, and all who nourish our children's spiritual development. When we do the work to develop our own beautiful imagery and imaginings, we can talk with children about mortality and other existential issues both honestly and beautifully, giving them a sense of mystery and comfort alike.

Child Dedication

*Child Dedication is a community event, honoring an intentional and ongoing relationship between families and our religious community. Children of members and those on the path to membership may be dedicated at First Universalist. If you are interested in dedicating your child/ren at First Universalist this Fall, please **fill out this form**.*

Child Dedications take place twice each year during a Sunday morning worship service. This Fall, Child Dedication is on **Sunday, November 8.** Child Dedication is a beloved ritual of our congregation and many UU congregations. In Child Dedication, our congregation pledges itself to partner with parents and families in the religious upbringing of their children. We promise to support the family as their child grows.

Family Holiday Potluck Dinner

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. in the Social Hall | RSVP Here

Half holiday dinner, half Friendsgiving, you are invited to bring a favorite holiday or potluck dish to share if you are able, or just bring yourself and your family. This is always a delightfully kid-friendly potluck with great community energy. All parents, caregivers, children, youth, and chosen family are warmly welcome. Come, build community and share a meal with us!

Christmas Pageant

Dec. 19, 4:00 pm, followed by cookies and hot cocoa—you are invited to bring cookies to share!

A beloved tradition here at First Universalist, come bear witness to our children and youth re-introducing us to the story of Christmas. *Registration for children and youth who wish to participate in the Christmas Pageant will open in late Fall.*

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 to connect and RSVP for events**

Early Adult Only Programs:

Asynchronous Low-Stakes Book Club

Any time, Bookclubbish Channel in Discord

Read one (or however many) book(s) you want, send your thoughts on it/them and send it to the channel if you recommend it at any time on the last Monday of the month. The general goal is just to read something you've been meaning to and share with others! No theme, no pressure.

Tea Party and Games

Sept 26, 2:00-4:00 pm at Maria's House

Casual get-together to drink tea (and other fun drinks) from fancy china like fancy people! Dressing in your best tea party attire is encouraged but not required. Weather permitting, we will play yard games after, or indoor games if not (bring games to share!). Accessibility notes: location has a few stairs to enter, and there is a cat.

Early Adult Potluck Dinner

Thursday, October 8, 6:30-9:00 pm, at an Early Adult member's home

Potluck dinner for spiritual and physical sustenance for members of the Early Adults group. Host will make main dish (with vegetarian and gluten free options). Please bring a dish to share if able. Accessibility notes: location has a few stairs to enter, and there is a cat. Notify host of any other dietary restrictions or allergies.

Duluth Day Trip

Saturday, October 10, 8:00 am - 9:00 pm, carpools depart from First U parking lot | RSVP Here

We will gather at Church at 8 am to carpool to Jay Cooke State Park, Brighton Beach, and Canal Park, all in the Duluth area. Join-as-you-wish spiritual practices and reflections provided as we engage with nature. Please pack your own lunch, but plan to have dinner in town together before departing. Return to Church around 9:00 pm.

Over the Garden Wall Watch Party

Saturday October 24, 7:00 pm in 211 | RSVP Here

Showing of *Over The Garden Wall*, a lovely autumnal animated series about two young boys lost in The Unknown. Watching all episodes at once. Bring movie snacks!

Early Adult Focused but Open to Everyone Regardless of Age:
(Minors must have a parent/legal guardian accompany them to these events.)

Mini Ted Talks

Monday, November 16, 7:00-9:00 pm, Cummins Room | RSVP Here
Got a topic you love to talk about? Come share a short presentation (PPT, demo, or just talk) with a group! Topics can be anything up to 8 minutes (educational, favorite media, persuasive, special interests). No food provided, feel free to bring snacks.

SENIORS

Daytime Connections for Older Adults

The Third Thursday of Every Month, 9:45 am coffee, 10-noon program, Noon lunch, in person in the Social Hall and on Zoom; RSVP requested by the Monday prior, for planning purposes
Daytime Connections empowers older adults to live intentional, joyful, purposeful and spiritually fulfilled lives, by building a vibrant community and providing engaging programming that promotes conscious aging and fosters personal and spiritual growth.

September 17 (no Zoom) | RSVP Here
Connecting through favorite books
Enjoy small group discussions about your favorite books, blogs, mini-series, and movies. *Greet old friends and welcome new folks. No zoom for this event.*

October 15 | RSVP Here
Pain Management: A Multimodal Approach
Chronic pain is a prevalent cause of physical and mental distress, especially for older adults. Ramesh Sairam, a physician with a background in anesthesiology and psychiatry will describe the complexities of chronic pain and outline a multimodal approach necessary to address these issues. Dr. Sairam has practiced mindfulness for over 20 years and finds this approach helpful for his own pain issues.

November 19 | RSVP Here
Minnesota Legislators' Election Analysis
MN legislators Jamie Long and Katie Jones will reflect on election results and help us think about what's next.

December 17 | RSVP Here *Topic to come*

Improv for Elders

Wednesdays from 10:00-11:30 am; Room 209 | RSVP Here
Join this lively cohort of elders as we laugh, play, and improvise together. We are not bound for the stage, just enjoying one another as we play improv games and do scene work. Laughter is a form of resistance, improv practice can enhance our daily lives as we navigate these turbulent times.

PASTORAL & COMMUNITY CARE

Caregivers Support Group (on Google Meet)

Second Sundays, September 13, October 11, November 8, December 13, January 10; 1:00-2:30 pm
Register to receive Google Meet link
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 Debbie Easterling and Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Mild Cognitive Impairment: We are Holding it Together

Wednesdays, Sept 16, Oct 7, Oct 28, Nov 18, Dec 9, Jan 6, Jan 27, 2:00-3:30 pm, Room 201 | RSVP Here
Early mild cognitive impairment (MCI) 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. *Facilitated by Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Grief Group (on zoom)

First Sunday of each month, October 4, November 1, December 6; 4:00-5:30 pm
Register to receive Zoom link or contact Rev. Laura at laura@firstuniv.org
Grief Group meets on the first Sunday of the month on Zoom. It is a gathering for those who are grappling with the web of feelings associated with the loss of a person, an important event in their lives, or a significant change of circumstances. This is 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, a UU seminarian.*

Care Partner Support Group

Thursdays, October 22, November 19, December 17, January 21; 2:00-3:30 pm, Room 201 | RSVP Here
This group is specifically for people who have spouses/partners with mild cognitive impairment, dementia, and Alzheimer's. Caregiving debbiesueeasterling@gmail.comfor a spouse/partner has its own nuances and realities. This group is an opportunity to share openly and confidentially, learn from one another, and to receive support. *Led by Rev Laura Smidzik.*

Leaving a Roadmap: Essential End-of-Life Planning

Sundays, January 10, 17, 24 and 31, Room 201, 11:30–12:45 pm | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*
Learn how to make life easier for your loved ones after you're gone. In this series of four nuts-and-bolts sessions you'll learn how to capture and record crucial information they'll need when you die; plan essential elements of your memorial service; and reflect upon, create and articulate your desired legacy. Then together we'll decide on the fourth topic. Come to one session or all four. Encourage friends or family members to attend. *Led by Harlan Limpert, retired UU minister and former hospital chaplain and Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

FAITHFUL ACTION

White Men For Racial Justice Fall Cohort

Every Monday from September 21 to November 9, 6:00 pm-8:00 pm in Room 209 | RSVP
White Men For Racial Justice is a group designed to help grow white men's (cis and trans) overall multicultural awareness and build their racial justice reflection and practice.

Environmental Justice Team Meeting

Sunday, September 27, 11:30-12:45pm in the Social Hall near the Library | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*
This will be a meeting where the Environmental Justice Team (EJT) sets the direction for their environment and climate work for this church year. All are welcome!

EJ Quarterly Plant Based Potluck & Film Screening

Wednesday, Oct. 21, in the Social Hall
Dinner: 5:30-6:15 pm, Social Hall | Film: 6:15-7:30 **RSVP Here** | **Share your potluck offering here**
Plant based meals are a wonderful spiritual practice that plays an important role in limiting greenhouse gases. Join the EJ Team's Food Solutions Group for a potluck supper of scrumptious plant based selections.

About the film: The UN estimates that 200 million to 2 billion people will be displaced by climate change by 2050. Director Josh Fox goes to the frontlines of displacement—across six continents—and meets people faced with the impossible decision to flee their homes. The current global migration policy is based on borders, walls, incarceration, dehumanization and fear. What is possible, if instead, we welcome each other? *The Welcome Table* brings together the people from these disparate stories for five days in New Orleans to a "metaphorical" table and blends together music, food and conversation.

EJ Screening: Part 2 *Welcome Table*, HBO Documentary

Sunday, Oct. 25, 11:30am-12:45 pm Cummins Room | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*
About the film: The UN estimates that 200 million to 2 billion people will be displaced by climate change by 2050. Director Josh Fox goes to the frontlines of displacement—across six continents—and meets people faced with the impossible decision to flee their homes. The current global migration policy is based on borders, walls, incarceration, dehumanization and fear. What is possible, if instead, we welcome each other? *The Welcome Table* brings together the people from these disparate stories for five days in New Orleans to a "metaphorical" table and blends together music, food and conversation.

Sacred Sites Tour

Sunday, Nov 1, four hours in length, meet off-site at 1:00pm. Details will be sent to registrants.
Registration is limited to 50 people | RSVP here
The Twin Cities are built on the traditional homelands of the Dakota, and this region is home to sites of significance for the Indigenous people who have lived here and still call this place home. Sacred Sites Tours invite us to learn the history and importance of these sacred sites, to reflect on our own roles in the continuing systems of colonization and extraction, and to develop plans for future action on reparation and repair. Participants move beyond just learning about the history of these places and into a deeper relationship with their own responsibility for honoring, protecting, and repairing our relationship with these places and the Indigenous people who originated here.The tour lasts about 4 hours and includes a visit to three sacred sites throughout the Cities. Led by Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, this tour offers an opportunity to learn about history through story-telling and experiencing the sites in silence/meditation/reflection.

Building Hope Together: First U Habitat Volunteer Events in 2026-2027 | Join Interest List

As the Habitat for Humanity coordinator for First Universalist, I'm excited to share our upcoming plans for the year ahead and invite you to join us in making a real impact. Whether you can swing a hammer, prepare lunch for volunteers, advocate for policy change with our state legislature, or support our program financially—there's a role for everyone in this work of building homes and hope. Here's a look at what's ahead for our Habitat partnership. Confirmed dates & sign-up information will be promoted in *The Liberal*:

- **2027 Build Days: January 9, February 13, March 6** | **Register Here**
- **Habitat on the Hill (advocacy event at the MN Capitol): May 2027**

Together, we're building more than houses—we're building community, hope, and justice. Your presence matters, and there's a place for you in this work. Reach out with any questions: David Harrison - rdavid.harrisonjr@gmail.com

ARTS & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE GATHERINGS

Labyrinth on the Full Moon

Monthly (dates below), 5:00-7:00 pm in the Social Hall
No RSVP Necessary | Join the Labyrinth Interest List
First U has a long history of labyrinth walking, please join us for this relaxing and contemplative open walk each month. You don't need to come every time, and you don't need any experience. Bring a friend!
Saturday, September 26
Sunday, October 25
Tuesday, November 24
Wednesday, December 23

Women's Ritual Circle

Every New and Full Moon: September 26, October 10 (Oct 10 is OFFSITE at a member home), October 25, November 8; 7:00-9:00 pm, Room 209 | RSVP Here
In the Under Northern Skies Women's Ritual Circle, women with many different life experiences, backgrounds, and belief systems come together to change, grow, and celebrate the Divine in each other through earth-centered ritual. We gather on the new and full moons to acknowledge the cycles of life and nature in member-led and -designed rituals that explore and honor a wide range of pagan practices and beliefs. Our group is open to all women (cis and trans) and non-binary people who find their home in women-centric spaces, age 18+.

Crafting Group

Sundays, Sept 27, Oct 25, Nov 22, Dec 20, 11:30-12:45 pm, in the Social Hall near Library | RSVP Here if you'd like, but please come even if you haven't! - *Childcare available*
Are you creative/crafty/artistic (or would 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 we can bring craft items we no longer want or need, 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! This is truly a drop-in group, so come when you can. *Facilitated by Chris Chiros.*

UU Wellspring "Sources"

Every other Sunday Throughout the Church Year, Fall Dates: October 25, November 1, November 15, December 6, December 13, Room 201, 11:30 am-1:30 pm | RSVP Here | Join Wellspring Interest List
UU Wellspring Sources is a program that provides a deep dive into UU history, many different theologies, and spiritual practice. It is geared towards deepening congregants' connection with each other, their church, and the UU faith at large. UU Wellspring is a year-long program with 16 sessions. There is "homework" in between sessions. While space is limited this year, we still encourage folks to sign up and show interest in possible future years.

Winter Music Fellowship

Sundays, November 8 (Cummins Room), November 15 (Cummins), and December 6 (Sanctuary) at 11:30 am in person, Cummins/Sanctuary | RSVP Here
The First U Instrumental Music group is returning this fall to play music celebrating the winter season. We have music for band and orchestra instruments, and it's at roughly an early-high school level. We'll gather 3 times beginning in November for rehearsal and musical fellowship. We'll look for opportunities to perform at service in December.

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 9:00-10:15 M with a rotating group of facilitators. People come with whatever experience they have and we learn from each other.

Qigong for Liberation

Every Tuesday from 4:30-5:15 pm, Room 201 | RSVP Here

Gather with us in person or online for an ongoing practice of the 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 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. The 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. *Facilitated by Denise Konen.*

SMALL GROUPS, BOOK GROUPS & CLASSES FOR ADULTS

PolycUUle: ENM & Polyamory Community Group

Sundays, September 27 and November 22, 11:30 am-12:45 pm in person, Room 201 | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*

Looking for a welcoming space to connect with other ethically non-monogamous (ENM) and polyamorous folks at First U? Join us 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!

Group Facilitator Training

October 4, 11:30am-12:45pm, Cummins Room | RSVP Here

Do you lead a group at First Universalist? Are you interested in leading one? This training led by Cas Burr, our Community Connections Coordinator, is open to everyone who wants to learn what small groups at First Universalist have in common and gain new skills. Come learn with others and share your experiences. All are welcome, no prior facilitating experience necessary!

Connecting with Meaning in Times of Uncertainty

Sundays, October 4, 11, 18, 25, November 1, 15; 11:30-12:45, Room 204 | RSVP Here - *Childcare available*

This group will focus on connecting with sources of meaning and purpose in these times of uncertainty using a model based on "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. Together, we will use structured questions and self reflection to identify how we can face these uncertain and often painful times in ways that feel grounded in our values and sense of meaning; While we cannot control the limitations that we face in our lives, we have autonomy in how we respond. *Rachel Bialostosky is a licensed independent clinical social worker who is trained in Meaning Centered Psychotherapy for individuals living with serious illness. This group will be based on that format.*

Aging as a Spiritual Practice: A Contemplative Guide to Growing Older and Wiser Book Group

Thursdays, 11:30-1:00 pm, October 8, November 5, December 3, January 7, in Room 201 | RSVP here

Zen Buddhist priest and meditation teacher, Lewis Richmond, re-imagines growing older as a meaningful and transformative journey. Each chapter includes "contemplative reflections" which participants are encouraged to do. Join us in a rich and reflective small group with Aging as a Spiritual Practice as a launching point. **Please read pages 3-39 for the Oct 8 session.** *Facilitated by Rev. Laura Smidzik.*

Tools for Spiritual Growth: Exploring Wisdom Practices for Deeper Inner Life, Meaningful Community, and Compassionate Action

CANCELLED: Weekly on Sundays from 11:30-12:45 pm, October 11, 18, 25 and November 8, 15, 22This is an invitation to explore time-tested spiritual practices including meditation from Buddhist, Sufi, Christian, Jewish, and other wisdom traditions. Together, we will consider how these traditions help us become more present, more grounded, and more open to the sacred dimensions of everyday life. Through reflection, conversation, contemplative exercises, and shared learning, we will be encouraged to go deeper within ourselves, engage life with greater awareness, and strengthen connections within each other and the greater community. *Facilitated by Dick Young and Jane Jordan with Rev. Laura when available.*

Expanded Library and Book Review

Second Sundays, October 11, November 8, December 13, 11:30-12:15 pm in the Library | RSVP Here - *Childcare available until 12:45*

This group meeting will have two parts: From 11:30 to 12:15 pm, participants will discuss books, make book recommendations to help determine which books will be added to the Library collection, share ideas on how to improve the Library, and potentially volunteer to write reviews of books they feel are important. At 12:15 participants are invited to stay if they'd like and support the functioning work of the Library (processing and shelving books). Come to one or all three sessions.

Chalice Circles

Circle 1: Sundays, October 11, October 25, November 8, November 22, December 6, December 20, 11:30am-12:45pm Room 200 | Closed to new registrants - *Childcare available* | *Facilitated by Cindy Marsh and Clyde Derrick*

Circle 2: Wednesdays, October 7, October 21, November 4, November 18, December 2, December 16, 7:00-8:30pm in the Library | Closed to new registrants *Facilitated by Shane Weinand and Karen Kingsley*

Interested in discussing the monthly worship themes with fellow congregants? A chalice circle might be the group for you! Led by two facilitators, these groups give folks the opportunity to discuss how the monthly themes intersect with their own lives. Monthly theme packets with quotes, questions, books, podcasts and more will be provided to look over before meetings. These groups are a great opportunity to get to know and be in community with folks that you might not normally reach out to or connect with at church.

BIPOC Group (multiple events):

Fill out the interest form in order to be contacted about upcoming events. We use the general email list for all announcements.

The First Universalist BIPOC Group provides a sacred time of community, support, and joy. Come be your full self, 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.

Community Dinner BIPOC Table

Wednesdays, Oct. 14, Nov. 11, Dec. 9; Dinner 6:00-6:45; RSVP for Community Dinner REQUESTED

A table is reserved in the social hall during Community Dinners for BIPOC folks to gather. Look for a sign on the table on the far end of the social hall. There are a variety of programs that follow dinner and all are welcome to participate.

Mindfulness Meditation Practice Online for BIPOC

Saturdays, Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Dec. 13 from 4:00-5:30 pm on Zoom

A monthly mindfulness meditation practice for First U BIPOC community led by Rebekah Padilla online on the third Saturday of the month. An invitation with a Zoom link will be circulated to the BIPOC Group via email 3-5 days prior to that month's practice, no need to RSVP, come as you are. Following the December 13th Mindfulness Meditation Practice, the BIPOC group will meet for an end-of-the-year celebratory meal at a restaurant. Details will be emailed to the BIPOC group in early December.

BIPOC Monthly Brunch (Off-site)

Last Sundays of the month, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 29, and Dec 27, following worship, approximately 11:30 am.
We will send out an email letting you know where we will gather for brunch.

Gathering for Gender Fluid, Gender Non-Conforming, Gender Queer, and Gender Expansive Folx over 50

Thursday, Dec 3, 6:00-7:30 pm, Library | RSVP Here
Join others at First Universalist in their later adulthood and who live beyond the gender binary. We will gather once to get to know one another and to see if there is interest or energy around gathering on a regular basis. *Facilitated by Rev. Laura Smidzik*

Book and Topical Discussion: *I Eat the Stars: How to Live Fully and Beautifully in a Collapsing World,* by Sarah Wilson

Dates and times TBD by group | Join the Interest List
Let's get together, hold it together, and hold each other with care as we soak up the wise, compassionate guidance of Sarah Wilson. As the world goes through fundamental shifts — ecological, institutional, societal, and civilizational crises — how can we live beautifully amidst the chaos? What does this moment ask of us? How can we connect in loving, creative, and courageous ways? How do we deepen our rootedness in beloved community come what may? Please join us for caring, careful conversations! *Facilitated by Gary Hoover.*

AFFILIATED GROUPS & PROGRAMS

12-Step Spirituality

First Saturdays, In person, 9:30 am-noon, Room 209
Other Saturdays, Online, 9:30-10:45 am, get the link here.
These meetings are for people who are actively working any 12-step program. The meetings focus on the 11th step, prayer and meditation, by using the practice of Centering Prayer Meditation. We teach Centering Prayer Meditation, meditate for 20 minutes, visit in small groups and practice two other forms of prayer. **Visit the website for details.**

Association of Universalist Women

AUW IS about community building and contributing to the church and larger community. AUW sponsors activities for people who identify as women, non-binary and/or gender fluid. AUW sponsors activities for members and friends to promote our three pillars—community building, spiritual deepening, and bringing our faith to action to work for women's justice. For more information go to: **AUW website** and/or **AUW Facebook Group.**