

# Unitarian Church of Underwood

## Annual Report for 2017-18

See: [www.ucofu.org/news/php](http://www.ucofu.org/news/php)

### **Governance/Administration**

#### **President's Report – Mary Anderson**

Wow, this is it – it is coming to an end for me. I have served six years on the Board of Directors, the last three as a Board Officer: one year as Vice President and the last two as President. My organizational fervor is ending, at least in my official capacity!

My mind works seeing connections. Connections of people, connections between work flow, connections of interests, connections of community. Thus, I relate especially to the 7<sup>th</sup> Principle: *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part* – how we connect and are connected.

From my perspective as your outgoing Board President, here's how I see the state of the Unitarian Church of Underwood:

The connecting cogs are working. One thing turns another. The Membership Committee not only counts the members, but courts visitors who become new members. The new members find places within the church community. And there are places to be found because of all that has been done before in building on the church mission. A variety of Program offerings are here with inspiring speakers, religious education classes, mindfulness sitting, U groups; There are community outreach opportunities with fund-raisers and events, social and environmental justice causes. This beautiful facility is here, having had continuous maintenance with Improvements over its many years and now we have more space with Sverdrup Suites. There is opportunity for individuals to make connections, to share talents: music, art, knowledge, skills, and opportunities; to share ourselves with our personalities, opinions, wisdom, questions, curiosity to know more.

There was already so much here as the result of previous leadership that created a strong foundation. The past couple years, we have acted mostly to strengthen and build upon what we already had.

**We strengthened our organization** – Revised our by-laws; developed and maintained the UCU Policy and Procedures Manual, a one-stop document that outlines clear roles, responsibilities, expectations and ready reference on what/how to do it through written policy, procedures, forms, history; built organizational cohesiveness; implemented many goals from the Plan to Grow project; organized and maintained our records and historical documents using Google Docs; made full use of the Executive Committee and the Board, committees, task forces, teams, individuals, fortifying where needed. Met the operational budget through our generous giving,

paying our bills and increasing our assets. We recognized and honored our volunteers – that meant most all of us.

**We strengthened communications:** communications among and between all those doing the work, cross-communications between the board and the various committees, communication to members for transparency so you know the decisions being made and why, information on what is happening within the church and outside in our communities. Using technology to assist in communication – the newsletter sent electronically, the website, the Facebook Page and the Podcasts – listening to the speakers we missed, sharing our speakers with the outside world.

**We strengthened our Program offerings:** a shout out again to the Speakers Committee for bringing us the variety and quality of speakers to educate and inspire us, the now Sunday Service Coordination Committee for bringing us the welcoming and comfortable routine to the service with the greeters, service leaders, sound and visual supports and the musicians – oh those musicians!!! To the adult religious education leaders, and mindfulness sitters, the U Groups, the Celebrants, all of whom fortified and challenged us on our intellectual and spiritual journeys.

**We strengthened relationships** between our members and friends through our social hour, our working together, our problem solving, our decision making, our growing friendships. We welcomed visitors, letting them know that we are here whenever they want to come. We've reminded ourselves of our Covenant of Behavior, treating each other with respect and understanding.

**We strengthened our outreach in the community**– reaching out to live our UU principles for giving, for social and environmental justice, for building community. For involving ourselves in areas we thought we could/should make a difference, individually and collectively, fulfilling ourselves in being a part of what matters.

**Specific accomplishments** that come to mind:

**Acting in leadership:** The Area Fall Workshop was a big event that not only brought other UU churches together but bound us together by participation in the workshop and doing all the work to make the workshop happen. There were 16 attendees from other churches and 39 UCU attendees.

**Development of the 3<sup>rd</sup> 5-year Strategic Plan** – visioning for our future and putting into print what we plan to do, where we plan to be on fulfilling our mission. Setting priorities to work toward: Building our Children's Religious Education program, developing further and future leadership, continuing in spirit and giving.

**Occupancy of a suite in Sverdrup Suites** at long last has given our kids a space. Planning is underway on how best to proceed on using and improving our space.

It was my goal to do the extra to make it easier for those who come behind. To do the underlying work so you didn't know that the work was even being done (unless you were on Mary's email list!). It was my goal that our work be transparent and that all have as much information as they need/want and thus it is not a monthly newsletter – it is a monthly magazine. It was my goal to grow to at least 100 members and we have grown close to that, and though we lost several beloved members, we gained many more. It was my hope that you'd feel welcomed when you came in the doors of the Unitarian Church of Underwood; that you'd find here what you were seeking, that you'd find other seekers who were as impassioned as you; that you'd want to be a part of whatever this is; that you'd find your community just as I have found mine.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve. I thank you for all the support you've given the Board of Directors and me. I thank the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, the chairs and members of all the committees, task forces, team and individuals, the doers, the seekers, the givers – each and everyone of you.

Now be overwhelmed when you hear all that has been accomplished by so many and yet, so few as we give you the annual reports.

#### **Treasurer's Report – David Wass**

- **Financial Reports**
- **Approval of 2018-19 Budget**

#### **Administrative Consultant – JoAnn Larson**

As Administrative Consultant, JoAnn:

- Is available via email or phone to answer questions, gather ideas, or point you in the direction of who to talk with regarding church business and activities.
- Assists with coordinating Sunday Services. If you would like to volunteer to greet, lead Sunday services, or help in any way, please contact me. Also, please contact me with suggestions for speakers or topic ideas for Sunday speakers to address.
- Is available to help support committees or special projects.
- Serves on Speaker's Committee, Sunday Service Coordination Committee, and Membership Committee
- Assists with Communications, Technology, and Records Committees, and attend board meetings.

JoAnn can be reached at [redswilds@gmail.com](mailto:redswilds@gmail.com) or phone: 218-405-0752.

#### **Stewardship Committee – Dave Sanderson, Chair**

- The Stewardship Committee informed the congregation about the status of the UCU's operating budget and revenues through quarterly reports at Sunday services.
- An Estimate of Giving Form was distributed to members to encourage giving financially and through time and talent.

- Two years ago, a system was developed that allows members to do direct payment from their checking account to the UCU account. This helps make revenues more predictable and steady throughout the year. Several members are using this payment system and we encourage everyone to consider it.
- Because of the generosity of our members, collections covered our budget.
- The Stewardship Committee will increase its number of members from 3 to 5. At least one member of the Stewardship Committee will serve on the Finance Committee.
- The Stewardship and Empowerment Committees will co-sponsor an event to celebrate and promote individual giving and celebrate Empowerment Grant awards.

Respectfully submitted,

*Stewardship Committee: Chair, David Sanderson*

*Members: Mary Worner; Kris Warhol.*

### **Foundation Advisory Committee – Dave Sanderson, Chair**

The UCU Foundation Advisory Committee oversees the operation of the UCU foundation and advises the Board of Directors regarding the Foundation structure, management and operation. The UCU Foundation will ensure that our church can continue to serve our community while staying true to our principles.

The UCU Foundation Advisory Committee met 5 times in 2017-18. Committee activities included:

- Currently the Foundation Committee is contacting UCU members by a mailing which includes a letter, two brochures and a bequest form. This will be followed by a phone call to answer questions about the Foundation. After reaching out to all members, we will contact friends of the UCU.
- Connie developed a spreadsheet for recording the names of individuals who have been contacted. This will facilitate appropriate follow up.
- All bequest forms are stored in a safety deposit box in Farmer's State- Underwood, MN. Confidentiality is strictly maintained to protect the privacy of those who make bequests and/or contributions.
- The Foundation received a gift of \$3,500. The donations to date are \$13,500.
- A personal "thank you" card signed by committee members will be sent to all donors, who will also get a receipt that can be used for tax purposes.
- A Foundation account, called the "Unitarian Church of Underwood Foundation", was set up with the UUCEF (Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund).

Dave Sanderson has attended quarterly UUCEF Webinars to update himself and the committee with the investment activity of the UUCEF, which prides itself in participating in socially responsible investments which coincides with the principles of the UCU.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Sanderson, Chairperson

*Committee Members: Dave Sanderson (Chair), Stan Carignan, Connie Stigen (Secretary), Kris Warhol, Mary Worner*

### **Membership Committee – Mary Anderson, Chair**

The Membership Committee works to improve member intake, hospitality, and retention, acquaint selves with members, and monitor that the needs of the membership are being met.

This past year's activities included that we:

- Sponsored the Volunteer Appreciation Event last April, served the Italian lunch, provided appreciation gifts and recognized and honored our volunteers.
- Reviewed and updated the Membership Rosters for Voting Members and Contact List of Members and Friends. We recommended to the Board certification of 62 members (UUA Fair Share Assessment of \$60/certified member and UU MidAmerica Region of \$25/certified member). We count 87 individual members. We sent a letter to 13 additional members to request response if they wished their membership status to remain: 1) active voting member, 2) inactive member with name retained on the contact list, 3) no longer wish to be a member. We received responses from most contacted and updated the lists accordingly.
- Maintained and distributed Visitor and New Member packets of information.
- Coordinated with the Celebrants for the Welcoming Ceremonies held in October and March. Seventeen (17) new members signed the membership book this past year.
- Developed a power point presentation for New Member Orientation and offer it in conjunction with the New Member Welcoming Ceremonies.
- Coordinated sending cards, arranging for visits or providing other assists for care and concerns to our members and friends.
- Noted attendance, candle lighting concerns, information otherwise gathered and followed up with contact via a personal phone call or an e-mail with those who have been notably absent or are experiencing life challenges.
- Encouraged visitors to sign the visitor cards and for those who complete one, update the contact lists including email list to receive the newsletters and church reports.
- Continue to notice newcomers and make sure they are welcomed and given attention.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Anderson, Chair

*Committee members: Mary Anderson, JoAnn Larson, John & Janell Miersch, Alisha Piekarski, Bonnie Showers, Mary Worner, Diana Ziesemer.*

### **Communications Committee & Technology Team – Ellen Eastby, Chair & Team Lead**

The Communications Committee will maintain, support and expand communication mechanisms that provide the means to increase the church's visibility and program accessibility

and keep members and friends informed of happenings. To meet this goal, the Communications Committee:

- Maintains the churches email list, currently with 183 addresses of members and friends. To resolve some mailing inefficiencies, we moved to the use of Mail Chimp. Not all the names are familiar so we surmise we are reaching a wide audience of friends.
- Mary Anderson or Betsy Wells take notes during Sunday services and produce the weekly church report usually sent out Sunday or Monday following services. It includes the church bulletin that JoAnn Larson provides.
- Mailsout on or before the 1st of every month, the monthly newsletter with Mary Anderson as writer/editor and Stephanie Sanderson as proof editor. Mary works very hard to include news from our congregation, other regional congregations and sources, as well as the Unitarian Universalist Association. Most everything that happens at UCU is mentioned in the Newsletter, making it a necessary read for those who want to be in the know.
- Established roles and responsibilities for communications, drew up standards and protocols to protect information and identities. I, Ellen acts as the Website Administrator. Our website can be found at [www.ucou.org](http://www.ucou.org). We are also making use of social media to inform and extend invitations to members, friends, and people who are curious about the Unitarian Church of Underwood. Our page can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org>. We currently have 129 followers. Our posts can reach up to 225 people a week. The administrators are Ellen Eastby, Melody Shores and Bonnie Showers.
- Features photos from Norman Kolstad, our unofficial, official photographer who provides photos for newsletter, Facebook, the website, and our archives. If you have any photos you would like to share we would love to have them. You can send an electronic copy to [ucofu@ucofu.org](mailto:ucofu@ucofu.org).
- Features our history. Norman is also our Historian. He made herculean effort to load history, photos, documents, etc. on Google Docs, keeping everything stored safely for years to come. Google Docs costs about \$30/year.
- Provides on-line access to Sunday talks. Great news! We now have our Sunday morning speakers recorded and uploaded to podcasts on SoundCloud. You can access those podcasts at <https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278>. There are currently 33 tracks. That number will continue to rise as we add the Sunday speaker recording each week and possibly add recordings from speakers in the past. We began uploading podcasts in November of 2017 and have had 318 plays from our tracks.

*Committee Members: Ellen Eastby, Mary Anderson, Norm Kolstad, JoAnn Larson, Bonnie Showers, Melody Shores.*

## **Technical Team**

The Technical Team came together by adding volunteers with specialized technical skills. We worked to obtain and improve the equipment we use. Regularly scheduling technical team members for Sunday morning assures better and more consistent sound and visuals.

The Communication Committee and Technical Team collaborate on recordings of the Sunday talks and downloads for the Podcasts. The Podcasts are a long awaited, huge enhancement that makes the Sunday talks available not only to regular attendees who may have missed a Sunday but to a wide range audience of UCU friends over a large geographical area.

The Technical Team also developed ways to address overflow in both the Ellison room and basement with sound in both and improved visuals in the lower level. Microphones were added for musicians and improvements were added to make it easier for our speakers to use the technology.

A budget request was submitted to cover cords and miscellaneous items so that other changes can be made for technical supports for Sunday morning service to go more smoothly.

*Committee Members: Mary Anderson, Ellen Eastby, Norm Kolstad, Melody Shores, Bonnie Showers with Technical Team: Ellen Eastby (Lead), Amy Beckman, Tere Mann, Jacob McKnite, Melody Shores, Wally Warhol*

## **Record Keeping Committee (newly formed) – Norm Kolstad, Chair**

The newly formed Record Keeping Committee will be meeting soon to sort hardcopies, determine filing needs, what to retain in hard-copy, what goes on Google Docs, etc. Stand-by for next year's report! By then we should know what we have in those boxes and drawers, here and in your homes!

*Committee Members: Norm Kolstad, Mary Anderson, Kris Warhol with the help of JoAnn Larson.*

## **Nominations Committee – Susan Groff**

- The Nominations Committee developed procedures for inviting Board member nominees.
- After consideration of Board needs, one individual was recommended to fill the vacated term and three individuals were invited to have their names placed in nomination. Other nominations may be placed from the floor.
- The next Board President will be added as a member to the Nominations Committee.

*Committee Members: Susan Groff, Mary Anderson, Ellen Eastby, Bob Worner*

**The Goal of Program is to: Support the spiritual journeys of members by providing a broad range of opportunities for personal reflection, discussion, intellectual stimulation, artistic expression, and social interaction. Kris Warhol, Coordinator**

**Celebrants – Ellen Eastby, Lead**

*The celebrants are: Ellen Eastby, Deb Ferguson, Richard Kagan, John Minge, Katy Olson, Stephanie Sanderson, Shannon Smith, and Bob Worner.*

The celebrants were originally formed to officiate weddings, funerals, dedications and other ceremonies. This year, Bob Worner officiated one wedding and the Celebration of the Life of Mickie Edmonds. The celebrants officiated the New Member Welcoming in March and October. No other ceremonies were officiated this year.

The celebrants speak each month, usually on the first Sunday of the month. Bob speaks six times a year and the other celebrants take turns speaking the other six months.

The celebrant’s meet most months to take care of what business we might have and to study together. This year we used the book *Fluent in Faith – A Unitarian Universalist Embrace of Religious Language* by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar.

*Submitted by Ellen Eastby*

**Sunday Speakers Committee – Betsy Wells, Chair**

The Sunday Speaker Committee met most of the 2017-18 goals and objectives – *to provide high quality, stimulating, inspirational programs and speakers relevant to the UCU mission and the UU principles and sources.*

<u>Programming topics/categories</u>	<u># of services</u>
UU topics (principles, sources, history)	18
UCU community (ex. – Phelps Mill)	3
Spiritual/Religion/ Philosophy, Mystery and Wonder	5
Social Justice	7
Cultural Diversity	2
Arts (music, visual, drama, written)	7
Environment/food/farm	3
Science	0
Local issues/history	3
Health (physical, mental)	1
Empowerment Grant Recipients	0
Other	1
(cancelled – 2)	
After service discussion	1
Workshops	0
Services involving children	2
UU Ministers	3



We plan to continue to strive to provide high quality programming in the areas listed above. We do have services scheduled that address Science and the Empowerment Grant recipients. We plan to continue to use several of the 2017-18 goals.

### List of 2017-18 Speakers/Programs

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Title</b>
Apr. 2	Shannon Smith	Meditation:Traditions and Revival in the West
9	Eden Play	In the Beginning
16	<i>Easter</i> -Mark Boen	Finding Easter in a Good Friday World
23	Kris & Wally Warhol	Annual Meeting
30	Mary Anderson	Finding Home/ Volunteer Recognition
May. 7	Stefan Jonassen	Strains of Joy
14	Bob Worner	We Are the Seeds
21	Rebecca Davis	Music for a Sunday Morning
28	Bob Worner - (sub)	Investment Opportunities
June. 4	John Minge	Jim Crow - What We Have Learned
11	Roger Parks	Eager to Love
18	John Smith (musician)	Honoring Dad
25	Sandy Barnhouse +	Phelps Mill Service
Jul. 2	Chris Hyslop	Humanity and Placement: People on the Move
9	Bob Worner	At One Ment
16	Jodi Janati	Conversation Peace
23	Roger Parks	Non Dual Reality
30	Ellie Kingsbury	If I am Not Doing Anything, then Who Am I?
Aug. 6	Bob Worner	Tyranny and Daily Life
13	Dave Hage	Paging Galileo
20	Athena Kildegard	How to Begin a Poem
27	Roger Parks	The Trinity
Sept. 3	Katy Olson	What I Learned from the Mosque, Muhammed, Islam, and Koran
10	Nic Nerburn	"Prairie Dreamers" film
17	Ghazi Hassoun	My Odessey from Palestine to America
24	Stefan Jonassen	The Longer View
Oct. 1	Ellen Eastby	Grieving Losses, Celebrating Gains
8	MNIPL Julia	Climate Conversations - Connecting Head, Heart, and Will
15	Willard Yellow Bird	We Are All Related
22	Rev. Ian Evison	Small, But Mighty
29	Chris Schuelke	Interpreting Sensitive Matter in History
Nov. 5	Jay Johnson	Prospect House/Civil War
12	Bob Worner	Giving Thanks and Making Plans

19	Richard Kagan	Felonization: The Evil Fairy Tale for Immigrants
26	David Grant	The Things We Fear
Dec. 3	Katy Olson	To Err is Human, to Forgive Divine
10	Jon Solinger	Working Land
17	kids' program	St. Lucia
24	Bob Worner	Why Not a Star?
31		postponed - weather
Jan. 7	Bob Worner	Shadow and Light
14	Joan Ellison	P. R. Multicultural Program
21	Missie Hermes	KKK and Race Relations in OTC
	Karen Terry	Native Plants in Public Places: Creating Healthier Communities
28		
Feb. 4	Shannon Smith	The Heart is the Last Frontier
11	Stan Carignan	Why I Am UU: We are a Pilgrim People in a Pilgrim Church
18	Adam Martin	F5 Project (helping released felons)
25		postponed - weather
Mar. 4	Spencer McGrew	water - a Geographer's Perspective
11	Kara Beckman	Restorative Justice in St. Paul schools
18	Victoria Creek	An Update from the field-How Did I Get Here?
25	Winona LaDuke	The Seventh Fire

We plan to continue to strive to provide high quality programming in the areas listed above. We appreciate the continuing contributions by the Celebrants and Bob Worner. We look forward to the return of summer favorites such as Roger Parks and Chris Hyslop. We plan to hold an after-service discussion with Karen Terry, and hope to offer additional discussions and workshops this year. Even though we can't involve all suggested speakers, we welcome referrals.

Many thanks to committee members – *JoAnn Larson, Diane Johnson, Sandy Barnhouse, Kris Warhol, Robbyn Navatto, and Richard Kagan. Submitted by Betsy Wells, Committee Chair*

**Sunday Service Coordination Committee (previously Worship Committee) – Mary Worner, Chair**

The committee changed its name from “Worship Committee” to “Sunday Service Coordination Committee” as the new name more accurately reflects the work of the committee. The primary goal of the committee is to coordinate and support all aspects of the Sunday morning service.

We incorporate ideas and suggestions from the congregation and incorporate them as is fitting. A couple of examples are (1) adding “Singing out the Children” and adding (2) “extinguishing the chalice candle” at the end of the service.

We provide the guidelines for the service leaders and greeters as needed. Jo does the orientation and updating for the volunteers as needed.

Mary and Susan take responsibility for accompanying the hymns and arranging special music. We are welcoming Amy Beckman who will make us a three-person team.

The committee also sponsors the Christmas Eve service.

*Submitted by: Mary Worner, Chair with Committee Members: Ellen Eastby, Susan Groff, JoAnn Larson.*

### **Adult Religious Education & Mindfulness Sitting – Sandy Barnhouse, John Minge, Bob Worner, Stan Carignan**

#### **Race Relations Class led by John Minge: The first Sunday of the month**

We've been reading the book "A Good Time for the Truth--Race in Minnesota". This book consists of about 16 chapters written by the same number of authors--all of whom either live in Minnesota or have another strong Minnesota connection and all of whom are something other than Caucasian. The theme of the book--in my words! -- is that Minnesota isn't quite as nice as it thinks it is. Minnesota has its share of deep-seated racial issues and injustices.

The discussions that we've had have all been good. The number of attendees has been down a bit this year. It might be that people are getting a bit tired of the focus on racial issue. (This is the second--or perhaps the third--year that we have focused on those issues in recent years in my class).

My class has always had as its emphasis something that relates to current affairs and how our Unitarian spirituality connects with the public conduct of the United States.

As is well-known, we meet on the first Sunday of each month at 8:45 a.m. We do not meet in the summer. And we have not yet decided on our topic for next year. *John Minge*

**Ancient Religions Class led by Sandy Barnhouse:** The Second Sunday Ancient Religions class endeavors to explore the roots of the beliefs of ancient agricultural/shepherding civilizations who first began to form our evolved Western religious heritage. This past year one of our member experts (on Asian history, Richard Kagan) made us aware of an ancient Asian goddess; another friend/scholar took us to ancient India. (Tim Hunt) This year our subjects checker-boarded between these teachings of old knowledge and the class members' increasing interest in ecofeminism, a spiritual learning adjunct to the women's spirituality movement of the late 20th Century.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Adult Religious Class led by Bob Worner used the book, *Fluent in Faith – A Unitarian Universalist Embrace of Religious Language* by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar. This book is also being used by the Celebrants.** It is a study encouraging us to be ok with using familiar religious terms defining them in ways that are comfortable (or at least acceptable) to Unitarians. It has a chapter on helping children use and understand this language, and several

concluding chapters only a page or so each looking at words like sin; atonement; mercy; grace; salvation; god; prayer and blessing.

**Mindfulness/Quaker Quiet Time Sitting led by Stan Carignan:**

This past year, group mindfulness was held in the Sverdrup Suite #300. The original time was 8:30 – 9:30 a.m., but this time was deemed too early and changed to 9:15 a.m. There has typically been a 30-minute silent sitting period, followed by an unstructured discussion. Sometimes, a reading was shared. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Sitting is attended by 4-6 people. Due to the availability of a dedicated room, sitting was expanded to every Sunday, but attendance is usually only 1 or 2 people.

I participated in a UUA Mystics conference call in March 2018. There were about 10 people on the call from all over the U.S. The facilitator, recommended a book by John Greer called *"Seeing, Knowing, Being: A Guide to Sacred Awakenings."* He used it in his UU church to get a meditation group going and to help educate people about Sacred silence. I have put in a request to have the UCU buy 10 copies. I plan to use this book as a text on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday to give greater structure and learning for our group. We will use it as a guide and go through several chapters every month as a more traditional RE offering. There would be a short discussion of the chapter, and then a period of silent sitting. We will be shifting our starting time, again, to 9:00 to accommodate this new structure and discussion. I anticipate about 5 minutes of gathering time, 20 minutes of discussion, and 20 minutes of meditation. The session would end about 9:45 in time for our church service. My intention is to start this new RE lesson this fall. I currently have 7 copies of the book. Please see Stan Carignan for a copy if you would like to participate.

*Respectfully submitted by Stan Carignan*

**Children's Religious Education – Mary Anderson & Kris Warhol, Co-Leads**

One large success was the ability to move Children's Religious Education to their own space in the Sverdrup Apartment Unit #300. Plans are in process to next move the kids' space to the living room instead of the small bedroom. They also use the kitchen for their "messy" projects.

High priority of the 2018-23 Strategic Plan is to build the Children's Religious Education Program. Several factors affect the reasons that we only offer Children's RE one Sunday/month: attendance by families, insufficient volunteers, range of age of children, distance traveled, age of congregational members, etc.

Saying that, we were able to provide Children's RE one Sunday/month the past year by enlisting the help of the parents/grandparents to each lead the class for one month. For display items and lesson ideas, we used materials from the uua.org website, *Tapestry of Faith, Chalice Children.*

We were unable to sustain offering child care the other Sundays, but we hope to either increase the lesson offerings or find willing providers to help with child care on a consistent, ongoing basis. This is where we need you!!

### **U-Groups – Stan Carignan/Luke Anderson, Lead Facilitators**

U-Groups are small groups of up to twelve people who meet on a regular basis (usually once a month) to share personal experience and feelings in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Currently active are:

Group: Alexandria -- meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday at 7:00 P.M.

Place: Widseth, Smith, & Nolting Office Bldg., 610 Fillmore, Alexandria.

Facilitators: Lee Becker and Susan Sanford

Group: Battle Lake -- meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 3:00 P.M.

Place: Joanne Cress and Luke Anderson's home at 846 Lake Shore Drive., Battle Lake

Facilitators: Joanne Cress and Bob Worner

Group: Fergus Falls – meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 6:00 P.M.

Place: Diana Ziesemer's home at 934 W. Linden St., Fergus Falls.

Facilitators: Jacob McKnite and Mary Worner

Group: Perham – meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:00 P.M.

Place: Stan Carignan's home at 35452 Inlet Estates., Ottertail

Facilitator: Stan Carignan

Monthly discussion topics provide context and prompts for personal reflection and sharing.

Topics this year included:

September: Racism – UU and Me

October: Fear of the "Other"

November: Humility

December: Grace

January: Embracing Change

February: Poverty

March: Simplicity

April: Trust

Within the course of a year each U-Group does two service projects, one for the Unitarian Church of Underwood and one representing the church in the greater community. A complete inventory of 2017/18 projects is not available at this date.

Joining or starting a U-Group is an excellent way to develop and deepen friendships in a "welcoming community where celebration of life and common search for meaning bind us together." For more information contact our lead facilitators: Stan Carignan at: (218) 841-2657 or [standley.a.carignan@gmail.com](mailto:standley.a.carignan@gmail.com) or Luke Anderson at: (218) 209-7809 or [luka@arvig.net](mailto:luka@arvig.net)

Facilitators: Stan Carignan, Lee Becker, Joanne Cress, Jacob McKnite, Susan Sanford, Kris Warhol, Bob Worner, Mary Worner.

### **Community Outreach – Kris Warhol, Coordinator**

The community outreach goal is to encourage and support members, affiliates, and collaborators to engage in community services, social justice, and environment causes from local to world levels.

#### **Church year April 2017 thru March 31, 2018**

June: City wide rummage sale - proceeds of \$550.00 donated to Playground equipment, Underwood City Park.

September: Harvest Festival and Parade, Shan Bike Ride, *Adopt a Highway* clean up.

October: Hosted a meet and greet for Carol Rojas, Education and peace making from the Antimilitarist Feminist Network.

Participants in UCU's hosting of the area workshop that included several UU churches.

December: Christmas Eve services led by Ellen Eastby with collections donated to Pelican Rapids Giving Plus Learning Program.

January - March: Many members participated in Habitat for Humanity Build.

February: U Groups and other volunteers served for Someplace Safe Fundraising Tea.

March: Chili Dinner joined forces with two local churches, organized by John Minge & Perham U Group with lots of help from JoAnn Larson and all the volunteers.

Our church continues this mission to worship and serve all, regardless of ethnic origin, race, religion; and to be respectful equally without prejudice, we promote tolerance, freedom and equality for all.

#### **Empowerment Grant Committee – Ron Roller, Chair**

Ten + years ago, UCU received an inheritance of \$464,000 from the estate of Frances Ellison. Some of this was used to remodel the west part of our building. Much of the rest went into various forms of savings. The interest earned from the savings has funded the UCU Empowerment Grant program. The application process occurs annually. Over the years, \$92,000 has funded 86 grants, benefitting 45 entities.

#### **The Unitarian Church of Underwood is pleased to announce the 2018 Grant Recipients:**

A Center for the Arts (Fergus Falls)	
(Seat Plaques for Outreach Programs)	\$600
Churches United for the Homeless (Fargo, ND)	\$300
Fergus Falls Farmers Market POP Program	\$580
Friends of the Prairie Wetland Learning Center (FF)	
(Yellow Bus Program for student transportation)	\$2000
Habitat for Humanity 500 Bike Ride	\$660
Giving and Learning Program for Pelican Rapids	
(Immigrant language aides, drivers & job training)	\$2000
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light (MNIPL)	\$1000

(Environmental Education Outreach for state-wide UU Congregations)	
Nonviolent Peaceforce (St. Paul, MN)	\$1140
Shan Refugee Program (Mpls., MN) (Education/scholarships for Shan refugee children in Thailand)	\$1140
Fergus Falls YMCA Child Care Program (After school children)	<u>\$580</u>
	\$10,000.00

*Special thanks all the submitters and to the Empowerment Grant Committee: Ron Roller(chair), Steve Nagle, Betsy Wells, Cedar Walters, and Connie Stigen.*

### **Social Justice Actions – Ellen Eastby, MUUSJA Liaison**

I am the liaison to the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance of MUUSJA. I was active with the program until August when the staff that was in charge of that program left. MUUSJA is reorganizing and will once again have a liaison program. Although, I have not yet heard when it will start or how the program will be run.

A resource packet was put together in March of 2017 that listed the agencies and organizations in our area that we as individuals could donate time or money to. That packet was distributed at the area workshop.

Danny Givens, from MUUSJA, presented an afternoon long workshop on Social Justice at the area workshop. It was during that presentation that we learned that not everything we have been doing is considered social justice. Social justice is advocating for systems change. The other good things we do are considered social work. For simplicity's sake, we refer to all of that work as social justice work.

There has not been a formal/official social justice committee at the Unitarian Church of Underwood, but if there is an interest one can be organized. *Submitted by Ellen Eastby*

### **Environmental Justice Report —**

In alliance with the 7<sup>th</sup> UUA principal, Environmental Justice at UCU strives to work with gratitude and reverence for all life. According to [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org) the *Unitarian Universalist Association shall act and encourage its affiliates, member societies, and individual Unitarian Universalists to bear witness to the need for environmental justice by reducing their consumption of the earth's resources, generating as little waste as possible, recycling, and making a commitment as producers, investors, and consumers to living in an ecologically balanced and responsible manner.*

On October 21, 2017 during the workshop at UCU, Janell Miersch and Northwoods Fellowship member, Melissa Birch presented climate change as a social justice issue which included the drivers of climate change and solutions.

Janell, liaison for Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) coordinated speaker, Julia Nerbonne, Executive Director of MNIPL, for the October 8, 2018 service. She also submitted a UCU Empowerment Grant for MNIPL to fund their ongoing work. MNIPL email notifications and newsletters are sent to Mary Anderson and Janell. Relevant news is shared in UCU monthly newsletters.

Future plans: Encourage members to provide more plant-based, organic, locally produced, and fair-trade foods at congregational events; support the development of democratic and ecologically responsible community organizations, labor unions, and business cooperatives; connect with MNIPL for future speakers; and coordinate with the Space Planning Task Force for a landscaping initiative for UCU properties.

*Respectfully submitted, Janell Miersch MNIPL liaison*

## **Facility – Kris Warhol, Coordinator**

### **Facilities Committee – Susan Groff, Chair**

Mission statement: Maintain the structural integrity while keeping with simplicity & eloquence of our historical building.

Accomplished 2017-2018

- Crash door installed (back entry)
- Extended Roof line to offset water running down the stairs, back exit.
- Installed a full-length, wider step to podium
- Repaired Lift
- Floor painted in Sanctuary
- Roof repaired with continued monitoring
- Restoring kitchen cabinets (Thank you Linda and Steve Berg).
- 

Board Approved Projects for 2018-19

- Attach railing to podium stage. Fix leak in front bathroom; touch up painted walls through-out, purchase easel, folding chairs.
- Finish off three-season porch in Unit 300.
- Annually clean windows and carpet.

*Committee Members: Darryl Booker, Susan Groff, Katy Olson, Kris Warhol.*

## **Safety Committee – Norm Kolstad, Chair**

The Safety Committee (*Norman Kolstad, David Sanderson, Kris Warhol, Wally Warhol, Susan Adams, and Tina Stone*) is tasked with "creating a safe-haven for the Unitarian Church of Underwood's members, employees, and visitors."

Last year we labeled toxic products in the kitchen area, put up a "no guns" sign, endorsed the dais step extension, and reduced the water temperature in the back lavatory.



We also are concerned with keeping safe our building, contents, and church records. To that end, we acquired a fire-resistant filing cabinet to protect and organize our records. The newly formed Record Keeping Committee will continue this initiative.

Our plans for next year include more training in the use of the AED and in conflict de-escalation. Smoke detector batteries in Sverdrup Suites will be replaced. We also expect to provide input to the Space Planning Task Force.

UU MidAmerica Region recently sent out information on church safety plans. Norm sent Lisa Presley, Consultant, a copy of the UCU Safety Plan and Lisa returned very positive comments regarding the contents of our plan.

*Submitted by Norm Kolstad, Chair*

#### **Sverdrup Suites Management – David Wass, Property Manager**

- Property management responsibilities assumed June 1 by volunteers: *David Wass, Susan Groff and Mary Anderson (Board President)*.
- Lawnmowing and grounds upkeep assumed by apartment occupant, Scott Schei (Unit 200) with \$50/month reduction in rent for payment.
- All four units were occupied by tenants with rent fully paid on-time each month until October 1, when #300 was vacated by tenant.
- Assumed occupancy of #300 using it for Children’s Religious Education, Mindfulness Sitting, other meetings, storage.
- Rental income sufficient to defray other expenses or need to use other deposits or savings.
- Based on needs and efficiencies, may do some modifications to Unit #300 space.
- When #400 is vacated, we will assume occupancy of that unit and either rent out #300 or use for other church needs.

*Property Management Team: Mary Anderson, Susan Groff, David Wass*

#### **Space Planning Task Force – Mary Anderson, Chair**

- Began work under Board charge to the Space Planning Task Force to identify the church’s current and future space needs and brainstormed some ideas to meet those needs.
- Submitted concepts for the Space Plan for the 2018-23 Strategic Plan.
- At future meetings, will refine ideas, consider options, costs, implementation challenges, invite member input, consult experts, proceed with development of a plan.
- Present a “Space Plan” to the Board by February 2019 and to the membership at the 2019 Annual meeting.

*Members: Mary Anderson, Sandy Barnhouse, Darryl Booker, Susan Groff, Katy Olson, Norm Kolstad, Mary Worner.*

