

# The Circuit Writer

## January Services

**Sunday, January 1, 2023 | 10:30AM**  
**New Year's Day Service**

*Led by lay leader Randy Jefferson*

Join in welcoming in the new year by participating in our first 2023 service of reflection, song, readings, and shared hopes for the year to come. We will gather together in grateful community in our sunny Atrium; *this service will not be livestreamed.*

**Sunday, January 8th | 10:30AM**  
**"Some Sins for a Life Worth Living"**

*Led by Preacher in Residence, the Rev.*

*Suzanne Wasilczuk | Potluck Sunday!*

This is the time of year we may make life resolutions, ways to change our lives for the better. We try to keep those resolutions. We may already have broken them. In our very busy lives, what might be another path to a life worth living?

**Sunday, January 15th | 10:30AM**  
**"The Profit of Prophets"**

*Led by Preacher in Residence, the Rev.*

*Suzanne Wasilczuk*

Inspired teachers come to us, voice disappointment at the wicked ways of the world. Point out the evils of our time. Who are these prophets, the prophets of long ago, and the prophets of today, and what is their message to us?

**Sunday, January 22nd | 10:30AM**  
**"Rhythms of a Full Life"**

*Led by Preacher in Residence, the Rev.*

*Suzanne Wasilczuk*

"People say to me: Oh, you gotta be crazy! How can you sing in times like these? Don't you read the news? Don't you know the score? How can you sing when so many others grieve?" [T. R. Ritchie]  
How, and why do we, indeed, keep on singing?

**Sunday, January 29th | 10:30AM**  
**"What's an Atheist Doing in a Pew?"**

*Led by Preacher in Residence, the Rev.*

*Suzanne Wasilczuk*

Many of us Unitarian Universalists struggle with the concept of the supernatural, the idea of an all-powerful God. We embrace the workings of science, the guidance of reason. We may call ourselves humanist, agnostic, atheist. Yet here we are, come together as a body, in spirit. A spiritual body. Let's think about that.



JANUARY  
2023

## *REflections*

Like many UU parents I followed my son through the RE program as a volunteer. I found nothing more humbling than my lack of classroom management skills, and nothing more rewarding than working with young adults. I continued volunteering through the pandemic in (mostly futile) attempts to engage youth in yet another zoom class after a week of on-line learning. In all those years I never questioned the Sunday school classroom model.

Changes in demographics, family structures, and the role of church has been challenging this model and all UU congregations have struggled with a steady decline in youth attendance. The pandemic accelerated the process in part by breaking continuity within our learning communities. First UU Wausau is not unique in having fewer children attending our congregation post-covid – our numbers closely mirror the enrollment decline across all UU congregations.

The traditional classroom model was a product of the middle of last century. It was established when church and religion had a greater role in US culture and was further enhanced to draw baby boomers back to church. Creating compelling, but separate, experiences for youth and adults was viewed as key for retention and growth. Slow moving demographic changes have challenged this model for decades, and we can see it looking back in our own faith community. For just one example there were almost double the volunteers available to staff classrooms in the 80's and 90's compared to my generation of parents. Even fully staffed classrooms wouldn't address the remaining issues of low enrollment, sporadic attendance, and overscheduled families choosing

time together on Sunday morning rather than apart.

The [UUA published an article](#) last month by Rev. Evin Carvill Ziemer that addressed the question of “What Could Congregational Life for Children and Youth Look Like Now?”. They listed what seems to be working best now across congregations - many of these elements are already in practice in our congregation under Jes's leadership:

- \* “Centering play and connection ... over curriculum”
- \* “Let kids be kids.... For exhausted families to feel welcome, they need to know they can just be at home in your congregation and it's okay for their kids to be kids”
- \* “Lean into the benefits of less is more and ‘less prep, more presence’”
- \* Create “Balance between multigen and volunteer led.”

Our challenge, then, is not just re-imagining RE in the context of long demographic trends. It is rebuilding those community connections severed by the pandemic. Personally, I'm grieving both the connections with the youth I abruptly lost during the pandemic and the connection I felt with the RE program of my son's youth. But in that grief, I recognize we all need the courage to create something more meaningful and enduring for the families and youth of the future. In the words of Rev. Ziemer, “Paying attention to the shifting needs of our families and children, releasing ourselves from the structures of our past, and boldly experimenting to contribute to the evolution of faith formation may just be the spiritual task of our time.”

In community,

Greg Zavadoski  
RE Committee Member

## *RE and Youth Updates*

### *Elementary Religious Education*

This month Elementary RE will be exploring the Soul Matters theme of "Intention" with stories, games, art, and more! Our Elementary RE group is open to children in grades K-6th grade.

### *Youth Group*

For youth in grades 7-12, Youth Group focuses on building relationships, creating a greater sense of belonging, and helping each other feel supported in their spiritual journey through hands-on experiences and deep conversation. During January Youth Group will be exploring the theme of "Living with Intention."

*The Elementary RE group is open to children in grades K-6th, and the Youth Group is open to youth in grades 7-12.*

*Elementary RE and Youth Group will not meet on January 1.*

### *Join RE!*

When RE resumes in January, we are looking to add a couple of additional RE Leaders to our Elementary RE and Youth Group teams. In addition to getting to work with our amazing children, youth, and volunteers, being a RE Leader is an opportunity for you to explore your own spirituality and beliefs more deeply and connect with a community of all ages. Our RE programs focus on fostering belonging, exploring differing views, and offering support for each person's spiritual journey. And lots of fun through hands-on activities, creative expression, and play! RE Leaders work as part of a team with two people present each Sunday, and the committee works out to be 1-2 Sundays per month.

To find out more about volunteering in RE, contact Jessica at [jessica@uuwausau.org](mailto:jessica@uuwausau.org).

### *We Rock It! Book Club*

Geared for tweens and their families (caregivers, grandparents, etc), we meet weekly on Thursdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom, to discuss that month's graphic novel or chapter book.

Selections explore themes of equity, inclusion, justice, and celebrating the diversity of differing and intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, sexuality, faith, ability, class, and gender. January's book is *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson.

Email Jessica, [jessica@uuwausau.org](mailto:jessica@uuwausau.org), for the Zoom link.



### *Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 5-6th Graders*

We are expanding our Our Whole Lives (OWL) offerings and OWL for 5-6th graders. OWL 5-6 will meet from 2:00-3:30 pm on Sundays starting January 15 to early May.

OWL is a comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education program that provides accurate, developmentally appropriate information about a range of topics, including values, body image, gender and sexual identity, peer pressure, and healthy relationships. It is designed to help children to gain knowledge and skills about the physical, emotional changes, and social changes of puberty, and invites parents and caregivers to be actively involved in the exploration of growing older, values, communication, and decision-making. You can find more details about the program here: <https://bit.ly/UUWausauOWL56>.

Unlike our typical RE programming, registration is required and will close on January 13.

Contact Jessica, [jessica@uuwausau.org](mailto:jessica@uuwausau.org), with questions or to sign up.

## *From the Board Table*

As we reflect on 2022 as a Board and Congregation, I think we have a great deal to be grateful for. First and foremost, we have transitioned back to in-person services along with other Church-sponsored programs like Soul Matters, Social Justice, and the We Rock It book club, to name just a few. Although most of us would like to forget the isolation, fear, and real danger of the pandemic, it doesn't take much reflection to appreciate how important being together, looking each other in the eyes, and even giving each other hugs or simply a handshake, is for all of us. And at the same time, we have continued the online services (live streaming and podcasts) which proved so essential to maintaining our congregation through the worst of the pandemic.

We have also slowly begun to re-engage our volunteer base, which is so critical to all aspects of what we do for the Church, each other, and the community. The addition of a new membership and involvement coordinator, Carolyne Powers, in October was an important, forward-looking investment in rebuilding our energy and engagement which the pandemic damaged significantly. It may seem like a contradiction that an organization needs a paid volunteer coordinator to build an effective volunteer program, but I can assure you, based on over 25 years of working with and for non-profit organizations, that it is an essential position that requires both professional skills and a time-commitment that volunteers are no longer willing or able to provide on a consistent basis.

I hesitate to mention being fully staffed as another important thing for which to be grateful, but it is critical and even if I "jinx" it by saying so, we need to acknowledge and show our deep appreciation for the important work that our staff have done throughout 2022. Their skills, commitment, and passion for the work of the Church have been and continue to be essential to everything that makes First UU Wausau what we are.

The fact that we are projected to finish the

year with a better-than-break-even budget is not something we should take for granted. Indeed, continuing this financial strength and stability will be an ongoing challenge in 2023 and every year going forward. So "finishing in the black" in 2022 is cause to be doubly grateful, first for the generosity of our contributors and second for the financial oversight provided by our Treasurer, Randy Jefferson, our Congregational Administrator, Danika Gibson, and ultimately the Board.

I am happy to add to this list of appreciation, that our Board of Trustees is working well together & in partnership with the minister & staff. We have worked to get to this point, so it's worth noting and even celebrating because leadership does matter.

As important as it is to be grateful and to recognize the accomplishments of 2022, we cannot ignore the significant challenges which are directly in front of us and will not go away without even greater effort from all of us. The difficulties all begin with demographics. Our congregation is aging. Our child/youth population has shrunk significantly. Our donor pool is also shrinking and, last but not least, we remain heavily reliant on a handful of major gift donors who are also aging...so yes, let's celebrate the many positives of 2022, and use the energy that generates to tackle the challenges ahead.

*-Brian Stezenski-Williams*

### *Early Risers is Relocating!*

All women of the church are invited to gather for breakfast and conversation!

**When:** Saturday, January 21st, at 8:30AM

**Where:** Tri-City Family Restaurant, 525 Grand Avenue, Schofield, 54476.



## Living Green

### January 2023

“What’s past is prologue.”  
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Over the winter holidays, I have indulged in a surfeit of my mom’s favorite homemade Christmas cookies. I have gorged myself on potato latkes fried to a golden brown just as my bubbe made them when I was young. Enough already. I am ready for the austerity of January.

I am ready to make my new year’s resolution for 2023 CE. The Jewish-Christian family of my childhood honored this old custom. I doubt my elders understood that it dates back to Roman times, when pagan parents and children made promises to Janus, the two-headed god of transitions for whom our month of January is named.

A year before the inimitable Frances Moore Lappé wrote *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971), I renounced eating the flesh of birds and mammals. Her book detailed the ways in which industrial meat production contributes to the global food shortage. The situation has gotten

worse in the last fifty years.

“Raising livestock for human consumption generates nearly 15% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, which is greater than all the transportation emissions combined.”(1)

I am not ready to become vegan full-time. But, this year, I resolve not to eat eggs or dairy products for three days of each week. Yes, that means fewer opportunities for indulging in buttery Christmas cookies and latkes fluffy with egg whites and slathered in sour cream next December. I’m ready for the challenge, knowing it will help to sustain “the interdependent web of existence, of which we are all a part.”

With heartfelt thanks,  
Donna Keuck for the EAG

1.) [It May Be Uncomfortable, But We Need to Talk About It: The Animal Agriculture Industry and Zero Waste](#)



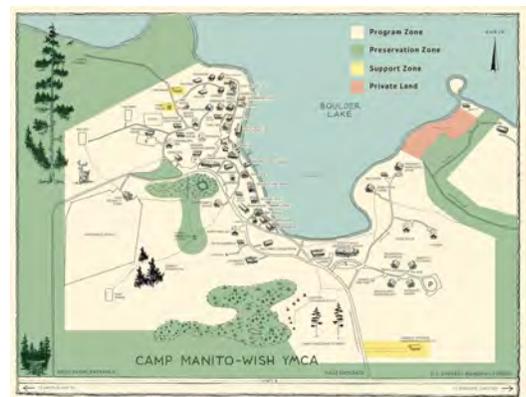
## Don’t Forget — UU Winter Retreat!

We are once again gathering at Schwartz Lodge at Camp Manitowish for our traditional Winter Retreat, from January 21-23, 2022!

Due to the communal layout and meal-sharing at the lodge, participants will be asked to show proof of vaccination for those age-eligible for the vaccine. Each family unit gets their own room, and 12 rooms are available. Each family/group will partner up to provide one of the meals for the group.

Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, rock wall climbing available onsite and ice skating available within a 5 minute drive. Games, great food, great company, wonderful memories!

Lodge fees generally run \$15 per night for children and \$45 per night for adults, depending upon final attendance count. Please contact Sally & Steve Schmidt at [sallyschmidt213@gmail.com](mailto:sallyschmidt213@gmail.com)



## *Spotlight: New Church Artwork*

To commemorate the 165<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this church's founding in Wausau, we have acquired a pair of glass artworks by Thomas M. Fleming, Professor of Art Emeritus at the UW Wausau campus for many years. Mounted in the Atrium lobby, they are titled, "Declaration of Independence Scattered" and "Mississippi Discovery by DeSoto." We hope you will examine and savor them. Fleming describes them in this way:

At 26, I was told, "In another half age, the location of a million glass roads will be revealed," by the neighbor across the hall, a doctoral candidate in art history who most people thought just wasn't quite all there. Years later, I stumbled upon two aerographic plates, cast aside haphazardly, in a cavernous old warehouse of surplus government property in St. Paul. Following their coordinates eventually led to a backwater cabin in the upstate New York Finger Lakes region and a huge mountain of forgotten treasure - more glass plates documenting the topography of an earlier decade. My work began.

The two artworks are composed of reverse-painted, altered, and manipulated aerographic glass plates and combines these aerial land references with reproductions of specific historical paintings displayed in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. This is part of the great American narrative we tell ourselves about the heroic founding and virtues of our society. However, this story is challenged and at times contradicted by depictions of the conquest of native land and subjugation of indigenous cultures. Still today, the actions of some members of our government undermine the altruistic community of brotherhood our founding envisioned. History is truly a measure of change over time with a lens for observation and evaluation.

*- article by Linda Ware*

## *From the Property Committee*

We are lucky to have a plethora of artistically gifted community members and generous donors, loaners who are able to help us decorate our somewhat empty walls (notably Walker). We have thought it would be fun to enhance the hanging system in Walker Hall (interestingly called the Walker System), and display the work either donated or on loan on a rotating basis.

Coming in 2023 we will augment the hanging possibilities for 2-dimensional work and also the beautiful quilts that have been donated to the Church. The committee will reach out to all

(of all ages) who might be interested in showcasing their work for a limited period of time. The logistics of this are still being worked out; if anyone has any desire to help in this process, please volunteer.

Please contact any Property Committee member with ideas or suggestions. Stay tuned!

*-article by Judy Beier*

## *MLK Celebration in Wausau*

The UU Wausau Social Justice Committee is passing along the following notice from NAO-MI. We hope to have a good showing of UU support for the event!

NAOMI is excited to be involved with the 2023 Martin Luther King (MLK) celebration, as well as the events being planned for Black History Month in February. But first the MLK Celebration. We are partnering with LPRC Diversity Consulting Services, LLC (La'Tanya Campbell) and other community organizations to celebrate and raise awareness of historical contributions made by Americans of African descent. This year's theme is "Why it still matters."

The event will take place at the UWSP in Wausau, starting at 5:30 pm on 1/16/23. Food will be catered by Taste of Jamaica; entertainment provided by a variety of multi-cultural groups and individuals, and our keynote address will be given by the Honorable Everett Mitchell.

Registration for the event is \$15 each with a \$30 family maximum, \$5 for students. Scholarships will be provided to all with need, as we want to encourage attendance! To register [please follow this link](#).

## *The Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk, Preacher in Residence*

The Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk is a 2007 graduate of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Her previous career was as a registered nurse, primarily in Sitka, Alaska. In her journeys south and east she has lived in Vancouver, British Columbia where she was a docent at a maritime museum; and in Missoula, Montana where she volunteered at the local food shelf and as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate for children who were in the judicial system because of abuse or neglect. She lives in Duluth, Minnesota, and has recently [semi-] retired, but continues to preach in the area. She now serves as a Senior Companion and as a Foster Grandmum with AmeriCorps-Seniors.

Along with her MDiv from Meadville she has earned a MA in Philosophy/Emphasis on Teaching Ethics from the University of Montana, and a BA in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In her volunteer career she has been copy editor for a feminist newsletter, on the advisory board of a gay newsletter, a docent at a museum featuring Alaska native artifacts, a deejay at a public radio station, an actress and stage manager at a community theater, and a dancer in a "hula art action"

highlighting local water pollution.

Suzanne is married to Tim Stratton, a professor at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a registered pharmacist. She has one son, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild who live in the Milwaukee area. Her oldest [but not older] brother Mike and wife Deb are members of UU Wausau.

*Please join us Sunday, January 8th for the Reverend Suzanne's first sabbatical Sunday with us, and stay for our January Potluck, hosted by the Social Justice Committee!*



## The Seven Principles of UU Congregations

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.”

**1st Principle:** The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

**2nd Principle:** Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

**3rd Principle:** Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

**4th Principle:** A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

**5th Principle:** The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

**6th Principle:** The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

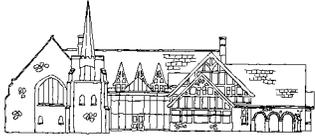
**7th Principle:** Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

-from [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)

# January 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:30AM: New Year's Day led by Randy Jefferson  No RE Classes	2 Church Office Closed  Women's AA 6PM	3  Qi Gong 6:30PM	4 Knitting 10AM  Noon Swoon 12pm  Adult Choir 6:30pm	5  Tai Chi 6:30PM  We Rock It! 7PM on Zoom	6	7
8 10:30AM: "Some Sins for a Life Worth Living" led by the Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk	9  Women's AA 6PM	10  Qi Gong 6:30PM	11 Knitting 10AM  Noon Swoon 12pm  Adult Choir 6:30pm	12 Social Justice 6:00PM Tai Chi 6:30PM We Rock It! 7PM on Zoom	13	14 SJC & Fair Maps meeting @ UU Wausau 9:30AM-2PM
15 10:30AM: "The Profit of Prophets" led by the Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk	16 Church Office Closed  Women's AA 6PM	17 BOT meeting 6:30PM  Qi Gong 6:30PM	18 Knitting 10AM  Noon Swoon 12pm  Adult Choir 6:30pm	19  Tai Chi 6:30PM  We Rock It! 7PM on Zoom	20	21 Early Risers @Tri-City Family Restaurant 8:30AM
22 10:30AM: "Rhythms of a Full Life" led by the Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk	23  Women's AA 6PM	24  February Circuit Writer Information Due  Qi Gong 6:30PM	25 Knitting 10AM  Noon Swoon 12pm  Adult Choir 6:30pm	26  Tai Chi 6:30PM  We Rock It! 7PM on Zoom	27	28
29 10:30AM: "What's an Atheist Doing in a Pew?" led by the Reverend Suzanne Wasilczuk	30  Women's AA 6PM	31  Qi Gong 6:30PM	1 Knitting 10AM  Noon Swoon 12pm  Adult Choir 6:30pm	2  Tai Chi 6:30PM  We Rock It! 7PM on Zoom	3	4



First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau  
 504 Grant Street  
 Wausau, Wisconsin 54403

## *The Circuit Writer - January 2023*

*Newsletter of the First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau*

### What's Inside:

January Services & Events	1
REflections	2
RE and Youth Updates	3
From the Board Table	4
Early Risers	4
Living Green	5
UU Winter Retreat	5
New Artwork	6
From the Property Committee	6
MLK Celebration	7
Bio: The Rev. S. Wasilczuk	7
Seven Principles	8
Calendar	9
Board of Trustees & Staff Info	10

**Office hours: Monday-Thursday, 9AM-2PM**  
**Please contact us to set up an appointment.**

**Church phone: (715) 842-3697 | [www.uuwausau.org](http://www.uuwausau.org)**

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