

Newsletter December 2020



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

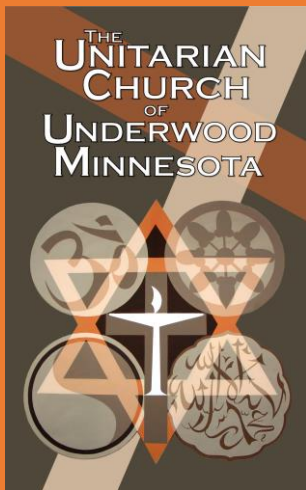
PO Box 58, 206 North Main Street

Underwood, MN 56537

Phone: 218/826-6553

Website: www.ucofu.org

www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org



Budd's Traditional Dancing Dolls

Due to continued precautions against the spreading of the COVID-19

In-person church services, meetings & activities are conducted via Zoom.

Watch for ucofu@ucofu.org messages, the Sunday "UCU Weekly" and check:

www.ucofu.org or

www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org

"Like" UCU on Facebook: see www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org

Stay Informed

U Group Zoom Meeting Schedule

- Alexandria U Group: 4th Sunday each month @ 7 p.m. Facilitators: Lee Becker/Susan Sanford
- Battle Lake U Group: 2nd Tuesday each month @ 3 p.m. Facilitators: Bob Worner.
- Perham U-Group: 2nd Thursday @ 6:30 p.m. Facilitator: Mary Worner

You are welcome to join a U Group – watch for the Zoom links.

For details or questions, Contact Lead Facilitator, Luce Reese @ lucereese@gmail.com or 218/495-2449

Tzedakah

The Hebrew word Tzedakah means both justice and righteousness. In the Jewish faith, it is a moral obligation to share your time, skills, and money to make the world a better place.

At UCU we call that

Gifts in Gratitude

To Contribute to UCU:

Sign up for automatic funds transfer or

Mail your check to: UCU

Attn. Treasurer

PO Box 58

Underwood, MN 56586

Building Access

For safety and sanitation purposes, if you access or need to access the church building, please call or text Susan Groff (Janitor) @ 218/205-0439.

UCU Weekly

Watch for these and other

ucofu@ucofu.org email messages.

Participate in the ZOOM invitations for Sunday service, social hour & other meetings

Note: Send Announcements for UCU Weekly and monthly newsletter to newseditor@ucofu.org. As appropriate, some will be forwarded for inclusion @ www.ucofu.org and Facebook Page.

Need help with Zoom?

Email: techhelp@ucofu.org

Want to volunteer to be part of the Tech Help Team?

Also email: techhelp@ucofu.org

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

Please submit your ideas, articles and photos to:

Writer/Editor: Mary Anderson @

newseditor@ucofu.org

Editing: Stephanie Sanderson

Emailing/ mailing: Ellen Eastby and Mary Anderson

Website: Ellen Eastby

Facebook: Melody Shores

Photos courtesy of Norm Kolstad & credited others.

[Credited Articles](#)

Note: For security, personal telephone numbers and email addresses will not be used within the newsletters except with the express permission of the individual.

UCU Weekly:

Designed and written by Ellen Eastby

Church Happenings

Message from Board President, Norm Kolstad

Where to go from here?



Know yourself. That is good advice for organizations as well as individuals. For the Board of the Unitarian Church of Underwood, it has become our tacit mantra as we seek to map out a future that satisfies our mission, goals, and principles.

As the first step in this process, we have asked members and friends to complete a survey that will tell us about how we are perceived and what can we do to improve. The compiled results will be analyzed by the board and

used to create a course that will be the basis of board actions and for the annual membership meeting in April 2021.

In 2020 we experienced quite a change in how we operate. We learned that technology can be used to connect us when we cannot - or choose not - to meet in person. We also learned that racism may be a more formidable foe than we realized. And we recognize that our demographic is also shifting. These factors will need to be considered in drawing our plans for the future.

We recognize that our job is not to do church the way we always have, but to adapt church experiences and services to meet the needs of our members and friends. Standing still is not an option. *Norm Kolstad*

Unitarian Church of Underwood Viable Future

To date, thirty-five (35) UCU members and friends responded to the Viable Future Questionnaire. The compiled information informs us as to:

- Membership Composition
- Effect of COVID-19 Restrictions
- Member/friend Participation Levels
- Member/friend satisfaction with UCU
- Member/friend aspirations for UCU

In addition, 16 from the Board of Directors and others participated in the Intercultural Development Inventory administered by Victoria McWane-Creek. Information on the meaning of those findings will be presented at an upcoming Sunday service in January.

We will also hold some focus groups to further capture thoughts of members and friends as we refocus on the UCU mission, vision, and goals. Watch for further announcements.

We value your thoughts and insights.

UCU Board of Directors

The Unitarian Church of Underwood now has a Public Calendar. It is available on our website at www.ucofu.org or [click here](#)



Commented [ma1]:

Remember those days??



Photo courtesy of Stefan Jonassen,
"The house if filling up"
November 10, 2019

Speakers for December Sunday Services

Commented [ma2]:

Via Zoom

10:00 a.m.

(Check in 9:45-10:00 a.m.)

See the ucofu.org emails and Weekly for link specifics)

December 6 – Celebrant, Bob Worner – “The Contemporary Story of Job” with the living tradition source, “Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.” It will be about keeping strength and moving forward when difficult challenges arise.

December 13 – Michael Kieber-Diggs, “My Friend, Barb, Our Neighbor, George.” The work of anti-racism is a daily practice. It requires diligence and consistency. By contrast, the forces of racism are pernicious. They thrive from inattention.

Michael Kleber-Diggs is a poet, essayist, and book critic. He is a past Fellow with the Givens Foundation for African American Literature, a past winner of the Loft Mentor Series in poetry, and he just completed service as the inaugural Poet Laureate of the Anoka County Libraries. His debut poetry collection, *Worldly Things*, won the Max Ritvo Poetry Prize and will be published by Milkweed Editions next June.

December 20: Ryan Pesch, "Good Food Movement." The good food movement has not only brought our attention to examine the quality of our food, but also how food and farmers fit within the web of community, economy, and justice. Ryan will talk about how this movement is manifesting itself within our region and playing out in projects that he is involved in from MANNA Food Co-op's expansion to the concept of a permanent farmers market space in downtown Pelican.

Ryan is the owner/operator of Lida Farm, a certified organic vegetable operation near Pelican Rapids, Treasurer of MANNA Food Co-op in Detroit Lakes, Extension Educator with the U of M in community economic development and practicing Lutheran.

December 24 – Traditional Christmas Eve Service @ 4:30 p.m. with Celebrant, Ellen Eastby – "It's Christmas! When Love Whispers Its Magic."

December 27 - "Moving Forward into the New Year." Writer members and friends of our congregation, John Miersch, Ozzie Tollefson, Melody Shores, and Edie Barret will be creatively exploring the theme through readings and presentations.

For a summary of the notes from the November speakers, see the Church Reports issued via ucofu.org email the Monday or Tuesday following each Sunday service.

The UCU Christmas tree is officially lit!



The Battle Lake U Group decided to decorate an artificial tree as a community project. The tree is lit up, decorated, and stands in the upstairs window facing the street. The idea was to share the church's wonder & warm spirit of Christmas with the folks of Underwood. *Luce Reese*



Photos courtesy of Steve Berg & Linda Quistad-Berg & Norm Kolstad

Here, in our church, you are just as much a holiday miracle as the turning of the earth, as persistence and dedication to a faith, as the creation of each new life. We see the love you give to others, the space you create to hold one another's joys and sorrows, and the generosity and spirit you entrust to this community.

You are the holiday miracle. This community is one of miracle-makers.
Gwen Matthews, UU

"It's Christmas! When Love Whispers its Magic"

Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday, December 24 @ 4:30 – 5:15 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

bit.ly/316KoBD

Meeting ID: 931 5581 5221

Passcode: 436212



As we end a year that has brought us some of the worst circumstances many have seen, it would be good to remember that Christmas can bring us some of the best. Where a country is divided, it can bring peace among all people, if only for a day. Where loved ones are grieving, it can bring respite for aching hearts. Where a family can't be together during the holidays, it can bring gratitude for technology. Where people are experiencing poverty, maybe for the first time, it can bring charity for those in need. All these positive emotions and actions stem from love. A love that during the Christmas season whispers loud enough for all to hear.

Join us on Zoom at 4:30 Christmas Eve to join others in the call of these whispers. Join us to be reminded that we need to expand the love we store in our hearts and bring it from a whisper to a joyous shout. Join us to celebrate the magic of Christmas. In all its glorious ways. From the birth of Christ to the twinkle in the eyes of our children to what your heart holds dear. It's Christmas! When love whispers its magic. *Ellen Eastby*

Children are our Wreaths of Joy

Children's R.E. is alive and the kids are entertained weekly through mailings. Inspirational custom projects designed for all ages are happily received. The challenge is to engage, capture and hold their attention. We attempt to inspire the children to take the ideas forward into their own lives.

Unitarian Universalists have a broad range of spiritual, social, and environmental topics to explore. To engage is to awaken the mind. Calling to the heart of all young minds to see what is within their reach. Capturing their attention and allowing them to escape into a wonderland of adventure.





Ten children receive weekly mailings. This Holiday we are making wreaths. The week starts on Monday with a new topic and by Thursday it is completed ready to be mailed out. All the supplies are recycled materials from vast collections over the years. We see this as recycle, renew, and reuse. Just how marvelous is that!

This process gives us joy and purpose. A great escape from the stress these days have brought on. *Kris and Wally Warhol*

Wisdom Class Up and Running



The adult religious education “Wisdom Class” led by Rev. Roger Parks has held two sessions with 14 people participating. The book we are studying, *The Wisdom Pattern: Order, Disorder, and Reorder*, brings up so many topics for discussion that the participants have requested the class be extended beyond the six sessions originally planned. Contact Mary Worner, Program Coordinator, by email at mary.worner@ucofu.org or by phone at 218-826-6998 for more information.



Celebrating the Life of Kathy Thompson

DOD - November 17, 2020

Kathy Thompson, summer visitor with the Unitarian Church of Underwood, died unexpectedly of a heart attack near her home in Florida on November 17, 2020. Otter Tail County resort owner and UCU summer attendee, Kathy made her presence known to us whether she warmly greeted at the front door or blasted into the kitchen with her laughter and enthusiasm.



“Kathy viewed this world through loving eyes seeing beauty, promise, humor and wonder. She also recognized pain, and struggle, and intuitively responded in ways that brought comfort. Kathy was a lover of art, music, dogs, adventure, and dessert. Her three beautiful children Jeff, Eric, and Sarah, and her two grandchildren Alexa, and Milo were her greatest joy.

Pictured here from when Kathy had hired a fishing guide to take her grandson Milo and herself to track down walleye. Kathy knew how to laugh and love, and her friendship has been one of the great blessings in my life.” *Alison Francis*



Gordon Hanson

November 2, 1939 – November 15, 2020

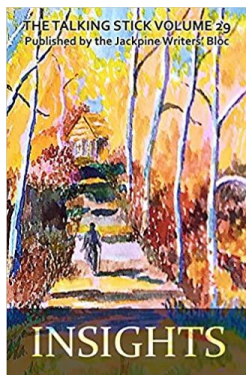
Tenant with his wife, Mary at Sverdrup Suites, Unit 4.

Remembrances at

<https://www.olsonfuneralhome.com/m/obituaries/Gordon-Hanson-5/Memories>

Remembering

*I am a poet,
In search of words,
Measures, and
Metaphors,
To resolve the enigma
Of my time being.*
From "Time Being" by Luke Anderson
(1937-2020)



Shortly after her partner Luke Anderson's death last February, long-time UCU member, Joanne Cress was contacted about the publishing of one of Luke's poems. The caller knew that Joanne was an artist and asked her permission to use it as well one of her paintings. Consequently, not only is Luke featured with the poem above, but the cover of *The Talking Stick, Volume 29* features Joanne's painting entitled "Missing You." The watercolor was painted by Joanne from a photograph she'd taken of Luke walking down a pathway while they resided in California.

Many will remember as Diane Johnson relays "that Luke Anderson was involved in the founding of the Fergus Falls Writers Group and upon the board of the Lake Region Writers Network which put on a yearly writers conference at the college in Fergus Falls. He also started a Underwood Unitarian writers group, which met regularly before Sunday services, utilizing 'prompts' and instigating writing exercises, with the goal of providing material for services, particularly as a means of exploring and initiating thought on our Principles and Purposes."

The Talking Stick referenced is a publication of the nonprofit organization, The Jackpine Writers' Bloc, Inc. It is a Minnesota collaboration of poetry, creative nonfiction and fiction with cash prizes awarded in each category. The goal of The Jackpine Writers' Bloc is simple - to encourage and publish Minnesota writers. Everyone published in this book, and all who worked to see it come to print, have a strong connection to Minnesota. These are writers who know

the length of the winter, the heat of the summer and the short breath-taking springs and autumns of Minnesota. *The Talking Stick* issues are available at Amazon.

**“Like a Traveler Who Stays: Jewish Pioneers of Otter Tail County”
With Missy Hermes, Education Coordinator, Otter Tail County Historical Society**

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library

Wednesday, December 9

6:30 p.m.

Missy’s presentation is an especially timely talk as Hanukkah begins the next day! Of the many immigrant groups who have chosen Otter Tail County as their home, one of the most poignant histories is that of the Jewish pioneers who settled here. Their journeys from Europe to West Central Minnesota tell us about hard work, heartbreak, resilience, and success. Names like Friedman, Braufman, Sigelman, Desky and more are written into the history of Otter Tail County and Minnesota.

To sign up for this Zoom presentation, register here: <https://bit.ly/otcjewishpioneers>

Other Historical Notes

And some think 2020 masks burdensome!



War time Londoners pose under the mistletoe 1940 after receiving the message, "Hitler will send no warning – so always carry your gas mask"

**Thank you, past,
present, and
future health
care & essential
workers.**

Australian nurses ready to battle the influenza pandemic in Surrey Hills, Sydney in April 1919.

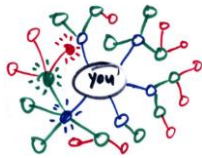


Photos courtesy of Glenn Frische, Willmar UU

*Hope continues, uncertain and true,
like candlelight, ready to spark again.*

All is not lost.

Kevin Jagoe, UU



Staying Connected....

UCU Virtual Dinners Beginning Saturday, December 5, 2020 @ 6 p.m.



Join recurring Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96754347298?pwd=MIJMdUdtYm9CckZLaW94Z3I5SG5sUT09>

Meeting ID: 967 5434 7298

Passcode: 396871

Curry Dinner with Carols a la John Minge

Make your own curry dishes and accompaniments –

Call John @ 218/298-1199 or 218/346-55330 or email bijosh@gmail.com if you need ideas or recipes! Then at 6 p.m. zoom in with others to enjoy a virtual meal together. Details arrived in the November 29 UCU church report.



Other upcoming virtual meals – Saturday, January 9 is African with Mary Anderson complete with a slide show of her time in Tanzania, E. Africa! Tuesday, February 16 will be Mardi Gras with Alison Francis so grab your masks and join her!

If you have questions or wish to sign up to host a dinner, contact Janell Miersch at 218/531-1445 or janell.miersch@ucofu.org.

Living Out Our UU Principles

Prayer for Our Community

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen. (from Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, From the Center for Action and Contemplation)



Confronting Racism in West Central Minnesota Film Festival

Zoom Discussion Recurring Link:

<https://bit.ly/3keC3mE>

Meeting ID: 943 1047 4851

Passcode: 577607

Click [app.bitly.com](https://bit.ly/3keC3mE).

Discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. on each date



The last of the series of discussion on three films viewed will be on **December 14: *Get Out* (Available on Hulu and Amazon Prime Video)**, a suspense thriller of when a young African-American man visits his white girlfriend's family estate and becomes ensnared in a more sinister real reason for the invitation.



Women's Prison Book Project

<http://wpbp.org>

Sponsored by UCU Social Justice Interest Group

The Women's Prison Book Project (WPBP) is giving us an opportunity to help women who are incarcerated to feel their inherent worth and dignity through donating books. The WPBP is an all-volunteer, grassroots organization (501 c3) that:

- Seeks to build connections with those behind the walls, and to educate those of us on the outside about the realities of prison and the justice system.
- Recognizes that flaws and inequities throughout the "justice" system act to control and suppress the lives/movements of the poor, women, and all people of color.

Watch a short video on their website @ <http://wpbbp.org> and see what the prisoners say this program has done for them:

- "Given me a connection to the world outside the fence."
- "The books make us feel like we are worth something when surrounded by some who think we are worthless."

The following are high need books: *Arts and crafts, horror, Christian, dictionaries, coloring books, mystery, self-help, romance, cookbooks, Lesbian, Transgender, Women's health, books in Spanish*. The books need to be soft cover and like new with NO tears, worn covers, yellowing pages or writing in it.

Visit their website above for a link to their Amazon wish list or make a monetary donation to paypal.me/wpbbp. Email any questions to: barbara.honer@ucuof.org.

Our goal is to collect five (5) boxes by January 8, 2021. You can drop off your donations in the Sverdrup Suites #300 front porch. Barbara Honer will transport the books to the collecting site in Minneapolis.

Your donations are appreciated!

Social Justice Interest Group: Amy Beckman, Alison Francis, Barbara Honer, Melody Shores, Shirley Spanhanks



Lenore Way Building Progress

We finished out the sheetrock and are now waiting as the taping and mudding is being completed. We will be back at it after Thanksgiving painting, putting in the flooring, doors, trim, and other finishing touches. It's coming along nicely!

Otto Bremer Trust Matching Grant Fundraising Campaign

We made it! Thank YOU for helping us get there. Over the last 2 months a variety of individuals, churches, and businesses donated to help us meet this fundraising challenge. Otto Bremer Trust will match the \$35,000 we raised to make it \$70,000. That is worth celebrating and thanking this wonderful community and area we live in. **THANK YOU!**

Paul Shol, Community Outreach Coordinator

www.fergushabitat.org

[Facebook](#)

pmschol@gmail.com

Unitarian Church of Underwood
Empowerment Grant
Application Time!
Applications Due January 31, 2021

From Kayak building for Boys & Girls Club, to POPS @ the Farmers Market to Shan Schools in Thailand, over \$100,000 has been distributed in Empowerment Grants by UCU since 2007. The Unitarian Church of Underwood is pleased to offer funding once again for distribution of the 2020-21 Empowerment Grants. These grants are made to encourage church members to develop projects that will have a positive effect on our communities at large. These projects may be related to any number of social or environmental issues, including poverty, education, ecology, alternative energy, & nutrition. The projects may be of varying time and cost, but all will be initiated and managed by the requesting applicant(s). This is an excellent opportunity for church members to make an impact on an issue they feel strongly about in the community around them. The deadline for grant applications is **January 31, 2021**.

Criteria for ‘Empowerment Grant’ requests:

- Must be proposed by Unitarian Church of Underwood (UCU) members.
- Must be compatible with the UCU mission/vision statement. (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).
- Must address one of the seven Unitarian Universalist principles.
- Must be non-discriminatory.
- Projects will not provide direct services to individuals or families - the project may help area charities and non-profits that provide direct services.
- The project being funded must be under the direction of an approved, not for profit (501c-3) organization.
- Projects/groups that have not received previous funding will be given a higher priority for funding.
- All grant recipients must agree to/sign an ‘Empowerment Grant’ contract. This includes progress reports and final report as per contract.

The next funding cycle will be for twelve months. The application deadline for the next funding period is **January 31, 2021**.

To pursue application for an Empowerment Grant, fill out the application online here: <https://forms.gle/zppKA5hUk78edRENA>.

OR print the application at the end of the newsletter and mail to: Unitarian Church of Underwood, PO Box 58, Underwood, MN 56587, Attn: Empowerment Grants.

The application must include the amount requested, a timeline for your project and a specific budget for the cost of the project. It would also be a good idea to talk to a member of the grant committee that will be accepting applications. Selection Team members are: Ron Roller, Amy Beckman, Deb Ferguson, and Connie Stigen.

The committee will review all applications and recommend or not recommend project requests to the church board of directors. Grant selections are determined in February-March, given Board approval in March, with contracts to be signed and returned promptly, and funds distributed upon receipt of the signed contract.

Please contact Ron Roller at 218-770-0374 or at: ron.roller@ucofu.org for further information and/or assistance.

Note again: The hard copy application form is at the end of the newsletter for you to print, complete and submit or it may be completed online @ <https://forms.gle/zppKA5hUk78edRENA>.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead (#561 from *Singing the Living Tradition*)

We Are Part of the Larger UU



Special Announcement

November 2020

Unitarian Universalist Association

Dear Unitarian Church of Underwood,
I send you my deep care in this time of changing seasons and tumultuous days. I continue to hold all of you in my prayers—as you lead your communities in these fraught times.

While there is very hopeful news about the efficacy of new coronavirus vaccines, there is still cause for serious concern. Given the dramatic surge in cases, we reiterate our recommendation for congregations to plan to gather virtually through May 2021. We have made some updates to our [Guidance on Gathering](#), including revised prevention measures and how decisions can be guided by our values.

As the holiday season approaches, I feel the grief of not being able to physically be with family and friends. While the longing to be together is real, so too is the way in-person gatherings increase risk. This pandemic is a vivid reminder that our decisions impact those around us—not only our loved ones, but those most vulnerable, including weary healthcare and essential workers. This is why we continue to lean into our values of collective care and interdependence.

The way that Unitarian Universalists are living our values is my greatest source of hope at this moment. Whether we are adapting to safely minister to one another or responding to the urgent demands of our world, UUs everywhere are showing up and making a difference.

I continue to celebrate joyfully everyone who voted in this critical election and all who overcame the extreme voter suppression. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people were especially targeted, but they still made their voices heard. Across the country, UUs showed up to protect the integrity of the electoral process, as election workers, poll monitors and election defenders. UU the Vote and local grassroots partners—including in contested states like Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona and Georgia—helped mobilize historic voter turnout!

The way that Unitarian Universalists are living our values is my greatest source of hope at this moment.

Even as we recognize the scope of our work, I am aware of how incredibly difficult these last four years have been. And the election cycle is still laden with fraudulent claims. The President is spreading pernicious misinformation that is dangerous to our democracy. His thwarted attempts to discount votes in Detroit, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Milwaukee amount to trying to steal the electoral count and are deeply rooted in anti-Black racism. [Election Defenders](#) is a core organization to volunteer with to help protect the vote in states around the country, including important virtual actions.

We must not let these corrupt efforts overshadow the fact that the election results are a win for democracy and the will of the people. This is a time to remember our collective resilience and ability to protect each other, to defend democracy, and to organize unfailingly for justice, equity and dignity.

As we anticipate the holiday season and create new ways to connect and celebrate

this time, let's remember the joy and love present in our hearts and in our communities. Let us also make space for grief and honor the memories of those who have passed away this year. May we feel the unseen but real threads that binds us all. We are not alone. We are powerful. Our communities are powerful. And we belong to each other.

In this season, may you find restorative space to lean into what you love and what makes you feel connected. May we find strength in our faith, and in the foundation of our families, friends and the people who came before us. While there is much work ahead, may we also make room to breathe and rest, and time to connect with our community and those we love.

Yours in love and care,

Susan

P.S.

Join UU the Vote in this critical time. If you are not already part of this national effort, sign up at UUtheVote.org or by texting VOTELOVE to 51555. There are ongoing opportunities to participate virtually, including support for the Georgia runoff election and a national debrief with election partners.

Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray spends her days strengthening the thriving mission of this faith. In her spare time, she enjoys being with her family and playing with their dog, Hercules.

Brilliant Bits from Boston: GA 2020 Available on Demand

The [2020 GA On Demand Library](#) is now available to the public on Video. In addition to the major GA worship services, business sessions and reports, the library includes the Ware Lecture, featured speaker presentations, learning stage presentations and huge number of workshops all previously available to GA registrants only. Enjoy and share widely!



**Unitarian Church of Underwood
Board Minutes
October 21, 2020**

Attendees were: Norm Kolstad, Mary Anderson, Amy Beckman, John Minge, Ron Roller, Shannon Smith, Wally Warhol, Mary Worner. Also, in attendance: Bonnie Graham, Congregational Administrator. Absent: Tim Lanz

The meeting was called to order by President, Norm Kolstad at 6:33 p.m.

The Board Agenda was approved with a reorder of topics so Mary Worner could present first on the David Pyle assessment information (Ron Roller/John Minge).

The Board Minutes of August 19, 2020 were approved as published (John Minge/Amy Beckman).

Reports:

Practices of Board Leadership: Mary Worner continued sharing highlights on the Practices of Board Leadership, as it was presented by Rev. David Pyle, "...board's task to assess the health and vitality of the congregation" by determining where we have been, the wholeness of the congregation and the Board's own relationships. This is often a neglected practice that ignores the failures and harms. Doing an assessment broadens the Board's view. (See full notes below.)

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ron Roller presented the financial report. Investment with UUA, though continuously fluctuating, show a 10% gain. September collections primarily via Automatic Funds Transfer were \$1906.67 compared to the \$3402.58 monthly collections projected. Ron expects some large collections in January what with the tax advantages to contributors. The UCU website platform does not allow the Givelify application so an alternate online application will be researched. With the decreased expenses, there is \$6800 to the good. Sverdrup rentals continue as regular income. Re: Empowerment Grants: \$1200 was returned; \$200 is pending due to an unsigned contract; \$2500 expected to be returned for the cancelled Nibi Walk. Disposition of these funds will be determined later. Re: Bookkeeper Terms - Tere Mann is satisfied with the \$50/month paid her for bookkeeping services. The full financial reports are available on Google Suites shared drive.

Congregational Administrator's Report: Bonnie Graham reported that she has been working with Melody Shores on implementation of Google Suites. With her queries to the Board, she learned more about additional training needed. In addition, Bonnie noted the UUA message that she'd forwarded the Board about taking protections following the election as many UU churches have been in the centers of political action. Discussion ensued on how UCU wants to be seen by the community and if members/friends will need anything post-election time that the church might provide. The matter was referred to the Social Justice Group.

Records Committee: Norm Kolstad, Committee Chair reported that work for record keeping continues with the implementation of Google Suites, review of the Articles and By-laws, and the

Policy and Procedures Manual. It is expected that the Article and By-laws will be ready for presentation to the membership at the next Annual Meeting.

Facility:

Norm Kolstad reported that the suggestion has been made to change the name of the Facilities Committee to "Buildings and Grounds" Committee, thus avoiding confusion between the name of the Committee and the mission of Facility (Program, Community Outreach, Facility). There was no objection to the name change and the committee will be notified accordingly. There was also a request, since retracted, to use Sverdrup Suite #300 for isolation purposes. It was determined that the matter of use/non-use of Sverdrup Suites for purposes of this type be referred to the Safety and Buildings and Grounds Committees for development of consistent and equitable policies.

Membership Committee:

Re: Circle of Calls- most Board members had overlooked the request to be part of the group of callers to members and friends for "circle of care" calls. Mary Anderson was asked to resend the call list. Re: Spiritual Companionship – the Membership Committee with Ellen Eastby determined that Ellen will send out a personal email to inform and invite members/friends to participate in this new offering. It is expected that Ellen will work further with the Celebrants to develop the role of Spiritual Companion.

Program Coordination:

Program Coordinator Mary Worner reported the status of the Children's Religious Education Program wherein, RE Lead, Kris Warhol has been making weekly contacts to 10 children including COVID safety and fun activity suggestions. Other members are involved in ideas for including the children in UCU activities.

Community Outreach:

Community Outreach Co-Coordinator Amy Beckman reported on the many social justice activities underway that include: Administration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (do by October 27, debriefing October 28); Book discussion on racism that led to a Facebook discussion group on Confronting Racism in West Central MN; upcoming film festival with pre-viewing and discussion groups to follow; member participation in North MUUSJA's webinar offerings on Being a Good Relative. There was no objection to individual's sharing information on these and other social justice activities.

Mary Anderson then reported that this group would prefer to act as an "Interest Group" rather than as a Committee. An Interest Group would be defined as "individuals working together on interest and action areas that meet the UU Principles and UCU mission and with their efforts, providing other UCU members and friends opportunities to at-will creatively and actively engage." Activity communication and leadership would be shared among and between the group members. Discussion ensued as to whether a "committee" is the designated means of conducting UCU business to carry out its mission. The matter was deferred for further deliberation.

Unfinished Business:

Determination and finalization of Bookkeeper terms was deferred to the Executive Team to complete.

Viable Futures Initiative - Mary Anderson laid out a plan for input from and assessment of the membership for further planning and mission and visioning purposes.

1. IDI Invitations sent 10/15/20 to Board, SJ Interest Group, Committee Chairs.
2. Announcements to Membership via newsletter and church announcements.
3. Administration of IDI to leadership 10/20-27 with debrief 10/28.
4. Questionnaire to members 11/1 - online survey and mailed to non-email users, request return by Nov 20.
5. Focus groups for discussion of ideas/options - early December.
6. Leadership retreat to assess information gathered to determine mission refocus - mission statement revision - (January).
7. Prepare findings and recommendations for Board approval - (February).
8. Incorporation into Strategic Plan 2021-22 Annual Goals and Objectives.
9. Viable Futures Report - April Annual Meeting of the Membership.
10. On-going implementation across program lines

The Board agreed that the plan proceed.

New Business:

There were no items of new business.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 18 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom
Executive Team – November 11 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anderson
Board Secretary

Addendum: Practices of Board Leadership 5 - Planning for the Future

- Strategic Planning is explicitly naming the congregations intentions to fulfill the mission over the short term of 3-5 years
- Long Range Planning is the congregation's intentions to fulfill the vision over the next 5-25 years

When I was teaching the Five Strategic Board Tasks, I framed this practice as "Strategic Planning", but I learned from engaging with congregations and leaders over the years that not only was that phrase so overlain with experiences people have from their professional lives, it was one of the primary ways that we were disempowering the Religious Leadership of

congregational lay-leaders. And so, while strategic planning techniques may be helpful in fulfilling the Board Leadership Practice of Planning for the Future, the practice itself is much broader than Strategic Planning. Remember, most of the ideas of Strategic Planning that we bring into our congregations come from the corporate world, where the goal that you are trying to achieve is different than the transformation and relationships that we are trying to build in religious community, and bring with them often unacknowledged patterns of white supremacy culture cloaked as “efficiency” and “Professionalism.”

Instead, what I mean by this practice is that it is the role of the congregational Governing Board, having developed a deep understanding of the living mission and vision of the congregation, having a understanding of the sustainable resources of the congregation, having looked closely at the congregation’s ministries and ad ministries and seen what is possible, to then chart a course of the congregation’s future for the continued fulfillment of the congregation’s mission and vision.

I must admit that, for myself, I have almost become agnostic about how a congregation fulfills this Practice of Board Leadership. I think it is different in every congregation. I have seen some congregations develop highly detailed Strategic Plans that took a task force six months of work and then successfully implement that plan. And I have seen congregations that have just set a few new goals each year, with an idea of a future set of goals they want to achieve a few years out meet those goals and even exceed them. I, myself and personally attached to teaching congregations what I call the “3 Year Rolling” strategic planning process as an ongoing aspect of the work of the Board.

So, this practice is more about an attitude than it is about a particular way to do it. There are tons of resources on planning for churches out there, in the Leader Lab and beyond. But this practice is really about a congregational governing Board developing practices that draw its vision towards the future and looks for ways to fulfill the mission and vision of the congregation. So much draws our attention to the present and the past in congregational leadership that it takes intentional effort to look towards the future. The key to this Practice of Board Leadership is that the Board maintains its focus on fulfilling the mission and building the vision of the church, and is intentionally planning the steps that will get the congregation and our world there.

Source: Practices of Board Leadership Workshop by Rev. David Pyle, MidAmerica Regional Assembly, April 18, 2020

Note: Empowerment Grant Application Next Page

**Unitarian Church of Underwood
2020-21 Empowerment Grant Application**

The application deadline for the current grant cycle is **January 31, 2021.**
(Please add more information on additional sheet(s) if needed)

Name of Sponsor _____ E-Mail: _____

Telephone: _____ Address: _____

Name of Project: _____

Description/Purpose of Project:

How does project relate to mission/principles of the UCU?

Project Timeline:

Amount requested: \$ _____ -

How will funds be used? Please attach a sample budget:

If your organization is approved for grant funds, a contract outlining terms for use of funds and project completion will be sent you for signature. Upon approval of returned contract, funds will be disbursed to your organization within 14 days.

Please contact Ron Roller at ron.roller@ucouf.org 218-770-0374 for additional information.

Mail to:
Unitarian Church of Underwood
PO 58
Underwood, MN 56587
Attn: Empowerment Grant

