

Unitarian Universalist Society

2355 Oakdale Road

Coralville, IA 52241

www.uusic.org

8 Principles of Unitarian Universalism

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part
8. Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions

The UUS News

June 2024 Newsletter

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From Your Minister

Rev. Diana

Dear Ones,

The summer is almost here! For all of us, this means various things, but one of the ones I'm most excited about is the next stages of our exploration of the proposed changes to Unitarian Universalism's purposes, values, principles, and sources (called [Article II](#)).

As you know, over the past few months we've been exploring the proposed changes in worship services and covenant groups. We've particularly been focusing on how thinking and talking about the proposed new values affect how we understand Unitarian Universalism and how it's now calling us to engage with both our internal spiritual journeys and the wider world.



As those of you who've been following this discussion know and as the image shows, the proposed values are:

- Love
- Justice
- Equity
- Transformation
- Pluralism
- Interdependence
- Generosity

We've also been using our new friend, Jet Pig, who is powered by Love, to help us remember what the proposed values are and have fun exploring them!

Watch: [Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt: "A Love That Frees"](#)

And now, we're coming to the final stage of this exploration! During our national General Assembly of Unitarian Universalist congregations happening June 20 – 23, UUs from around the country will be discussing and taking a final vote on the proposal. If the proposed language is adopted, these values and the rest of the proposal will become part of the Unitarian Universalist Association bylaws. They will become some of the ways we discuss Unitarian Universalism and will help guide us in our ministries. You can read the full text of the proposal using the link below:

www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/final-proposed-revision-article-ii

This is part of a process that Unitarian Universalists go through every 15 years as part of discerning how we understand our living religious tradition now and how we talk about who we are and what we are called to be and do.

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To produce this proposal, the Article II Study Commission met with thousands of UUs in groups and as individuals, collected feedback on surveys, and held many discussions. To develop the first draft, they engaged in 45 feedback sessions with 4,611 participants, videos reached 7,765 viewers, and their 29 surveys generated 10,925 responses. And then they incorporated the amendments made at General Assembly in June 2023. Amendments to the final language were due February 1, 2024. UUs are engaged in discussing these amendments in online forums and they will be part of the vote at General Assembly. You can read more about the process and amendments using the link below:

discuss.uua.org/c/ga24/2024-a2-amendments/28

As we come to the end of this part of our engagement with this process, I'm delighted that UUS's General Assembly delegates are excited to work with the congregation on the final stages of gathering input and discerning our votes on the proposal. Please stay tuned to your email for opportunities to engage with UUS's GA delegates and me about Article II this month!

Whether or not the Article II proposal is adopted, the work we've done the past two years first to adopt the 8th principle, because we realized that we needed to update the seven principles to guide our journeys, and then to explore the proposed values has been an important part of understanding Unitarian Universalism today and where it's calling us today and tomorrow. Thank you for being part of this crucial work!

Love and Blessings,
Rev. Diana

Upcoming Services

June 2024 Sunday Services

June 2nd: Blessing of the Animals

Join us as we celebrate our interdependence with our all ages blessing of the animals! Favorite stuffies, small animals in cages/containers, as well as service animals, are invited into the sanctuary for the service. We will also be honoring our animal companions who have died, so please bring a picture. After a short service, Rev. Diana Smith will head outside to bless animal companions of all kinds - particularly larger hairy or hooved ones who couldn't come inside.

June 9th: PRIDE!

Join us for our annual LGBTQIA+ Pride worship service! We'll hear from members and friends of many ages, and Rev. Diana Smith and others will offer a glitter blessing to all who would like to receive one. After the worship service, we'll have materials and space for making signs and things for the Iowa City Pride parade on Saturday, June 15th.

June 16th: Navigating Change

Join us to welcome new members, mark Juneteenth, and reflect on the proposed changes to our Unitarian Universalist principles, values, purposes, and sources of inspiration. Rev. Diana Smith preaching.

June 23rd: General Assembly Worship Service

This will be a multiplatform service, with congregants and visitors welcome to join in person or watch over YouTube Live. Details to follow.

June 30th: Sacred Cows & Roundabouts: Metaphors for Shared Ministry

A whimsical meditation on traffic experiences in New Delhi, India and Mount Vernon, Iowa, to help us look at congregational life and shared ministry from a new point of view. UUS member and Board President Jeff Walberg speaking.

Find more information on our Sunday Services on our website: www.uusic.org/services

Join us on YouTube Livestream: www.youtube.com/@UUS_IC

June Offerings

Emma Goldman Clinic

June Sunday Offerings benefit the Emma Goldman Clinic, a non-profit organization founded in 1973 that empowers people of all genders and sexual identities through quality reproductive health care including abortion services, gynecology, safer sex promotion, and active education. Learn more about Emma Goldman Clinic on their website: emmagoldman.com/.

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Cash and check donations are collected during the Sunday service offering. Checks should be made out to UUS and have "Emma Goldman Clinic" on the memo line. You can also donate online at bit.ly/UUSPartner, text "GivetoUUSIC Partner" to 73256, or mail a check to the UUS office.

From Your Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Nic Kaplan

During the summer months, attendance and volunteering in Religious Education classes can vary greatly from week to week. In an effort to reduce volunteer needs and still continue to build beloved community through adaptable, active religious education, we will move to a "one room school house" style RE class. I have created another summer curriculum to fit the needs of our congregation this summer. Let me tell you about it!

Nature Adventure is designed for allany ages to come together and explore our value of interdependence through outside, nature-based stories and activities meant to help develop deep connections in our beloved community. Between June 9th and August 18th, we will have RE every week (outside if at all possible). Most weeks, we'll have a story to explore together and then there will be games, crafts, or other activities to help explore our faith and grow.

Each week has a different "Day" name and image that will tie to the themes of nature, adventure, and interdependence. For instance, June 9th is "Rainbow Day."

We will read *This Day in June* together and then create rainbows in a variety of ways (prisms, kaleidoscopes, and chalk paint). July 28th is "Star Day" and after we read "You are Stardust", we will decorate stars to take home and remind us of the story.

I hope you will join us for this fun-filled summer. If you are interested in volunteering with our Summer Nature Adventure program or in RE classes during the rest of the year, please email me at education@uusic.org.

SUMMER Religious Education

Outside as much as possible -
dress to get messy

June 2 - Blessing of the Animals -Bring a stuffie - All Ages Service



June 9 - Rainbow Day



June 16 - Flower Day

June 23 - Clay Day



June 30 - Insect Day



July 7 - Together Day



July 14 - Mushroom Day



July 21 - Orange Day



July 28 - Star Day



August 4 - Web Day



August 11 - Water Day

August 18 - Fire Day



August 25 - Ingathering Day - All Ages Service - Carnival!



From Your Congregational Administrator

Maya Kehr Yoder

Greetings, from your new Congregational Administrator, Maya!

Thank you so much to the UUS community for the warm welcome (and delicious cake) you've offered me as I transition to this new role. It's been a bit of a whirlwind and I'm still in learning mode, but I've got a great team of people training and supporting me. My regular working hours will be Monday-Friday from 8:30-3:30; I will also work 1-2 Sundays a month. On weeks when I work on Sunday, I will shorten my Friday to stay at the expected 30 hours a week.

Thanks again for your kindness and I look forward to getting to know all of you more!

Announcements

- **UU the Vote**

UU the Vote is a program of your Unitarian Universalist Association to build a genuine multiracial democracy through voter registration, issue education, get-out-the-vote drives, and voter protection. Here at UUS we are beginning to formulate plans to implement UU the Vote in Johnson County. Our first activity will be an information table on Sunday, June 2. Our Sunday service on July 21 will be devoted to UU the Vote. We need your enthusiasm and ideas.

For more information see the article on pages 36-37 in the current issue of UU World, visit the website below, or contact Jim Olson at jimolson921@gmail.com.

- **2023/24 Annual Report is Available**

The 2023/24 Annual Report is done! Thank you to everyone who contributed content, edited, and helped put this report together.

You can read it [on the website](#) or find a printed copy at the UUS building.

Passing the Baton

Ron Wright

As some of you know, I was rehired at the end of January 2024 for the position of Building Steward which had been vacant since I left that position in February of 2022. I agreed to resume that position until the church had found and hired someone new. Emma let me know that she was actively looking for someone who would take up that position permanently.

I began the assessment of what to tackle, and which tasks to prioritize that had not been done in the previous two years that I was gone. Descaling the dishwasher was first on my list. Also, cleaning up random carpet stains and organizing Storage Room A were some of the first tasks.

By mid-February, Emma let me know that Patrick Satter was hired and the following week we met and began training. Patrick has extensive mechanical systems experience, having worked as a maintenance technician at Centro Plastics in North Liberty.

After we got acquainted, one of the first tasks we did was to check all 30 of the air filters for all 12 heat pumps and air-to-air heat exchangers, replacing those filters that needed it.

In March, Patrick and I began contacting various window cleaning firms to submit estimates to us. I'm sure that many of you have visually winced at the sight of the white filmy build-up on our windows, both inside and as well as outside. It had been 6 and 1/2 years since they were completely cleaned so they were badly in need of it.

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After several vendors visited and submitted their estimates, we chose Fish Window Cleaning of Cedar Rapids and they had cleaned all the windows inside and out by the first week of April.

We tackled cleaning both stoves and ovens, as well as the kitchen floor underneath them. We completely removed the dual hot plate elements, thoroughly cleaned them, and cleaned the catch pan beneath the heating elements also.

Of utmost importance on the list of things to do was cleaning our kitchen's grease trap, because it had not been done in more than 2 years. A grease trap is designed to capture fat and grease that would otherwise go down the kitchen drain and potentially clog up the drain pipe. There is a gray and black sludge that builds up in the grease trap. You will see how thick that the buildup of greasy sludge can be, about 1 to 2 inches thick. This grease trap has to be cleaned out at least once a year. Ask anyone who was in the building at the time we did this and they'll tell you the smell is horrible!

We cleaned the exhaust hood filters, and then the stainless steel wall behind the stoves was cleaned and wiped down with stainless steel polish.

Every year, the ice machine must be cleaned and sanitized. But Patrick and I went much further than that! First of all, we removed the poured marble top from the kitchen prep island and lifted out the ice machine from the pit. It had been 3 years since that pit had been cleaned. We scrubbed out the accumulated dirt and sludge, then replaced the ice machine back into the pit. Next, we emptied the ice bin completely and disassembled the interior of the ice machine so that the parts could be cleaned and sanitized. You'll see the buildup of calcium deposits that I'm scrubbing off the walls.

By March 15th, Patrick was trained on nearly all the tasks and duties of Building Steward, so I resigned at that time.

It has been an interesting and exciting time to work as your Building Steward and I know that with Patrick Satter now in this position, you are in good hands.

Upcoming Events

Men's Sunday Social, June 2nd

UUS adult men are invited to gather together the first Sunday of most months from 6 to 8 pm to socialize in a casual setting. Members and Friends are welcome. We define "man" as any adult who identifies as a man. Currently, our monthly gatherings take place at 2Dogs Pub (1705 First Avenue, Iowa City). Send questions to Russ Lenth and Phil Beck at menssundaysocial@uusic.org.

Let Love Fly, June 8th

On Saturday, June 8, mega kites will soar above North Liberty's Centennial Park. Come for awe-inspiring views, and information, activities and giveaways from LGBTQ community groups and sponsors for a community celebration of love. Here's all you need to know:

The five Ws

1. **Who:** You! This is a free, all ages event.
2. **What:** Mega kites soar above Centennial Park for a community celebration of love.
3. **Where:** Centennial Park, 1565 St Andrews Drive.
4. **When:** Saturday, June 8, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
5. **Why:** Love is love!

UUS will have a presence at Let Love Fly!

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Check out the volunteer opportunities [here](#) or contact Nic Kaplan, education@uusic.org, for more information.

First Week of Summer Nature Camp, June 10th

Our nature camps will be filled with child-led exploration of our woods, Mud Creek, and of course the climbing trees and boulder scramble. Last year at camp, we saw deer, turkeys, and loads of other birds. If there is dangerous weather (high heat, lightning, etc), we will take breaks indoors for nature-based crafting, science experiments, and more as needed. Register [here](#) or online at uusic.org/day-camps-at-uus/.

Rev. Diana Community Office Hours, June 12th

Rev. Diana will be at Press Coffee in Iowa City from 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM for members and friends to stop by and chat about whatever's on your heart or mind. You don't need to have an appointment. She hopes you'll stop by to say "Hi!"

Lament: LGBTQIA+ PRIDE Vespers-style Worship Service, June 12th

As we often say, PRIDE is both a protest and a party. Part of the protest is coming together to support our community around our losses and griefs. Join us for a special LGBTQIA+ PRIDE vespers-style worship service at 6:30 PM where we'll mark the losses our LGBTQIA+ community has suffered in recent months. Led by Rev. Diana Smith.

Free Lunch Program, June 14th

The cornerstone of the Free Lunch Program is, "an open door, a full plate and no questions asked." A hot meal is served six days a week

at 1105 S. Gilbert Court, Iowa City. Since 1986, UUS has provided the Free Lunch meal on the second Friday of every month to about 110 guests. This year we have returned from the pandemic limitations by creating the main meal using the UUS kitchen by our volunteer chefs under the guidance of Vicki Siefers. This change has reduced the costs of our offerings in the face of higher costs.

If you would like more information about how you can contribute to Free Lunch, please contact Bob Littlehale (freelunch@uusic.org or 419-297-7812)

Iowa City Pride, June 15th

The mission at Iowa City Pride is to increase positive visibility of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual/agender/aromantic (LGBTQIAA) community of Iowa City. We do so by providing opportunities to express and celebrate diverse perspectives, emphasizing acceptance of all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

UUS will have a presence at Iowa City Pride again! Check out the volunteer opportunities [here](#) or contact Nic Kaplan, education@uusic.org, for more information.

UUS Men's Sharing Circle, June 16th

All adult UUS members and friends who identify as male are invited to join us to our monthly sharing circle. You are invited to share your joys and sorrows, practice deep listening, and offer support when asked for, all in a confidential environment. We will meet in the Hickory & Oak Rooms at UUS on the third Sunday of each month from 6-8 pm. For questions, contact Ron Pile and Niklaus Jakob at menssharingcircle@uusic.org.

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Second Week of Summer Nature Camp, June 17th

Our nature camps will be filled with child-led exploration of our woods, Mud Creek, and of course the climbing trees and boulder scramble. Last year at camp, we saw deer, turkeys, and loads of other birds. If there is dangerous weather (high heat, lightning, etc), we will take breaks indoors for nature-based crafting, science experiments, and more as needed. Register [here](#) or online at uusic.org/day-camps-at-uus/.

Green Sanctuary Potluck, June 19th

Green Sanctuary is hosting a potluck on June 19th starting at 5:00 PM. All are welcome! More details to come.

UUS Board Meeting, June 19th

The UUS Board of Trustees holds a meeting, open to all members, each month at 7 pm on the third Wednesday. Look for an agenda in the weekly email or [on the website](#) before the meeting. ([Link to Join](#), Meeting ID 891 3256 0297, password 228948, or join by phone).

Third Week of Summer Nature Camp, June 24th

Our nature camps will be filled with child-led exploration of our woods, Mud Creek, and of course the climbing trees and boulder scramble. Last year at camp, we saw deer, turkeys, and loads of other birds. If there is dangerous weather (high heat, lightning, etc), we will take breaks indoors for nature-based crafting, science experiments, and more as needed. Register [here](#) or online at uusic.org/day-camps-at-uus/.

Find our full list of June Events at www.uusic.org/upcoming-events.

UUS Committee and Team Reports

COVENANT GROUPS

In May, covenant groups discussed a particularly rich topic—pluralism. Pluralism isn't just about diversity, it embodies it as an idea. It's a flashpoint in political discussions, of course. But the polarized arguments of the day might be hiding the true extent to which we live in a pluralistic society. Pushback by certain groups becomes stronger the more there is to push back against. How pluralistic do you think our country, our community, our congregation are? And what about your personal life?

The May edition of Soul Matters shares this interesting perspective: "Pluralism is most often applied to conversations about communities. But it's just as relevant to individuals. We don't have an identity; we have identities. As Walt Whitman famously said, 'I am large, I contain multitudes!' But we rarely - if ever - step back to reflect on how those multitudes influence us and interact with each other... So this month spend some time getting to know your many selves, your pluralism within."

If questions like these intrigue you, you might want to consider joining a covenant group. The covenant group program offers its members the opportunity to share their views and deepen their understanding of a wide range of issues while creating closer ties with other UUs.

FREE LUNCH PROGRAM

On May 10, many UUS volunteers served a baked potato bar, green and fruit salads and cookies to 97 diners and 26 take out meals. The meal was greatly appreciated.

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This month's meal was donated by Bonnie Penno in honor of Mother's Day.

Working in the kitchen this month were: Barb Haring, Gene McCracken, Bob Littlehale, Frank Wildensee, Russ Lenth, Laurie Cubit, Joy Thompson, Theresa Ullerich, Bonnie Penno, John Elson, Gare Calhoun, and Carrie Z. Norton. Many others donated food for the salads and desserts.

The UUS group has been saving money by cooking meals on-site and this month we were able to make a donation of \$500 out of our account thanks to donors covering our meals. The check was presented to Diane Platte by Bob Littlehale, Vicki Siefers, and Frank Wildensee, and Bob matched the \$500 for a total donation of \$1000 to the Iowa City Free Lunch Program. UUS is very proud to support this program to combat food insecurity in our community. Our contribution goes to help support the fixed costs at the kitchen including staffing, utilities and use of the kitchen.

Congregational members also have the opportunity to donate to the ICFLP during the month of May when we pass the plate during the service. Thanks for all your donations! In June, Dave Jepsen will be donating the meal in memory of Mary Jepsen.

GREEN SANCTUARY

Wednesday, June 19 Green Sanctuary Potluck and Program!

Join Green Sanctuary on Wednesday, June 19 for a Potluck and Program. We will gather at 5:30 pm, with a short program around 6-6:15. After cleanup we will hold our regular meeting. All are welcome to stay for the meeting.

- We will provide childcare.
- Bring a dish to share with 6-8 people with a label listing ingredients.

- In the spirit of taking care of nature, we invite you to also bring your own plates, utensils, and napkins to clean at home to reduce waste and speed the cleanup after the potluck.

Composting Policy

We have set up a composting service. Now we need to ensure we do it right!

- There are green, square, 5-gallon containers in the kitchen for holding compost.
- The containers need to first be lined with compostable bags located (for now) in the trash bag drawer by the entrance to the storage area.
- When they are full, they should be tied shut and placed in the 55-gallon container labeled Compost Ninja located outside in the solid waste corral with the garbage and recycling bins.
- The only items that can go into the bin are: food waste, compostable tableware, and clippings from plant arrangements.

June Better Together Challenge - Connection

Each month of Better Together we have actions that members of the congregation can take to address climate Mitigation, Adaptation, Resilience, and Justice. Our focus for the summer is Adaptation to the new circumstances created by climate change. One way to adapt is to create and deepen connections.

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Here are three different ways to connect. Try the one that fits you best, and if you can, try another.

1. **Connect with Neighbors:** If you don't know your neighbors, start by picking one to connect with. Make the first move by just nodding and smiling, and maybe adding a comment about the weather. When your paths cross again, introduce yourself and ask how long they have lived in the neighborhood. Questions can progress to what they do, where they are from, do they have pets, or is family nearby. If you already know your neighbors, ask them for advice about pets, service people, plants, or a nice place to eat. Next level stuff: Consider planning a neighborhood get together so all your neighbors can become better acquainted.
2. **Connect with Another Species:** Choose a plant or animal you see in your neighborhood fairly regularly and learn more about it. Learn what its common name is, what its scientific name is (the Latin two-part name). Learn about its life cycle, how it reproduces, what it eats, and what eats it. Look for it when you are out and about and make mental notes on its growth or behavior through the cycle of the seasons.
3. **Connect with Another Culture:** Choose a culture you have wondered about and learn more about it. It can be a place, a music genre, a religion, a type of food, a sport, a fashion, a TV series, almost anything as long as it is different from what you already know. Talk to followers, read a book, listen to a podcast, watch a documentary. Seek to understand what human need this culture meets, and how it shapes the

way its followers view the world and make decisions. Then think about the cultures you follow and find the common links.

How to Help Green Sanctuary's Work (even if you don't want to come to a meeting.)

You can help with our project even if you can't make our regular meetings. Projects include ways to engage the congregation, exploring battery backup for emergencies, helping the Center for Worker Justice with a resilience project and the Creekside Neighborhood with an environmental threat, developing a water quality focus, and exploring outreach to elected representatives. To help, just email Jan Weaver at jan.weaver57@gmail.com with your interest, and she will connect you with the project leader. Our next meeting is **Wednesday, June 19 at 5:30 pm** for our Potluck, Program and Meeting at the Church.

Photo Caption:

UUs "Clean a River" by exchanging good farming practices for harmful ones in our River of Yarn. They removed cows from streams, reduced fertilizer amounts, reduced the number of pigs in a watershed, switched to spring plowing, and added grassy filter strips to stream edges. These five practices help keep soil, fertilizer, and poop out of Iowa Rivers. Learn more from the book "The Swine Republic" by Chris Jones. The Swine Republic just made the Library of Congress' 2024 Great Reads list.

www.thegazette.com/agriculture/swine-republic-makes-library-of-congress-great-reads-list/

IMMIGRATION ACTION TEAM

Yoel and Carmen, the Cuban couple sponsored by UUS, are settling into their new life in Iowa City these past three weeks.

Yoel and Carmen are eager to learn English, find jobs, and become familiar with Iowa City.

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Their love of music and dancing brought them to the Saturday night Salsa dancing on the Iowa City Ped mall. They even tried their hand at square dancing at the American Legion. Yoel is a wiz at mastering the Iowa City bus system! Carmen found some bargains at the local thrift shops. Volunteers for grocery shopping trips and tutoring are needed. Please contact Peg Bouska if you are interested in volunteering with this friendly and kindly couple (peg-bouska@uiowa.edu).

IUUWAN, our State Action Network

Fifteen years ago, several UUs thought how great it would be if all Iowa UUs could connect with one another. That is how the Iowa UU Witness Advocacy Network came about!

The IUUWAN Faithify fundraiser project this past year involved distributing funds for LGBTQ+ projects. These projects included the Iowa Trans Festival that was held several months ago in Des Moines, a partnership with a trans support organization in Waterloo, and a keynote speaker for a Davenport LGBTQ+ event.

The Environmental Justice Team has networked with six congregations to supply postcards for writing to the Iowa Utilities Board and the Department of Natural Resources.

While the past year the group has focused on pipeline and water issues, they are now pivoting to getting out the vote. A subgroup has formed to perform street theater at local fairs and festivals to draw attention to voting and the environment. Should you be interested in such theatrics, contact Sally (sallyahartman@hotmail.com).

Check out their website: iuuwan.com/.

LAND MINISTRY

Playscape enhancements 2024

As part of our mission and vision UUS has striven to be a place where families with children can find connection and joy in nature and in play. Funds from the Jean Reese Endowment Fund will pay for playscape enhancements this spring and summer. These enhancements will be enjoyed by the participants in the Nature Camps that Nic Kaplan, DLRE, organizes and leads.

In 2021 funds from the Jean Reese Endowment were used to add limestone steps to the “active play area” at the base of the boulder scramble. This is the area that would be the focus of our continued improvements. The projects below will improve and enhance our outdoor area:

1. The addition of more boulders at the top of the current boulder scramble will eliminate the muddy area at the top near the sidewalk. An area about halfway down the hill will be leveled and boulders added to create a “gravel pad” where the slide will be installed.
2. Picnic tables in the shade of the oak tree will be beneficial for lunches and other activities that need a table for both RE participants and campers. The removal of the brush and flattening of the area around the tree will also increase the area accessible by line-of-sight, which in turn will allow for more of our space to be utilized in ways compliant with our safer congregation policies.
3. The addition of boulders in the slope above the picnic tables will give more visual interest and protection to an area that children are regularly using during child-led exploration.

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4. On the south side of the building a wildlife container pond will allow children and adults alike to observe and marvel at native water plants that will attract a variety of amphibians, birds, and mammals.
5. Also, on the south side of the building, a “mud kitchen” will allow for both dramatic play and exploration of one of our world’s most important natural resources - soil. The mud kitchen will preserve landscaping from naturally curious children who want to dig and play in mud and dirt, giving them an outlet for those tendencies.
6. The pergola added to the gravel area across from the RE gardens will allow for a clearer spot for drop off in the mornings during Nature Camps. We also envision using this space during the year for drink stations and a clearly defined place to gather.

The Land Ministry Team and Nic Kaplan, DLRE, see playscape enhancement as an important goal that capitalizes on the unique opportunities we have to honor and celebrate the earth and to nurture deep connections not only within our own congregation, but also in the wider community. We anticipate that the camps will continue to attract new families to our congregation.

As a team, we will continue to work with many volunteers to enhance and maintain our landscaping and wild areas. We believe that when these projects are completed, the labyrinth, the playscape, and the memorial garden will provide a unified look and will help to beautify and complement our outdoor spaces on the south side of the building.

PRISON MINISTRY

The Prison Ministry Team “endeavors to become informed advocates for justice and build relationships to decrease isolation of those confined in the Iowa Justice System.” Here are some of our latest endeavors:

- In May plans continued for a June 11 screening and fundraiser at FilmScene as part of their Community Collaborations series. “Beyond Walls” is a program of five short documentaries about prison life, its effects on families of the incarcerated, and life after incarceration. After the screening, there will be a panel discussion, including incarcerated-rights advocate Sue Hutchins and Michelle Heinz, executive director of the Inside Out Reentry Community. PMT members Kim Palmer and Zach Palmer are working with FilmScene on this important part of our mission to educate the public.
- Ron Pile continued to correspond with an incarcerated individual at Newton Correctional Facility about establishing a prison ministry there.
- We now have a presence on the bulletin board in the church lobby thanks to Sally Hartman and Bonnie Penno, who created a space for the Prison Ministry Team and posted information about the pen pal program and resources concerning prison justice issues. We will post bulletins about upcoming events in this space.
- The Prison Ministry Team continues to be active through the Pen Pal program. Members regularly correspond with incarcerated individuals either by “snail mail” or through the Iowa Department of Corrections’ o-mail system, CorrLinks. We are always looking for volunteers to write to inmates. Incarcerated persons tell us over and

over how important it is for them to hear from those of us outside. Just knowing that there are caring people who haven't forgotten them and are willing to spend time writing to them is a deeply meaningful, positive experience for them. And it is very rewarding for volunteers, too. We can set you up with contacts, instructions for using CorrLinks and postal mail, and a sample introductory letter to use or modify as you see fit. If you think you might be interested, please email prisonministry@uusic.org and one of us will get back to you. You can also check out our page on this website at www.uusic.org/connect/#justice.

- The UUA has a prison ministry through the Church of the Larger Fellowship, the Worthy Now Prison Ministry Network. They're also looking for people to become pen pals to incarcerated individuals nationwide. For more information, go to worthynow.org.
- The UUS Prison Ministry Team meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the UUS Conference Room. You are welcome to join us at our next meeting on June 4, 2024, either in person or via Zoom (Meeting ID: 848 0842 4430; Passcode: 193553).

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