

♥ Weekly e-UU Newsletter – Friday, February 14, 2025 ♥

We acknowledge that our campus is located on traditional, unsundered and unceded Algonquin Anishinaabeg Territory; and that the work of reconciliation is a responsibility of our congregation, and of all Canadians.

Sunday, February 16, 2025

Online and In Person

Starts at 10:30am



Love, the Teacher: Post-Valentines-Day Reflections

Reverend Eric Meter

In anticipation of a significant winter storm on Sunday, we encourage everyone to **take part in the service by livestreaming it in warmth and safety of your own homes.** Instead of the Multi-Generational service prepared by Jodi McIntosh and Susan McEwen (which will come next month) Rev Eric, Jodi, Music Jenn, Mary Jackson, and others will offer a post-valentines-day worship service reflecting on the theme of "Love, the Teacher".

Stay warm, stay safe, stay together. [Click HERE to join us on Sunday morning.](#)

Sunday Service Announcements

If you would like an announcement made during the livestreamed Sunday Service, please email the Board of Directors at boardannouncements@firstunitarianottawa.ca by Friday at 10am. Do allow for time in case there are questions with regard to the announcement. Also note that announcements may need to be edited for length and that time-sensitive announcements may be prioritized.



Children's Religious Exploration

Our Worship service this Sunday was going to be a multigenerational celebration of family and community in Worship Hall, but Mother Nature had other plans! Since we're expecting another foot of snow to fall over the course of this weekend, most of it on Sunday, we'll be doing an online-only service. **No RE or OWL programming will be scheduled for Sunday, February 16.** We'll see you back at FirstU on February 23!

Reverend Eric's Departure

Drop In Sharing Circle with Reverend Eric

Saturday, February 15 - 1:00pm - 2:30pm in Room 6

Reverend Eric will be available to talk and answer questions about his departure. This is the first of several Sharing Circles that are planned.



Information/Listening Session

Sunday, February 16 – 11:45am – [Online](#)

As was mentioned in [the Thursday email](#) (see last page of this document) to the members from Reverend Eric and Chuck Shields, president of the board, there will be a session after the service this Sunday, February 16, for congregants to ask questions and express their thoughts and feelings. It will be held in Worship Hall starting at noon, and you can also participate in the session via the Zoom link provided below. The session will be recorded and made available on the [Our Ministry Team page](#).



[ZOOM LINK](#) Meeting ID: 841 6566 3350 Passcode: 953654

Charitable Tax Receipt Announcement

The 2024 charitable tax deadline has been extended until Feb 2025! Donors can choose to include donations from Jan 1 to February 28, 2025 on their income tax. If you would like to receive an income tax receipt for donations already sent in and postmarked on or before February 28, 2025 [please email](#)



[Michelle](#). If you plan to send in donations to be included before Feb 28, 2025, please ensure it's **received or postmarked** by February 28, 2025. **Requests must be sent by email**. Note: All 2024 Tax receipts will be mailed by February 28, 2025. **The extended donations period of January – February 28, 2025 will be mailed on an individual basis if I have received an email request.**

Please [contact Michelle at fm@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:fm@firstunitarianottawa.ca) with any questions.

Caring Contacts for February

[Agnes Davis](#) - 613-737-6527

[Carmen Contreras](#) - 613-715-3872

During "Heart Month," our Caring Network thanks you all for continuing to care for each other, no matter what comes up in our changing lives. Caring is for everyone!

We are all interconnected, interdependent and minister to each other in many ways. Our monthly Caring Contacts take your phone calls and emails when you wish to alert us to a need or a concern or have a joy to celebrate. We try to ensure no one is forgotten and that appropriate help is provided when requested.

Featured Volunteer Opportunity

FirstU Archivist

Are you interested in the inner workings and the history of the Congregation? As well, do you have basic computer skills (particularly as regards Excel), and do you enjoy work that calls for attention to detail? If so, being the congregational archives volunteer might be something you would enjoy.

For more information visit the [Volunteer With Us](#) page, or [contact Jen in the office](#).

Want to let the congregation know about a volunteer opportunity? [Fill out this online form](#) to let people know!

Have you already completed the FirstU Volunteering survey? If not, please click the embedded link and add your information to the volunteering data base: [Participation Survey](#)

-Chuck Shields, Volunteer Coordinator - volunteers@firstunitarianottawa.ca

Read All About It



Well-Wishes from FirstU

Our families come in all shapes and sizes and our hearts contain multitudes. Wishing a Happy Valentines' Day AND a Happy Family Day to you and all your loved ones!



Giving From the Heart

Congregants who have the financial flexibility to do so are invited to donate some or all of their \$200 Ontario Rebate Checks to the Ajashki program, the FirstU Food Cupboard, or other FirstU social justice programs that could use a financial boost.



Spring Spire - Deadline Extended

We want to hear from you in the March edition of the Parkway Spire! Time is running out but you're in luck. Your editor is a little late herself so the deadline is extended to Wednesday February 19. Please send your articles (max 450 words) and photos to spire@firstunitarianottawa.ca.



Mapmaking: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey

This series of group discussions begins Thursday March 27, and runs for six biweekly sessions, from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. Contact adultlearning@firstunitarianottawa.ca if you'd like to claim the last spot available.



We Need Your Help Getting to the Campus!

Navigating to Cleary can be tricky due to detours that aren't updated promptly on navigation apps like Google Maps, Apple Maps, or Waze. To help speed up the updates, we suggest that **when driving to Cleary over the next while, we all use Google Maps, even though you know the route**. There's an option to rate the directions, and if enough of us give a poor rating, it might expedite the updates. It's worth a try!



Concerned About Tariffs at the Grocery Store?

If you're worried about rising grocery costs being made worse by tariffs on brands imported from the US, you can [click here for a compiled list of Canadian alternatives](#).



It's February: Take Action!

Don't forget! This Sunday, February 16 is the last day for the collection of coffee bags (Visit the [Climate Action Page](#) for details). On Family Day, February 17, the four provincial party leaders will be holding a live debate on most major networks at 6:30pm. Take the opportunity to hear their positions, then vote for the environment on February 27! Lastly, we're having a special guest speaker at the February 23 service. [Don't miss it!](#)

Upcoming Events

Drop In Sharing Circle with Reverend Eric - Saturday, February 15 - 1:00pm - 2:30pm in Room 6

Reverend Eric will be available to talk and answer questions about his departure. This is the first of several Sharing Circles that are planned.



Information / Listening Session: Reverend Eric's Departure - Sunday, February 16 – 11:45am – Online

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Save the Date

Women's Inclusive Pagan Circle Ostara Ritual - Thursday, March 20 - 7:00pm - NOW Room - \$5 Suggested

Trans women, cis women, and non-binary folks are invited to take part in our Ostara Ritual. Honour the sacred balance of Spring Equinox and celebrate the spring of sap rising and geese returning. Bring finger foods to share after the ritual and anything seasonal you'd like to include on our altar.



Mapmaking: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey - Begins Thursday, March 27 - 7:00pm

This series of group discussions begins Thursday March 27, and runs for six biweekly sessions, from 7:00pm to 9:00pm.



Introducing Ourselves - Sunday, April 13 - 12:00pm - Fellowship Hall

This will be a small group, casual gathering after Sunday Service. You will share with other newcomers what brought you to FirstU, hear and ask about the basics of Unitarian Universalism and get some insight into how FirstU functions and ways you can get connected here. Brent Nicolle and Rev. Eric Meter will be your guides. This session will be offered in-person at FirstU, unless there is a general preference to meet on Zoom instead. For more information and to register, email_welcome@firstunitarianottawa.ca.



FirstU AGM - Saturday May 3 - 3:00pm

Due to a previously scheduled outside rental, the date for the 2025 AGM has been rescheduled to Saturday May 3 (3:00pm-6:00pm). We chose to schedule it on a Saturday afternoon, instead of a Sunday after the service, because there were no Sunday afternoons available in late April or early May. Stay tuned!



Visit our calendar for more upcoming events: <https://www.firstunitarianottawa.ca/calendar.html>

Recurring Events

Mental Health Support and Action Group - Sunday, February 16 - 12:00pm - Online

The Mental Health Support and Action Group meets on the third Sunday of every month for an hour of supportive listening and sharing. An additional thirty minutes are available after 1:00pm for those who wish to collaborate on group administration and on planning the future foci of our group.



FirstU Trivia Night (Monthly) - Monday, February 17 - 7:00pm - On Zoom

Join us for our monthly Trivia Quiz! Questions are diverse, fun, and taken from several sources, and there is no need to feel embarrassed about getting an incorrect answer: players score themselves! All you need is a pen or pencil, paper and your "thinking cap". Play alone or team up with friends!



Taoist Tai Chi (Weekly) - Tuesdays at 1:00pm - Fellowship Hall

Tai Chi is a series of gentle movements that improves circulation, strengthens the bones, and develops good balance. Each two-hour session is led by experienced instructors from "Friends of Tai Chi" and includes a tea break. There is no fixed fee for these classes, a donation basket will be available. Questions? Contact adultlearning@firstunitarianottawa.ca.



Knitters Group (Weekly) - Wednesdays at 1:00pm - Room 3

This group welcomes knitters and crocheters of any level, from beginner to expert, who enjoy creating hand-made items in a friendly, supportive setting. Using donated yarn, we make a variety of goods to sell at Fall Fair, Mitten Tree, and other events in support of the church, and to donate to special community projects.



Online Group Meditation (Weekly) - Wednesdays at 7:00pm - On Zoom

Join us on Wednesday evenings for online meditation plus readings from teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh. [Let Colleen know](#) if you would like to receive a friendly email reminder on Tuesday.



yUuth Group (Monthly) - Friday, February 21 - 6:30pm

Youth ages 11-17 are invited to join our yUuth Group meetup on the third Friday of every month. We usually meet at the church (but sometimes go bowling or do something else off-site), share a meal, and play games together. Email dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca for details on this month's activity!



After-Service Conversation (Biweekly) - Sunday, February 23 - 11:45am - The Lounge

Join us in the Lounge for a conversation about themes and insights from this morning's service. Grab some food from Fellowship Hall then join us in the Lounge for coffee and the conversation.



In-Person Bridge (Monthly) - Sunday, February 23 - 2:00pm - Room 3 – *Note new date*

Join us in Room 3, **this time on the fourth Sunday of the month (snow date)**, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, for a fun game of bridge. To RSVP, email bridgehost@firstunitarianottawa.ca by the Saturday immediately before our game, so we can set up before you arrive!



FirstU Virtual Discussion Circle (Biweekly) - Thursday, February 27 - 1:30pm - On Zoom

Discussion circles are held biweekly, with a different topic each time. No pre-registration is required, just drop in by clicking on the link. We look forward to seeing you! This week, our topic is "**Transitions**".



Thursday Evening Reading for Growth (Monthly) - Thursday, February 27 - 7:00pm - On Zoom

Join us, on the fourth Thursday of every month, for a lively discussion of our next book! [Contact Ken for the zoom link and our next title!](#)



Men's Breakfast Group (Biweekly) - Friday, February 28 - 8:00am - Fellowship Hall - \$10

Gentlemen are invited to join the Men's Breakfast Group for coffee, socializing, and breakfast, followed by an informative and engaging talk by [Ian Arnold MD](#), on his topic, *Looking for a surgical post - try Labrador*. Expect a lively discussion to ensue. **Register, no later than Monday, February 24, by [submitting this form](#).**



Daytime Reading for Growth (Monthly) - Friday, February 28 - 1:30pm - On Zoom

Join us in a discussion of *The River of Consciousness* by neurologist Oliver Sacks. Published posthumously, this eclectic collection of ten essays includes some dedicated to specific figures such as Darwin, Freud, and William James. Copies are available at public libraries. [Contact Clea](#) for the zoom details.



Virtual Bridge (Monthly) - Friday, March 7 - 7:00pm on Zoom and Bridge Base

Join us online for a fun game of bridge, using Zoom and Bridge Base Online, on the first Friday of every month. [Email Barb R](#) to RSVP and get the links and ensure your spot, by the Thursday immediately before our game.



Algonquin Word of the Week

We all know that Ajashki means "Soil" in Algonquin, that Kitigan Zibi means "Garden River", and "Gichi Miigwetch" means "Thank you very much". Let's learn some more words in Algonquin language. **This week's Algonquin Word of the Week is:**



Web'aagonaan

Web'aagonaan means "snow shovel". Can you see how Web'aagonaan relates to **goon** (snow)? You need a web'aagonaan when goonikaa (there is a lot of snow).

Unitarian Universalist nUUs



Volunteer at the National Level

The Canadian Unitarian Council is looking to fill two different positions:

- An Eastern member to join the CUC Nominating Committee for a three-year term
- An Eastern member to join the Eastern CUC Board for a three-year term

If you'd like to volunteer at the national level, and would like to know more about these positions, please [contact Cindy Dunning](#).

Get the eUU in your inbox: <https://www.firstunitarianottawa.ca/connect-with-us.html#nUUs>

Dear Members and Friends of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa,



Rev. Eric begins: Sadly, the time has come for me to say goodbye.

At last Spring's AGM, one of you asked me how Ann's then recent move for a new job in the Boston area would affect my work with you.

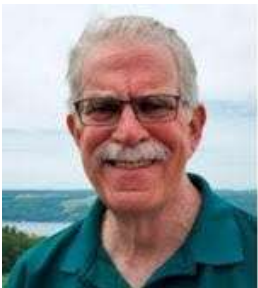
As we had been a two-household family before, at the time both Ann and I thought we'd be able to manage as we had earlier. Yet we found that as we're older now, time together is more precious than ever. For years I've counseled people to choose family first. Now, the time has come to heed my own advice.

And while the "dream job" that prompted Ann's move last April is a real-world job with both joys and challenges, she loves the work (training organ donation staff) and would not be eligible to do that work in Canada. (We knew this when we moved to Ottawa but, unfortunately, she found it hard to find other suitable employment here).

Still, this was not an easy decision to make. While I had hoped to be with you longer than four years, I remain proud of what we've done in this admittedly short time. We've recovered, bruised perhaps yet even more determined, from a pandemic. Our Religious Exploration program is more energetic than it has been since well before Covid. We have just welcomed two new refugees to Ottawa and work continues to settle several more. And, finally, plans are being finalized to secure a stronger legacy with the pending construction project and ceding property to Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services for affordable housing.

The spirit of this congregation is vibrant and deeply rooted. You have much to be proud of even as you work to build an expanded future, and I am looking forward to saying exactly that with any and all colleagues who reach out to me, thinking about applying to be with you as your next minister.

I will remain with you until the end of June, and will do everything I can to assist your new minister to succeed. I look forward to hearing great things coming out of this congregation in the years to come.



And Chuck continues: It was, indeed, sad to receive this news from Reverend Eric.

He has established himself well with our congregation and has been making a great difference. I and others on the board had been looking forward to working with him for many more years, but we understand his need to put family first.

However, and not to diminish the crucial role played by ministers like Rev. Eric, a congregation is really its members, and we have a strong and resilient group of members. We have gone through changes in the recent past and will be able to weather this unexpected one too.

The board has met to discuss this change. While saddened by it, the board has begun charting a way forward. In keeping with the decision, a couple of decades ago, that created the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), ministerial transitions are handled on a continental basis through the US-based Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), but with the involvement of the CUC. In keeping with this, Mary Ella Keblusek, the vice-president of the board, and I have spoken with the CUC and the UUA about this development and have received useful guidance.

The board believes that in order to maintain the current positive energy and momentum, it will be important to have a minister starting this August. It is expected that this minister would serve FirstU for two or three years, as the congregation decides how it wants to identify a minister for the longer term. In the next weeks, the board will be sharing information about how this process can unfold.

While this may not be an ideal situation, I believe that FirstU is in a strong position to continue moving forward. Our membership is growing, Sunday services throughout the year have been engaging and stimulating, our Religious Exploration program is attracting families, we are gaining momentum on social justice issues, and we have again demonstrated our tradition of generosity through the recent, successful pledge campaign and the related 'Help Staff Help Us' campaign. Once our campus development projects are completed, FirstU will have income that will sustain us into the future, while at the same time addressing indigenous reconciliation, providing affordable housing and likely providing funds for additional social justice activities.

Being open about our next steps will be important. The board will be sending information to congregants in many ways and will be convening opportunities for conversation and for everyone to ask questions. The first of these will be this coming Sunday, February 16, following the service. Details will be announced in this week's eUU and at the service. Please plan to participate!

**In shared faith,
Rev. Eric H. Meter
Chuck Shields**