

## Unitarian Church of Underwood December, 2013 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.*

### Continuing the Newsletter

We want to thank Ellen Eastby and Stephanie Sanderson for all their work on issuing informative and timely Newsletters these last two years. We regret, but understand their need to move on and know they have left big shoes to fill. But we just felt that the newsletter was too important to let even one issue go so with the help of you all, Mickie Edmonds and I will act as co-editors/writers and continue to issue the Newsletter. Please submit your ideas and articles to: [medmonds@arvig.net](mailto:medmonds@arvig.net) and/or [maryanderson8380@msn.com](mailto:maryanderson8380@msn.com).

### Coming Up in December

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

**December 1** - Shannon Smith - 2009 South Africa Mission Trip

**December 8** - Sarah Lysacker - Tsunami Relief in Ishinomaki, Japan

**December 15** - Jessica Daniels - Darwin and Evolution

During service - Kids' RE

Following service- John Minge's Curry Dinner

**December 22** - Holiday Celebration

**December 29** – Graceful Journeys

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

**December 1** – Adult RE

**December 15** – Writing as a Spiritual Practice

#### Other Meetings:

**December 5** 11:45 a.m. U Group Facilitators

6:30 p.m. Planned Giving Committee

**December 8** 9:00 a.m. Celebrants

**December 11** 12 Noon Facilities Committee

5:30 p.m. Membership Committee

**December 18** 5:30 p.m. Speakers Committee

7:00 p.m. Board Meeting

Please note that news and information about upcoming speakers is also available on our website [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org).

“Unitarian Universalism’s purpose is much bigger than gathering with like-minded people for mutual support. The contemporary understanding of Unitarian Universalism is in truth a utopian and demanding vision of community. We must build our religious communities *not as refuges*, but to humanize our culture and transform the world.” Excerpts from “Religious Community is not Enough” by Rev. Tom Shade’s in his article in the UUWorld magazine Winter 2013.

## More about December Sunday Speakers

### **December 1** - Shannon Smith - **2009 South Africa Mission Trip**

Shannon moved to the Fergus Falls area 3 years ago for her current work as a conservation (civil) engineer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS). Before moving to this area she lived near Onamia, MN (16 yrs), in Eau Claire, WI (13 yrs), and also in the Twin Cities, where she grew up. Shannon has studied and worked in the fields of musical stringed instrument repair, band instrument repair, civil engineering, and Reiki energy healing. Because of her mom's prodding her to learn music, she now enjoys playing the violin and singing with others to share the joy of music.

In Oct. of 2009, Shannon went on a mission trip with a group to Shongweni, South Africa, 20-30 miles NW of Durban on the Indian Ocean coast. It is an area heavily ravaged by HIV leaving many orphans. Several Lutheran churches formed a mission support network for the Shongweni work that has grown and grown. It began to refurbish and re-pastor an abandoned Lutheran church in Shongweni, and it now includes 40-50 simple homes built to house orphans and their caretakers, a community center, a crèche (nursery and pre-school program), a sewing center for women, a soccer field for the boys and men (including team support with equipment and uniforms), and more.. Shannon will share her impressions of South Africa and the mission.

### **December 8** – Sarah Lysaker - **Tsunami Relief in Ishinomaki, Japan**

Sarah Lysaker traveled to the tsunami disaster area in April 2013. Though it is two years later, the area is still devastated and people are traumatized, but there is hope and rebuilding too. Sarah will present on the experience of staying in Ishinomaki for five days, hearing the stories of survivors, and playing traditional Japanese flute music.

**December 15 - Darwin and Evolution.** Guest Speaker, Jessica Daniels has a BA in biology from Concordia College. She has her MS degree in Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics from the University of Minnesota where she has taught for the last 8 years of her 13 years of teaching.

**December 22** –We will have a **Holiday Celebration** that will feature members of our congregation. The kids will present a short play to recognize/honor the winter solstice. Some people have already let Betsy know they are interested in participating - by sharing a song or poem or reading. We will sing some of the old favorite carols, and Budd will bring his dancing dolls. If you would like to be involved, please contact Betsy Wells. On this date for after service treats, everyone is asked to bring a small amount of Christmas treats - such as a dozen cookies.

**December 29** – A faith ambassador from the MN Council of Churches will talk about the pilot project, **Graceful Journeys** that helps people think about the kinds of decisions that need to be made at end of life. Graceful Journey acknowledges that life is a journey and offers tools necessary to discuss and make those decisions on the basis of deeply held religious beliefs, surrounded by a caring community of faith. After a quick coffee break, we will resume back in the sanctuary for question/answer time.

### **December 15, “Curry & Carolling”**

Following the Sunday service on December 15, John Minge is once again providing for us his curry dinner with some help from others. Please plan to stay for dinner and carolling accompanied by Mary Worner on the piano & Shannon Smith on the violin.

### **Children’s Religious Education (Kids’ RE)**

Children’s Religious Education will resume activities December 15 10:30-11:30 a.m. during Sunday services. Betsy Wells has come out of retirement to resume work with our kids. Betsy will have help from several of the parents. We now have 7-10 kids ranging in age from 3 to 13. The kids will participate in the Holiday Celebration on December 22. After that Children’s RE will meet once a month, January – May. The group through email contact will determine the best Sunday of the month to meet. They will begin each RE with the chalice lighting and as a group discuss Bible stories/other traditional stories. Then they will split into 2 groups with Heather Czeck (mother of 3 of the kids and “adoptive” member of whoever else she brings) will do activities with the younger kids and Betsy will be with the older kids. The older kids want something in the direction of “Coming of Age” (the UU kind of confirmation). If you have kids, join them!! For more information, contact Betsy Wells at [betsyanddougwells@gmail.com](mailto:betsyanddougwells@gmail.com) or 218-736-4469.

*“New life grows.*

*Each new life ventures first words, first steps, first essays in the art of living. Each grows, ever surpassing the life that was for the life that shall be. May we patiently wait, and watch in wonder. “ Reading # 717 from Singing the Living Tradition.*

### **Native American Truth Telling Book Collection**

The Northwoods UU Fellowship of Brainerd/Pine River left with us their collection of Native American Truth Telling books. The books are generally written by Native American authors and dispel some of the untruths and myths about Native American history, spiritual practices and culture. The Adult Religious Education group this year wants to gain a sense of the spiritual traditions of Native Americans so this collection is indeed apropos to this study. These books are now available for check-out. Please see Betsy Wells.

### **2014 Directory with 125 Year History**

We will soon order the Photo Directories with a 125 year UCU history compiled and written by Norm Kolstad. If you want a copy of the Directory and haven’t placed your order and paid \$5/directory, please contact [maryanderson8380@msn.com](mailto:maryanderson8380@msn.com). We can only order a limited number of extra copies so don’t go without one!

## November Successes

**Area Fall Workshop:** The Unitarian Church of Underwood, Minnesota hosted on November 9<sup>th</sup> an area fall workshop “Building Stronger UU Fellowships.” Rev. Ian Evison, Congregational Life Specialist with the MidAmerica Region, was the featured guest.

Twenty-seven attendees came from seven other Fellowships including: Bismarck-Mandan Unitarian Universalist Fellowship & Church, Northwood UU Fellowship of Brainerd/Pine River, UU Church of Fargo Moorhead, Grand Forks UU Fellowship, St. Cloud UU Fellowship, St. Cloud Spirit of Life, and UU Church of Willmar.

There were 30 attendees/volunteers from the UCU who served as registrants, greeters, treaters, lunch servers, presenters, facilitators and note takers. High praise was given by the attendees for the wonderful musicians who played upstairs and downstairs, during the opening and closing ceremonies and during lunch. Out-of-towners were astonished when they heard that these musicians are regularly featured at UCU’s Sunday services.

The visitors also expressed appreciation for our church facility that had been freshly painted and “all spiffed up” to welcome our guests. The UCU will be celebrating the 125 year anniversary of this congregation in 2014.

The workshop featured three topic areas: Building Spirituality, Social Justice and Community Service Action and Building Vital Fellowships with three sessions under each area. During lunch, participants divided for discussion of 8 topic areas.

Evaluation comments included gratitude for gathering with other UUers, communicating, learning and sharing together.

It was a day of meeting fellow Unitarian Universalists, sharing best practices and appreciating our common journey.

From Ian Evison: “It was a great honor to be with you in Underwood for the weekend of November 9-10. It was fun to get to know you and amazing to meet all the leaders from so many congregations. I may have been the “featured” guest but I felt myself to be only a small part of the weekend.”

Before giving the “official” quote above, this is what else Ian said: “I have been on a high from the experience of the weekend ever since I was with you. I want to finish my fall season every year with an event like this!”

If you would like a copy of the session notes and/or evaluations, please contact:

[maryanderson8380@msn.com](mailto:maryanderson8380@msn.com)

### **Habitat for Humanity Fund Raising Dinner**

225 people attended the Habitat for Humanity annual Fund Raising Dinner and at least 24 of them were from the Unitarian Church of Underwood. UCU members were also heavy donators for and buyers of items in the silent auction. Liz Sweder donated two pecan pies and Don Sweder was highest bidder until Bob Worner finally outbid him on one of them. Mary Worner said they had it for Thanksgiving dinner and it was "fantastic!" The Silent Action alone took in \$2399.00 with nearly \$16,000 in other donations. A highlight of the program was the introduction of the couple for whom a wheel chair accessible home is currently being built. Along with this new build, Habitat repaired 40 homes over 2012-2013. Dave McRoberts is a new member to the Habitat Board and Bob & Mary Worner serve on the committees.

### **Community Thanksgiving Celebration**

Over 50 people from four congregations, Sverdrup and Tingvold Lutheran Churches, St. James Catholic Church and the Unitarian Church of Underwood, joined together the evening before Thanksgiving day in this the 3<sup>rd</sup> year to give our thanks. Music, gratitude offerings with a theme of thankfulness for heritages, more music and the Thanksgiving proclamation as written by President Obama were all part of the program. Treats and good conversations followed. Thanks to Dave McRoberts for helping organize this now traditional Thanksgiving collaboration with our other faith partners.

#### **UU Quote**

*As We Gather Together This Morning  
by Bets Wienecke*

*As we gather together this morning,  
May we learn to recognize and affirm  
The pieces of possibility - -  
The bits of good - - we bring.  
May we encourage rather than control;  
Love rather than possess;  
Enable rather than envy.  
Allowing our individual gifts to weave a patchwork of peace;  
The soft deep blue of sensitivity and understanding;  
The red energy of creativity;  
The white heat of convictions;  
The risky, fragile green of new growth;  
The golden flashes of gratitude;  
The warm rose of love.  
Each of us is indispensable  
If we are to minister to a broken and wounded world.  
Together, in our gathered diversity, we form the whole.  
So be it.*

*(read by Ellen Eastby for Opening Ceremony of the Area Workshop)*

## **“Gifts They Bring” Featuring 2013 New Members**

This past year, we took in eight new members. We welcomed three new members at our Flower Ceremony in March. Although we did not have an official welcoming ceremony in October, the other new members signed the book these past months with orientation to be held at a later date. Please welcome to our membership:

**Heather Czeck** – Heather was born and raised in the Twin Cities but in September 2007, she and her family followed her grandmother to the country and moved to Perham. Heather’s kids, Skylar, Jewel & Sterling had been regularly transported to church by Great Grandma, Mary Anderson. They are all active with Kids’ RE. Heather joined the Perham U Group last year and liked it so much that she decided to become a member of the church. She was welcomed at the March 2013 ceremony along with Cedar & Sarah below. Also in late March, tag-along Precious arrived and now she tags along to church with her older siblings, mom & great grandma. Heather is now Kitchen Coordinator for Sunday mornings. You’ll see her in the kitchen with her list ready for you to sign up for a date to bring treats.

**Sarah Lysacker** - You know Sarah as our wonderful flutist. Sarah grew up in Pelican Rapids and works for Otter Tail Power in Fergus Falls. She heard about the church from Katy Olson and wanted to check it out. She was looking for a community to replace the fundamentalist church groups she'd been raised with. She was welcomed at the March 2013 ceremony along with Heather and Cedar, bringing more young adults to our Fellowship. Sarah says “The best parts of being a part of the UU church are the freedom of opinion and the freedom of musical expression.” Playing flute for Sunday services has been a highlight of the last two years for her because she can play absolutely anything she wants, instead of being limited to "sacred" music. We’ve just learned that Sarah will soon be leaving to do some long-term travelling. During that time, we will miss Sarah and her beautiful flute playing as well as her lovely presence.

**Cedar Walters** – Cedar grew up attending the Unitarian Church of Underwood, and recently moved back to the Underwood area after living in Minneapolis for many years. Cedar graduated from the Sustainable Food Program and raised and sold her first batch of chickens this past year with her dad, Ron Roller. But lately most of her time is spent raising her young son, Hart. Hart prefers to take his naps during the time of Sunday service but soon that may change. Cedar, her husband Chris and Hart have recently moved back home to Linden Tree with Katy Olson and Ron Roller so notice the smiles on those grandparents’ faces!

**Meredith Albers** – Meredith found UCU out of curiosity. She googled UCU, came, liked, joined, got a job promotion and then LEFT us for the Big Sky country of Great Falls, Montana. Meredith works for the Natural Resources Conservation Services and is doing soil investigations. Before leaving, she talked to us with great passion about her love for soil. Meredith has recently bought a home in Great Falls and is looking for a church home but the closest UU is in Helena about 1 ½ hours away. Meredith says to tell everyone “Hi!”

**Anne & Luke Andersen** – Our most recent additions are Anne and Luke. They've been living in Fergus Falls the past 8 years. Anne is employed by the Fergus Falls School. She is on the boards for the Fergus Falls Swim Team and the Boy Scouts. She is also a facilitator for an autism group. Anne's daughter attends the University in Madison, Wisconsin where she is majoring in music. Luke is on the swim team and does Tae Kwan Do. He is also a den chief for a Cub Scout den and really likes interacting with the young scouts. In fact, it is because of the Boy Scout's pledge that Luke wanted to find a church home and once they attended UCU, he said it felt right. Anne and Luke have jumped right in already helping out with treats and serving at the Thanksgiving Celebration. And Luke has agreed to help out with the sound system on Sunday mornings. Now that deserves a Merit Badge! Please introduce yourselves to Anne and Luke when you next see them.

**Mary Lundeen** - Mary Lundeen divides her time between Battle Lake and Tucson, Arizona. She is now south so we will find out more about Mary once she returns again in the summer.

**Tere Mann** - Tere has again returned to UCU after sojourns with other denominations and an 8+ year sojourn to the Boulder, Colorado area. Tere moved to OT County in 1977 and with Bert, established Linden Tree, an attempt at intentional community where they built the "umbrella house." Beginning with Maine Coop/Common Health Cooperative Warehouse and Linden Tree, Tere's life has intertwined with Katy Olson and Ron Roller in a number of ways for a lasting connection over the years. While in Boulder, she obtained her Master's Degree in Environmental Leadership at Naropa University. She's looking to establish herself in some niche of sustainability. She has also returned to massage therapy and is practicing at the Body Mind Center. Tere can be described as a "Jill of all Trades." She is full of energy and vitality and is willing to do it all, with the knowledge that she is still learning how to say "no". Tere said there was no question of her returning to the Unitarian Church of Underwood because she appreciates its "open door." We're glad you're back, Tere!

**Jen Walla** – Jen was raised in Fargo where she attended the Fargo/Moorhead UU. She even worked as a bicycle mechanic. She left there to get her certificate at the Sustainable Food Production Program at Fergus Falls. Last summer she spent her internship working at 4 farms in the Itasca area. On one farm she learned about medicinal plants and Icelandic sheep, another was an organic CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), the 3<sup>rd</sup> a large vegetable farm and the last, a smaller hobby farm where they raised poultry and had a large garden. Jen says she learned ways to make farming and that life style work and "some of what not to do". Some day Jen wants to have her own farm with medicinal plants, goats and poultry. We're happy that Ron Roller & Katy Olson introduced Jen to UCU as we like seeing her with her easy, ready-smile greeting us on Sunday mornings.

*“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)*

**Mark your Calendars!!**  
**January 19, 2014**  
**125 Year Anniversary Celebration Kick-Off**  
**Special Speaker – Stefan Jonasson**  
**Special, Special Music**  
**Potluck**  
**UCU Directory Reveal**

### **Did you know this about UCU History?**

“**On January 13, 1889**, a small group of Norwegian immigrants, determined to establish a liberal forum in which to explore new religious philosophies in this new land, met in Johan Kolstad’s Underwood home to organize a new church which they called *Den Fri Kristne Menighed* (The Free Christian Congregation). Eschewing the dogma, orthodoxy, and absolutism of the Lutheran Church, their vision, now expressed as “a celebration of life and common search for meaning,” has inspired generations of free-thinking Minnesotans for 125 years.

At that first meeting in January, a constitution was adopted and Hans P. Bjorge, and Otto Nilsby were elected as president and secretary. At the incorporating meeting in September, other officers were elected: Johan Trondson, vice-president; Johan Kolstad, treasurer; Josepha Medjaa, Anne Kolstad, Peder Jensen, Martin Ness and Christian Kolstad, trustees. The group at that early date gave suffrage to women.“

“**Today church membership** is at an all-time high. Sunday services featuring interesting and diverse speakers and talented musicians are conducted year-round. Additional opportunities for spiritual awareness and growth abound, with adult and youth religious education, covenant groups and book discussion groups. Member Celebrants conduct ceremonies. The church building, a proud symbol of the church’s heritage, is well-kept and features visual art throughout. An Outreach Committee oversees assistance for Shan refugees, Senior Dining, and many other programs. Annual Empowerment Grants address issues such as poverty, social injustice, environmental challenges and abuse.” *(Excerpts taken as compiled and written by Norm Kolstad for the soon to be published UCU 125 History for the 2014 Directory).*

## **U-Groups**

The presentations at the Area Fall Workshop on Establishing a Covenant Group and Experiencing a Covenant Group were well received by the attendees of these sessions. Several of the attendees from other Fellowships commented that this is one idea they were taking back with them. The presenters were Stephanie Sanderson, Ron Graham and Connie Stigen with other U Group Facilitators supporting. Ron had written and Stephanie edited the lessons and compiled them all in a beautiful spiral bound handbook that comprised “30 Topics for Small Groups.” These are the lessons of the UCU U-groups these last three years. This handbook in itself is of lasting value to us and now to several other Fellowships who received it.

“Rules for Happiness: something to do, someone to love, something to hope for.” Immanuel Kant

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” Mahatma Gandhi “

“Want what you have. Do what you can. Be who you are.” Forest Church  
(From the November lesson: Claiming Happiness).

### **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

(There is always an empty chair at each U Group gathering ready to welcome a new member)

## **Unitarian Church of Underwood Board Minutes for October 20, 2013**

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

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 12:15 p.m.

David Sanderson offered a meditation/reading.

The agenda was approved (Sanderson/Siems).

The minutes of the September 18, 2013 meeting were approved as printed (Worner/Wass).

### Reports:

Treasurer: David Wass

Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson

Program Committee: Mary Worner

Outreach Committee: Mary Anderson

Facilities Committee: Dave McRoberts

Mary Anderson was authorized to purchase a wardrobe for the children's area (McRoberts/Sanderson).

Planned Giving: David Sanderson

Membership Committee: Mary Anderson

Old Business: Anderson reported on the November 9<sup>th</sup> Regional Workshop and the Membership Directory. Other topics: Board roles and responsibilities and missing board minutes.

New Business: The photo/video release form was formally adopted as a policy (Worner/Anderson). Other topics: budget process plan, thanks to painters, acknowledgement of new members, newsletter editor needed, information on the "Beyond Belief Walk for Peace" November 16, and display of the UUA's Honor Congregation designation.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, November 20, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Kolstad