



## Unitarian Church of Underwood April 2014 Newsletter

*The Unitarian Church of Underwood is a welcoming community of diverse people where our celebration of life and common search for meaning bind us together.*

### Coming Up in April

#### **Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30 a.m.**

**April 6 - Athena Kildegaard, "Ruth Stone: A Poet of Complex Simplicity"**

**April 13 – Stephanie Sanderson, "The Power of the Heart"**

**April 20 – Bob Worner – UU Principle & Celebration of Spring**

**April 27 - 9:15 – 10:15 a.m. Brunch Back Pack Fundraiser by Fergus Falls Afternoon U Group – see U Group information below**

**10:30 Abbreviated Service**

**11:15 Annual Meeting**

**Note: Prior to beginning of each Sunday Service, at 10:20 a.m., JoAnn Larson will issue a "Call to Gather" to alert folks to assemble in the sanctuary so that the service can start promptly.**

#### **Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15 a.m.**

**April 6 – 9:15 – 10:15 a.m. Adult Religious Education**

**April 13 – 10:30 – 11:30 Kids' Religious Education**

**April 20 - 9:15-10:15 a.m. Spiritual Writing**

#### **Other Meetings:**

**April 9 - 12 Noon Facilities Committee**

**5:30 p.m. 125 Year Celebration Planning Team**

**April 16 - 5:30 p.m. Speakers' Committee Meeting**

**April 23 - 6:30 p.m. Short Board Meeting**

**April 27 - 11.15 a.m. Annual Meeting – see above**

**Note: AA Meets every Monday evening @ 7 p.m. at UCU**

### More about April Sunday Speakers

**April 6 - Athena Kildegaard, "Ruth Stone: A Poet of Complex Simplicity."** Ruth Stone died in 2011. First editions of her early books go for several hundred dollars. You haven't heard of her? Well, you're not alone. Kildegaard will introduce Ruth Stone through her life and her poetry.

Athena is the author of three books of poetry, one of which was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award. She lives in Morris, MN, where she teaches at UMM. She's also a board member of the Lake Region Writers Network, the president of the Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance, and the senior editor of the *Lake Region Review*.

**April 13 – Stephanie Sanderson, "The Power of the Heart."** Stephanie will address the Seventh Principle, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part," and the first Source, "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life." Science continues to reveal the intelligence of the heart, and the impact of "the little brain in heart", those things that poets and songwriters have long known. We will explore how to be a peaceful, loving presence in our little corner of the world.

**April 20 – Bob Worner** will speak on one of the UU Principles and the Celebration of Spring.

#### **April 27 - Fundraiser Brunch & Annual Meeting**

March 22, 2014 – I saw a robin today. I know that there are robins that winter here, but I personally hadn't seen one since last fall. I still consider a robin as the first sign of spring. Having seen this robin today, I am at last feeling optimistic that winter will end and warm weather is on the way.

At the Unitarian Church of Underwood we have a sign of spring of our own. It is the annual meeting. This year the annual meeting is being held on Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. We will start the day off with brunch at about 9:30 a.m. The brunch is being provided by the Fergus Falls U Group. This will include a fundraiser for the Feeding Backpack Program, so a free will offering will be accepted. At 10:30 our Sunday Service will begin in the sanctuary. This will be an abbreviated service and there will not be a featured speaker. At about 11:15 we will head back downstairs for our annual meeting.

I'm sure there are those of us who groan at the thought of sitting through an annual meeting, especially if we have a gorgeous spring day. I think though, that the annual meeting is an important event in our church year. It gives all of our members and friends an opportunity to catch up on what has been done over the last fiscal year and learn about what is coming up in the current year. And, as always, the annual meeting will give you the chance to voice your questions, concerns, and feedback. Hearing what you think will help guide the board of directors as they make decisions concerning all aspects of the church in the coming year.

To recap, the UCU annual meeting is being held Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. A brunch will be served beginning at 9:30, an abbreviated service will be held at 10:30 and the annual meeting will start at about 11:15. I hope to see you all there!

UCU Board of Directors President  
Ellen Eastby

### Newsletter Submissions

Please submit your ideas and articles for the Newsletter to: [medmonds@arvig.net](mailto:medmonds@arvig.net) and/or [maryanderson8380@msn.com](mailto:maryanderson8380@msn.com). Assistance is provided by Ellen Eastby and Cedar Walters.

**Feedback is appreciated!!** If you have a favorite source of inspiration, please email it to Mary Anderson or Mickie Edmonds so we can include that information in a later Newsletter. Notice: We have incorporated the new UU logo in the design of our Newsletter.

### The Month That Was

**March 2 – Tammi Kromenaker**, Director of the Red River Women’s Clinic in Fargo, ND, spoke on overcoming the stigma and silence surrounding a woman’s decision to have an abortion. Reproductive rights are human rights giving women the decision when, how and whether to have children. Her decision is an act of good conscience determining her fate and valuing the fetus and what she and a child might experience as a quality of life. Tammi presented data that dispels many of the misperceptions about who has abortions: 23% of women are age 30 or over, 50% already have one child; of teens, 85% have their parent involved in the process, 97% of women having abortions are first timers. The issues really surround a women’s place in society and trust in women making decisions of conscience. By educating and informing, it helps to acknowledge that each woman can choose a path that is best for them and thereby, reduce the stigma attached to the decision of abortion.

**March 9 – Steve Nagle, “The War on Poverty, the Local Front 1965 to Present.”** Steve gave the history of the Community Action Program (CAP) created by Lyndon Johnson in 1964 in his War against Poverty enactments. The CAP programs were to be run by, for and evaluated by the poor. Low income individuals were to comprise 51% of each board. As a young boy, Steven actually met Sargent Shriver (he thought some “army” guy) with his head bandaged from an “obi” – older brother injury. Steve named famous people all involved in the beginnings of the programs – Hubert Humphrey, Don Frazer, Orville Freeman, Walter Heller, Gene McCarthy, Walter Mondale. Roy Isaacson, a dairy farmer out of New York Mills was designated head of the Otter Tail-Wadena CAP that started as active organizing and not so much a service program.

Some aspects included: family planning, youth centers, business ventures such as Rural Resource Cooperative, senior citizen centers, food shelves, youth development, and an upholstery shop, adult driver’s education (many farm wives), weatherization program, Head Start, food programs including food stamps and the school lunch program, Habitat for Humanity where the use of inmates to build houses had a side-effect of radically changing for the better the former inmate. Community service programs changed over each administration. Now “poverty” seldom mentioned but rather the emphasis is on the middle class. The Otter Tail/Wadena program has basically now shut down with services moved to Detroit Lakes.

Steve noted changes where elderly now seem to be better off and the poor are primarily women and children. Small farmers now few, farms bigger and farmers old. Truck drivers not served before but now meet low income standards. Only ½ of those eligible apply to receive energy assistance available. Program acts in partnerships with other agencies. “Hate” radio acts as if “poverty” is a bad word.

**March 16 – Katy Olson and Ellen Eastby**, two of our Celebrants, led the service. Katy spoke in welcoming of new members and what UCU means to her. She has been coming here for thirty-one years; Cedar (her daughter) is thirty-two and she was a babe in arms. “This church has been the ground I stand on, and enriched my life. I feel I have a home. What attracts me to the Unitarian Church is the process of remembering, to be mindful, and aware of the role we play in the body of the church, the impact we could have on the world. We are brave curious thinkers and doers who practice our faith. We have a firm set of principles, are self-motivated individuals in a house without walls. We have a better path to a better world. The Seven principles include worth and dignity of every person: justice, acceptance, a search, conscience, goal of world peace and justice for all.”

Katy reminded us that Stefan Johansson, our January speaker, thought that UCU’s underlying characteristics are warmth and generosity. Ellen led the New Member Welcoming Ceremony. New members welcomed were Anne Andersen and her son Luke, Deb Walwork and Jenna Walla. Not present was new member, Tere Mann.

Betsy Wells brought her class of six young ones to finger play the story of Genesis. Sequoia Larson, Esme and Greta Larsen and Heather Czeck’s kids - Sterling and Jewel, and friend Mary.

Special music was provided by the Explosive Rockats – Alvin Olson, Alan Thompson and Justin Retzlaff. They had us rocking! And a wonderful pancake breakfast with trimmings was served by the Battle Lake U Group.

**March 23 – Eric and Laurel Lein – “Is This a Tour or a Pilgrimage?”** The Leins, members of the Unity Universalist Church in St. Paul, long-time friends of John and Janell Miersch and now joint in-laws with the marriage between their daughter and Miersch’s son, spoke about the 1<sup>st</sup> of their 5 trips to Transylvania, now part of Romania. Transylvania is the home of Universalists. The St. Paul UU church is the sister church to the village of Homorodszentpeter in Romania (known also as Petreni,) with a population of 150 people.

Transylvania is a gorgeous countryside with scattered villages. [Their slides showed quaint, old world scenes.] In one place the outhouse was in the barn past the rabbits and the horses. The huge combine inhales acres of the crop and spews out the grain. “I helped fill bags as it was coming out of the spout.” Everyone’s cows joined on the trip to pasture and returning home in the evening, each cow knew which gate was theirs.

Eric began by telling that he was a fix-it man, so when the four sided village clock did not run, he climbed up to try to work on it. A bird’s nest above, collapsed on his head, but he got the

clock to run. From Laurel - an appealing lady had a National Geographic face. "I said God Bless You in her language and she said the same." Later she had a present she had made in two days. It was in a small plastic envelope with the lace doily she had made with her old fingers. A return trip in 2001, Eric and the clock spent time together. That summer, he spent only two days on the clock. In 2006, the clock had stopped again. These visits showed the Leins that people are not as easily fixed as machines but communicate with their wounds and their soul and they've become village neighbors with these relationship transformations. These person to person relations built of inner strength are "magical." The Edict of Torda, an early attempt for religious freedom in the 1500's had a huge impact and may have paved the way for the Universalist Church's beginnings there.

### OPENING WORDS

*"The object of pilgrimage is not rest and recreation - to get away from it all. To set out on a pilgrimage is to throw down a challenge to everyday life. Nothing matters now but this adventure. Travelers jostle each other to board the train where they crowd together for a journey that may last several days. After that there is a stony road to climb on foot - a rough, wild path in a landscape where everything is new. The naked glitter of the sacred mountain stirs the imagination; the adventure of self-conquest has begun. Specifics may differ, but the substance is always the same."* - -- Huston Smith, philosopher & professor of religious studies.

### CLOSING WORDS

-- *"Some journeys outward are also journeys inward, taking us both far away and towards the very heart of things. Some journeys forward are also journeys backward, plunging us simultaneously into uncertain futures and even deeper pasts. Some journeys have endings embedded in their beginnings and new beginnings in their endings. All such journeys defy normalcy. The ways they curve through time and space and spirit are neither linear nor plain. They bear tremendous power for transformation. These are journeys to the site of holy ground, the court of the Lord, and therefore called **pilgrimage**."* -- Rev. Gretchen Thompson – From a sermon entitled, "Pilgrimage."

**March 30 - History Portrayal of Notable Women.** Sandy Barnhouse organized the presentation of seven notable women portrayals. Sandy introduced woman of history through depictions of various goddesses that displayed the characteristics of those woman: Mary Anderson as Dolley Madison, the 1<sup>st</sup> of the First Ladies, Mickie Edmonds as Sojourne Truth, An African American abolitionist and women's right activist - "Ain't I a Woman?" Cedar Walters as Maria Goeppert-Mayer, theoretical physicist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1963 for the nuclear shell model for the atomic nucleus, Janell Miersch for Rachel Carson, naturalist and writer, who warned the world of the dire environmental impact of fertilizers and pesticides in her influential work Silent Spring, Tere Mann as Meridel LeSueur, social political activist and writer, and Ellen Eastby as Kuan Yin, the Chinese goddess of mercy, compassion, protector of women and children. Lee Hamress assisted in the program.

## Introducing New Members & Featuring Deb Wallwork



Anne & Luke Anderson, Deb Wallwork, Jen Walla, New Member not pictured, Tere Mann  
Photo courtesy of Susan Groff

We held our semi-annual New Member Welcoming Ceremony on March 16 and officially welcomed new members: Anne and Luke Anderson, Jen Walla and Deb Wallwork. Anne, Luke, and Jen along with Tere Mann were featured in the December Newsletter. Let us tell you more about Deb Wallwork.

Deb was raised in Fargo. She then lived in the Twin Cities for 10 years. Last fall, she moved to Fergus Falls finding housing at the Kaddatz Gallery Artist Lofts. She also has a cabin on Star Lake. She's familiar with this area because she is friends and has played the fiddle with Katy Olson, and Doug and Betsy Wells. Deb has joined them to play for us at UCU several times already.

Deb's other artistic talents include film making. She worked for Prairie Public TV for 20 years. She has done films about the North Dakota Native American tribes featuring their heritage and cultures. She's also done local food documentaries working with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Stand for Food. **Her film "Dirty Work" will be shown on TPT, May 1 at 8 p.m.** She is now working on a film about the monarch butterfly decline. We are happy to welcome Deb Wallwork and look forward to her sharing more of her talents!!

If interested in becoming a new member, please see JoAnn Larson. The next New Member Welcoming Ceremony will be October 19, 2014.

### **Annual Chili Dinner**

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Ron Roller, long-time chili chef and chili dinner coordinator, in his final year nearly reached his all time high with 175 attending the Chili Dinner and bringing in \$1750, \$1000 of which will go to the Underwood Senior Nutrition Program. The chili was delicious, the crew working stupendous, the music (Andrews Persson and Mikkel Thompson ) toe-tapping, the crowd hungry and enthused. It was great to see so many coming from the Underwood and neighboring areas gather together for this evening of good eating and good company. Many, many thanks to Ron for his 10 years of concocting chili and for organizing this event and many, many thanks to all the others who helped to make this a worthy and fun-filled event.

### **Stewardship**

The new fiscal year runs April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015 and thus begins a new budget year. Last fiscal year our budget was \$32,000 needing about \$2600/month in giving. Last year we almost met that goal. For this year, we ask you to carefully consider the needs of our church and your ability to give. "Estimate of Giving" cards were mailed out to those who didn't pick them up at church. They were due March 30<sup>th</sup> to be returned to the Unitarian Church of Underwood, Box 58, Underwood, MN 56586 or placed in the collection plate. But they will still be accepted!! The 2014-2015 budget will be included at the April 27 Annual Meeting. We are grateful and appreciative of your past generosity and continued commitment. Through your giving we are able to continue our commitments to the church and our community.

**Meatball Dinner & Silent Auction to  
Benefit the Otter Tail County Humane Society  
at the VFW in Fergus Falls  
Saturday, April 12, 4:30—7:30 p.m.  
Then dance the night away to  
Giving Back Jack**

Some UCU members have volunteered to help serve and more help is needed so if interested, contact Susan Groff at [susan.groff@gmail.com](mailto:susan.groff@gmail.com) or 218/205-0439 or Stephanie Sanderson at [highlife@prtcl.com](mailto:highlife@prtcl.com) or at 218/736-2616.

### **Save Africa's Elephants**

"I'd like to invite any and all UU'ers to join me for a three lap walk around Lake Alice on Saturday, April 26th starting at 12 noon. It's a fundraiser sponsored by the Wildlife Conservation Society. Details and registration can be seen on this web site. It's to raise money in an effort to stop the horrible slaughter of African Elephants for their tusks. If urgent steps aren't taken we could lose these magnificent animals forever.

Thanks,

Chuck Adelsman"

For more information visit the web address:

[http://e.wcs.org/site/TR?px=2955113&pg=personal&fr\\_id=1130&et=EjodvVzvRnppZ261TkMVzQ&s\\_tafid=5762](http://e.wcs.org/site/TR?px=2955113&pg=personal&fr_id=1130&et=EjodvVzvRnppZ261TkMVzQ&s_tafid=5762)

## Lost!!

Maybe two potlucks ago, Bev Backstrom lost her cut class, 8" round, flat-bottomed, straight sided bowl. If you maybe thought it was yours by mistake and took it home, Bev would appreciate its return.

## MidAmerica Regional Assembly

You are ALL invited to attend the MidAmerica Regional Assembly 2014--the first Regional Assembly to be held in four locations, the second weekend in April! Please visit the MidAmerica website and check out the different programs in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Bloomington, Indiana; Topeka, Kansas, and Wausau, Wisconsin!

Each location will have opportunities to worship and sing together; meet UUs from across the region; learn from each other; and be inspired. Visit [midamericauua.org](http://midamericauua.org) to register.

## Camp Unistar

Apply to attend Camp Unistar until May 24. Email: Registrar or Director@CampUniStar.org.

"Camp Unistar is a place of natural beauty and serenity nestled on Star Island, surrounded by the clear waters of Cass Lake, Here amidst the pine forests of northern Minnesota, Unitarian Universalists and like-minded friends gather to relax and regenerate. You will enjoy an unforgettable experience, once you venture forth. Weekly stays include a variety of programs from the end of May to the end of August.

## Join the UUA Move

*Letter from Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President:*

"Dear friends,

On Friday, February 21, 2014, we celebrated the history of our Boston home at 25 Beacon St. in a special Beacon Benediction. One hundred friends from across the country attended in person, and 300 additional people joined us online. The service was funny, poignant, and reflective, and looked forward to our future while honoring our past. ...

Pictures and a video of the Beacon Benediction are available on our blog for anyone who wasn't able to join our celebration on the 21st.

We're looking forward to gathering again at the Farnsworth Dedication on October 4, 2014, which will mark our new space as a spiritual home and important location in UU history. As we continue to embrace the dawning future, I hope you will consider making a gift to the Join the Move Fund or naming an item in our new building!

In faith,

The Rev. Peter Morales

UUA President"

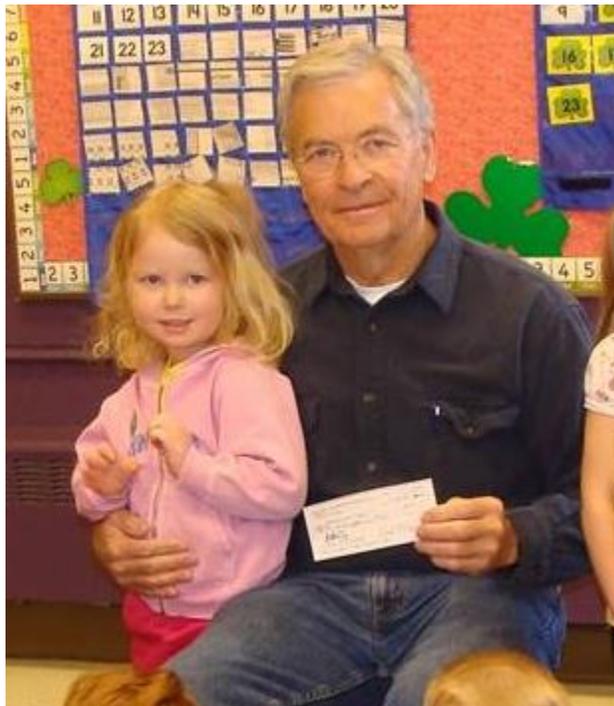
To get more information on UUA, subscribe to [interconnections@uua.org](mailto:interconnections@uua.org) or check the UUA website at [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org).

### 2014-2015 Endowment Grant Awards

Since 2007 when the Empowerment Grant Program began, the Unitarian Church of Underwood has given over \$48,000 to a wide variety of charitable organizations. Grant awards for 2014-2015 have been approved by the Board to the following:

Kinship Program of Fergus Falls.....	\$1315
(Lunch Buddies Reading Program)	
Sticks and Strings Naturalist program.....	555
(Prairie Wetlands Kids Archery program)	
Underwood School 3 and 4 Year-old program.....	1315
Shan Refugees Migrant School.....	1315
(Bernice Johnson's school in Thailand- scholarships & Funding for migrant children education).	
Habitat for Humanity.....	500
(Annual Fund-raising dinner)	
Feeding Backpack Program.....	500
(Food/Nutrition program for children-provides food items for weekends for at risk kids)	
Total.....	\$5500

Thanks to Ron Roller, Stephanie Sanderson, Deb Ferguson, Connie Stigen and Steve Nagle for reviewing the grant applications and for their recommendations. For complete information on the Empowerment Grant Program, see the January Newsletter.



Dave Wass delivering check to Underwood 3-4 year old program with granddaughter, Greta Larsen, one of the classmates.

## **Gifts They Bring Speakers Committee**

Each Sunday, we are offered a special guest speaker, special program, or feature from one among us: Bob Worner, one of the Celebrants or someone within the congregation with special expertise. The Speakers' Committee makes this all happen. The committee is led by Betsy Wells with members: Bob Worner, Sandy Barnhouse, Kay Honeman, Administrative Consultant, JoAnn Larson and new to the committee, Cedar Walters who replaces Ron Roller.

Ideas for speakers or special guests sometimes come from members but most often come through the networking and contact work of the committee members themselves. The interesting variety of our speakers is probably the most mentioned item in our satisfaction surveys and from the calls made to members by board members last fall – that and our music!

We learn so much through our speakers – about our environment, social justice issues, spiritual awakenings and renewal, the UU principles that bind us together, our connection to the web of our universe, our dependence and interdependence on each other.

For their efforts at bringing us the quality and variety of speakers, we thank the Speakers Committee for the work they do. We appreciate all of you and we are grateful for your service. We look forward to the next coming attractions!!

***“May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations,  
And inspired to bring our gifts of love  
and service to the altar of humanity.  
May we know once again that we are not isolated beings  
But connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,  
to this community and to each other.”  
(#434 Anonymous from Singing the Living Tradition)***

## Springtime on the Platte.....What Joy



Photo by Michael Forsberg

Dance the spirit of joy for there is never a time when life should not be celebrated.

Give thanks.

Queen Violet 'Bhana SatGuruBhakti

### 125 Anniversary Spring Celebrations

#### Save the Dates

**May 18, 2014 – Norwegian treats after service** – in recognition of UCU's Norwegian history, please plan to bring your favorite Norwegian or other Scandinavian food to share at after service coffee hour. That could be cookies, lefsa, knickabrod, pickled herring, pickled beets, cheese - whatever. Please see Diane Johnson to coordinate items and sign up on the treat sheet.

#### **May 25, 2014 Recognition of Long Term Members**

**Then on May 25, 2014 we plan at Sunday Service to honor and recognize those members still among us who became members LAST CENTURY!!** If not for their dedication and perseverance, the Unitarian Church of Underwood would likely not be celebrating our 125<sup>th</sup> year!! If you became a member from 1970-1999, please contact [maryanderson8380@msn.com](mailto:maryanderson8380@msn.com) or call 218/346-6638 or Kris Warhol @ [wwwmk@prtcl.com](http://wwwmk@prtcl.com) or call 218/826-7540.

More details will be provided in the May Newsletter and church announcements.

## **Honoring Our Heritage**

**Harold**

(11/2/1915 – 7/9/2006)

**and**

**Blanche Gray**

(12/18/1909 – 3/24/2011)

“I had the unique opportunity to meet and get to know Harold and Blanche Gray as a teenager who was a patient on the “Teen Ward” at the Fergus State Hospital. From April 1962 through December 1963, I was a patient in an experimental “Teen Ward” set up by the hospital to create an effective treatment program for adolescents. It was the first of its kind at the state hospital....and may have been the first of its kind in the state.

As to the treatment program the hospital wanted to set up a program especially for adolescents. Various staff members including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, ward aids, and teachers studied and discussed the latest research on adolescent psychology and the programs that had been set up for them in other institutions. Harold Gray was one of those who worked on these plans. I don't know if Blanche Street did.

Harold Gray was the social worker for the teens on that ward. Blanche Street (Gray...she and Harold later married) was the head nurse. The psychiatrist was Ralph Hirschowitz MD, the psychologist was John Vancini, MA.

Harold Gray was a rather small, quiet, soft voiced, thoughtful, dignified man. He had a broad range of intellectual interests. He was patient, kind, respectful and considerate. He looked out for the interests of his clients...both when they came in and when it was time for them to leave. Harold Gray could not be fooled or taken advantage of. And believe me being part of the teenage population I know that a lot of the boys and later girls would try all kinds of shenanigans to get their way with the staff. The kids liked and respected him.

Blanche Street was the Head Nurse. She was in charge of the ward during the day and was usually there from eight to five. Like Harold Gray she was knowledgeable, patient, respectful and considerate. She was for all practical purposes the housemother and head house keeper. She kept order, dispensed medicines and handled emergencies. She was good at discipline. Like Harold she could not be fooled or taken advantage of. Like Harold, the kids liked and respected her.

When you consider the population Harold and Blanche Gray successfully worked with they were very remarkable people.

In December 1962 I was transferred over to the Receiving Hospital Ward which by then was an open ward for adults as well as new admissions. Harold continued as my social worker. He worked hard for me and arranged for me to go on to college at the University of Minnesota-

Duluth (I later transferred to Moorhead State) on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (they paid for college education in those days). I completed it and went on to teach and later became a speech language therapist working in Minnesota, North Dakota and rural Alaska.

Years later, in 1988, I met Harold and Blanche Gray at the Underwood Minnesota Unitarian Church. We kept in touch from then on. I was living and working as a speech language pathologist in North Dakota then. My mother was living south of Detroit Lakes and I had in the meantime met and become friends with Marguerite and Budd Andrews. At any rate from that point on I made it a point to stop and visit with Harold and Blanche Gray when I was in the area both at their Vernon Street home and at the assisted living home in Fergus Falls until they had both passed away.

One of the things I remember about them when I visited them was that even though they were in their late eighties they were still actively working as volunteers helping children with their reading at the local schools.

Blanche continued to drive until she was into her nineties. She was careful though perhaps a bit slow and she was doing fine.”

Victor E Machart

**Note:** *Victor kept a journal while at the state hospital that he transcribed and typed up a couple years ago. The Otter Tail County Historical Society has a copy of it. Parts of it were used for the historical exhibit there on the State Hospital. Parts of it are also included in their book “The State Welcomes You: Minnesota’s Third State Hospital, Fergus Falls published by the Otter Tail County Historical Society. Victor says he gets the UCU Newsletter!*

Mary Worner had at hand a 2-page letter written by Harold Gray dated 7/25/05 where he describes his history. Harold’s adoptive paternal grandfather, a Canadian, bought land by Thorne, ND and bought for his sons sections of land in counties “bordering Canada.” Harold’s mother died during the flu epidemic of 1918. He was adopted by John and Mathilda (Simpson) Gray in 1919. He says that “stuttering has been a problem all my life.” He did not go to college at first because of his stuttering. In 1946 he took a 6 week speech class at the University of Minnesota and his “speech improved considerably.” A test taken there indicated he “had a high aptitude for succeeding in college.” In 1953 he graduated from the U of M with a major in sociology and a minor in history and psychology. He received his master’s degree in social work from the University of Illinois in 1958. He further states in his letter, “We attended the Unitarian Church since the early fifties.”

Dave Wass recalls that he had a special relationship with Harold in that they were both interested in agriculture. As Dave tells it: Harold was passionate about farming and owned a farm of 1000 acres near Rouseau where prior to his marriage, he spent most week-ends. In the Grays’ later years, Dave had to attend a meeting in Warroad so he offered to Harold and Blanche a ride with him. Along the way, they stopped at a restaurant that served drinks. Harold ordered one and when he sipped, he beamed and said, “Oh, they did put some in.”

Dave met their renter on this trip. Later the renter bought the farm from Harold on a contract for deed. When the umbrella payment came due, the renter asked Harold to lower the price. Go back to Victor's assessment of Harold, very kind and gentle but no push-over - Harold said "No."

Blanche (Botts) Gray was born December. 18, 1909, in Frazee, the daughter of Grova and Grace (Weymouth) Botts. She graduated from Frazee High School in 1928, and attended Nurses Training at Wright Memorial Hospital in Fergus Falls and at the University of Minnesota.

Blanche met her first husband, Harold R. Street at the University of MN. They were married on Aug. 23, 1933, in Milbank, S.D. Over the years Blanche worked as an obstetrics nurse and a private duty nurse in Fergus Falls, later returning to Minneapolis to work with her husband in research at the University of Minnesota. She received recognition from the State of Minnesota for her invention of a drug cart.

Her first husband was in the U.S. Army, stationed at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. The family lived there until 1944, when Harold was sent overseas and Blanche returned to Fergus Falls.

Per Marguerite Andrews: "One hard story - Blanche was alone in the house when the messenger came with the news that her husband, Harold Street, had been killed - in the military in England during World War II. She thought how less stressful it would have been had someone been with her. She had two young children. "

From 1952 until her retirement in 1975, Blanche worked at the Fergus Falls Treatment Center where she was a charge nurse and for a time worked in the adolescent unit that Victor describes. That's where she met Harold Gray. On July 16, 1971, she married Harold Gray and they made their home in Fergus Falls.

Blanche was known as an accomplished knitter, and passed on those skills by teaching students to knit. She enjoyed doing volunteer work, was involved with the Camp Fire Girls program, and was an avid reader, belonging to book clubs and assisting with the reading program at Adams Elementary School.

Per Mary Worner who visited Blanche regularly, "until shortly before her death, Blanche knit beautifully. She made lovely sweaters for herself and the new babies in the family. And even in the nursing home, every day, she was a classy dresser."

And from Marguerite Andrews: "Even when they were in advanced years – the Grays led the Junior Great Books discussions with groups of young people in FF. They were both great readers. Victor took me along on many visits with Harold and Blanche, then with Blanche after she was alone.

Last year's exhibit at the OTCHS museum in FF - and now beautifully done is book form with colored pictures - tells Victor's story and how important to him were Harold and Blanche. Very few names are listed, but Harold and Blanche are.

Harold was an elegant man and Blanche, a great lady. They regularly attended Underwood Unitarian Church."

Blanche Agnes Gray, 101, of Fergus Falls, died peacefully in her sleep Thursday, March 24, 2011, at Pioneer Care Center in Fergus Falls.

Upon their deaths, the Unitarian Church of Underwood received from Harold and Blanche Gray the residuals of their estate, a gift of \$36,833.80. We continue to be grateful to their memories and to their gift.

### **More on Frances Ellison (From Marguerite Andrew's "church drawer")**

*It was Frances' large bequest that made possible for one thing, the remodeling of UCU in 2004. For a complete feature on Frances, see the March Newsletter.*

Dated 8.03.2004 - from **Margaret Nelson, Viola's daughter and Frances Ellison's niece**

"... I am excited to think of the possibilities Frances' gift gives to the Unitarians in Underwood for a liberal voice (much needed) in that area. I am pleased she chose your congregation as 'trustees' for this gift."

**Viola Nelson:** letter: 8.03.2004

"...I had gone with Frances at times when she was an active member before her health failed. She always LET ME KNOW WHEN BILL HOLM WOULD BE THERE."

Frances' sister, **Viola**, wrote in 2.13.2005:

"... It was a pleasure to see the changes made, also to see the sanctuary much the same as when I occasionally visited with Frances ....."

..

2.13.2005

" the Unitarian Membership is certainly an enthusiastic, dedicated group. Frances would be very happy with their use of the money."

2. 09, 2005 -from **Margaret** (I am sure this goes for the whole church, not just us).

"Dear Marguerite and Budd,

Thank you so much for your wonderful hospitality and the friendly luncheon with such good company. My mother and I had a wonderful day.

We were so pleased to see the remodeling which has been so tastefully done.

Again, it was a treat to see the vibrant congregation at the Underwood Unitarian Church. We feel Frances made a very wise decision.

Fondly, (interesting signature) **Margaret"**

Per Marguerite: *"Viola died in January of 2013, and when Margaret told me that last fall, she said she was herself receiving hospice care.*

*They were right in saying that the remodeling was tastefully done.*

*When I asked David Wass, also on that building committee, How come it turned out so well? He said, "Mary Worner; she had done it before and she enjoyed doing it."*

### **In Memory of Melva Johnson**

Melva Johnson died at her home in Wheaton, MN on March 13, 2014 ending her battle with cancer. Melva was a cherished member of Unitarian Church of Underwood. She had been unable to attend church after she moved back to Wheaton to be closer to her family, but UCU was still included in her funeral service. Susan Groff and Anders Persson played music, including a favorite hymn of Melva's, "Morning Has Broken" and Ellen Eastby, celebrant, officiated the service. Melva enjoyed the Sunday morning tradition of the chalice lighting and the sharing of joys and concerns, so a candle was lit as a way of bringing that tradition to her service.

Melva was loved and will be remembered by many people. She will especially be remembered as a writer. Instrumental in forming a writers group in the Fergus Falls area, she has become somewhat of a legend. Those writers who knew her respected her writing and even those who had never had the good fortune of meeting Melva, know her name. She was published in local and regional publications and was especially honored by being published in the Talking Stick.

Melva was active in politics and spent many hours volunteering for the Otter Tail County DFL. She was known to her family and friends as a woman with strong opinions and a deeply held value for helping others. She demonstrated this through her work with victims of domestic violence, reading for the blind, supporting recovery through AA, many 'letters to the editor,' and being a foster parent for 15 years to special needs children.

Melva will be greatly missed by her friends and family.

### **Community Resources**

#### **Ruby's Pantry**

All people deserve adequate and healthy food. Yet, even in the U.S., hunger is a serious problem. According to the USDA, at least 14.5% of Americans were food insecure during 2010. According to *Feeding America*, in some counties the rate is over 30%. Over 43 million Americans are on food assistance. Why?

In response to the rise in hunger, "Facing Hunger in America" seeks to understand the programs that are in place to alleviate hunger in the U.S. We want to learn what works best, where the gaps are, and how concerned people and organizations can make an effective difference.

One program making a difference is Ruby's Pantry where you can get \$75-\$100 worth of food with a donation of \$20.00.

Ruby's Pantry is one outreach program of a 501(c)(3) evangelical Christian organization called Home and Away Ministries, Inc. Ruby's Pantry states its mission like this: "To procure and distribute corporate surplus food and goods to help fight poverty, hunger and disease in rural communities in the United States for those with low resources and in crisis through churches, food shelves and other local civic organizations."

All food distributed by Ruby's Pantry has been donated to the central warehouse in North Branch, MN. From there it goes out to rural areas and small communities, mostly in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin, where 29 local churches or church groups hold Ruby's Pantry distribution events, typically once a month.

Ruby's Pantry relies largely on good-hearted volunteers and donations. All the food is donated, all the on-site labor is done by volunteers and the CIP inmates, and local stores donate bags and lend shopping carts. Some of the donation dollars go back to Ruby's Pantry to help pay for transportation, and the remainder stays with the local sponsoring organization, which uses it for other charitable purposes.

This program requires no qualifications to participate other than the expected donation. This factor appears to foster a sense of dignity among all participants. There seems to be an eagerness to volunteer (almost all volunteers were also customers), and some volunteers were giving the food they got to a daughter or grandchild who was in tough circumstances.

**Perham, MN** - *Hosted by St. Pauls Lutheran Church*

500 6th Ave SW

4th Saturday of the Month

Doors open at 9:30 AM and distribution starts at 10:00 AM and ends approximately at 11:30 AM

**Breckenridge, MN** - *Hosted by Inspiration Church*

1130 Main Street

4th Monday of the month

Doors open at 5:30 PM and distribution starts at 6:30 PM and ends at approximately 8:00 PM

## **Cold Turkey**

I came into church this morning and there was Marguerite parceling out turkey eggs for folk to take home. And I thought about turkeys and cold turkey. Four years ago I was struggling with nicotine addiction, trying to beat it "cold turkey," meaning one simply stops smoking and shuts up about it." Phew. It ain't easy. There surely must be better ways to think about cold turkey.....well, of course there are the luscious sandwiches the day after Thanksgiving. And then there are the wild turkeys who venture onto our property in the depths of winter, only to be run off by a determined little West Highland Terrier. And then there are the turkey eggs, brought to church by Marguerite, to be taken home and transformed into deviled eggs. Now, which would you choose? *March 2014 from Mickie Edmonds.*

## Spiritual Writings Poetry Month

Inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets in 1996, National Poetry Month is now held every April, when schools, publishers, libraries, booksellers, and poets throughout the United States band together to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. Thousands of organizations participate through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events. UCU is also participating in Poetry Month with featured speakers and offerings from our writers.

*The Spiritual Writers Group provided the Sunday service March 9 and shared a series of their writings. We will feature their writings in this and coming Newsletters.*

### The Silo

Silage was chopped after first frost.  
A full-blown silo stored feed for stock.  
Cooked in a sweet-sour compost  
within walls of concrete block,  
green-cut corn turned warm as toast.

Today, the tall tube stands hollow.  
Storms have blown down the chute  
leaving door-holes in a vertical row.  
for winds to play tunes on the flute,  
while pigweeds sway in the pit below

Cattle no longer loaf in their pens  
and the barnyard is dusty and dry.  
The silo rises, useless and high.  
Tearing it down is a huge expense,  
so it's left to poke at the sky.

Kids gone, Mom and Dad passed on,  
the barn collapsed, boards decay.  
Our farmstead, once alive at dawn,  
sits silent, weathered, and gray.  
The silo looms . . . like a tombstone.

*Written by Luke Anderson*

### Saddlebag Parson

My grampa was a saddlebag parson. I like to think of him riding through the northern forests, along clear cold lakes and rushing streams. I breathe the pungent scent of pine, hear the creak of saddle leather and the soft thud of horse's hooves. But I know too soon would come, inevitably, the thunderous winds with billowing snow.

My grampa, Martin Carl August Mueller, was born in 1888 in Lewiston, Minnesota and was still in diapers when a group of Norwegian immigrants met in Johan Kolstad's home in Underwood to organize the new Free Christian Congregation. I'm not sure Grampa's family, good German Lutheran farmers, would have approved the shenanigans up here. But they shared the values of hard work, devotion to a higher good, and the strong love of education and music. Most of my Grampa's siblings were preachers or teachers, vocations dedicated to serving others. None learned to navigate the material world with any great success; ergo, I have no rich uncles.

Grampa Mueller graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Paul about the time that the Free Christian Church Women's Alliance was having bake sales to keep this church afloat. From seminary, he headed to the woods to serve a district from International Falls by horseback around 1912. Somehow, Rev. Martin Carl August Mueller met and married sweet Anna Sophie Louise Karoline Rittmueller, a girl from the Chicago suburbs, and convinced her to join him in the wilderness. But sometime in the year or two after my father was born in 1914, they headed for the more civilized regions of Elmore and Blue Earth in southwestern Minnesota. There, Grampa served several churches, while he and Anna farmed to provide food for the family, which grew to eight children. Grampa traded his saddle horse for his prized team of trotters to make his Sunday rounds.

Another young woman, Anna Kolstad, too, left loved ones and loved places to follow her husband Johan, into the wilderness. Both Anna and Johan were born in Norway and they married in 1845. Johan came from a farming family but became a minister's assistant and teacher. They immigrated to America in 1869, settling in Underwood in 1870. They were instrumental in starting several churches in this community, including our own.

There was a time when sacrifice was a holy act, a sacred thing.

I think of my father at the age of six, standing with the team under a star-filled sky in the black and cold of the pre-dawn winter night, waiting for Grampa to get into his preacher clothes. I can hear the stillness and feel the crisp tingle in my nose as the horses stomp away the cold, their whiskers heavy with frost. At last, long beyond the onset of shivering and numbness and the longing for the warmth of the kitchen stove, Grampa came to take the reins.

The preacher, the boy, the trotters, and Grandma's warm kitchen are gone now. Only the stars remain, looking down on a different world. The caravan of life moved on, loaded down with blessings of wisdom, generosity, knowledge, determination and dedication to an ideal.

What is it now for us to do?

*Written by Stephanie Sanderson 2014*

## U Groups

The Fergus Falls Afternoon U-Group will do the brunch for the Annual meeting April 27 as a means to fundraise for the Feeding Backpack program. Otter Tail County Family Services Collaborative and United Way coordinate this program for youth K-6, placing food in backpacks of hungry kids each Friday in all of our school districts! There are 320 students signed up for the 2013-2014 school year. By letting people know about the program and asking for a suggested donation, their U Group of 6, wants to leverage more for their efforts. This program provides food for kids that might not otherwise have sufficient food at home during the week-end. We ask you to give generously!!

Some U Group members will help serve at the Humane Society Fundraiser dinner on April 12 (see above). Contact Susan or Stephanie if you can volunteer to help. If you are interested in helping on any of the U Group projects, please contact Connie Stigen at [djstigen@gmail.com](mailto:djstigen@gmail.com) (218/731-1443) or Stephanie Sanderson at [highlife@prtcl.com](mailto:highlife@prtcl.com) (218/736-2616). It is just one way to serve our communities.

### April U Groups Topic: Seeking Peace

“Be Peace, don’t just talk about it.” Thich Nhat Hanh

“When you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.” Francis of Assisi

“I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality...I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

### 2013-1014

#### U Group Meets:

##### **Fergus Falls Evening Group**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the Month - 7 p.m.

Home of John & Janelle Miersch

Co-Facilitators – Diane Johnson & Carole Mitchell

##### **Fergus Falls Afternoon Group**

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the Month – 4:30 p.m.

Home of Diana Ziesemer

Co-Facilitators – Bonnie Bell & Tere Mann

##### **Battle Lake Afternoon Group**

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Month – 3:30 p.m.

Home of Ross & Mary Larson

Co-Facilitators – Bob Worner & Stephanie Sanderson

##### **Perham Afternoon Group**

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the Month – 3:30 p.m.

Home of Mary Anderson

Co-Facilitators – Mary Anderson & Mary Worner

## Unitarian Church of Underwood Board Minutes for February 19, 2014

Board members present: Ellen Eastby, Norman Kolstad, John Miersch, David Sanderson, Dave McRoberts, Mary Worner, Don Siems, Alisha Piekarski, Mary Anderson and David Wass.

Absent: none. Also present: JoAnn Larson.

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 6:31 p.m.

Dave McRoberts shared a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (Sanderson/Wass).

The minutes of the January 12, 2014 meeting were approved as printed (Siems/McRoberts).

### Reports:

Treasurer: David Wass

Program Committee: Mary Worner

Outreach Committee: Ellen Eastby

Facilities Committee: Dave McRoberts

Planned giving: David Sanderson

Membership Committee: Mary Anderson

Old Business: Betsy Wells was present to answer questions about a proposed pay schedule for speakers. UCU will certify 60 members to the UUA for 2014 (Wass/McRoberts). Other topics: Lucie Shores workshop and stewardship.

New Business: Topics included: handicap parking, board terms, annual meeting, Celebrants, and the Chili Dinner.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Kolstad