

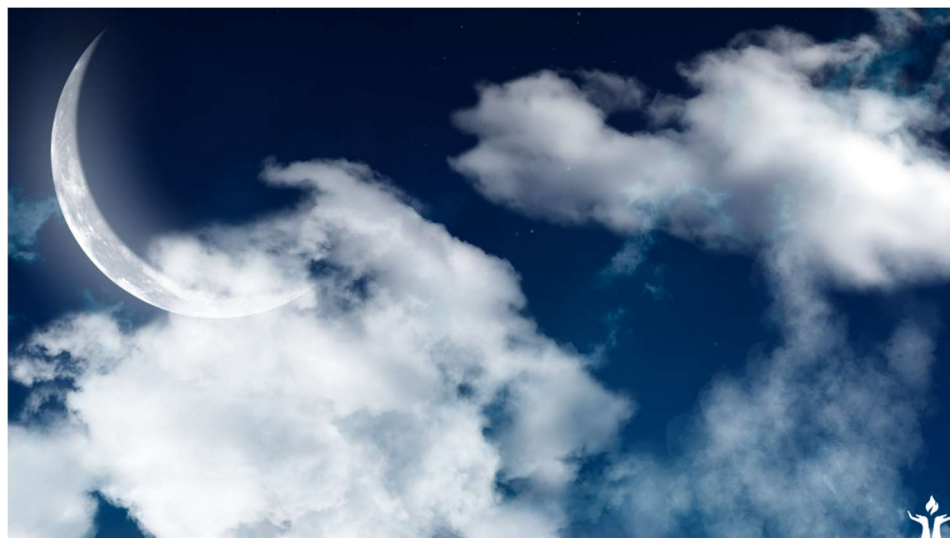
# Weekly e-UU Newsletter – Friday, February 28, 2025

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, March 2, 2025**

**Online and In Person**

**Starts at 10:30am**



## **A Midnight Unclear**

**With guest speaker Reverend Stan Sears**

Our guest Minister this Sunday says that, perhaps more than any time in his seventy-four years, our world is unclear. Orwellian "doublespeak" has become not only acceptable but replete throughout the world. How does one preach at such a time - as the Father of Universalism John Murray said: "Give them hope, not hell".

*If you know, or suspect, that you have COVID or another respiratory illness, [please take part in the service online.](#)*

### **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](mailto: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**

**Hi Friends!** Here's what our UU kids and OWL participants will be doing this Sunday:

### **2-12 Year-Olds:**

This Sunday, we'll start upstairs for the time for all ages, then gather in **Room 4** where we'll explore the practice of gently "listening in" to our joys, sorrows, and loving hearts, and make sets of listening beads to take home.

### **Grade 4-5 OWL:**

Our pre-registered Our Whole Lives participants will **gather at 10:30 in Room 2** to talk about feelings and attractions.

## **Update on Ministerial Search**

The FirstU Board is pleased to announce that **Guy Belleperche, Carmen Contreras, Mary Ella Keblusek (Chair), Sharmila Khare, and Lee Rose** have agreed to serve on the Search Committee that will identify a new minister to begin serving us in August. They have some very intense weeks ahead of them and plan on having a minister to announce at the end of April or early May.

The committee is interested in hearing the views of congregants and will hold a series of focus groups over the next couple of weeks. See below for details.



## **Focus Groups: Ministerial Search**

Given Reverend Eric's unexpected June departure, our search for a replacement is on a short time frame. Much of the survey and focus group input we got in 2020 on congregants' priorities is still relevant – but we want to supplement it and particularly encourage people to participate who did not do so last time.

We have scheduled the following focus groups, but may announce more in the weeks ahead. Unless otherwise specified, each session will last about 90 minutes and will take place in person at the church.

**Registration is required. To register, please email [focusgroup@firstunitarianottawa.ca](mailto:focusgroup@firstunitarianottawa.ca)**

- Tuesday, March 4 - 7:00pm - Open to all congregants
- Wednesday, March 5 - 7:00pm - Open to all congregants
- Sunday, March 9 - 10:30 - For **RE parents** (this session will last about an hour)
- Tuesday, March 11 - 7:00pm - **on Zoom** - For **newer congregants** (those who have been attending FirstU for five years or fewer)
- Thursday, March 13 - 10:00am - For **longtime congregants** (those who have been attending FirstU for at least twelve years)

## Caring Contacts for February

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

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

## Caring Contacts for March

[Clea Derwent](#) - 613-694-0505

[Karen Swinburne](#) - 613-234-4305

**Caring Cards for February:** EN and UU Church of Tallahassee, Lisa B and Family, Kayoki W, and Maryan O.

*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

### Ushers and Greeters Wanted

Do you like running into old friends, and making new ones? We're looking for a few more people to act as Sunday morning greeters and ushers. You would need to be available one Sunday every several weeks, depending on numbers. The only skill needed is a welcoming smile. Childcare is available before the service if you need it. Email Barb if you'd like to be involved.

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](mailto:volunteers@firstunitarianottawa.ca)

## Read All About It



### Campus Community Wellness Committee (CCWC)

[Here is your link to the CCWC's first annual report](#), which summarizes the committee's activities since its inception in 2023. Representatives of the Cleary campus partners (currently, First Unitarian, Unitarian House, River Parkway Children's Centre, Or Hanesamah, and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services) worked together to communicate and address matters of common concern and interest. In the foreseeable future, as campus plans progress through the site planning stages to construction and beyond, the CCWC will continue to identify and communicate issues impacting the well-being of campus visitors and residents.



### From the Board: Let's Help our Staff!

We want to thank everyone again for their generosity in the "Help Staff Help Us" campaign, and want to remind everyone that, while exceeding the target we had set, staff salary and hours were still cut by 5%. We can all help staff to continue to provide us the service we value by thinking whether we, individually or as part of our committees or teams, can do something that we might otherwise ask staff to do.



### New Recycling Initiative Underway

Bring in your dead pens, markers, highlighters and caps! For more information see the latest Enviro-Action on the [Climate Action Page](#), where you can also check out updates on the Chalk River Nuclear Waste Dump and the City of Ottawa advertising policy review. If you missed [Last Sunday's speaker Alex Neufeldt](#), her talk is well worth a listen.

## Upcoming Events

**Information / Listening Session: Reverend Eric's Departure - Sunday, March 2 – 12:00am – Worship Hall**

There will be a second session, in person, after the service on Sunday, March 2, for congregants to ask questions and express their thoughts and feelings about [the February 13th email](#) from Reverend Eric and



Chuck Shields. It will be held in Worship Hall starting at noon. The recording of Session One is available at: <https://www.firstunitarianottawa.ca/our-ministry-team.html>

### Ministerial Search Focus Groups - March 4 to 13 - Various Times

The Ministerial Search Committee wants to hear from YOU.

Much of the survey and focus group input received in 2020 on congregants' priorities is still relevant – but the Committee wants to supplement it, particularly with input from people who were unable to participate in 2020. **Full details and registration available at:** <https://www.firstunitarianottawa.ca/focus-groups.html>



## 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.



### 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](mailto: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

### 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](mailto: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.



### 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.



### After-Service Conversation (Biweekly) - Sunday, March 9 - 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.



### FirstU Virtual Discussion Circle (Biweekly) - Thursday, March 13 - 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 "**Uncomfortable Truths**".



### Men's Breakfast Group (Biweekly) - Friday, March 14 - 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 [Peter Duschinsky](#) who will present his topic, **Hearts of Freedom – Stories of Southeast Asian Refugees**. Expect a lively discussion to ensue. **Register, no later than Monday, March 10, by [submitting this form](#).**



### **Mental Health Support and Action Group (Monthly) - Sunday, March 16 - 12:00pm - Room 6 and [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.



### **In-Person Bridge (Monthly) - Sunday, March 16 - 2:00pm - Room 3**

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



### **FirstU Trivia Night (Monthly) - Monday, March 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!



### **yUuth Group (Monthly) - Friday, March 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](mailto:dre@firstunitarianottawa.ca) for details on this month's activity!



### **Thursday Evening Reading for Growth (Monthly) - Thursday, March 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!](#)



### **Daytime Reading for Growth (Monthly) - Friday, March 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.



## **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:**



### **Giizhik**

Giizhik means "(Eastern white) cedar", one of the plants sacred to the Anishinaabeg. Cedar is the grandmother who loves her people. Tea made from cedar fronds can warm you up inside, and can help with coughs and colds.

## **Unitarian Universalist nUUs**



**Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth - *SAVE THE DATE*: Earth Day Worship Celebration**  
**Tuesday, April 22 - 8:00pm - Online**

As Unitarian Universalists, we are positioned to be faith leaders at this critical time in our country's history. And it can feel overwhelming. Where do we start? We run the risk of becoming quick to act without listening to each other and the communities most impacted by climate disruption. This Earth Day, UU Ministry for Earth will help us deepen practices that put Love at the center of our climate justice work.

[Register for the online service and \(optional, by donation\) request the related written materials here.](#)

## **Chez FirstU**

### **Rise: A Community Singing Event - Sunday, March 9 - 1:30pm - Admission is By Donation**

Come ready to sing! In this interactive concert, Tone Cluster and All Voices queer choirs will lead the audience in singing songs of protest and justice, as well as perform some choral numbers.



*Joining us for this event will be Waigwa, the Artistic Director of Minnesota's One Voice Chorus, who will also be the guest speaker for FirstU's March 9 Sunday Service. Advance tickets required*, as the event will likely sell out. Ticket available at: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/rise-a-community-singing-event>

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.

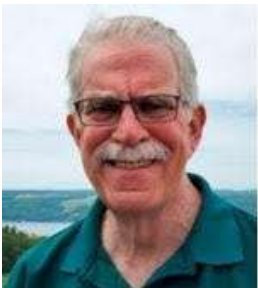
As we had been a two-household family before, at the time both Ann and I thought we'd be able to manage as we had earlier. Yet we found that as we're older now, time together is more precious than ever. For years I've counseled people to choose family first. Now, the time has come to heed my own advice.

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**