becoming a people of story
We were moved by the stories you shared with us in response to the question, “What does FUS mean to you?” Stories of belonging, of living out your Unitarian Universalist values, and how this community has made a difference throughout your lives. It continues to be a privilege to hear your stories and to share this work with you.

As we explore “becoming a people of story” this month, we do so at a critical time in history. Not only in terms of the pandemic but also in the context of calling a new minister. Throughout the interim period, we’ve been asked to tell the story of who we are and who we want to become. The parish vote on Sunday, May 2, will be an important part of this next chapter, and we look forward to (virtually) seeing you there.

The stories we tell and believe about ourselves and our lives profoundly shape how we inhabit the world, and the work of Narrative Therapy centers around this idea. Developed in the 1980s, this approach to psychotherapy explores how stories influence our behavior, our beliefs, and our relationships. Sometimes influenced by events and sometimes influenced by what others tell us about ourselves, how we interpret these stories makes meaning of our lives. Check out the resources below for the science, philosophy, and art of storytelling.

- An article from On Being contributor, Terri Schanks, on The Stories We Tell Ourselves. [https://onbeing.org/blog/the-stories-we-tell-ourselves/](https://onbeing.org/blog/the-stories-we-tell-ourselves/).


- Launched in Belfast by Paul Doran and Pádraig Ó Tuama, Tenx9, is a storytelling performance where nine people tell a true story in ten minutes to a live audience. During the pandemic, they’ve held these events online. Listen to these stories at [www.tenx9.com/podcast](http://www.tenx9.com/podcast). Thanks to Hannah Lee for sharing this resource with us!

Our deep gratitude to the Search Committee for their dedication and commitment in selecting our candidate and preparing for this important week in the life of our community.
The story of First Unitarian Society has been unfolding for 142 years. This month, a new chapter of the FUS story continues with the decision on whether to call Rev. Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson to join Rev. Kelly Crocker as Co-Senior Ministers. FUS is on the cusp of the ministerial transition period winding down and a new era dawning. This is a pivot point in the story. Assuming that the call vote is affirmative and Rev. Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson joins you in August, you will carry with you the story of these last 142 years into the new era. It will help shape what is to come—and the Revs. Kelly, along with all of you, will also shape what is to come. Together, you will create new stories.

This month also marks a pivot point in Rev. Kelly Crocker’s FUS story as she continues her movement at FUS to the Co-Senior Minister. We will celebrate this transition moment and Rev. Kelly C’s twentieth anniversary with FUS on Sunday, May 23. The Flower Communion service—the most important celebration across much of the Unitarian/Universalist world—will include a tribute to Rev. Kelly’s profound contributions to FUS during these past twenty years and a look ahead to her new form of ministry here. This will be a service not to miss. I hope that you will also join us for the Coffee Hour following the service and then a drive-through reception in our parking lot. (More information is available on the next page.)

The call of Rev. Kelly A-J will also signal the winding down of my brief ministry with you. I will be with you through July, but clearly, we will all be looking toward and anticipating what lies ahead. My story will perhaps be the oddest ministry in FUS’s long history: the minister who met almost no one except one afternoon when dressed as a bunny for the Easter Hop-About, the minister who most of you saw only on a screen. I never imagined having a television ministry, but that’s been my story with you from beginning to end of my time here. In spite of not meeting the vast majority of you face-to-face, I will carry you with me. You are in my heart. What I have learned here will shape my coming interim ministries in many and deep ways. I thank you for letting me into your story and your hearts.

I invite you to contemplate your stories and FUS’s story this month. Come, let us worship, share, learn, and celebrate in this community we create together.

In gratitude,
Roger
We warmly invite you to participate in celebrating Rev. Kelly Crocker’s 20th anniversary with FUS on Sunday, May 23. The virtual worship service and drive-through reception will give us an opportunity to honor and thank Rev. Kelly for the multitude of ways she has enriched and deepened us spiritually, cared for us, and led us forward. It will also be a way to mark her transition this summer into a new role at FUS as the Co-Senior Minister.

Our celebration begins with the virtual Flower Communion service on Sunday, May 23, at 10 am, which will include a tribute to Rev. Kelly, and she will be the guest of honor at the virtual Coffee Hour immediately following worship. Then we invite you to continue the celebration with a drive-through reception in the FUS parking lot. The drive-through reception will start at noon and end at 2 pm. To facilitate a smooth flow of cars, we’re inviting FUS folks to come at the designated times (please come at a different time if the scheduled time doesn’t work for you):

12:00 - 12:30 pm  Last names starting with A-F
12:30 - 1:00 pm    G-L
1:00 - 1:30 pm     M-R
1:30 - 2:00 pm     S-Z

Another way to participate in celebrating Rev. Kelly’s 20th anniversary is through Kudoboard—an online appreciation card from FUS. Everyone has an opportunity to attach messages, photos, videos, photos of kids’ art, etc., to an online appreciation card we will send Kelly. Here’s the link to add your appreciation to Rev. Kelly’s kudoboard: https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/Cp2RDL9C. If you have questions or run into problems, please contact Rev. Roger at rogerb@fusmadison.org. More information is available at www.fusmadison.org/kellys20th.

Please join us in celebrating this big milestone for Rev. Kelly and FUS!
The question of staff compensation is one our congregation has pondered in one form or another over decades. As Alyssa Ryanjoy pointed out in her article last month, this has been the focus of discussion during the interim ministry, especially in the past several months. Following small and large-group discussions at the Winter Parish Meeting (youtu.be/8F37W2BGW0M), congregational listening session (youtu.be/mzdhgZNhA88), and conversations with staff, we have developed an FAQ (fusmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Staff-Compensation.pdf) that answers many questions. What follows is a historical summary of this question and the board’s approach to moving toward equitable compensation. Please plan to join us at the financial forum on Sunday, June 6, for small group discussions on this question and how our budget can continue to grow in alignment with our vision and values.

With the retirement of Rev. Michael Schuler in June 2018, we entered into what would become a 3-year period of discernment to reflect on our past, assess our present, and lay the groundwork for our future. We have accomplished much during the interim: We have redefined the roles and relationships of our ministers, strengthened the board’s capacity for engaged and compassionate leadership, examined and refined our annual vision of ministry, and found new and significant ways to engage members, adults, children and youth alike, even in the midst of a global pandemic. As of this writing, our annual stewardship campaign is ahead of where we were this time last year, which speaks well of our ability to face the joys and challenges of the next era in the life of our congregation.

The interim time followed a period of declining revenues beginning around 2014. This led to the loss of a key staff position in 2018, the Member Engagement Coordinator, the staff member responsible for welcoming and supporting new members, hospitality, and connecting members with volunteer opportunities and ministry teams. That position was combined with the Director of Adult Spiritual Programs, which encompassed Quest, campus ministry, adult religious education, and a wide array of other programming. This led to a significant reduction in our capacity to recruit volunteers and support the needs and opportunities for engagement and connection for the adult members of our faith community.

Among the goals that the board set out for the interim period, two are particularly relevant to our current budget process: First, we intentionally focused on stewardship to strengthen our finances and increase opportunities for connection. A second related goal was to address the need to significantly improve staff compensation.

We had an opportunity to learn many, many lessons over the transition period, especially over the past year. Among the most significant of these lessons is a reminder of the worth and value of our staff as they have endeavored, under challenging conditions, to support our community in its efforts to communicate, connect, and thrive.

The staff leadership team and board are guided by the Unitarian Universalist Association’s extensive study on staff compensation, and their work has shaped our recent conversations with the congregation. Holding this knowledge, our commitment to staff, and what we learned in our conversations with the congregation, the board, at its April 21 meeting, formally adopted a policy to strive to align our staff salaries with UUA compensation standards. The purpose of the board review of staff compensation is to monitor internal equity and current alignment to UUA standards, and/or reasons for variance. While individual compensation will be confidential to the leadership team, personnel committee, and board, capsule position descriptions may be shared with membership for communication and transparency purposes. Current UUA standards for each of these capsules are freely accessible on the UUA website.

The board recognizes that these changes need to be phased in over time. The Human Resources Manual includes a series of step increases that move each position to the regionally adjusted UUA salary recommendation for their position and tenure.

Drum roll, please! I invite you to insert your favorite hymn of hope, community, and a new day dawning here, and sing it from the rooftops! We are entering an exciting time of change, possibility, and challenge in our community. We look forward to the time when we can be together once again in person, and the board is deeply grateful to the congregation for keeping up the faith during these strange times!
FINANCIAL FORUM REIMAGINED
by Monica Nolan, Executive Director

If your eyes glaze over when you hear the word “fiscal,” or you’ve never dreamed of (and perhaps even dreaded) attending a financial forum, or you’ve uttered something in the realm of “we are a congregation, not a business,” then our upcoming opportunities for financial reflection and conversation might be for you. The June events are also for the finance experts and those with a special affinity for balanced budgets.

Dan Hotchkiss, church governance expert and author, shares in his article, “Green Eyeshades and Rose-Colored Glasses,” a somewhat humorous description of two distinct financial orientations, provides suggestions for avoiding divisiveness, and how to create budgets that comply with policies, accomplish the vision, and transform lives. Together, we’ll explore where you and our community fall on this spectrum of green and rose-colored perceptions and how it impacts our success in embodying our principles.

Our annual Financial Forum will be unlike years past, as we embody our Vision of Ministry call to practice adaptability, nurture community, and dismantle systems of oppression. At the end of May, a “FUS Financial Reflection” YouTube video will be made available for viewing at your convenience. Watch your inbox for more information. Instead of a 45-minute Zoom presentation, in which my cat attempts to implement his long-planned scheme to become an internet sensation live, my rural internet proves just how archaic it truly is, and my toddler may or may not sing “Puff the Magic Dragon” for 30 minutes at truly terrifying decibels, we’ve planned a hybrid between a traditional worship service and a financial forum. We’ll strive to provide food for thought, as well as relevant year-to-date financial information and an introduction to the proposed 2021-2022 budget. In addition to a reading from “Green Eyeshades and Rose-Colored Glasses,” we’ll explore the question, “how much is enough?” And we’ll look at our proposed budget as the moral document that it is—inviting you to consider what our budget says about us, our purpose, mission, vision, priorities, and principles.

We hope the “FUS Financial Reflection” will stir you before we gather together via Zoom, on Sunday, June 6, at 11 am. After a brief recap of the reflection questions presented in the video, we’ll break into small groups and discuss these topics and practice our active listening and curiosity skills. Facilitators will note comments which aren’t expressly communicated as confidential and will share with the larger group the themes and diverse opinions shared. The board and staff leadership team will review these notes during its meeting on Wednesday, June 9. Frequently asked questions and requests for budget modifications will be compiled, responded to, and made available before the June 13 Parish Meeting when we vote on our 2021-2022 budget.

I strongly encourage you to join us for these opportunities to listen and engage in thoughtful, ethical conversation around our fiscal orientations, thresholds for financial risk and pursuit of security, and perceptions around how we use our resources to be a force for good in the world. Though we may not have the culinary gifts of the Food Haulers to entice your attendance, there will be music, thoughtful readings and reflections, good conversation, and dare I say, even a little bit of fun.
Before we close the door on this year’s truly unique Children’s Religious Exploration programming, we want to take a moment to send a very special “thank you” to our volunteer teachers. Frankly, they all deserve medals for the ways they brought ingenuity, compassion, humor, thought-provoking content, and community building, all within the confines of a virtual world. Whether it was Zoom games (because one can never have enough fun, especially during a pandemic!), sharing wonderful videos of children’s books, meaningful discussions in breakout rooms, Zoom polling or so many other things; each week our teachers strove to create meaningful experiences for our CRE children and youth. In short, they kept CRE alive and well these past eight months! And so, we give a special and full-of-gratitude *SHOUT OUT!* to these wonderful and generous people:

Amy Bradshaw  
Rachel Bennett  
Santhia Brandt  
Tamara Brognano  
Julie Collins  
Jen Conti  
Rev. Kelly Crocker  
Adrienne Eberhardy  
Vickie Eiden  
Reenie Euhardy  
Karen Faller  
Terri Felton  
Joy Stieglitz Gottschalk  
Scott Harrington  
Sarah Herrick  
Rachel Howard  
Sandy Johnson  
Sarah Jung  
Susan Koenig  
Andy Levi  

Barbara Nehls Lowe  
Ali Maresh  
Scott Mason  
Brian Miles  
Olivia Mote  
Rudy Moore  
Abigail Musselman  
Dipesh Navsaria  
Morgan Neuman  
Tara Peotter  
Jay Ranney  
Susen Schroeder  
Brad Sinner  
Amy Slater  
Kristina Trybek  
Melissa Tumbleson  
Lindsay Warren  
Jennifer Wickman  
Jack Williams  
Jane Nelson Worel

And as we close the door on the 2020-2021 CRE year, the 2021-2022 door is opening wider every day, and with it, the need for next year’s teachers. Maybe you’d be interested in following in the footsteps of those listed above? You’d get to spend time with awesome kids while promoting the UU values and beliefs that we hold dear. And the icing on the cake? You’d teach alongside some pretty darn special adults! Contact Leslie Ross at leslier@fusmadison.org if you’d like to learn more about what it means to be a CRE teacher and what classes are available.
WHEN & HOW WILL FUS REOPEN?

by the FUS Leadership Team

Not surprisingly, we are getting an increasing number of questions about when and how FUS will reopen its in-person gatherings. There is a great deal of excitement and anticipation about reopening and anxiety, too. Much like the last 14 months, it’s a complicated and uncertain picture.

Even with the uncertainty, there are some things we know for sure:

- Individual comfort levels will vary depending on when they and their loved ones get vaccinated, risk levels for themselves and family, and personal characteristics, to name a few. We are mindful, for example, that many children in FUS families may not have access to the vaccine until early 2022.

- We continue to base decisions about reopening on advice from our medical advisors, recommendations from Dane County Public Health, and the well-being of the congregation as a whole. We hold these alongside our UU principles which, as UUA President Rev. Susan Fredrick-Gray reminds us, includes centering the most vulnerable in our decision-making.

- Reopening will be phased depending on circumstances with the virus—outdoor and indoor small group gatherings will happen before large inside group activities such as worship. We also recognize that conditions may dictate scaling back reopening.

- FUS will reopen large group activities later than most congregations in Madison—just as FUS and other UU congregations were among the first to close when the pandemic hit.

- As we reopen, we will offer in-person and virtual options for worship, CRE, small group gatherings, etc., guided by our commitment to equity and inclusion.

- Operating simultaneously with in-person and virtual platforms in a safe, sustainable way for staff, volunteers, and congregants will require a great deal of ingenuity, experimentation (including trial and error), and flexibility.

The Leadership Team is working on creating criteria for moving forward with phased reopening. We promise to communicate our plan and timeline as soon as possible. Balancing and navigating reopening will be a great challenge for all of us, and we appreciate your commitment to being kind, patient, and flexible. We welcome questions and comments.

—Rev. Roger Bertschausen (rogerb@fusmadison.org)
—Rev. Kelly Crocker (kellyc@fusmadison.org)
—Monica Nolan (monican@fusmadison.org)
Over five years ago, FUS embarked on a significant overhaul to our online presence with the launch of our current website. I arrived at my role as your Communications Director after all the hard work was completed and have navigated our changing virtual needs with you over the last three years.

For the last year and a half, we’ve experienced more technical difficulties with the website. We’ve attempted to resolve issues as quickly and efficiently as possible, but these have only been temporary fixes. Essentially, to fix the underlying issue, we’ll need to make significant upgrades to the website.

Fixing this issue presents an opportunity to address needs we didn’t anticipate five years ago. However, it doesn’t necessarily mean that we need to start over, as there are many aspects of our website that meet their goals. The old adage, “If it isn’t broke, don’t fix it,” applies here as well. The scope of the project compared to five years ago is best described in terms of filing systems. Five years ago, the project essentially moved from a paper filing system to a digital one. This time, we’re just switching from one digital filing system to a new one. In other words, we’re not reinventing the website, but we’re doing a thorough update—cleaning out old files, keeping necessary ones, and reconfiguring other ones.

One change we’ll be addressing is how we approach our three main website audiences: visitors (people unknown to us), members and affiliates, and renters. When we designed the website five years ago, the focus was on visitors, leaving many members and affiliates frustrated. It remains critical that the website is both helpful and accessible to visitors as most people will look us up online before they ever enter our building. It also remains critical, especially during this increased time of virtual community life, that you as members and affiliates can access the information you need to stay informed and engaged. Meanwhile, renters have not had any significant focus, but we’ll be working to simplify access for them as they provide a source of revenue.

Your feedback is a critical part of this process, and we’ll be sending out a survey in the Red Floors to collect your responses. Please take a few minutes to respond whether you’ve had a positive, negative, or average experience using our website. We’ll also utilize Google Analytics to identify user trends and other quantitative data to inform our work.

We hope to launch the updated version of the website by the start of our 2021-2022 program year in September. While we know it will be difficult to create a website everyone adores, we will make a concerted effort to meet the many needs of our community.
COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Wheel of Life
Congratulations to Dan and Mary Broner on the arrival of their grandchild, Erin Olivia. Erin is the child of Dan and Mary’s daughter, Laura, and her husband, Brock, and everyone is doing well and enjoying this new life and love. Welcome to the world, Erin!

We send our love, strength, and prayers for healing to Karen Jaeger as she recovers from a recent surgery.

Candidating Week & Special Parish Meeting Announcement
Join us for this important week in the ministerial search process. A special virtual parish meeting is scheduled for Sunday, May 2, at 11 am to vote on calling the candidate. Link information is on our website at www.fusmadison.org/candidatingweek.

First Friday Film on May 7 @ 6:30 pm
This film night will be different than our typical format. Rather than showing one feature-length film, we will be sharing several short volunteer-made videos that began as written articles, letters, or testimonials calling for justice in the state budget. This pro-justice event is being co-sponsored by: FUS, the Coalition for a Just WI Budget, Family Farm Defenders, Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, and others. Visit www.facebook.com/events/255823812914253 to learn more and to register for this event. For more information, call Tim at 608-630-3633.

Letter of Gratitude for Health Care Workers and First Responders
Rev. Roger joined several faith leaders with the Wisconsin Council of Churches and the Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice in expressing gratitude to health care workers and first responders for their dedication in caring for the public throughout the pandemic. You can read their letter here: https://www.wichurches.org/2021/03/24/faith-leaders-covid-19-thank-you/.

Groundwork Anti-Racism Training
Saturday, May 15, from 10:30 am - 2:30 pm with a break between 12 pm and 1 pm
This virtual workshop will explore our personal and collective understanding of white privilege, white supremacy, and racism. The goal is to help us as white people examine how racism impacts our lives and our congregation, and how we can diminish the impact and harm of racism in our everyday lives. Registration available at https://fus.ministryplatform.com/portal/event_signup.aspx?id=8265.

Musicale Mini-Series
The Friday Noon Musicale returns for a limited series. Videos will premiere each Friday in May at noon on FUS’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/fusmadison. More information will be available in the Red Floors.
A MONTH OF SERVICES
Sunday @ 10 am at www.fusmadison.org

Sunday, May 2 - “Lost and Found”
with Rev. Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson, Ministerial Candidate

This is the second of two worship services with our candidate, Rev. Kelly A-J. Immediately following today's service, the congregation will vote on calling Rev. Kelly A-J as Co-Senior Minister to join Rev. Kelly C. Music by Frédéric Chopin, Thomas Arne, Norman Dello Joio, and James Taylor.

Sunday, May 9 - “The Power of Story”
with Rev. Roger Bertschausen

Stories are powerful. They can move nations and even the whole world to action. Stories about themselves and their families have an enormous impact on individuals. Stories shape congregations and other communities. We will reflect on the power of stories—from Buddhist nationalists in Sri Lanka to stories we have about our mothers and First Unitarian Society. Music by and for moms of FUS's music staff: an organ solo by Linda Warren's mother, a bell choir piece by Heather Thorpe's grandmother, and a song by Drew Collins written for his mother.

Saturday, May 15 @ 4:30 pm & Sunday, May 16 @ 10 am - “Coming of Age”
with FUS Coming of Age Classes

This annual Rite of Passage celebrates the accomplishments and learnings of our Coming of Age youth. This class spends the year learning about Unitarian Universalism, their own beliefs about faith, and its place in their lives while working with adult facilitators. This service is their own beautiful creation representing the journey they have been on together. Over this past year, our youth and facilitators have done a magnificent job of creating community while tackling challenging conversations in a virtual setting. We hope you will join us in this recognition and celebration of our Coming of Age youth.

Sunday, May 23 - “The Flower Communion”
with Rev. Kelly Crocker & Rev. Roger Bertschausen

Flower Communion is the most important, specifically Unitarian/Universalist ritual across the U/U world. We will also celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Rev. Kelly Crocker's ministry at FUS. Join us for this virtual service—and then we invite you to come by the FUS parking lot for a drive-through reception honoring Rev. Kelly (details on page 4). Music will include a Scottish folk song, Léo Delibes’ beloved Flower Duet from Lakmé, Tchaikovsky’s Waltz of the Flowers from Nutcracker, and What a Wonderful World.

Sunday, May 30 - “How Do We Remember”
with Rev. Roger Bertschausen

How we remember wars and other historical events is complicated. Look no further than the Civil War, which was recast in the “Lost Cause” story as part of the effort to roll back freedom for Blacks and enforce Jim Crow segregation. This reflection will explore the big-scale stories humans craft about history like the “Lost Cause” and zoom in to focus on some powerful stories about FUS’s past. Songs of freedom, mourning, peace, and hope.
Understory
by Mark Nepo

I’ve been watching stars rely on the darkness they resist. And fish struggle with and against the current. And hawks glide faster when their wings don’t move.

Still I keep retelling what happens till it comes out the way I want.

We try so hard to be the main character when it is our point of view that keeps us from the truth.

The sun has its story that no curtain can stop.

It’s true. The only way beyond the self is through it. The only way to listen to what can never be said is to quiet our need to steer the plot.

When jarred by life, we might unravel the story we tell ourselves and discover the story we are in, the one that keeps telling us.