

The Circuit Writer - March 2021

Monthly theme: *Commitment.*

What does it mean to be a people of *Commitment*?

Services for March 2021

March 7, 10:30AM:

the Rev. Brian Mason, preaching

Children's Chapel on Zoom at 9:30AM.

Coffee Hour on Zoom at 11:45AM.

Youth Group at 4PM.

March 21, 10:30AM:

the Rev. Brian Mason, preaching.

Children's Chapel on Zoom at 9:30AM.

Coffee Hour on Zoom at 11:45AM.

March 14, 10:30AM:

Randy Jefferson, guest speaker.

Children's Chapel on Zoom at 9:30AM.

Coffee Hour on Zoom at 11:45AM.

March 28, 10:30AM:

the Reverend Brian Mason, preaching.

Children's Chapel on Zoom at 9:30AM.

Coffee Hour on Zoom at 11:45AM.

At this time, all services are online-only, available at 10:30AM on Sunday unless otherwise stated. Every service is posted to our [website](#), [Facebook](#), and sent via e-mail.

Sign up for e-mails from First UU Wausau [here](#).

Our service podcast is available on Podbean, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.



From a Window on Grant—March 2021

Learning to love spring in north central Wisconsin wasn't easy for me. I'm from the southern Midwest where spring starts often in late-February and stretches into early-June. The trees, flowers, grasses, and fields seem as though they're suspended in bloom. "But spring!" we say in July when it's 104 with 85% humidity, wiping sweat from our foreheads in the shade.

I've heard people say that up here there are only two months: Winter and Not Winter. That's pretty accurate. I would have kept envying the springs of my youth if it weren't for poetry. But that's what good art can do. As Fred Buechner says, "art teaches us to stop, look, and listen to life on this planet, including our own lives, as a vastly richer, deeper, more mysterious business than most of the time it ever occurs to us to suspect as we bumble along from day to day on automatic pilot." Thankfully I stumbled on the poetry of John Koethe, a former philosophy professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His poem "The Late Wisconsin Spring" helped me listen. It stopped me from bumbling along day to day on auto pilot waiting for Not Winter to arrive...in June. I hope you will enjoy Koethe's very Wisconsin ode to spring.

Snow melts into the earth and a gentle breeze
 Loosens the damp gum wrappers, the stale leaves
 Left over from autumn, and the dead brown grass.
 The sky shakes itself out. And the invisible birds
 Winter put away somewhere return, the air relaxes,
 People start to circulate again in twos and threes.
 The dominant feelings are the blue sky, and the year.
 —Memories of other seasons and the billowing wind;
 The light gradually altering from difficult to clear
 As a page melts and a photograph develops in the backyard.
 When some men came to tear down the garage across the way
 The light was still clear, but the salt intoxication
 Was already dissipating into the atmosphere of constant day
 April brings, between the isolation and the flowers.
 Now the clouds are lighter, the branches are frosted green,
 And suddenly the season that had seemed so tentative before
 Becomes immediate, so clear the heart breaks and the vibrant
 Air is laced with crystal wires leading back from hell.
 Only the distraction, and the exaggerated sense of care
 Here at the heart of spring—all year long these feelings
 Alternately wither and bloom, while a dense abstraction
 Hides them. But now the mental dance of solitude resumes,
 And life seems smaller, placed against the background
 Of this story with the empty, moral quality of an expansive
 Gesture made up out of trees and clouds and air.

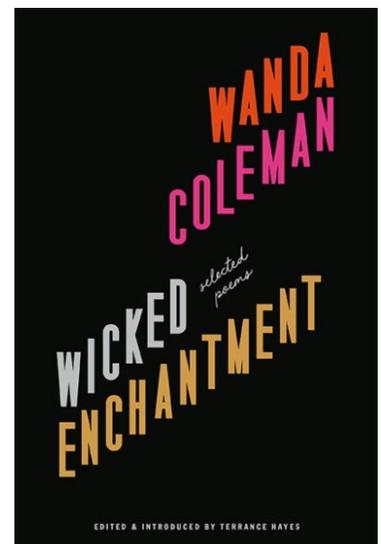
The loneliness comes and goes, but the blue holds,
 Permeating the early leaves that flutter in the sunlight
 As the air dances up and down the street. Some kids yell.

A white dog rolls over on the grass and barks once. And
 Although the incidents vary and the principal figures change,
 Once established, the essential tone and character of a season
 Stays inwardly the same day after day, like a person's.
 The clouds are frantic. Shadows sweep across the lawn
 And up the side of the house. A dappled sky, a mild blue
 Watercolor light that floats the tense particulars away
 As the distraction starts. Spring here is at first so wary,
 And then so spare that even the birds act like strangers,
 Trying out the strange air with a hesitant chirp or two,
 And then subsiding. But the season intensifies by degrees,
 Imperceptibly, while the colors deepen out of memory,
 The flowers bloom and the thick leaves gleam in the sunlight
 Of another city, in a past which has almost faded into heaven.
 And even though memory always gives back so much more of
 What was there than the mind initially thought it could hold,
 Where will the separation and the ache between the isolated
 Moments go when summer comes and turns this all into a garden?
 Spring here is too subdued: the air is clear with anticipation,
 But its real strength lies in the quiet tension of isolation
 And living patiently, without atonement or regret,
 In the eternity of the plain moments, the nest of care
 —Until suddenly, all alone, the mind is lifted upward into
 Light and air and the nothingness of the sky,
 Held there in that vacant, circumstantial blue until,
 In the vehemence of a landscape where all the colors disappear,
 The quiet absolution of the spirit quickens into fact,
 And then, into death. But the wind is cool.
 The buds are starting to open on the trees.
 Somewhere up in the sky an airplane drones.

Practicing Hope Book Club – March 2021

Practicing Hope is a book club that reads and discusses works by Black and Indigenous authors and poets. March's book selection is *Wicked Enchantment: Selected Poems* by Wanda Coleman. From the publisher: "A voice for justice, anti-racism, and equality—here is the greatest and most powerful work of the people's poet, Wanda Coleman. One of the most talked about literary collections of the year is this collection by a beat-up, broke, and Black woman who wrote with anger, humor, and clarity about her life on the margins. *Wicked Enchantment: Selected Poems* is a selection of 130 of Coleman's poems spanning four decades, edited and introduced by Terrance Hayes."

Meeting will take place on Zoom on Monday, March 29, 6-7 p.m.
 RSVP to brian@uuwausau.org for Zoom meeting link.



REflections

I've been thinking about the story of Jonah and the whale. When I was taught that story, as a child, it was in the context of obedience. If I didn't follow the rules, I could literally be swallowed by a giant fish. Over time, that story has come to have a very different meaning for me. I think the story of Jonah is a story about calling. It's a story about following your heart and becoming the person you are meant to be. It's about trusting that your heart will never lead you astray.

In the story, Jonah is minding his own business when out of the blue his heart tells him to become a teacher, a spiritual teacher no less, and in another town. Jonah is scared. Maybe he doesn't like change, and he knows that spiritual teachers aren't treated very well. Jonah tries to ignore the call of his heart. When ignoring it doesn't work, he runs away. Things get pretty difficult for Jonah, as they can for anyone trying to ignore what their heart tells them to be true. Eventually, Jonah ends up in the belly of a whale—a place to pause, to rest, to reevaluate, and to be held. Jonah is safely spit out onto dry land when he surrenders and agrees to follow his heart.

Recently, my heart has been calling me away from my work at First UU Wausau, and the entire rest of me has been resisting. I love being your Director of Religious Education. I love UU Wausau and the community that my entire family has found here. And, my heart is calling me elsewhere. During a recent time of pause and rest (in the belly of the whale, some might say), my heart won. I became ready to listen and trust that my heart would not/will not lead me astray. I became ready to be spit out onto dry land. I have resigned from my position as your DRE. My last day will be March 19th.

It has been a pleasure to serve as your Director of Religious Education the past five years. It has been an honor to be a part of your lives and this community. I will dearly miss this work, and each of you. You might check out [Things to do in the Belly of a Whale](#) by Dan Albergotti if you enjoy poetry. This poem has been a regular companion of mine the last several weeks.

With Love,
Julie



What does it mean to be a people of COMMITMENT?

This is our Religious Education question for the month of March.

A spiritual exercise from this month's Small Group packet:

"It's hard to imagine keeping commitments to others if we can't keep commitments to ourselves. In fact, many say it is loyalty to ourselves that ultimately gives us the strength, groundedness and self-confidence needed to follow through on the promises we make to those around us. And yet we rarely devote the same level of intentionality to self-commitments that we give to our commitments to others. So let's use this month to be more intentional about the promises we make to ourselves!

First, identify three commitments you've *already* made to yourself. We bet it will be harder than you think. Very few of us carry our self-commitments at the forefront of our awareness. But the importance of doing so can't be overstated. As Stephen Covey has said, "Anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant." If you find this harder than you expected, enlist a loved one or trusted friend. They can probably name your existing self-commitments easier than you can.

Next identify two *new* commitments you want to make to yourself. Odds are they're long overdue. Then write all five of your commitments on a 3x5 card and place it on your bathroom mirror, bedside table or desk for the remainder of the month. Treat this as both an act of awareness and an act of accountability."



Join us in the following ways this month as we explore COMMITMENT:

Children's Chapel

RE for children in Kindergarten through 6th grade

Sunday mornings, 9:30 am-10:00 am

Live via Zoom. Adults and families welcome!

Topics:

March 7: Commitment to Curiosity

March 14: Commitment to Change

March 21: Commitment to Conscience

March 28: Commitment to Compassion

Youth Group

RE for youth in 7th through 12th grade

In-person, Once a Month

March 7th, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm

For youth and advisors only

Registered families will be contacted directly with more information

Anti-Racism Family Story Time

Wednesday evenings, 6:30-7:00 pm

Live via Zoom + a recording of each story available to those unable to attend live.

We'll use children's picture books to start conversations around anti-racism. Appropriate for all ages. All are welcome. Families are encouraged to attend together. Email julie@uuwausau.org to register and request the Zoom link.

Soulful Home

This monthly PDF packet of at-home Religious Education exploration is created with families with children in mind, but contains activities and information that could be enjoyed by anyone. The packets align with the monthly Religious Education question. Email julie@uuwausau.org to request a Soulful Home packet.

2020 Treasurer's Report to the Congregation

Financial Results 1/1/2020 – 12/31/2020

1.) Key Annual Budget Numbers:	2020 Pledges (Stewardship Drive Results):		
Total Income	\$381,365	Pledges Budget	\$334,875
Total Expense	\$354,119	Pledges Actual	\$316,765
Net Income	\$ 27,246	Pledges Less Than Budget	\$ 18,110
Pledge Payments Received for 2020		\$315,060	
Pledge Payments Percent of Pledges Budget		94.1%	
Pledge Payments Percent of Pledges Actual		99.5%	

Outstanding Mortgage: \$141,727

Endowment: \$512,223

- 2.) Total Income includes a \$26,300 Federal Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) loan which we secured under the CARES Act pandemic legislation. We have received confirmation from Incredible Bank and the Small Business Association that our loan was forgiven and paid in full. We are in the process of applying for another PPP loan for 2021.
- 3.) Total Income was 99.1% of budget, while Total Expenses were 92.7% of budget. The unusual year produced several budget variances that were larger than would be expected in a normal year.
- 4.) Our Endowment grew 15.2% (\$67,621) from 1/1/2020 to 12/31/2020.
- 5.) While 2020 presented an unprecedented challenge, which required our church to make major modifications to how its ministry is provided to our members, First UU of Wausau has continued to be a source of strength for us, and we have responded by supporting it through our sustained financial contributions. Thank you to all who have continued to meet your pledge commitments during 2020 or made other financial contributions. Finishing the year with pledge receipts at 99.5% of the pledge promises made at the beginning of the year clearly shows how important our church community is to us.

Respectfully submitted,
 Randy Jefferson
 Treasurer
 02/19/2021

From the Stewardship Committee

Greetings from your favorite church committee, Stewardship! Well, the sun is shining, Spring is just around the corner, and we need you to step up and help us complete our financial mission. We are almost there, but need your assistance. PLEASE send in your pledge forms so we can complete this year with the comfort of knowing we won't have to make any sacrifices in our budget. The light is visible at the end of our tunnel. A return to normalcy is possible. Please give again, knowing the time of face-to-face, in person contact may become a reality once again!!!

If you haven't yet turned in your [2021 Pledge Form](#) committing your financial support to First UU Church, please take 2 minutes to fill it out and send it to the church.

As of the time of this newsletter's printing, we still have a number of outstanding Pledge Forms we'd sure like to see come in.

We have several **easy ways for you to pledge your financial support** to UU Wausau:

- [Download a Pledge Form here](#)
- Return the Pledge Form that Members received in the mail in the self-addressed envelope provided.
- Request a Pledge Form be snail-mailed or emailed to you: danika@uuwausau.org
- Give online at <https://onrealm.org/uuwausau/give/online>
- Text "FirstUUWausau" to 73256

We kindly thank you in advance for your generous support of this beloved church community.

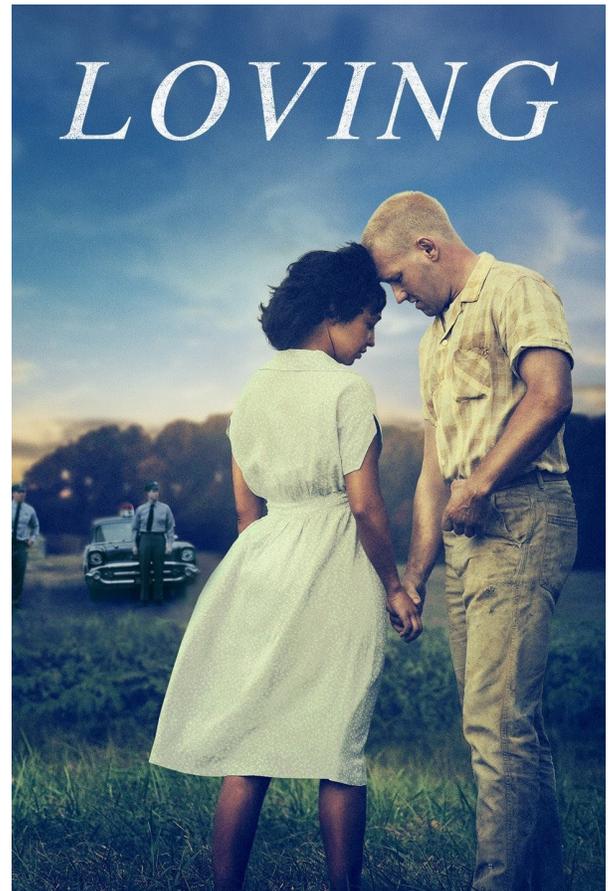
- The Stewardship Committee

*Moving Movies—film discussion
hosted by the Social Justice committee*

Join a Zoom gathering on March 17th at 7 PM for a discussion of the film *Loving*, hosted by the Social Justice Committee. At your convenience, watch the movie prior to the 17th, then join us for an hour of discussion. The movie is based on the true story of Mildred and Richard Loving, a interracial married couple who were arrested in 1958 because their home state of Virginia banned interracial unions.

As you watch the movie, consider how far we have come since the 1950s and 1960s ... and how far we have not.

The 2016 film can be streamed on Netflix or rented (\$4.21) [via YouTube here](#) (look for the "BUY OR RENT" button).



Use this Zoom link at 7 PM on March 17th to join the discussion:

<https://tinyurl.com/MovingMoviesMarch21>

Meeting ID: 881 1370 9680

Passcode: 689183

MARCH 2021



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Women's AA 6PM	2	3 Anti-racism Family Story Time: 6:30pm on Zoom	4	5	6
7 9:30AM: Children's Chapel on Zoom 10:30AM: Service led by the Rev. Brian Mason 4PM: Youth Group	8 Women's AA 6PM	9	10 Anti-racism Family Story Time: 6:30pm on Zoom Choir meeting 6:30pm on Zoom Office Closed	11 Social Justice meeting 6:30pm on Zoom Office Closed	12	13
14 9:30AM: Children's Chapel on Zoom 10:30AM: Service led by Randy Jefferson	15 Women's AA 6PM	16 BOT meeting 6:30PM on Zoom	17 Anti-racism Family Story Time: 6:30pm on Zoom Moving Movies Discussion 7PM on Zoom	18	19	20
21 9:30AM: Children's Chapel on Zoom 10:30AM: Service led by the Reverend Brian Mason	22 Women's AA 6PM	23	24 Anti-racism Family Story Time: 6:30pm on Zoom	25	26	27
28 9:30AM: Children's Chapel on Zoom 10:30AM: Service led by the Reverend Brian Mason.	29 Practicing Hope Book Club 6pm on Zoom Women's AA 6PM	30	31	Sunday Services at UU Wausau: <i>All services are online-only, posted at 10:30AM on Sunday unless otherwise stated. Every service is posted to our website, Facebook, and sent out via e-mail. You can sign up for e-mails from First UU Wausau here.</i>		



First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau
 504 Grant Street
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The Circuit Writer - March 2021
 Newsletter of the First Universalist Unitarian Church of Wausau

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Office hours: Monday-Thursday, 9AM-1PM
Please contact us to set up an appointment.
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