

## Unitarian Church of Underwood December, 2012 Newsletter

The Unitarian Church of Underwood is a welcoming community of diverse people who gather to reflect, to find refuge, spiritual renewal and intellectual growth; to improve our understanding of the world; to build bridges towards peace and understanding; and to improve lives and opportunities across our communities.

### Coming Up in December

#### Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30

December 2 – Mary Phillipe – United Way – Living United In Otter Tail County  
 December 9 – Mark Vinz – The Poet’s Work  
 December 16 – Laura Thompson – What Are You Waiting For?  
 December 23 – Betsy Wells – Seasonal Poems, Songs, and Stories  
 December 30 – Ellen Eastby – There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place

#### Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15

December 2 – Adult RE – Discussion will continue on the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the book American Gospel by Jon Meacham  
 December 9 – Strategic Planning Discussion Group – Everyone is invite to attend  
 December 16 – Writing as Spiritual Practice

### Child Care

Betsy Wells will be doing child care during one church service a month. Please contact her for more information.

### Weather Related Announcements

Find weather related announcements on Lakes Radio Family of Stations – 103.3, 96.5 FM and 1020, 1250 AM or online at [www.lakesradio.net](http://www.lakesradio.net) under “News” or KSA TV Alexandria, MN or online at [www.KSAX.com](http://www.KSAX.com) under “weather”.

*Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Many people bear three kinds of trouble – the ones they had, the ones they have, and the ones they expect to have.*

Edward Everett Hale (Unitarian, minister, author, historian)

## Sunday Morning Speakers

**December 2** – Mary Phillipe – Living United in Otter Tail County – An overview of United Way Programs – Community Volunteering opportunities and our mission.

Mary Phillipe has been a 20 year resident of Otter Tail County living in the community of Fergus Falls. She is married with two children. Mary graduated from St. Cloud Technical College with a degree in Sales. Mary had a 12 year career in training, Organizational Development and Human Resources prior to working for United Way of Otter Tail County. Mary has been with United Way for 8 years and has served as the Director for 5. Mary also serves on the Otter Tail County Safe Communities Coalition, Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative, Otter Tail County Early Childhood Workgroup, Non Profit Essentials Training Workgroup, Fergus Fall Early Childhood Initiative, Otter Tail County Emergency Shelter and Food Committee; she serves as a board member for the State of Minnesota United Ways and is a local member of Fergus Falls Business and Professional Women’s Organization and Fergus Falls Otter Risers Kiwanis.

**December 9** – Mark Vinz – The Poet’s Work

My talk is titled “The Poet’s Work,” which derives from one of my favorite quotes: “A poet’s work is to name the unnamable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it from going asleep.” (Salman Rushdie)

That subject is also related to most recent book, *The Work Is All*, which is a collection of poems on poets and poetry—my own exploration of what has, for so many years, called me to be a writer.

Mark Vinz is Professor Emeritus of English at Minnesota State University Moorhead, where he served as the first (1995-98) coordinator of MSUM's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. His poems, stories, and essays have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies; his most recent books are collections of poems, *Long Distance* and *The Work Is All*. He is also the co-editor of several anthologies, including *Inheriting the Land: Contemporary Voices from the Midwest*, and *The Party Train: A Collection of North American Prose Poetry*.

A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry, he has also won the New Rivers Press Minnesota Voices competition, Milkweed Editions “Seeing Double” competition, six Pen Syndicated Fiction awards, three Minnesota Book Awards, and the Lake Region Arts Council Individual Artist award. He has given workshops and readings from his work throughout the region, as well as several poetry and jazz performances in collaboration with pianist David Ferreira and bassist Bill Law, most recently as a program on Prairie Public TV in Fargo, which was aired in July.

### **December 16** – Laura Thompson – What Are You Waiting For?

In the Christian tradition, Advent is a season of wondrous expectation and preparation. What are the wonders that we are waiting for and how do we prepare for them?

Laura Thompson is a former chef and current seminary student at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Laura currently works part time as a chaplain at a long-term specialty care center. When not studying or working she enjoys cooking and time spent laughing with friends. She makes her home in Saint Paul with her partner Emily and their ever-energetic dog, Pip.

### **December 23** – Betsy Wells – Seasonal Poems, Songs, and Stories

We will have a Christmas/Seasonal celebration. Everyone is invited to participate. Please contact Betsy Wells if you have a story, poem, or song that you would like to share.

### **December 30** – Ellen Eastby - There's a Spirit of Love in This Place

On November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ron Graham and I attended a workshop sponsored by Prairie Star District about worship services. The fabulous Dr. Marcia McFee presented. (Google "Dr. Marcia McFee" if you'd like to know more about her.) During the December 30 Sunday Service, I will give you a taste of what we learned during this workshop. Of course, there will still be a traditional message during the service entitled There's a Spirit of Love in This Place. It will very much be about the spirit love found in the Unitarian Church of Underwood and its people.

## **Strategic Plan Group Discussion**

The last of the three group discussion about our Strategic Plan will be held Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 a.m. in the lower level of the Unitarian Church of Underwood. The discussion will focus on Outreach, but there will be an opportunity to discuss other topics. It is important that we get your input about the Strategic Plan, as it will guide us over the next 4 years. If you are unable to attend, you can talk to a board member at any time about the Strategic Plan. That information will be brought back to the planning team. For more information you can contact Ellen Eastby at [eastofellen@hotmail.com](mailto:eastofellen@hotmail.com) or 218-731-0803.

## **UU Humor**

Why did the UU cross the road? To support the chicken in search for its own path.

"I know my humor is outrageous when it makes the Unitarians so mad they burn a question mark on my front lawn." Lenny Bruce.

## Member Profile

How do you get to switch places and be the one interviewing Stephanie? Blackmail. I promised to do a few of these IF she went first.

Stephanie and Dave Sanderson live in a log home on a little country estate with shoreline, woods, horse barn and pasture and a few animals: 2 mares (Capriche & Gabriella), Ben and Jerry the cats (Ben being the one on my lap, Jerry a bit shy), Mickey the greeter dog, 5 hens (no longer named since a coyote ate Mildred, the greeter chicken, and Madison). Not to mention Dave's African Kudu and Gemsbok which grace their living room.

Stephanie is retired from her most recent career as a psychologist. She primarily worked with PTSD patients, especially women with sexual abuse histories. From this she became aware of the tremendous complexity of the brain, especially from her patients with dissociative disorders. Previously she worked as a stockbroker and options strategist. She admits to a much more complex history which includes Radiologist Technologist, a runway model at Young Quinlan's, working at Dayton's (so long ago that she watched the I.D.S. tower being built). "I'm so old that there is more history than you would want to know."

What was it like growing up as the daughter of a Lutheran pastor? Well, many of you have heard the wisecracks about this being the reason she is how she is. But, Stephanie has fond memories of her devoted parents and the kindness she experienced from the congregations her father served. The members of those congregations brought a richness to their lives that she still values today.

She and David have (combined) 5 children - Jami, Jodi, Erin, Sean and Seth and 7 grandchildren – Christopher, Gennifer, Cole, Sean, Christian, Carter, and Cooper. Last summer she was the celebrant for her granddaughter Genna's wedding. "My family is what gives me meaning in life."

Stephanie came to us about 7 years ago when Kris asked her to speak on "The Power of the Heart." She was wowed by the attentiveness and enthusiasm of the congregation. The next week she was back to sign the membership book and has been an active participant ever since. She is both a visionary and an involved contributor to helping our church move forward. She picked up on the idea of small groups from our first 5 year plan and brought the idea to the Celebrants as a possible service project. She continues to play a central and active part in what has become an astounding 5 U groups with about 40 participants. In addition she was president of the board for 2 years and served on the board for 6. When she became president of the board, she was terrified of church politics, but her experience on the board proved to be so gratifying that it "restored my faith in human beings and our ability to work together."

As a Celebrant she especially loved the 2 child dedications and the 2 weddings she did on behalf of the church. Her most recent contribution is working with Ellen to put out a first class newsletter which, amazingly, not only contains a lot of pertinent information but always comes out precisely on the first of each month. "But, don't ask me to bake bars, it's beyond me."

Her belief is "the Universe that sustains us is greater and more glorious than our wildest imagination and I fall on my knees in wonder of it."

Ron Graham

## **An Original Piece**

### **The Winter of our Lives**

Looking up from my work, I see a large nest of mud and grass, empty now, resting on the gnarly branch of an old oak. Lower in the woods, I find the tiny twig structure of a wren, looking for all the world like a game of "Pick Up Sticks" left behind by woodland nymphs. I recover a tiny yellow warbler's nest, woven from the tail hairs of my grey Spanish mares. Beyond incredible.

A delight of oncoming winter is of finding the homes left behind by our feathered summer friends. They seem to me to be impossible feats of artistry and creativity.

Maybe life is like that. The winter of our lives lay bare the structures we have created – for good or for ill- on which our lives rest: our values, our family, our friendships, our priorities and passions. It reveals our legacy. It is a time of reckoning, reflecting and rejoicing. And so it is and so it will be.

Steph Sanderson

## **Thank You Betsy Wells**

Betsy Wells has been very active at UCU. She was the Chairperson for the Programs Committee for several years, she has coordinated kitchen work, and has been involved with Kids RE since 1988 when her youngest was just 3 years old. She has recently resigned as coordinator for Kids RE. She said, "I have gotten to work with many wonderful parents and kids over the years!! Great Halloween haunted houses; fun sleepovers to prepare for the annual Christmas program; great discussions and projects." Betsy is hopeful that when our little ones are a wee bit older and are ready for Kids RE, that someone will take the lead with that program. It always seems to work out. People are there when we need them. We are hugely blessed that way in this church. We want to thank you Betsy for all you have done and continue to do. You are a gem!

## **SOURCES OF TRUTH FOR THE LIVING TRADITION**

On November 11, I laid out my best case for paying more attention to our Unitarian Sources. Since we do not depend on an inerrant Pope, the Bible as the exact Words of God, or even denominational prescribed creeds, we must rely on our 4<sup>th</sup> principle “Common search for Truth and Meaning. But, what sources do we use to arrive at this truth and meaning?

While the Baptists and other fundamentalists rely on “The Bible” (2 words) and the United Methodists on “Bible, Tradition, Experience and Reason” (4 words), it turns out we need 147 words to fully cover our 6 sources.

Those 147 words have been printed on the back of our bulletin, along with our 7 principles, Sunday after Sunday. But, it appears few of us have even noticed, much less contemplated their meaning and application. I believe we, as a congregation, need to better understand and use those 6 sources.

So far we have found someone to lead the effort for 2 of these (Saundra is putting together a program that will celebrate some of our “prophetic women....” and I will begin to put together something on “Christian teachings.” But, even for those two, this only touches part of the designated source and each of them could be a whole series. This might well turn into an ongoing effort similar to Bob’s years long series on our Principles.

We, as a congregation, have rich and varied experiences with many of these sources. If you are interested in being a part of this effort, please contact me at [Universeron@hotmail.com](mailto:Universeron@hotmail.com). You may not want to present aloud for 25 minutes but we can explore various ways to teach the sources in addition to the usual one person lecture, Thanks so much.

Ron Graham

## **Celebrants**

You maybe haven’t heard much about the celebrants lately, but they are alive and well. Celebrants are the people in our church who have been designated to assist with and to officiate life passage ceremonies for people within or even sometimes outside of UCU. They are able to legally perform weddings in the state of Minnesota, and can also do funerals and dedications. The celebrants are Bob Worner, Florance Thompson, Ron Graham, Stephanie Sanderson, Deb Ferguson, and just added, Ellen Eastby. If you would like more information about the celebrants, (they do much more than what is written here) any one of these people would be happy to talk to you.

## Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

**Note...***The italicized portion of this article is taken word for word off of the website at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org). The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonsectarian organization that advances human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. We envision a world free from oppression and injustice, where all can realize their full human rights.*

*Through a combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, UUSC promotes **economic rights**, advances **environmental justice**, defends **civil liberties**, and preserves the rights of people in times of **humanitarian crisis**.*

*We also engage local communities through our service-learning program, **JustWorks**, which introduces participants to the work of our domestic and overseas partners — who are often on the front lines of addressing social-justice issues.*

*Our work is built on the conviction that all people are entitled to basic human rights, which transcend divisions of class, race, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and gender.*

*We rely on our members and supporters — people just like you — to fund our programs. Anyone wishing to support human rights and social justice is welcome to **join us**.*

*UUSC is an associate member of the **Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)**, but receives no general financial support from the UUA. Neither do we receive funding from federal or state governments or institutions, ensuring our independent voice.*

*Headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, UUSC is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.*

UUSC started working with the Papaye Peasant Movement (PPM) shortly after the earthquake devastated Haiti in 2010, to help build eco-villages in the country's Central Plateau region. Each village include 10 separate homes built by the men and women, and children who will live in them, a community center, composting toilets, cisterns, and the critically important tire gardens. The tire gardens us especially fertile soil and retain rainwater much longer than the ground, making them far more productive than traditional gardens. Just five tire gardens can feed a family of four for a year. And since the tire gardens are elevated, the crops are protected from goats, cows, and pigs that might destroy them.

Right now the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, New York have offered to match ---- dollar-for-dollar---- every contribution of \$100 or more that UUSC receives by the end of the year. That means a contribution can help families escape the slums and build new lives of dignity, but the contribution of \$100 or more must be received by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

If you would like to make a contribution please go to their website [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org) or look for copies of the donor information card located on the table just before entering the sanctuary.

## Empowerment Grants

The new Empowerment grant cycle will be starting soon. If you would like an application please contact Ron Roller or watch for them at church over the next couple of weeks. Information will be posted on our website at [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org) as it becomes available.

## UU Quote

*Mankind has always been but one humanity. We still are. It may even be prophesied that we probably always will be. Our great problem is and has been for ages, how to live with each other, with fellow human beings. Religion in its core is what Jesus and Buddha and Lao Tzu and*

## UCU Website

Check out our website for all kinds of church related information at [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org). The website will have some bigger changes made over the cold winter months. Keep watching!

## Minutes of the October 21, 2012 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

Present: Ellen Eastby, David Wass, Dave McRoberts, Luke Anderson, Donn Siems, David Wass, John Minge, Norman Kolstad, Alisha Piekarski, Mary Anderson, Mary Worner, and Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson. Absent: none

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Eastby at 12:36 pm. Mary Worner offered a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (Minge/Siems).

The minutes of the September 19, 2012 meeting were approved as printed (M. Anderson/L. Anderson).

### Reports:

Treasurer: David Wass

Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson

Program Committee: John Minge

A motion passed to reimburse Ellen Eastby up to \$200 for expenses related to attending the Prairie Star workshop in Mankato, November 2 & 3 (M. Anderson/Minge).

Facilities Committee: Dave McRoberts  
Outreach: no report

Old business:

A motion passed to participate in the Community Thanksgiving service November 21 at Sverdrup Lutheran Church (M. Anderson/Minge).

Other reports: internal audit, Eastby; banner, Minge; sound system, McRoberts; strategic plan, L. Anderson; exit interviews, Worner.

A membership committee was established to be responsible for welcoming, orientation, and retention of members (Worner/M. Anderson). Chair Eastby appointed Mary Anderson and Alisha Piekarshi as co-chairs of the new committee.

Endowment Committee: Mary Worner reported and moved that the board look into the possibility of hiring a professional to guide the congregation through the process of establishing a planned giving program; second by Minge, motion passed. Ellen Eastby, Luke Anderson, and John Minge are to handle this task.

Membership: Chair Eastby deemed that board consensus was return the July, 2012 Recommendations Regarding Membership to the committee for review based on new information regarding proposed changes to the UUA Program Fund assessments. A letter will be drafted to the UUA expressing support for change to the Program Fund.

The Annual Goals for 2012-2013 were adopted (L. Anderson/Siems).

A motion passed to have a “vote no” (on the marriage amendment) sign only on the church lawn (Wass/M. Anderson).

Next meeting: November 28 at 6:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 pm.

Norman Kolstad, secretary.