

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.

Unitarian Church of Underwood

PO Box 58, 206 North Main Street

Underwood

Phone: 218/826-6553

Website: www.ucofu.org

www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org

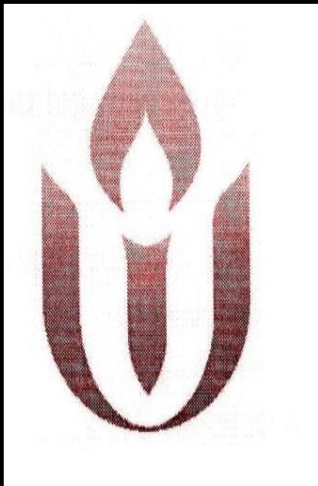
Sunday Services 10 a.m.

April 7- Rev. Stefan Jonasson -
"Radical Moderation"

April 14 – Abbrev. Service – Kris
Warhol, Brunch & Annual Meeting

April 21 – Bob Worner, "The Day the
Stone Was Rolled Away"

April 28 – Larry McDonough,
"Wellstone: A Remembrance"



Spring Resurrection

***April 2019
Newsletter***

April 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 AA 7 pm	2	3	4	5  Chili Dinner Underwood Community Center 5-7 p.m.	6
7 Rev. Stefan Jonasson - "Radical Moderation" Adult RE 8:45 Mindfulness Sitting 9:15 am Children's RE 10:00-11:15 am	8 AA 7 pm	9 Battle Lake/Underwood U Group 3 pm @ Sverdrup Suites #300	10 Alexandria U Group 7 pm @ Widseth... Office Bldg	11 Perham U Group 6:30 @ Stan Carignan's	12	13
14 Kris Warhol Abbrev, Service Annual Meeting Mindfulness Class 8:45 am Children's RE 10:00-11:15 am	15 AA 7 pm	16	17 Speakers Committee 3 p.m. #300	18 FF U Group 6:30 pm @ Diana Ziesemer's	19	20
21 EASTER Bob Worner, "The Day the Stone Was Rolled Away" Adult RE 8:45 Mindfulness Sitting 9:15 am Children's RE 10:00-11:15 am	22 AA 7 pm	23	24 Records Committee 5 pm	25	26	27
28 Larry McDonough- "Wellstone: A Remembrance" Adult RE 8:45 Mindfulness Sitting 9:15 am Children's RE 10:00-11:15 am	29 AA 7 pm	30	Sunday, April 14 – Abbreviated Service followed by brunch and Annual Meeting. Attend and exercise your rights and responsibility as a voting member of the Unitarian Church of Underwood.			

Coming in April

April 7 – Rev. Stefan Jonasson, “Radical Moderation” – The late Elliot Richardson declared, “I am a moderate – a radical moderate.” The very phrase seems like a contradiction, but is it really? Amidst the shrill pronouncements of radicals and ideologues, public discourse might benefit from some radical moderation – in religion, in politics, and in everyday life.

Stefan Jonasson is a UU minister who lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has delighted and challenged us regularly for 30 +years.

Chili leftovers after services to share while visiting with Stefan.

April 14 – Annual Meeting. Because Easter falls on the 3rd Sunday of April, the traditional date of the Annual Meeting, this year the meeting will be held on the 2nd Sunday, April 14. There will be an abbreviated service with Board President, Kris Warhol, who is also providing brunch. The Annual Meeting will immediately follow the brunch.

April 21 – Bob Worner, “The Day the Stone Was Rolled Away,” speaking about Easter, spring, and Earth Day.

April 28 - Larry McDonough, “Wellstone: A Remembrance.” Larry McDonough has been performing for over 40 years. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in music education from the University of Minnesota in 1978, performing on piano and trumpet, and in ensembles. He is a jazz pianist and vocalist, composer, arranger, and educator. He has developed several programs around UUism and social justice themes. Larry presentation will include piano, voice and essays with Carol Bergquist playing flute.



Monthly Greeting from Board President, Kris Warhol

It is with mixed feelings that we say good-bye to JoAnn Larson who has served UCU as Administrative Consultant for the past 9 years. Sequoia had not yet been born when Jo began, and we enjoyed our years watching her grow. We give Jo and Sequoia, our best wishes as they move on to other opportunities.

Meantime, efforts have begun to replace JoAnn with the establishment of a Hiring Task Force to develop the position description and the interviewing process. Watch for further postings.

Thoughts:

All in, all hands-on deck. This past year has had upheavals. Too many to count. Every day other twists, other turns. We endure. We hold church. We gather together for one common bond. “No single belief includes us here: no disbelief excludes us.”

We are maintaining dignity with hearts of glass breaking into a million pieces. Holding onto to one special place, this Church. One hundred and thirty years strong.

People come, people go. The ones that remain need to embrace those who journey through and dialog our story. Take time to introduce yourself to the stranger. Shake their hand. Welcome them into our space. Ask them back.

In building this organic congregation we look for strong leaders. Can we count on you? The ancient masters said, "If you want to be given everything, give everything up," "Only in being lived by the Tao can you be truly yourself."

Marguerite Andrews calls this her "Tribe." Can we count you in or out? Each Sunday there is a different group of people in the pews. We love greeting you each time you walk through our doors. We invite you to come more often.

Those who have left us have the invitation to return when they are able. No guilt, no worries. We think of you often and love you with glass hearts. This Church isn't going anywhere. It is exactly where it belongs. In all our brokenness, our strength in numbers holds us together.

Lovingly, Kris Warhol



"Giving Back in Gratitude" Volunteers

In appreciation of the gifts given you through the Unitarian Church of Underwood, there are many opportunities for you to give back out of your own time, talents and money. Behind the scene volunteers work to make the Sunday offerings happen, but **Sunday volunteers are always needed!! Some ways you can give include:**

Greeters are an easy and fun way to serve and to get to know other UCU members and friends as you welcome them at the front door or hand out the bulletins at the sanctuary entrance.

Treaters – Bringing and serving treats provides the best fellowship for the after-service coffee hour. On your sign-up day, come ½ hour early to set out your treats, make coffee and arrange dishes, etc. Enjoy the time visiting behind the counter as you serve and clean up after. Treats for the freezer are always welcome to fill in for those Sundays when no one does sign up. On the Sundays of freezer treats, jump in to help set-up, serve and clean-up. Membership Committee members and others act as monthly coordinator for the kitchen and are there to assist the Sunday treater(s).



Service Leaders select the topic readings and lead the Sunday service. Preparatory work includes selecting the topic readings and notifying the bulletin maker prior to Sunday service, arriving a bit early to ready the podium and have a sound check and then lead us through the order of service.

Technical support: Pictorial instructions and mentoring for equipment make it easy for volunteers to provide technical assistance to set-up the sound and video assists, record and transfer files for the podcasts. Please contact Ellen Eastby 218/731-0803 or eastofellen@hotmail.com.



Children's Religious Education – volunteer to be an assistant to the lead for a Sunday and get to play and know the children!

Please pick up a “Gifts in Gratitude” brochure and complete the tear-off section indicating what ways you want to give, be it with your time, talents or pledge of money.

To make it easy to contribute regularly, sign up for Automatic Withdrawal of Payment from your bank account. Forms are available from Treasurer, Ron Roller or at the church office.

UCU Sunday Volunteers for April

A monthly grid will be published in the newsletter and available on the bulletin board at church. If you see a slot open and wish to volunteer, please contact the listed coordinator or Mary Anderson: maryanderson8380@msn.com or 218/346-6638.

Sunday Volunteers/Coordinator	April 7	April 14	April 21 Easter	April 28
Sunday Speakers (Betsy Wells & Kris Warhol)	Rev. Stefan Jonasson – “Radical Moderation”	Abbrev. Service/Brunch/Annual Meeting Kris Warhol	Bob Worner “The Day the Stone Was Rolled Away”	Larry McDonough, “Wellstone: A Remembrance” (Children)
Service Leaders (Mary Anderson)	Rev. Stefan Jonasson	Kris Warhol	Bob Worner	Katy Olson
Greeters (Kris Warhol)				
Hymn Accompaniment (Susan Groff/Mary Worner)	Mary Worner	Susan Groff	Mary Worner	Mary Worner
Special Music (Susan Groff/Mary Worner)	Ken Hamrum	Marianne Byron	Steve & Linda Berg	Larry McDonough & Carole Bergquist
Technical Support (Ellen Eastby)	Melody Shores	Amy Beckman		

Children's RE (Mary Anderson/Kris Warhol)	Cedar Walters/Ron Graham UUA #10 Lesson	Ron Graham/?	?/Ron Graham	Jon Solinger/Ron Graham
Treat Provider (April Kitchen Coordinator Janell Miersch)	Chili Leftovers	Kris Warhol		
Adult RE Classes	John Minge	Sandy Barnhouse	Stan Carignan	Bob Worner



Children's Religious Education

Jon Solinger led with Ron Graham assisting with three children in attendance: Amari, Violet and Lorelei. We used session 9 of the UUA *Creating Home* series, "Our Ancestral Home." We talked about the ideas of ancestors and legacies. We read the story "The Farmer's Legacy" about important values we can leave to our families as a legacy. We met a few UU faith ancestors: Susan B. Anthony, Charles Dickens, and Hajom Kissor Singh. Ron told the story of our own congregation's faith ancestors, whose pictures we can see in the church building. The kids colored a picture illustrating part the story and made some fabulous sticker art.

Ron Graham has been reviewing with the children the Biblical and Scientific creation stories and Richard Kagan has shared some beginning (or no beginning) stories from other cultures. They also made a Mobius strip (a one-sided strip) to illustrate no beginning and no end. Richard also taught about Shintoism's (Japanese understanding of the beginning).

Ron has also been doing magic tricks to help us to be alert as to what is real and what only appears to be. One trick was to determine if what looked like an egg really was, or just plastic. A lively discussion on fake or real ensued with a split verdict. Ron solved the mystery by "accidentally" dropping it and then cleaning up the mess.

The children seem to prefer bananas or apples for their fruit snacks. Having "fidget materials" while they listen to the lesson also seem to be helpful.

During the annual meeting on April 14, Ron will attend the children for the extended time. Please have your child dress appropriately for the outside weather as they'll be spending time at the park.

Notes from March Programs

March 3 - "Gifts in Gratitude" was produced and presented by the **Stewardship Committee**: **Dave Sanderson, Chair; Mary Anderson, Tim Lanz, Tere Mann, Kris Warhol**. (Committee member, **Mary Worner** was unable to attend that date).



Committee Chair, Dave Sanderson gave background on the meaning of Stewardship and the work of the committee to share today's program.

Tere Mann shared excerpts from the sermon of Galen Guengerich, UU Minister. (Words of message and readings included in the bulletin insert below). The readings were read in unison, responsively or by readers.

Adapting the U Group format, four questions were asked for reflection, recording, and sharing among small groupings. The recordings were gathered and will be reviewed by the Stewardship Committee and the Board of Directors for follow-up.

Questions:

1. What are the gifts you receive from the Unitarian Church of Underwood?
2. What are the gifts you give the Unitarian Church of Underwood?
3. What are the gifts you give your community that reflect your UU principles?
4. Does our current mission statement say who we are and why we exist?

Attendance: 33

Podcast @ <https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278/gifts-in-gratitude>

March 10 - Services cancelled due to inclement weather.



March 17 - “View from the Throne” was written, produced and directed by **Sandy Barnhouse** using the format of the TV show, *The View*. The four British queens were portrayed by **Sandy, Bonnie Bell Albers, Alison Francis and Kris Warhol**.

In Sandy’s play the four British queens converse about their personal reactions to world events, relationships, complaints and observations. The words contained their history, oppressive experiences, humor, relationship to their cultures and even some reverences to today’s events.

Sandy explained the origin of her work was inspired by Joseph Campbell: "We need a new story." The queens tell how they wished to re-imagine their own histories and rituals from the patriarchy so widely accepted as the only truth.

The Queens were **Celtic Queen Boudicca (Alison Francis), Eleanor of Aquitaine (Kris Warhol), Guinevere (Bonnie Albers) and Elizabeth I (Sandra Barnhouse)**.

Bodica of the Iceni people, living around 43 A.D. was queen when the island was invaded by Rome. **Queen Guinevere** of King Arthur and Sir Lancelot fame said she was married to both men living sometime in the 11th century. **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (1122 or 1124 – 1 April 1204) was queen consort of France (1137–1152) and England (1154–1189) and duchess of Aquitaine in her own right (1137–1204). **Queen Elizabeth I** (1533-1603) remained unmarried and without children and reigned for 60 years.

Readings: But we do not assert this crushing force had anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth, who took part of his learnings from Druids, preached tolerance and love, and who prophesied that awful things would be done in his name.

Indigenous culture is local culture, based on the spirits of the neighborhood, not imported by a full-scale army and read-made priesthood, with survival skills and holding assumptions from an entirely different ecosystem and way of life. For thousands of years, this kind of forced proselytizing has brought our planet to the brink of destruction, if not very long-term carnage, may we be so lucky.

As primarily European Americans we need to revisit our own indigenous spirit worlds our older customs, and we do it by channeling through our known history and myth to reconnect and so, reform our story, make it new again, tailed going forward to an earth-centered spirituality of our own making and of our ancestors. We go back to them to remember our deeper connection to the earth in order to understand, protect and renew and nurture our Mother Gala. Part of this older tradition is primarily the worship of the feminine forces alongside the masculine.

We know that indigenous culture is much gentler on the land and this is true world-wide. So, can a discussion by four British queens save the planet today? Only in so far as this gets us thinking about the world to come. Based on the culture we choose to create, from the remains of a culture that once left only light footprints.

For special music, **Betsy and Doug Wells** delighted us with a Celtic Reel and other numbers for the prelude, offertory and postlude.

Attendance: 40

Podcast at: <https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278/view-from-the-throne-four-british-queens-sandy-barnhouse-friends-20190317>



March 24 – Maryjane Westra, “Stupid Missionary Tricks.” Her talk was based on what she and her husband, Don had learned from their experiences as Mission Co-Workers in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Honduras.

Maryjane described the evolution from old "patronage" style work to "partnership" work under the United Church of Christ.

She stressed mutuality in ministry but first contrasted the old style which included: compounds of western whites separated from the people of a country; separate schools for missionary kids, condescending power and control by missionaries and wealth/power disparities. She told of experiences where useless items were sent in container ships, cash given out inappropriately, a show of ethnic "superiority" based in self-righteousness and ignorance of cultural morés.

Maryjane stressed a better, newer partnership where existing communities are respected. She suggested that to change to a better model of intercultural work, personal relationships should be stressed first. All should be equal partners, where local people were in charge. There are no simple solutions but first no harm should be done.

Don and Maryjane Westra, served as Mission Co-workers for 8 years with Global Ministries in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Honduras. The work of Global Ministries is to work mutually and alongside global partners toward justice, reconciliation, and peace.

Podcast @: <https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278/stupid-missionary-tricks-maryjane-westra-march-24-2019>

Attendance: 45

March 31 – Edie Barrett, “Getting Uncomfortable with White Privilege,” Edie is a published author, poet, and fine artist now living in Ortonville. She is attending the Humphrey Institute

where one of their class readings was *White Fragility – Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin Diangelo. Edie can only share her story of dialoging the illuminating, disruptive, awkward conditions of white privilege. She thinks it important in being socially responsible that we explore issues and not just think or do “what’s convenient for me.”

Our own experiences shape us, creating blind spots so we need to “clean our own closets.”

Edie has been influenced also by the writing of Jonathan Haidt whose main areas of study are the psychology of morality and the moral emotions. In recognizing our divisions, there is the ying/yang of destroyer/preserver in our moral diversity. We tend to become a team with those with whom we share values. We need balance: 1) be in the present; 2) know who we are; 3) imagine the other side; 4) commit to Truth.

She also referred to Courtney E. Martin, author, speaker, and social and political activist, featured on Krista Tibbetts and Ted Talks. Martin talks about the tensions that are at the heart of fighting racism for a white person, one of which is that as a white person, we are unable to sit in the sad place of a non-white person.

In our self-reflections, we need to expose the status of white domination, diminish our own complacency, recognize the discrepancy of power and abuse of power for personal gains. Power – who stands to gain.

These readings jolted her to pay attention. As a white person she can only say she is deeply sorry. Part of “my moral imagination and moral humility is my social responsibility to engage.” Being uncomfortable is a start for change to pursue wholeness, search for truth, wade in the water, see that everything is connected. Showing emotion, Edie called us to UU Principles 1,2, 4 and 7.

For further information please visit her website: www.ediebarrett.com.

Attendance: 56

Podcast @ <https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278/getting-comfortable-with-white-privilege>

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Website:
www.ucofu.org

**Sunday Talks available via
PodCasts @ soundcloud.com/user-927528278**

**“Like” UCU on Facebook: see
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**Contact Mary Anderson @218/346-6638 or
maryanderson8380@msn.com for Sunday
announcements. Contact Kris Warhol @ 218/
or mwarhol7up@gmail.com for local media
notifications.**

U Group Schedule (Meetings Monthly)

- Alexandria U-Group: 2nd Wed @ 7:00 pm @ the office building of Widseth, Smith & Nolting Office Bldg., 610 Fillmore, Alexandria: Facilitators: Lee Becker/Susan Sanford
- Battle Lake U Group, the 2nd Tuesday @ 3:00 p.m. @ **Sverdrup Suites #300.** Facilitators: Bob Worner/ Joanne Cress/Kris Warhol.
- Fergus Falls U-Group: 3rd Thursday @ 6:30 pm @ Diana Ziesemer's, 934 W. Linden St., Fergus Falls. Facilitator: Melody Shores.
- Perham U-Group: 2nd Thursday @ 6:30 p.m. @ Stan Carignan's. Facilitator: Stan Carignan.

Each group holds an empty chair for anyone who wants to come and join the group.

To learn more or join a group, contact Lead Co-Facilitators: Kris Warhol @ mwarhol7up@gmail.com or 218/205-1644 or Shannon Smith @ shannonsmith20@gmail.com

Newsletter Submissions due prior to Issuance the 1st of each month

Please submit your ideas, articles and photos to:
maryanderson8380@msn.com

Editing: Stephanie Sanderson

Emailing/mailling: Ellen Eastby and Mary Anderson

Website: Ellen Eastby

Facebook: Melody Shores

Photos courtesy of Norm Kolstad & credited others.

Note: Send Announcements for church bulletin and monthly newsletter to Mary Anderson @maryanderson8380@msn.com. She forwards for inclusion in the www.ucofu.org and Facebook Page.

Newsletter comes out on the 1st of each month via email. They are also posted at www.ucofu.org.

Adult Religious Education Classes & Mindfulness Sitting

1st Sunday of the month, 8:45 - 9:45 a.m. – John Minge leads discussion.

2nd Sunday of the month, 8:45- 9:45 a.m. – Sandy Barnhouse leads the Ancient Religions Class using *Sacred Pleasures* as resource.

3rd Sunday of the month, 8:45 – 9:45 a.m. – Stan Carignan will lead new class using the book, *Seeing, Knowing, Being* by John Greer as a text to explore what mindfulness is, how it can be achieved, and what it does for a person. Book chapter discussions followed by 20 minutes of mindfulness practice.

4th Sunday of the month, 8:45-9:45 a.m. Bob Worner leads the discussion on the book, *Unbelievable* by Jon Shelby Spong.

Each Sunday of the month, other than 3rd Sundays (see above): 9:15 – 9:45 a.m., Stan Carignan leads Mindfulness Sitting @ #300 Sverdrup Suites.

UCU Happenings

New Member Welcomed



Alison Francis - Please meet our newest member, Alison Francis who was welcomed to UCU March by Celebrant, Ellen Eastby. Alison counts herself very fortunate to have found such a welcoming and thoughtful church community. A perfect day for Alison would start with a strong pot of coffee shared with family, friends or a good (cook)book. She enjoys being in, on and

around water, pickling and fermenting vegetables, dominoes, card and word games, and exploring things new to her. One day, Alison would like to spend a weekend treasure hunting for gems and fossils.

Alison grew up in St. Paul, MN where she attended Unity Church-Unitarian with her family. She is a graduate of St. Paul Central High School and the College of Saint Scholastica. She moved to Otter Tail County in 2006 and works for United Way of Otter Tail and Wadena Counties. Alison lives with her husband, Jim, their dog, Buckaroo and their cat, Figaro (Figgy).

Note: To become a member of the Unitarian Church of Underwood, you simply ask to sign the silver membership book. New members are officially welcomed the 1st Sundays of March and October.

Space Plan Submitted to Board of Directors

In response to the Charge of the Board of Directors, the Space Planning Task Force has submitted a "Space Plan" to the Board outlining their considerations and conclusions on space needs for short and long-term planning. The bulk of the work was done by an ad hoc team of four members who are professional architects: Darryl Booker, Joan Vorderbruggen, Lee Becker and John Shaw.

The main thrust was to identify air quality issues. A profession study revealed that there is no mold in the church but recommended some preventative measures. Another concern has been how to address installing a second emergency exit from the sanctuary. The Task Force also looked at the need and feasibility of a structure to connect the church with Sverdrup Suites.

The Task Force offered these conclusions to the Board for their further action and consultation with the membership:

- 1) Restore and add storm windows rather than replace the sanctuary windows to allow opening and closing;
- 2) Convert the north window nearest the piano to an exit door to an outside platform with steps going down to the ground;

- 3) Consider installing a heat ventilation recovery (HVR) system.
- 4) Defer to the Facilities Committee projects to:
 - Re-grade, contour and landscape grounds on the church's south side edges to avert water running toward the foundation wall.
 - Remove/install sidewalk or pavers from apartment to church and to the street to augment easier access.
 - Retrofit lighting to LED.

With the advice of the architects, the Task Force concluded that building a connection between the church and the apartments was impractical because of grading elevations, accessibility requirements and currently limited use or need. For now, a connecting sidewalk or pavers will suffice.

The full Space Plan is available upon request. A summary will be given at the annual meeting on April 14 with opportunity for discussion. No further Board action will be taken until further research is done through the Facilities, Safety and Finance Committees for costs and other determining factors.

Many thanks to the hours of work by the *Space Planning Task Force* – Mary Anderson, Chair; Darryl Booker, Susan Groff, Norm Kolstad, Katy Olson, Florance Thompson, Mary Worner
Ad hoc Team of Architects: Darryl Booker, John Shaw, Reed Becker & Joan Vorderbruggen.

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF UNDERWOOD

Award of 2019 EMPOWERMENT GRANTS

Empowerment Grant Objective: *Increase visibility of grant awardees and their programs to recognize and promote the important work being done by UCU.*

In 2004, a large legacy was bestowed to the Unitarian Church of Underwood by member, Francis Ellison. These funds gave opportunity for UCU to award the first Empowerment Grants in 2007. Annual grants have continued to be paid out since from UCU investments. After twelve years, the awards given out now total \$105,000. Grant applications are made by UCU members to go to an established non-government organization or entity with a proposed project that meets one or more of the UU Principles and is inclusive and non-discriminatory. Applications received are reviewed by the Empowerment Grant Committee and selections are submitted to the UCU Board of Directors for approval.

The Unitarian Church of Underwood's Board of Directors has approved the following 2019 Empowerment Grants:

Citizen's Climate Lobby, Fergus Falls Chapter	\$1200
Fergus Falls FarmerMarket (Power of Produce Program	700
United Way of Otter Tail County (select program)	900
Battle Lake Indivisible (Community Conversations Forum)	

Climate Change Issues 2019	1100
Churches United for the Homeless (Fargo, ND)	300
Friends of Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (Yellow Bus)	800
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light	600
Legal Services of Northwest MN	1400
Welcome Place (Pelican Rapids, MN)	2000
Schools for Shan Refugees	<u>1000</u>
	\$10,000

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

New UCU Social/Environment Justice Committee Forming – Please Join!

One of the 2019-20 goals and objectives for the UCU Strategic Plan is to form a new committee to focus on doing justice work from a religiously grounded place. This is beneficial because it:

- Sustains us personally and congregationally.
- Provides vision and grounding.
- Gives us courage to engage in transformative work.
- Helps to frame our issues authentically and morally.
- Reflects our most deeply held values and beliefs.
- Increases our clarity and effectiveness.
- Allows us to speak with a religious voice and demonstrate that there is a plurality of religious beliefs that can come together for action.

If you are interested in joining this group, please call Janell Miersch @ 218-531-1445 or email: miers004@umn.edu. We would like 5-7 people involved. We will meet in April to brainstorm ideas, activities and frequency of meetings.

Living Out Our UU Principles

“Love Keeps Reaching Out”

Willmar Workshop

Bonnie Bell Albers, Molly Delabre and Katie Drussel attended the UU cluster workshop hosted by the Willmar Unitarian Church on February 16 hosted by the Willmar Unitarian Church. Phil Lund, Congregational Life Consultant with UU MidAmerica Region facilitated with the focus on strategies and tactics to grow membership to our UU congregation.

Bonnie Bell Albers reports:

“Two workshop sessions with time in between to share stories casually amongst the group allowed Katie Drussel and Molly Delabre, and me, Bonnie Bell Albers, to meet with members of UUA congregations from St. Paul MN, and Willmar as we were looked for tools to grow our congregations. The presence of the Underwood group served to help newer member Molly and Katie learn about the UUA and how it assists our churches to thrive. For my part I was excited to relate at the workshop examples of what our church has done in the last 25 years that resulted in the vital growth of members here at our Underwood church.

The first session was entitled, “The World We Live In.” A statistic about the American religious experience demonstrates a shift where today in 2018 23% of Americans do not affiliate to a particular religion, whereas in the 1990s that number was just 9%. Where in the past it might have been said ‘Don’t let God keep you out of church,’ today we must frame the statement. ‘Don’t let church keep you out of church.’ In the past, to grow membership it often was church verses church. Now it is the church verses *anything* else.

The value for church goes is more often about service verses assembly; about promoting values we are missing in our community, values that are social and spiritual. Re-imagined church communities are ‘bounded but pushing boundaries, authentic, embedded, pollinating, embodied, activated, empathetic, networked, enfranchised, adaptive.’

Re-imagined congregations are popping up as Dinner Churches, Service Organizations with focus on social action, Learning Journeys, Online Communities, Storytelling Organizations, ie., a ‘Church with a twist in unusual spaces with unusual formats.’ They are combining tradition and innovation taking the best liturgy and traditions and living it in new ways.

Session 2 was titled ‘Who we are and why we do it, why it matters.’

Our first exercise was to finish this sentence with three adjectives about our congregation. We are a _____, _____, _____.

Answer the question, “What can a religious community do for a spiritual not necessarily religious person?”

Our facilitator Paul reminded us the etymology of the word religion is the word “rely”. What is our religion’s relativity to the Body of Humanity?

Our last session was titled, ‘Where to start, sweet spots and entry points.’

A final exercise to explore ways to gain membership was to find the sweet spot where there is cross over between three things that excite members, three things that are exciting within the community and three heartaches within the congregation and within our community.

For my part I answered this way: Things that excite me at the church include: visiting ministers, speakers and visionary leaders like Winona La Duke. Second, I am excited by the diverse work of our committees to support our members spiritual and physical self, and church community

outreach through grants and volunteer efforts around passionate cares and concerns to positively affect the wider community. Third, I am continually inspired by the people who attend our church who share aloud the affirmation of our Chalice lighting words.

Three things that are exciting about our community include our lake country and the relatively clean air, water and fertile ground we share and treasure. Next, I wrote down the vibrant Arts community of Fergus Falls. Last, I wrote about our pride and participation in the celebration of our church's home town of Underwood, as demonstrated with the annual Chili Feed for senior nutrition, the Underwood parade, community clean-up and programs in the local school over the years.

Three heartaches I identified included concern over mono type agriculture risking our precious natural resources of land, water and air. Second concern was for my witness of racism and classism related to economic inequality, and lower wages available within our community. Last is my deep concern for the scourge of dangerous drugs and related addiction that afflicts families, coworkers, and our public servants in the law enforcement and health care industry.

Our challenge as a congregation is to address how can we inspire like-minded folks? Can we find potential new members in these exciting places in our community? Can we promote joy that can be found through the church while also addressing our heartaches through outreach? Can we find people who share our concerns to collaborate on a shared value or mission who are not already part of our membership and who long to engage?

How do we promote the idea 'Join our cause, not our club?'

Results from the UU Sharing Project survey of marginalized groups (gender identity, race, ability, etc.) asked why respondents first decided to attend their congregation and then why they continued to attend. The top response for the decision to attend was, 'I wanted to deepen my spiritual life.' The top response for staying was, 'I love the community of people.' A workshop handout said, 'To grow we have to describe what we offer for learning, yearning, and working for our values. We can't assume people are already looking for a church on Sunday mornings, because in fact we're competing for their time and attention against sleeping in, taking a walk, soccer practice, Facebook and brunch. We need to focus on what we DO as UUs, not just who we are.'"



Friday, April 5, 2018

5-7 p.m.

Underwood Community Center

John Minge is cooking five varieties of chili that will be accompanied by breads, raw veggies, and numerous desserts. Sverdrup Lutheran has been invited to collaborate again with us for

the dinner that feeds 130-150 neighbors of the community. Proceeds go to the Underwood Senior Nutrition Program. ***See Kris Warhol for tickets and Mary Anderson to sign up for duties and/or to bring desserts. Further details during church announcements.***

Shan Schools



Dear Friends of the Unitarian Church of Underwood,
Before writing to you, I wrote to Pippa Curwen a respected Shan elder who lives and works in Chiang Mai, and I asked her what donors should know about what is going on in Shan State. This is what she said: "...the main thing to highlight about Shan State (and other ethnic areas) is that conflict is intensifying, despite the "peace process". The international community must impose strong sanctions on the regime, stop "business as usual", and resume aid for refugees/IDPs on the Thai-Burma border."

We have little influence on overall aid for refugees, but we can help the children of families who are subjected to abuses such as this one reported by the Shan Human Rights Group on March 20, 2019: 'Burma Army ground and aerial attack to seize strategic mountain in N. Shan State kills one villager, injures two, and displaces 700.' When families from groups like this one flee to Thailand, we help their children get an education.

The latest newsletter is filled with photos so you can see how we are using your donations in our Schools for Shan Refugees education programs for Shan children and youth.

We could not do it without your help!

Sincerely,

Bernice Koehler Johnson

Schools for Shan Refugees, Inc.

<http://shanrefugeeschools.org/newsletter/>

Note: Schools for Shan Refugees, Inc have received funds from the Empowerment Grants and other special fund-raisers. Bernice comes for a visit annually to UCU to update us on their work.

We are Part of the Larger UU

Celebrate EARTH DAY

April 22, 2019

Did you know that Earth Day Network works year round to solve [climate change](#), to [end plastic pollution](#), to [protect endangered species](#), and to broaden, educate, and activate the environmental movement across the globe? Their theme for Earth Day 2019 is to protect our threatened and endangered species. In Otter Tail County the two listed threatened species are Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*).

Their web site states that the unprecedented global destruction and rapid reduction of plant and wildlife populations are directly linked to causes driven by human activity: climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pollution and pesticides to name a few.

As stated in UCU Principals, all living things have an intrinsic value, and each plays a unique role in the complex web of life. We must work together to protect endangered and threatened species: [bees](#), [coral reefs](#), [elephants](#), [giraffes](#), [insects](#), [whales](#) and more. Read more at <http://www.earthday.org>.

CLEAN TRANSPORTATION

What: Electric Vehicles and Active Transportation

When: Saturday April 20, 10:00am - 11:30am

Where: Fergus Falls Library, 205 E. Hampden Ave, Fergus Falls

Event Sponsored by West Central Climate Action and Sierra Club with support from OTCI Climate. Join us to learn about Electric Vehicles (EVs) & Active Transportation. **Free and open to the public.**

Presenters:

- **Wayne Hurley, West Central Initiative**, sharing Active Transportation options and continued infrastructure changes and options
- **Jason Grenier, Otter Tail Power**, presenting on the current and future opportunities for an Electric Vehicle infrastructure, including a summary of what's happening right now at the legislature to support outstate Minnesota EV growth
- **Meet and hear from Electric Vehicle owners.** What is available? How does this work? What are the challenges and the benefits?

Listen to Greta Thunberg On Climate Change

Bert Whitcombe highly recommends that we listen to Greta Thunberg, 15-year old from Stockholm, Sweden who has been nominated for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for her speaking out for climate change. She began alone by a weekly school strike standing vigil outside Sweden's Parliament. She no longer stands alone. Students worldwide have heard her message. An estimated 1.6 million students in over 120 countries left school on March 15 in protest of adult inaction on climate change. "We need to change ourselves now, because tomorrow it might be too late." It is up to each of us and to the world's politicians to act. Watch her Ted Talk and other speeches on U Tube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAmUUEsN9A>.

Minnesota Peace Project Letters to MN Delegates

Friends of Katy Olson, Adele Lennig and Chris Sullivan, members of St. Luke Presbyterian in Wayzata, MN, have joined the Minnesota Peace Project. The primary objective as an organization is to influence Minnesota's delegation in Washington, D.C., to move American foreign policy toward nonviolent solutions. They do that by building trusting



relationships with our representatives. They propose to become reliable sources of information, rather than opinion, and be accepted by the representative as a nonpartisan organization. The agenda is peace and justice, not support for any political party.

Upon the request of the board of MPP, Adele and Chris are building a letter writing network. We are bringing onto one team the skills required to submit letters to opinion pages in Minnesota publications. They are seeking people who know how to write effective letters or are willing to learn how to do that. They are looking for people who live in various parts of the state to submit letters either of their own devising or one written by MPP to their local newspapers or magazines. Some people may fall into more than one of these roles. The work load for volunteers in this project will be as light or as demanding as the volunteer chooses. There will be no meetings to attend. If interested, please contact Chris @ andromed88@comcast.net.

Promise to Protect Training Tour Coming to Minneapolis, MN on April 6 & 7 #NoKXL

Dear Minnesota UU Friends,

Last year the UUA, UU Ministry for Earth, and many UUs made a promise. We pledged ourselves as partners to the Promise to Protect campaign to join indigenous leaders, rural communities, and climate justice organizers to stop the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. Our faith calls us to heal our relationship with the earth through action.

On February 19th, the campaign launched the [Promise to Protect Training Tour](#) in response to state authorities in Nebraska – backed by the Trump administration and the fossil fuel industry – granting TransCanada the final permit they need to start construction. The campaign coalition states: “Every day for the last several years we’ve stopped TransCanada and kept tar sands in the ground. **We’re going to keep stopping them.**”

The training tour is coming to ten cities, including Minneapolis on April 6th and 7th, offering a one-day training on each date so people can choose to attend on Saturday OR Sunday. (See the full tour schedule [here](#).) It is led by the Native Organizers Alliance and [350.org](#) and supported by the Promise to Protect Steering Committee: Brave Heart Society, Wiconi un Tipi, Indigenous Environmental Network, and Dakota Rural Action. The goal is to train thousands of people who are committed to supporting communities and stopping this pipeline as one key front line in stopping the fossil fuel industry’s extraction and exploitation of people, resources, and lands. Our faith calls us into solidarity with those resisting this exploitation and protecting the land and water. We will be getting ready to mobilize. TransCanada hopes to begin construction this June and while there are many barriers and legal actions that may prevent that, now is the time to begin preparing for action if necessary.

The trainings will cover:

1. How to Be a Good Relative: Best practices and protocols for mobilizing to Lakota territory
2. How We Win: The political strategy to stop the expansion of the fossil fuel industry
3. The Power of Collective Action: Nonviolent direct action as a strategic campaign tool

The relationships we’ll build and the learnings we’ll receive will go far beyond these particular actions. **Please join us and share this invitation with people in your congregation and community. Register for the training [here](#) and you will receive more information about the location as the date approaches.** Note that there are two days to choose from - it is not a 2-day training. (Just 1 day!) Seats are limited so sign up soon.

Whether we choose to put our bodies in front of a pipeline or throw our considerable energies into legislation for just energy transitions, may we do so, centering the margins. Whether we work for food justice or protecting and sharing the earth's water; whether we dance, paint, sing or pray for climate justice; let us remember this is a unique moment - a time when we are called to rise for all life and the lives of generations to come.

#NoKXL, #PromiseToProtect

Yours in hope,

UUA Organizing Strategy Team (OST) & UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE)



Dear Unitarian Church of Underwood,

On any given night, more than 450,000 people who have not been convicted of any crime are incarcerated in the United States simply because they don't have enough money to pay bail.

Money bail has nothing to do with reducing crime and everything to do with systemic racism that breaks up families.

Our Universalist values tell us that no one is disposable, and our interdependence means that none of us are truly free as long as people are in jail.

Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) is one of Love Resist's partners in the campaign to end money bail.

Here are four ways to get started on ending money bail in your community:

- Take BLUU's End Money Bail Faith Resource Assessment to share what resources you and your congregation need to engage in this work.
- Gather a group to watch our webinar, *Jailed For Being Poor*, and learn about the movement to end money bond and pre-trial detention.
- Download the Majority/Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) Transformative Bail Reform Curriculum (PDF) which includes many education resources and action steps to help you engage with this issue.
- Save the date: Mamas Day in May is a national bail fund organizing event, so start talking in your congregation now about how you can support your local Mamas Day Bail Out event.

By joining this movement, you are working to liberate millions from the deeply unjust mechanism of mass incarceration. There is enormously positive impact in helping release

held purely because they couldn't afford bail.

In solidarity,
The Love Resists Team

Love Resists is a joint campaign by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

www.loveresists.org



To make 100% clean energy a reality in Minnesota, your legislators need to hear from **you!**

Right now, Governor Walz and our climate champions in the legislature are preparing bills that create a Pathway to 100% clean energy, and so much more. So many of the policies that move us forward are at stake: renewables, electric vehicles & buses, just transition of our communities, ensuring good jobs for everyone.

To make sure it moves forward with momentum, we need to act. We need to make sure your Representative is hearing from folks like you.

Please call, email and reach out to your legislators over social media **today** and let them know why you support the One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy. Click [here](#) to take find your legislature's contact information.

When talking to your legislature, tell them...

Sam Benson
<http://mnipl.nationbuilder.com/>

Example Letter:

Dear _____,

*People across our state have made one thing clear – Minnesota is ready to lead on 100% clean energy. **We can make this happen today by following the One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy.***

The One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy will address climate change, grow jobs in every corner of the state and ensure that our kids have healthy places to raise their own children.

Please support the One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy today. We need your leadership. Our health, economy and environment are all at stake.

Together, we can make 100% clean energy a reality in Minnesota!

(Your name)

March 2019

Governor Walz announced a plan to move Minnesota to 100% renewable electricity by 2050. Thanks to all who have been speaking out to support 100% clean, equitable energy, and thank you Governor Walz and Lt. Gov Flanagan!

Itasca County Community Solar update- Community skeptical as power company takes over solar-plus-storage project

For more than two years, the grassroots Itasca Clean Energy Team in Grand Rapids has been working to plan to build a 1-megawatt community solar array. MNIPL's Bret Pence has worked in collaboration with Itasca Clean Energy Team for the last 4 years about the topic of community solar, including technical assistance in terms of sourcing grants, organizations, and individuals to advance the local initiative. Recently, electricity wholesaler Minnesota Power asserted control over the project and threatened to stop it – then offered to double its size. [Read more.](#)

WRITTEN BY [Frank Joss](#)

February 12, 2019



The MidAmerica Region is where UUs visibly live our faith, create connections, grow our membership, and welcome all persons who share our UU values.

Dear Friends,

Two things: we made a mistake, for which we are sorry, and we have extended the registration deadline for Regional Assembly until this Friday (March 29, 2019).



We are dropping the theme *Intersectionalities* from our Regional Assembly. We were appropriately called out on the use of this theme without us also centering the work of Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw. A copy of our full apology is linked below, and in addition to posting this apology on our website, we have added a couple of elements to our Assembly: a chance for people to talk with the MidAmerica program staff about our mistake, and a showing of Dr. Crenshaw's TED talk on Intersectionality with conversation in caucus groups after that. Please be in touch with us with any comments you have.

<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra/we-want-apologize>

Excerpts from MidAmerica Region UUA

MidAmerica Messenger

Volume 6 Issue 8 | March 2019

The new MidAmerica UUA website is located

at: <https://www.uua.org/midamerica> .

The 2019 General Assembly (Titled, "The Power of We") will be June 19-23 in Spokane, Washington. Most General Assembly events will be held in the Spokane Convention Center. Information including on registration, housing, programming and available financial assistance is found at www.uua.org/ga.

Note: If interested in attending, see Kris Warhol, Board President.

Getting Called Out: How to Apologize

As a Unitarian Universalist religious educator, I seek to be a consistent advocate—and active participant—in all our efforts to dismantle white supremacy in Unitarian Universalism and the greater culture. I esteem the daily practice to raise my own awareness of decentering whiteness, and am blessed to serve on a team, both regionally and nationally, that intentionally seeks to change the way we understand ourselves. I have learned that I often demonstrate a level of insensitivity without, at times, being aware of that insensitivity. That is why I am particularly blessed to serve with many youth and young adults, whose prophetic voices call me to a level of higher awareness and sensitivity around race and inclusion. In that context, I wanted to share a video that we use at our Youth MidWest Leadership School.



The video, "[Getting Called Out: How to Apologize](#)," on YouTube,



by chescaleigh (Franchesca Ramsey), has a profound message for those of us committed to change. Our MidAmerica team is including the video in one of our generative conversations about dismantling white supremacy, and, I believe, that it would also provide helpful insights for groups in congregations to view together, including your youth group and

Board!

Nancy Combs-Morgan, CRE-ML, Congregational Life Consultant

MUUSJA's Spring Covenant Group Series

All of us endure, embody, and experience trauma, whether because our identities are targeted, or because we are simply all harried by the broken systems in which we live our lives. Addressing this trauma and healing our spirits is essential for those of us who are committed to the long-haul work of collective liberation.

MUUSJA's Statewide Organizer, Pastor Danny Givens will facilitate this 4-session Covenant Group on healing and growing through and past trauma in our shared work for justice.

Groups meet Third Mondays (March 18, April 15, May 20, & June 17) from 11am-12:30 pm, or on Third Tuesdays (March 19, April 16, May 21, & June 18) from 7-8:30 pm.

This group is open to Unitarian Universalists and any people of faith and conviction who want to explore these themes together as partners and companions on the journey. We welcome those living in Minnesota and beyond to join us. Click [here](#) to register!

From the UU World to New Zealand to Minnesota, it's all interconnected.

Dear ones,

These last months or so has been full of heartbreak in the religious world, from the United Methodist Church's decision to [double down on their exclusion of LGBTQIA people](#), to the complicated conversation about the intersections of anti-semitism and sexism and islamophobia and racism surrounding Rep. Ilhan Omar's comments about AIPAC, to our own *UU World's* publication of an [egregious article that caused harm](#) to our transgender/non-binary/genderqueer siblings, to last week's appalling [massacre of 50 Muslims](#) gathering for prayer at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. My heart has been heavy and my stomach has been churning as I have watched the events unfold, and I've struggled with what to say to all of you as individuals and organizations far more eloquent than I have released the litany of responses and public statements that have filled my news feed.



So often, when major events like these happen, they feel far away to me from my own context here in Minnesota. Another denomination's painful reckoning, a national debate about trans+ inclusion in UUism, a white supremacist shooting on the other side of the globe... They're all shades of terrible, but what can I possibly do here, where I am?

I am reminded, yet again, that we always have the most power in the communities in which we are rooted, and in which we are the most connected. I'm also deeply aware that, as Adrienne Maree Brown puts it in her principles of Emergent Strategy, "what we practice at the smallest scale sets the pattern for the largest scale."

All these horrific events have links to the interlocking systems of white supremacy, white nationalism, global imperialism, colonialism, Christian hegemony. All of them reveal how these ideologies of hate begin in individual hearts and calcify into entire systems that cause violence against marginalized members of the community. And all of them compel us to create local responses right here, in our own state and in our own congregations.

We must think systemically as we work for collective liberation. But our "big picture" should never be an excuse to stay in our heads, nor should it keep us from seeing--and acting upon--the things in our own circles that we can transform here and now.

I'm including below a list of things to read, events to attend, and actions to take. Even though these things may seem disconnected from one another, let's all remember that all systems of oppression are interconnected, and there is no single "issue area" that we can address without also looking at other injustices.

Beloveds, in these times that are so hard on our hearts and souls, may we all be both gentle and fierce. Let us each find our place in the struggle, and hold each other as we take shifts for the revolution and the repairing of our beautiful world.

In faith and solidarity,
Ashley Horan

A Resource List of Activities, Readings, and Ways to Plug In

- Friday, March 22, join for [a solidarity gathering at the Dar al Farooq Center](#) in Bloomington--a community which itself has been targeted by anti-Islamic violence.
- Attend the [Challenging Islamophobia Conference](#) next Thursday, March 28.
- Donate to local Muslim organizations doing powerful work for justice here in Minnesota, such as [CAIR-MN](#) and [RISE](#).
- Reflect on the [direct connections](#) between the hateful islamophobic rhetoric and policies of the current US Administration and the occurrence of mass violence like the Christchurch massacre. Commit to working against white nationalism, white supremacy, islamophobia, and anti-semitism here in our own communities.
- Read reflections written by UUs most directly harmed by the *UU World* article. Click [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) for some of the most powerful writing on the topic from these past few weeks.
- Get clear on just how closely connected white supremacy and anti-LGBTQIA+ bigotry are, and how imperative it is to not separate the two oppressions into different "identity" categories--especially in UUism. For a quick read on this, click [here](#).
- If you are a cisgender person and you want to talk about *UU World* article, especially at your congregation with other cis UUs, follow [these excellent tips from the Transforming Hearts Collective](#).
- Connect with TRUUST, Unitarian Universalism's national organization of transgender/nb/gnc/gq religious professionals. Read "[Putting the T First](#)" and the TRUUST [report on the experience of trans UUs](#). Follow [all five steps of their Call to Action](#) in support of trans UUs.
- Learn more about the intersections between anti-semitism, white nationalism, white supremacy, and islamophobia. Check out the work of [Eric Ward](#) on white nationalism and anti-semitism, read [this article](#) about why the recent controversy about Rep. Omar is so problematic, and check out the thinking of progressive Muslim and Jewish leaders who are unwilling to throw each other under the bus.

Pilgrimage to Mecca

Former foreign exchange student, Fikrirahmat wrote his host mother, Mary Anderson about his recent pilgrimage to Mecca. Having never talked to someone who had been on the pilgrimage, I thought it interesting enough to share with you all. When I asked Fikri for permission to share, he worried so much that he has since sent me numerous versions. I like best the following, his first, with some edits. Many of you will remember that Fikri spoke limited English when he came here in 2012. Since then, he has also become fluent in the Turkish language necessary for his studies. *Host Mom – Mary Anderson*



“My wife, Citra and I have just returned from the pilgrimage this Sunday (March 10). We stayed three days in Medinah, the city where our prophet is buried and five days in Mecca, the city where the Muslims do their pilgrimage.

As Muslims, we are required to do the pilgrimage once in a life. However, there are two types of pilgrimages in Islam. The first pilgrimage is called the Hajj which is compulsory for all Muslims if they are capable. It is held once a year and not all people can join it because of a limited quota determined by the Saudi Government for every Muslim country. The pilgrimage that we did was called the Umrah. There is no quota for Umrah so that everyone can do the Umrah all year round except in the few months after the fasting month, the Ramadan. It also has less ritual than the Hajj does.

Our pilgrimage was arranged with the Turkish Diyanet, the Turkish religious affairs office. They have a pilgrimage program for university students with a reasonable price but with good services. I was very happy with their services. The guide, the foods, the hotel, the transportation, all were good. In fact, my wife and I were lucky to fly business class from Ankara, the capital of Turkey to Medina.

There were not many things to do in Medina, the city of the prophet, besides praying in the prophet mosque, buying dates, or maybe to visit some museums or tombs of the prophet's companions. Because we came with Turkish people, our guide who was also Turkish. He took us to some sites built by the Ottoman. We went to a non-active train station built originally in the late 19th century by an Ottoman sultan. We also visited an Ottoman mosque. We visited the tomb of the prophet which was located inside of the Nabawi Mosque. My wife and I got a chance to pray just right beside his tomb. People were lining up to get the chance to pray beside His tomb. Men and women have different visit times. I waited for about an hour to get that chance and so did my wife.

Tombs in Mecca and Medina, or perhaps in Saudi Arabia, are unique. Usually, a stone which contains information of the death person's name, birthday, and death date is put on a place where someone is buried. However, the tombs which I saw did not have that kind of stone. Instead, there is only a normal stone on it to signify that it is a tomb without any information on it. So when I visited the tombs of the prophet companions, there was no information at all regarding who was buried in there. However, the Ottomans in the past kept a good record of

who was buried in that place. thus our guide could easily show us where the tombs of some important figures in Islamic history were located. I was really impressed that the Turkish people really respect and are really proud of their history!

Saudi Arabia has distinctive rules regarding women. This is what made us most uncomfortable. When I was in Mecca a friend of mine was visited by his uncle. We had a picnic on the side of the road which was surprising for me because usually people have picnic in park etc. But that was on the side of the road. We had nice African foods and African coffee. While eating, I saw women inside my friend's uncle's car. I asked why they were not joining us here. The uncle said that it was forbidden for women to be in public with a group of men. The uncle also said that he had given to the women the same foods we ate.

Citra and me personally experienced this "unique" rule. In Medina, we went to a restaurant which we did not know had a separate place for women. When we entered, the people shouted at us saying, "Haram ! haram !," meaning forbidden in Arabic. Luckily, there was a man showing us where the place for women was. There were women ordering the foods there. But I also still found a separation between the lines, one for men and one for women. From that time, if we bought food outside, Citra just preferred to get her meal packed to be eaten back at the hotel. She did not wish for further harassment.

We were also warned by our guide when we ride a taxi. The guide said that the women should travel with at least one man. He said it is for the security: 'let the man get in to the car then the women get in and let the women get out the car first, then the man get out.'

All those "unique" rules in Saudi Arabia might be claimed to originate from Islam. but keep in mind that Islam is interpreted differently throughout the world. For example, in Indonesia, where we are from, except for praying situation, we don't have segregation between men and women. We can go to any restaurant or places conveniently. Women are also welcomed in public places. A woman could even be president! In other words, we do not have the same rules that the Saudis, even though we are also a muslim majority country. (*Both Fikri and Citra are Indonesian.*)

Citra is a moderate Muslim woman. She dresses moderately and modestly with her hijab. She wears pants and is up to date with fashions. Before we went to Saudi Arabia, she insisted to buy a more conservative-looking cloth, like the Saudi women wear but just without the face cover even though it did not feel as natural to her.

I also expected the cities of Medina and Mecca to be administrated better. I think a better public transportation such as bus, tram, or underground metro might be very useful for the pilgrims to commute or to visit historical places. We mostly used taxis to travel in Mecca. The taxi drivers we had were commonly expats from many countries so it was less likely to have a taxi driver that could speak English. My friend was even cheated by a taxi driver because of this language barrier.

Besides that, the places where our prophet stop by must be better taken care. During our visit to a historical place in Mecca, I found garbage or vandalism with unnecessary words near the place. These conditions must not be allowed in order to respect the place.

We had hoped that more public money would be invested to provide better services to the pilgrims who spend millions of dollars every year. Indonesia alone contributes 1 million for the pilgrims annually. It costs \$100/person to get the pilgrimage visa. Then there is the income that the pilgrims spend on the hotels, restaurants and state-owned airline.



Apart from those things, our pilgrimage was good and quite easy. We finally had a chance to see the Ka'aba*, and the tomb of the prophet and his companions.

From Medina, we had moved to Mecca to do our pilgrimage rituals. The Pilgrimage starts from a place of your choice out of several starting points. When we arrived to that starting point, the men must wear two pieces of white fabrics, one to cover the below part and the other one to cover the upper part of body. Men were not allowed to wear anything other than that two fabrics, not even underwear. However, women could wear anything under the fabrics as long as it covered their body and hair. Our guide said that the fabrics symbolized the fabric which was used to cover a muslim death body where men would be covered in a three layered fabrics and women in a five layered fabrics.

From that starting point we went to the Haram mosque, where we finally had the chance to see the Ka'aba*, the cube which we face when we pray. Then we performed seven counter clock wise turns around the Kaba and we performed our prayer after that. Then we had a drink of Zamzam water. The water was unique because the taste was different from normal water, maybe more like coconut water. It is difficult to explain.

The well of the water is located near the Kaba and according to Islamic history, the water was made possible by God after the wife of Abraham ran between the Safa Hill to Marwah Hill to look for water for her baby, Ishmael. To commemorate her, our next ritual was to march from the Safa Hill and to Marwah hill back and forth for seven times.

Our last ritual was to get our hair cut. I got my hair completely cut whereas my friends just got some of their hair cut. This was also obligated for women too but they just cut a small piece of hair.

Then we finished our pilgrimage. We did it in just 3 or 4 hours so that during our stay in Mecca we could perform as many pilgrimages as we wanted. We just needed to go to the closest starting point and do all the rituals again. We did this three times when we were in Mecca.

I only visited the Medina and Mecca during the pilgrimage. During our stay, the weather in both cities was very hot during the day and it was very dry. There were no clouds at all, and

the sun was very bright. It was hard for my body to adapt because we went from a place with 5 degrees celcius, to a place with more than 30 degrees celcius. It was too hot so that one day when I returned to my hotel from praying in Mecca I got dizzy and my nose was bleeding.

Definatly, I would like to return to Mecca and Medina to perform a pilgrimage again.

Another good news: I have been awarded a scholarship to continue on to my master's degree in political science and international relation major in a private university in Istanbul. The monthly allowance is good too. At least I have a plan to do after the graduation. Now, my job is to finish my undergraduate study before June."

Later emails: "We found Mountain Dew there in Mecca and Medina and I was so happy as I have not had that drink since I left the U.S. I'm told it is now being sold in Turkey but not commonly found yet."

"I also invite people in the church to pray for the victims in New Zealand. because this is not an attack against Islam or a certain religion. It is an attack against the freedom to exercise the religion or belief; such kind of hatred must not be given any space within any community."

Fikrurahmat

*The Ka'aba is 40' **cube** style building made of granite, and rests on a marble base. Located in the city of **Mecca**, Saudi Arabia, it is the most sacred site in Islam. The building predates Islam, and, according to Islamic tradition, the first building at the site was built by Abraham. The Ka'aba is in the background of the pictures above that Fikri sent.

Because of the excessive length of the April Newsletter already, UCU Celebrates 130 years, part 3 of the series on "Church Squabbles" will be continued in the May Newsletter. There are just too many news worthy items to be able to include them all!

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF UNDERWOOD BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES FEBRUARY 27, 2019, BOARD MEETING

Board members present: Tim Lanz, Connie Stigen, Darryl Booker, Shannon Smith, Kris Warhol, Ron Roller, Dave Sanderson, and John Minge.

Board members absent: Bob Worner and John Miersch.

The Meeting was called to order at 5:35 P.M. by Board President Kris Warhol.

1. Kris opened the Meeting with a reading.
2. Agenda: The proposed agenda for this meeting was approved. (Roller/Sanderson)
3. Minutes of the January 2019 meeting were approved with the following corrections: (a) with regard to paragraph 4, the one-page addendum was to the UCU Manual and not to the Five-Year Plan; (b) with regard to paragraph 5, the first name of the Church's bookkeeper is "Tere", not "Terri"; and (c) with regard to paragraph 14, it should have referenced "the Welcome Place" rather than "Someplace Safe". (Smith/Booker)
4. The Finance Committee and the Treasurer's Report: Ron Roller gave the Board a written balance sheet for the period ending on January 31, 2019, as well as written profit and loss and

performance reports for the same time period. He also reported that he had learned that there were no restrictions on the use of the stock donations to the Church from Dorn and Company. Finally, after some discussion of an expense line item in the budget that would cover some portion of the cost of having Church celebrants attend the UUA annual convention, Ron indicated that there was in the current year's budget a \$3,000 expense line item that could be used for that purpose if the Church so decided. He suggested that that such a line item without a precise use designation could be part of the budget to be proposed at the annual meeting in April. The Board took no action on this but did seem satisfied with Ron's suggestion.

5. Stewardship Committee Report. Dave reminded the Board of the "thanksgiving" event/meal scheduled for the following Sunday.

6. Program Committee Report: Kris updated the Board on the efforts of the Speakers Committee. Shannon reported on the activities of the celebrants (such as periodic meetings and what they're reading and doing).

7. Outreach: Ron reported that the applications received for empowerment grants totaled \$19,500—almost double what's likely to be available for approved grants. The chili dinner is scheduled for April 5. A Fergus Falls U Group attended a recent Someplace Safe Tea.

8. Facilities: Ron summarized the items that are being considered by the space planning task force. The three larger projects being considered are a second exit upstairs out of the east end of the sanctuary, replacing the existing windows in the sanctuary, and air quality and ventilation. Other items being considered are water runoff, LED lighting, and an energy audit. Darryl talked about the process that is being followed by the space planning task force. In large part, that will consist of written plan that is presently being prepared and will be presented at a future date.

9. Willmar Workshop: Kris indicated that she had received a good report on this workshop.

10. Church Coordinator: It was reported that JoAnn Larson has resigned from her position with the Church—primarily through informal communications with Kris. A motion to accept JoAnn's resignation, effective February 28, 2019, was made and seconded. (Minge/Sanderson) That motion passed. John Minge is to draft a letter to be signed by Kris informing JoAnn that the Board has accepted her resignation as of the prescribed date. Arrangements are to be made to retrieve from JoAnn any church keys that are in her possession as well as the church computer at the same time as JoAnn is given her final paycheck for the period ending on February 28, 2019.

The next Board meeting is to be held on March 20, 2019, at 5:30 p.m. at Sverdrup Suites.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted this 18th day of March 2019.

John Minge, Secretary