As we come closer to the fulfillment of winter and the emergence of spring, we are entering a time of renewal and revitalization. The endurance required to withstand winter’s challenges is thus meaningful; there is a reprieve in sight. The thawing of the ice is a time of joy and resurgence, and a welcoming of new life. Winter gifts to us the space for thorough introspection and deliberation; it is a time of reflection on the experiences of the last cycle. What, within us, can we allow to thaw? As the snow melts into streams that feed the fertile ground, so can we release the things that freeze us and sow the terrain with potential.
from Molly Crosen in Art of Awareness

The Madison Unitarian volunteer editorial team: Lari Fanlund and Hannah Lee
On March 1st each year, my grandfather would call early in the morning and say, "Don't forget to wear your red. It's St. David's Day." An immigrant from Wales, Grandpa Crocker wanted us to remember who we were and the place from which we came. Now, I am the one reminding my kids to wear red each year.

We also celebrate the St. David's Day tradition of filling our house with daffodils, one of the national symbols for Wales. Bringing home this bundle of vibrant yellow flowers and placing them on the fireplace is always a joyous occasion. After months of a hard Wisconsin winter, these delicate yellow flowers are not just a symbol of home and hearth but are also a symbol of renewal. Despite the harsh and difficult season, a season of growth and life still emerges.

Renewal might be beautiful, but it isn't easy. Much like a daffodil bulb in winter, it is working tirelessly to grow under the weight of frigid days. The painter Andrew Wyeth, in speaking of winter, said “Something waits beneath it—the whole story doesn’t show.” It is not until the ground has thawed that you can witness its beauty, but the process of renewal has been happening all along. Sometimes in life, the moments in which we experience a renewal of our hearts happen during "wintry periods," those moments of struggle or pain, from which we emerge, changed by the experience.

As we begin to see the daffodils, these cheery messengers of hope appearing in our homes, and as we embrace the theme of renewal this month, we do so emerging from the latest wave of the pandemic. We emerge changed by its impact on our bodies and our communities. For some of us, this time has renewed our sense of what it means to live fully into these days: to understand our lives with greater fragility, our community with greater tenderness, and to remember who we are and from where we come.
RACISM & REPARATION

Last month, the Board of Trustees shared with you areas of focus for our community, including dismantling oppression especially as it relates to racism. One program currently offered toward this effort takes place later this month. Please plan on joining us for a virtual two-part educational and reflection series called Racism & Reparation. This free program is organized by members of the Racial Justice Ministry Team and the MOSES Team (criminal justice reform), and generously funded by the Joyce and Bill Wartmann lecture series. More information about each presentation is below. Registration will be available in the Red Floors and on our website. If you have questions, please contact Rev. Kelly Asprooth-Jackson at kellyaj@fusmadison.org.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27, AT 6:30 PM
“BLACK ON THE WISCONSIN FRONTIER, 1725 TO 1866”

Dr. Christy Clark-Pujara is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of Afro-American Studies. Her research focuses on the experiences of Black people in French and British North America in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. She is particularly interested in retrieving the hidden and unexplored histories of African Americans in areas that historians have not sufficiently examined—small towns and cities in the North and Midwest. Those who have taken the “Black History for a New Day” course will be familiar with Dr. Clark-Pujara’s revelatory work and engaging presentations. Her program for FUS will feature research from her forthcoming book Black on the Midwestern Frontier: From Slavery to Suffrage in the Wisconsin Territory, 1725—1868, which examines how the practice of race-based slavery, Black settlement, and debates over abolition and Black rights shaped White-Black race relations in the Midwest.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, AT 6:30 PM
“REFLECTIONS ON REPARATIONS”

Rev. Leslie Takahashi is the lead minister at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church in Walnut Creek, California. She is co-author of The Arc of the Universe is Long: Unitarian Universalists, Anti-Racism and the Journey from Calgary as well as a contributor to numerous other anti-racism publications. From 2017-2020 she chaired the UUA’s Commission on Institutional Change “Widening the Circle of Concern.” FUS members will remember Rev. Takahashi’s well-received sermon at FUS on April 12, 2021, “What We Can’t Unknow.” Her program on March 29 will help us “learn about the history of our own institutions and the models of redress being discussed and advocated for by Black leaders, Indigenous leaders, and other leaders of color.”
Grace shining through is an emerging and joyful theme throughout this winter as we embrace new opportunities to gather that celebrate community engagement. Our Valentine Jazz Soiree last month was such an example. The food offering, stellar jazz, inaugural FUS cooking show, and your in-home gatherings were a warm reminder of what being in community can accomplish. And, as the soft open evening of our 2022-2023 Stewardship Campaign, this event shone brightly.

As we approach our annual Stewardship Campaign with dual platforms for worship services and important gatherings, we are united in lifting up our shared concept of stewardship as the giving of our time, talent, and financial support for our community as a single message. As with last year’s campaign, there is no one unique messenger. You, our community, are the best messengers of what stewardship means in practice and in principle as we embrace those who have gone before us, those we share our days with now, and the generations to come. We are steadfast in the belief that community engagement is the theme that binds together the personal stories we share about why FUS matters to us. During this month of giving, you will hear and see stories from fellow FUS members about what community engagement means to them, and we encourage you to share your story with us.

The last months have taught us that engagement encompasses a broad spectrum of who we are and what each of us has to offer. We know there are those among us who have time to give, those who have an abundance of talent to share, and those who can provide the financial support needed to nurture our community. We ask you to consider your gifts and what you bring to this community: all gifts are welcome, all are necessary, and all are honored. To our Sustaining Stewards, thank you! Your multi-year pledge commitments are not merely a financial gift, but an extension of our Unitarian Universalist values.

We are thrilled that our Weekend of Promise, March 12 and 13, will align with our ability to be back for in-person services. In the week leading up to that weekend, the 2022-2023 Stewardship Campaign materials will be in your mailbox. While our current in-person restrictions mean I won’t be in the Commons for your questions and conversations about this campaign, I will be available at our outdoor hospitality on Saturdays and between services on Sundays, and by phone or email during the week. I love answering your questions, hearing your stories, and sharing with you our hopes for this campaign. Together, I know we can meet our financial and engagement goals.
The bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don’t flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;
though sometimes it is necessary
to reteach a thing its loveliness,
to put a hand on its brow
of the flower
and retell it in words and in touch
it is lovely
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;
as Saint Francis
put his hand on the creased forehead
of the sow, and told her in words and in touch
blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow
began remembering all down her thick length,
from the earthen snout all the way
through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl
of the tail,
from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine
down through the great broken heart
to the sheer blue milken dreaminess flowing
into the fourteen mouths beneath her:
the long, perfect loveliness of sow.

by Galway Kinnell
In our human bodies and emotional lives, we can feel the aches and pains that accompany the need for renewal. The worn-out and broken parts of us are hard to ignore if we are listening and shout out when we refuse. But how do we assess when our organizations require restoration and then identify what parts are most in need of attention?

I have watched your Board of Trustees grapple masterfully with questions pertaining to where our organization needs renewal. After three years of interim in which listening sessions were offered in abundance, and in a period in which Trustees have a deep understanding of our governance structure, the Board has a beautiful finger on our congregational pulse, as well as a compelling vision for the future. Together, after querying the staff and congregation and participating in a meaningful discernment process, they crafted a strategic plan that marries an understanding of our community’s deepest wounds and the wisdom required to point us in the direction of potential remedies.

During my tenure at FUS, I’ve noticed a dominant preference for assessing the state of our community using quantitative data. There’s a desire to use membership, pledge, and financial trends to make sense of where we’re ailing and where we need to improve. And though these numbers can certainly tell us where something is growing or shrinking, unless they are accompanied by an assessment of how deeply we are living into our mission and vision, they are incomplete.

I believe every number associated with our income and membership represents an opportunity. In order to understand these opportunities, we need to craft wise questions and values-based tools for assessment. The finance committee is hopeful that the Purpose-Based Budget (introduced in the October newsletter) will help us make this connection between quantitative and qualitative modes of assessing how we are lifting up our mission with our resources.

I propose that to identify what parts of our organization need renewal, we must push ourselves to ask new questions, listen deeply to the answers and then carefully apply what we’ve learned to a plan that can guide us on our path forward. We must ask ourselves and others how we have fallen short of living fully into our principles. And in a ministry that is perpetually shared, we press on together with intention and curiosity. This sense of renewal, I believe, is alive in the rebirth of hope that things can continue to change for the better.
1. Pledge payments are $43k higher than last year but are still below years prior (as can be seen reflected in the budget for this year).

2. Rental Income is in line with last year's but under budget, due to a shift in when individuals and business prepaid for parking. We anticipate this will even out at the end of the fiscal year.

3. Our outreach offering is doing approx. $2k better than last year at this time but unpledged contributions were down by mid-year.

4. Additional Cabaret and fundraising income will appear in Q3 financial statements.

5. The second round of PPP funds hit the books in the first quarter.

6. An unexpected HVAC repair put us $9k over the building budget

7. Nearly all account expenses are under budget—totaling $55k in savings.

8. Our Operating Net Operating Income is $213k, which is $48k better than budgeted and $306k better than last year at this time. Even without the PPP funds that would have set us up with a positive net operating income of $6k.

9. Our Other Income is better than budgeted by $23k thanks in part to a late surge in Capital Campaign payments.

10. When factoring in Other income and expense, we see a Total Net Income of $143k, which is $279k better than last year and $70k better than budgeted.
ART IN THE WRIGHT PLACE
Leslie Ross, Director of Children’s Religious Exploration

After a nearly 2½ year hiatus, we are thrilled to finally bring back Art in the Wright Place. We have heard from so many of you how much you’ve missed this beloved event, so we know we are not alone in our excitement! Our April 9 & 10 event will include 40 area artists—a handful less than our usual number to allow for greater distancing, especially in our crowded Loggia. Many of our artists are returning favorites, but almost 25% are new to Art in the Wright Place, and we are delighted to welcome them.

As you are likely aware, Art in the Wright Place is a fundraiser for FUS. We charge a nominal booth fee for each artist with the understanding that they then give 15% of their net sales to FUS. In this way, the better the artists do, the better FUS does. If an artist donates an item valued at $75 or more to our raffle, they pay a lower percentage to FUS. You can help both FUS and area artists succeed by spreading the word about Art in the Wright Place and by attending the event, perhaps with a friend or five! With Mother’s Day and graduations right around the corner, you will find some wonderful, unique gifts to buy. If you’re like me, you use art fairs throughout the year to stockpile birthday and holiday gifts as well. And let’s face it, we’re all a bit antsy to get out and enjoy some pre-Covid activities!

At our last art fair in 2019, we added a raffle to our event. That proved to be “a keeper,” and this year it will be held on both Saturday and Sunday in the Gaebler Living Room. You’ll be hearing more about opportunities to buy raffle tickets online. We will also have food carts available for hungry shoppers and artists on both days, from 11 am – 2 pm. As was true at Winterfest, seating will be set up in the Atrium building for your dining experience!

Business owners are invited to sponsor Art in the Wright Place and will receive acknowledgement in our program guide, on yard signs, and on our website. If you’d like to add your business to our list of sponsors, please contact Cheryll Mellenthin at cheryllm@fusmadison.org. If you’d like to donate your time and energy to the event, trust me...there will be many opportunities for you! Our thorough and determined Volunteer Coordinator, Lorna Aaronson, has put together a SignUp Genius page just for you! We’ll need many helpers to pull off this event and there’s a variety of tasks, some with low contact with others, others with greater contact. You can choose to help with hospitality, set up/clean up, shuttling artists to parking spots “down the road,” clerical assistance, raffle sales, and more! Check out the volunteer page at https://bit.ly/3BryP8P to see what most intrigues you. Let’s make this event return even bigger and better! Join us on Saturday, April 9, from 9 am to 5 pm, or Sunday, April 10, from 10 am to 4 pm. We hope to see you there!*

* Masks are required to attend the art fair.
Our Wartmann Series was, like everything else, interrupted by the pandemic. While we were able to adapt our class and workshop with the Transforming Hearts Collective leadership for an online audience, we decided to wait until this spring to offer the third installment in the series on trans inclusivity. We are delighted to bring back (in-person!) the beloved lecture element of the Wartmann series.

The Wartmann Series is one of the enduring legacies of members Joyce and Bill Wartmann. Bill envisioned a lecture series that would offer a voice at the intersection of human sexuality and the liberal religious tradition at a time when such conversations were happening in seminaries but rarely with celebration in congregations. While the series is expanding its scope of topics and formats, we remain committed to exploring how our liberal religious tradition contributes to the conversation of building a more just and inclusive world.

It is with great excitement that we announce Dr. Linn Tonstad as our Wartmann lecturer. Dr. Tonstad is the Associate Professor of Theology, Religion, and Sexuality at Yale Divinity School. She also serves on the steering committee of the Queer Studies in Religion unit of the American Academy of Religion and is an associate editor at Political Theology.

Dr. Tonstad is the author of Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics, a highly praised introductory text to the field of theology and queer theory. She also argues that the embodied experience of religious practitioners, beyond the question of acceptance of queer individuals in congregations, offers an expansive contribution to the life of the church. Her lecture is sure to challenge your assumptions through a rigorous and approachable look at the field of queer theology.

Join us for this in-person lecture on Sunday, April 3, at 2 pm in the Atrium Auditorium.
COMMUNITY INFORMATION

WHEEL OF LIFE

We send our love to Sue Vogt and her family on the passing of her husband David Penn on February 6. David believed the best way to live life was to “have fun, learn lots.” Formerly a Children’s Religious Exploration teacher and chalice group participant, David also loved services, music, and coffee hour discussions, especially when politics or civil liberties were involved. He had a big heart, and his spark will be deeply missed.

We send our love to Leah Sinclair as she transitions out of her supportive housing and her family begins searching for a new home for Leah. If you are someone with ideas for supportive housing in Dane County, please contact Rev. Kelly C, and she will connect you with Leah’s parents, Lori Neumann and Jim Sinclair.

There are three upcoming memorial services for members who have recently passed. All services will be held in the Atrium Auditorium and livestreamed via YouTube: March 12 at 12 pm for Lillian Tong; March 19 at 11 am for Joy Wiggert; and March 22 at 6 pm for Thom Boykoff.

MARCH FORTH TO EARTH DAY

On Friday, March 4, the FUS Sustainability Team will help launch an eight-week statewide climate justice action in communities across Wisconsin. You can learn more about this exciting project at tinyurl.com/Mar4th2EarthDayAbout. We will join the larger Madison-area community at 5 pm at the UW Library Mall (700 block of State St.) Join us each Friday as we build momentum for a very exciting Earth Day celebration and dramatic action for the climate in Wisconsin! For more information, call Tim at 608-630-3633.

CHILDREN’S RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION CLASS OPENS APRIL 1ST!

Registration for our 2022-2023 Children’s Religious Exploration (CRE) classes will begin on April 1st. More information from Leslie Ross, Director of CRE, will be shared in the April newsletter and in the Red Floors.

Visit our website at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes.

SAVE THE DATE!
INSTALLATION SERVICE FOR TEAM KELLY

The Service of Installation is the formal recognition of the covenantal relationship between our called Co-Senior Ministers, the Rev. Kelly J. Crocker and the Rev. Kelly Asprooth-Jackson, and the congregation. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, May 15, at 3 pm to mark this ceremonial celebration in the life our community.
A LECTURE WITH DR. LINN TONSTAD

QUEER THEOLOGY

SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2022 @ 2 PM
FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MADISON

ART IN THE WRIGHT PLACE

www.fusmadison.org/artfair

APRIL 9, 2022 | 9 AM - 5 PM & APRIL 10, 2022 | 10 AM - 4 PM
MARCH 5 & 6
REFRESHING OUR SPIRITS
with Rev. Kelly Asprooth-Jackson, Co-Senior Minister

In the hopefully waning weeks of the winter doldrums, perhaps you may find that life’s zest is running low. And even if you are the sort who only ever feels invigorated by February and March, we could all still use a pick-me-up now and then, couldn’t we? As we return to gathering in-person for worship (as well as online), join us for a service dedicated to replenishing our spiritual storehouses.

Music in recognition of Women’s History Month by Tania León and Clara Schumann.

MARCH 12 & 13
RENEWING OUR PROMISES

The lives that we lead and share are held together, largely, by the promises we make to ourselves and one another. But keeping our promises is not a passive undertaking; it requires conscious effort to renew our commitments. In this service, we will explore and celebrate the promises that hold us together.

Anticipating St. Patrick’s Day, music from The Lost Songs of St. Kilda on Celtic harp.
MARCH 19 & 20
RECONSIDERING OUR PRINCIPLES
with Rev. Kelly Asprooth-Jackson, Co-Senior Minister
One of the chief hallmarks of our faith is a willingness to question and to challenge—not only the world but also ourselves. Even for our free-thinking tradition, introspection can sometimes be the hardest part. Join us for a service about second thoughts, second chances, and what it means to reconsider what we know to be most deeply true.

MARCH 26 & 27
RECLAIMING OUR BODIES
with Rev. Kelly Asprooth-Jackson, Co-Senior Minister
To move. To laugh. To touch. To do all of these things requires a body—not simply a carrying case for our minds, but the shape and form of the impression we leave upon the world, the chemical means by which we feel every sorrow and joy, and the source of much wisdom. We will devote this service to a critical part of ourselves too often neglected or derided—our own bodies—in order to appreciate how sacred they are.
Music in recognition of Women’s History Month by Amy Beach, Margaret Bonds, and Beatrice Miller.
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LAY MINISTERS
Our lay ministers provide a confidential, caring presence to congregants undergoing stressful life challenges or joyous occasions. Under the guidance of our called ministers, they promote the spirit of community through direct service in visiting the ill and healing, facilitating support groups, and more.
Contact a lay minister at 608.233.9774 x. 126