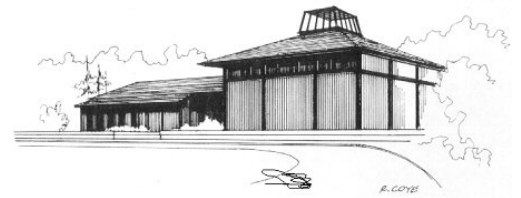


May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society Newsletter



We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world

January 2024
Volume 1
Issue 1



Beloveds,

I hope that this letter finds you well, warm, and taking some time to rest during this winter season. I am writing to give you details about my upcoming ministry sabbatical so that we can put your mind and heart at ease in my absence. I will be away from you and from the church beginning February 26th. On August 19th I will move into study leave as I prepare for the new church year; at that time I will be available for emergencies until my return to the pulpit on September 8th.

Sabbatical is a time for my professional and personal rest and renewal, a part of that means being completely away from my work. Therefore, during this time, I will be completely out of communication with all members of the congregation. In my absence, our Board of Trustees, in conversation with Stacy, Glenn, and Teri, will lead this society with joy and love. If something should arise in my absence that they need help with, they will seek help from our UUA Central East Region Primary contact person, Alia Shinbrough. If you have a pastoral emergency, you should contact the church office and Teri will direct you to one of three Ministers who will be on call for pastoral emergencies. These ministers are Rev. Jennifer Hamlin-Navias (retired from FUUS, our former MRE), Rev Douglas Taylor (Minister in Binghamton, son of Rev. Liz Strong), and Rev. Karen Brammer (UU Utica).

The board of trustees have been informed as to what circumstances would warrant their contacting me while away. While I may be informed of certain things, I may or may not respond to any of them, trusting in the leadership of this congregation. This

congregation has come such a long way since we have been in partnership together, and I have every confidence that you can all handle what comes your way in my absence.

Sabbatical is a wonderful opportunity for you to experience many other ministers and worship perspectives while I am gone! While I am away, you will continue to see Glenn and Stacy on Sunday mornings supporting our Worship Associates, guest preachers and artists lead wonderful and engaging worship services. My final Sunday with you will be February 25th and my first Sunday back will be September 8th. This will also be our Water Communion homecoming service and I hope to see many of you at both of those services.

My loves, you may not fully understand how much I love you. I am going to miss you all very much while I am away. I am so excited to return rested and renewed so that together we can rise up and grow into the next best version of ourselves so that we might spread the incredible message of Unitarian Universalism.

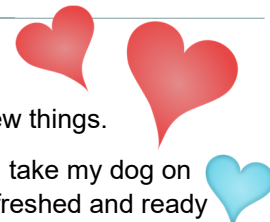


I love you, and there is nothing you can do about it.

Rev. Jo VenRue

Continued on page 2

Continued from on page 1



For those of you who are wondering what I will be doing on sabbatical, I wanted to fill you in on a few things.

First and foremost I will be using this time to rest. I'm going to read a lot, sit out on the deck a lot, take my dog on "sniffaris", and just exist with my husband. This rest will give me the opportunity to return to you refreshed and ready for the next iteration of our relationship together. In addition to resting, Isaac and I will be traveling to Norway, visiting Oslo, and the town of Longyearbyen on Svalbard Island to chase the northern lights. March 29th I will fly to Tanzania, Africa on where I will spend the month of April. During the first two weeks I will be doing some lifesaving sexuality education with the women of Arusha; for the second two weeks I will be living in a remote Maasai village, open to whatever they need, but likely teaching children. Upon my return to the US in May I will be going on a backpacking trip with my best friend. Then, in June, Isaac and I will travel to Branson MO where we will get to spend a week with four of our precious Niblings (Jacob, Therese, Howard, and Andrew) as well as Isaac's parents, brother and our sister-in-law. At some point while I'm away I will go on a solo backpacking trip that will serve as an internal spiritual journey as well. All the while during my time in PA with my husband, I will be volunteering with an organization in Wilkes Barre that helps new Americans assimilate to life here in the US. I will also spend time hiking with my best friend Lauren and generally spending time in nature to reset. I will miss you all very much and I'm very much looking forward to the next phase of our relationship together when I return!

"May Memorial Loves the Arts"

The month of February is when we celebrate the arts at May Memorial by hanging an exhibition of work by members of our congregation. When you step into the Social Hall on Sunday, February 4, you will be surrounded by wonderful works of art by your friends here at May Memorial. Take your time looking at the paintings, sketches, photographs, and more, and then enjoy a second cup of coffee while you read the creative words of the writers in our community. February may be cold and dark, but the atmosphere in our Social Hall will be decidedly warm and wonderfully colorful as we celebrate the arts!

FEBRUARY
Artist

Gallery Hours:
 Sunday: 8am-2pm
 Monday: 8am—2pm
 Thursday: 8am—2pm



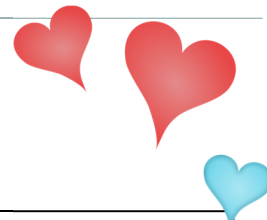
The Folkus Project of Central New York



The Folkus Project presents [The Atkinsons](#) on Friday, February 2 @ 8pm. The Atkinsons are a family band, rooted in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. They play a style all their own, an acoustic genre of bluegrass, Americana and folk music with a refreshing sound. Their original songs tell the stories of their lives in the northern mountains of the Adirondacks. "Just a few short years ago a talented, audience grabbing bluegrass band appeared from out of nowhere... The Atkinson Family, talented musicians and singers committed to preserving traditional bluegrass ballads, instrumentals and gospel songs." --Bill Knowlton, host of "Bluegrass Ramble" on WCNY-FM. For tickets and more information go to folkus.org.



The Folkus Project presents [Karen Savoca & Pete Heitzman](#) on Friday, February 16 @ 8pm. Karen Savoca's baby diary reads, "20 months, knows six songs." "A voice with this much strength and easy confidence is a rare find. But that's not where Savoca's talents end. Her songs are filled with good humor, sensuality, and nature's simple pleasures. She can work a sly smile into a lyric that makes you smile in spite of yourself. Open up and let her in." --All Music Guide. Pete Heitzman is "a true virtuoso of groove, with a sly touch that, combined with Savoca's in-the-pocket drumming and spectacularly soulful vocals, gives the duo the impact of a four-piece band." --Acoustic Guitar Magazine. Karen and Pete have eight SAMMY awards, and are independent record producers and film scorers. For tickets and more information go to folkus.org.



2/4	Spreading Our Love into Our Community	Rev. Jo VonRue and Director of Religious Education Stacy Sceiford
2/11	The Joy of Welcoming Stewardship Kickoff!	Rev. Jo VonRue and Worship Associate David Mendelsohn
2/18	Until All Flourish and Thrive	Rev. Jo VonRue
2/25	Return to the Home of Your Soul	Rev. Jo VonRue and Worship Associate Eliza Bailey

<https://zoom.us/j/91720743841?pwd=ZFdlbVNsYW1za3RWN29SVldUMDV5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 917 2074 3841

Passcode: 801542

One tap mobile

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Dial by your location

• +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

• +1 646 931 3860 US

Meeting ID: 917 2074 3841



Vespers

Join us on Wednesday evenings at 8pm for a short 30 minute time of connection and reflection. We will listen to a short reading, a piece of music that expands on the topic, and we connect with one another through check-ins and conversation.

<https://zoom.us/j/96509877539?pwd=ZmZPQllaTlhkSFNETW5yQmszMXdYZz09>

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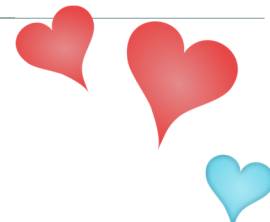
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HISTORY CORNER



“Gilbert Lot”

As we have written in past columns, it took a long time for our predecessors to find a site on which to build a new church [our present building]. The process began in the 1950s, with the realization that the church on James Street, constructed in 1885, was no longer large enough for the growing congregation. In addition, the parish house, which was used for religious education classes, was overcrowded and there were safety concerns with both buildings.

Finding an appropriate place for the new church proved difficult. Many members did not want to move away from the center of Syracuse, where the Unitarian congregation had a long history of active involvement, but there was no nearby property available for expansion or rebuilding. In 1957 a congregational vote reaffirmed the decision to move, and later that year, suitable property was found on the outskirts of the city.

May Memorial’s goal was to buy 10 contiguous lots of the “Genesee Manor Tract” on the eastern edge of Syracuse, bounded by East Genesee Street, Dewitt Road and Meadowbrook Creek. The congregation purchased seven of those lots (lots 24-30) that same year, and the building process began in 1961. Three additional lots (31-33) were to become the parking area. May Memorial was successful in purchasing two of them in 1962; however, the owner of the lot closest to the church was not willing to sell. So, in 1964 a crushed stone parking area was built on lots 32 and 33, but 31 (the “Gilbert Lot”) remained as a 90’ wide empty lot for over 20 years.

Long time members will recall passing through the vacant lot while walking from the parking area to the church. Some may also remember weekend volleyball games there. Because the parking lot was too small, cars could be found all along the front of the building on Sunday mornings, and even on East Genesee Street.

In the fall of 1985, the owner of the Gilbert Lot was finally ready to sell. May Memorial paid \$20,000 for the lot, with \$3000 down and a 5-year mortgage. At last, the gravel parking area could be enlarged.

In the late 1990s, a landscape architect drafted plans for major improvements to the parking lot. Those plans had to be put aside, however, due to financial constraints and more pressing projects, such as staining the exterior of the church and installing air conditioning.

Twenty years later, new plans were drawn up for a safe, attractive, and environmentally responsible parking area. Thanks to the herculean efforts of Don Milmore and the parking lot improvement team, as well as financial contributions from many members and friends, the long-held dream became a reality. Our beautiful parking lot was finished in the summer of 2020, just in time for the outdoor gatherings made necessary by the Covid pandemic.

Mary Louise Edwards

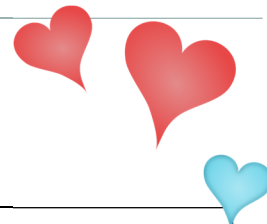
MMUUS History Committee (history@mmuus.org)



- Minister
- Director of Religious Education
- Director of Music
- Board President
- Book Keeper
- Finance
- Church Office

- Rev. Jo VonRue ministerjrev@gmail.com
- Stacy Sceiford stacymaydre@gmail.com
- Glenn Kime gkimeorganist@gmail.com
- Peter McClure peterrogermccclure@gmail.com
- Leslie Dendy lesliedendy@yahoo.com
- Jane Fagerland jane_f@sbcglobal.net
- Teri Coon office@mmuus.org

UPCOMING Events



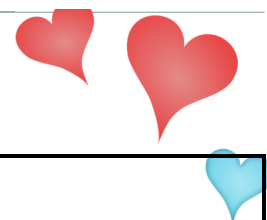
<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Thursday	2/1	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Rehearsal	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Friday	2/2	FOLKUS	8pm	Sanctuary
Saturday	2/3	Pot Luck Bingo	5pm	Social Hall
Tuesday	2/6	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	2/8	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Rehearsal	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Sunday	2/11	First Sunday Lunch	11:45pm	Social Hall
		Soul Matters	12:15pm	Teenz
Monday	2/12	Twisted Sisters	7pm	Teenz
Tuesday	2/13	Writers Group	10am	Teenz
		Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	2/15	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Rehearsal	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Friday	2/16	FOLKUS	8pm	Sanctuary
Tuesday	2/20	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	2/22	BookEnders	1:30pm	Memorial Room
		Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Rehearsal	7:30pm	Sanctuary
Tuesday	2/26	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Thursday	2/29	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
		Choir Rehearsal	7:30pm	Sanctuary



Unirondack weekend 2024 dates

Friday Sep 20 (late afternoon) to Sunday September 22 (mid-afternoon)

Details to follow in future newsletters.

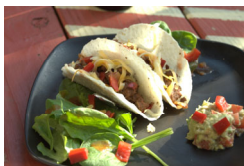


Revised Covid Policy May Memorial

- This revised Covid Policy assumes we hope to provide worship, education and social activities in person whenever possible while keeping our members, friends and staff as healthy as possible. While the Pandemic Emergency is over, the risk of Covid infection is not.
- Masks are always an option for anyone who feels more comfortable wearing one. Research has demonstrated that a good fitting mask can help prevent the spread of covid and other viruses.
- We ask that if you feel ill or are symptomatic, please stay home.
- If you find that you test positive for Covid within 5 days after attending a May Memorial activity such as Worship, Religious Education, a small group, etc., please inform Teri in the office. She will then send out an email to the congregation letting them know of their possible exposure. She will only share your name if you give her your permission to do so.
- Teri will share the COVIDACTNOW risk information for Onondaga County each week in the eblast, the order of service and on the front door. The risk information at this point is based on Hospital Admissions, and the risks will be listed as low, medium or high.
- When Onondaga County is in low, masking is not required.
- When Onondaga County is in medium, masking is recommended but not required for those aged 2 and older, including while singing.
- *When Onondaga County is in high, masking is required for those aged 2 and older, including while singing. If a small group of 20 or fewer choose to test for Covid on the day their small group meets, all those who test negative can attend this small group meeting without wearing masks. This does not apply to Worship services or other large group activities. Masking will not be required while eating and drinking at any level.*
- If you or a member of your household has Covid, please follow the CDC recommendations around isolating and masking.

The Board reserves the right to change this policy if significant changes occur.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on August 15 2023 and amended on January 16, 2024

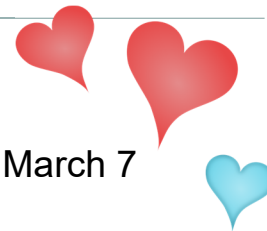


First Sunday Lunch Feb. 11

On Sunday, February 11, the choir and Twisted Sisters will host a Taco Bar Lunch after worship. Please join us at this fun, tasty, community-building event to enjoy tacos with all the fixings. There will be options for varied diets, including vegan, lactose intolerant, and gluten-free. The Taco Bar Lunch also serves as a fundraiser for MMUUS, with a suggested donation on a sliding scale from

\$0-\$10 for an adult. \$0-\$6 per child; \$20 max per family.

If this donation presents a hardship for you, we invite you to join us "on the house."



Kickoff of our 2024-2025 Stewardship Campaign: February 11 - March 7

Rise Up!



Sunday, February 11, we kickoff our annual stewardship campaign. To *Rise Up!* our welcoming religious community, we will need increased financial support from members to catch up with inflation and poise us for a drive for increased membership when Reverend Jo returns in September 2024 from her well-deserved sabbatical leave.

- After-Worship Stewardship Lunch: Come early or after worship to the Social Hall to pick up your pledge packets describing how to make your pledge. The choir is putting together a nourishing array of items for our eating pleasure. Come and enjoy each other's company with good food!
- During the campaign, we will hear testimonials that reflect individual members' thoughts on our community and its future.
- During the campaign, we ask that you carefully consider your pledge with generosity to support our mission. ***"We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world."***
- **Thank You All! Together, we can make a more loving and just world.**

4 ways to return your pledge – choose whichever is easiest for you.

Please return your pledge before March 7, 2024.

- Return the signed pledge form to the Pledge Box in the office.
- Send the paper form by US mail to Jane Fagerland, 2852 Citation Drive, Fabius NY 13063.
- Scan or take a picture of the form and email it to Jane at jane_f@sbcglobal.net
- Send an email specifying the pledge amount to Jane at jane_f@sbcglobal.net

May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society

3800 East Genesee Street
Syracuse, NY 13214
315.446.8920
office@mmuus.org



New Office Hours:

Sunday: 8am-1pm

Mon - Thurs: 8am-1pm (other times by appointment only)

Days off are Friday and Saturday

- **Calendar Items:**

All zoom meetings must be scheduled through the Office Administrator.

- **Deadlines to remember:**

E-Blast and Order of Service need to be to me by 5pm on Wednesday.

- **Newsletter:**

Deadline 20th of preceding month, please adhere to this deadline to allow for the newsletter to be sent out in a timely fashion.

Please keep word count to 300-400 to allow room for everyone to have a voice in the newsletter