

Unitarian Church of Underwood February, 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 February

Sunday Services – 10:30 a.m.

February 5th – Adelle Lenning - *Peace and Non-violence*

February 12 – Michael Andregg - *Causes of War*

February 19 – Eddah Mutua-Kombo - *Post Genocide Peace in Rwanda & Race Relations, Justice & Humanity*

February 26 – Mickie Edmonds & Barb - *Graham Heart Smart*

Meetings :

Sunday, February 5 - 9:15 a.m. - Adult R.E.

Sunday, February 12 – 10:30 a.m. – Children’s R.E.

Sunday, February 12 - 12 p.m. - Following the service, there will be lunch for those wishing to learn about becoming a member. Contact JoAnn Larson for more information, redswilds@gmail.com or 218-826-6658

Tuesday, February 14 - 12 p.m. – Heart Smart Group Meeting

Wednesday, February 15 - 6:30 p.m. - Church Board Meeting

Sunday, February 19 - 9:15 a.m. - Writing as Spiritual Practice

Tuesday, February 21 - 6 p.m. - Speakers Committee Meeting (Speakers for Services)

Wednesday, February 15 - 6:30 p.m. - Church Board Meeting

Sunday, February 26 - 9:30 a.m. - Marriage Amendment Committee

Winter Weather Related Announcements

Weather related announcements regarding church services and events are on Lakes Radio Family of Stations – 103.3, 96.5, 99.5 FM and 1020, 1250 AM or online at www.lakesradio.net under “News;” KSAX TV Alexandria, MN or online at KSAX.com under “Weather;” or call the church voicemail.

Adult R. E.

Dan Buettner's book *Thrive, Finding Happiness the Blue Zone Way* will be the topic of two RE sessions on February 5 and March 4. Judy and Lowell Carpenter will lead the sessions. The first week's focus will be on the opening chapter "The Truth about Happiness" and first two of the four middle chapters, "Denmark: The World's Happiness All-Stars" and "Singapore: Can You Manufacture a Happy Nation." Week two will cover Chapters 4 and 5: "Mexico: The Secret Sauce of Happiness" and "San Luis Obispo: A Real American Dream" and the final chapter "Lessons in Thriving."

Whether you have read the book or not, you are welcome to attend for some lively discussion of this very interesting topic.

Peace Works

There will be a workshop entitled Peace Works on February 5th at the Unitarian Church of Underwood from 12:30-3:30pm. Everyone is invited to attend. The sessions will explore communication techniques used by the civilian peacekeepers of the Nonviolent Peaceforce and others committed to non-violent conflict intervention to defuse conflict and build connections. Learn how to apply them in YOUR life. The workshop will be led by Adele Lennig (see bio below). This is a very exciting opportunity to help put our principles into practice.

Pre-registration is requested as the number of participants is limited. Contact Ron Roller at 218-495-3235 or register at rollerolson@gmail.com. For more information on the Nonviolent Peaceforce organization go to their website.

Presenter/Facilitator

Adele Lennig received training in non-violent communication and non-violent intervention techniques as a part of an outreach program developed by the Nonviolent Peaceforce in 2009. Since then she has delivered ten training events in both corporate and congregational settings. In addition, she volunteers for the Nonviolent Peaceforce providing facilitation, organizational development, and special project services to the Minneapolis office of the Nonviolent Peaceforce, the NP Fund Raising Board, and the United States Nonviolent Peaceforce Chapter Association. Adele is a member of St. Luke Presbyterian Church where she chairs the Peace and Justice Focus Group and serves on the church's governing council. She lives in Minnetonka, a suburb of the Twin Cities, with her husband of twenty-eight years and is the mother of three adopted children from Minnesota, Korea, and China.

Welcome to the Unitarian Church of Underwood

There will be a gathering February 12th for anyone who would like more information about the Unitarian Church of Underwood. Church history, membership, and opportunities for involvement will be discussed over a simple lunch. All folks who may be interested in joining the church are encouraged to attend this lunch after treats on Sunday, February 12th. For more information, please contact JoAnn at redswilds@gmail.com.

Speaker's Committee

The Speaker's Committee is seeking volunteers to join us in planning Sunday morning services. Please talk with Betsy or JoAnn for more information.

WomenHeart

Marilyn (Mickie) Edmonds will be speaking on February 26th. She writes this as an introduction to her talk:

Barbara Graham and I attended the WomenHeart Science and Leadership Symposium at the Mayo Clinic last October. Open only to women with heart disease. I have no idea how they select the women, but we had written applications, answered several questions, and wrote a number of essays. And then we were separately interviewed by phone. Our room and board were paid for us, and in return for 3 days of seminars, we agreed to organize a support group for women with heart disease, and to carry out community education advocating women's heart health, etc. It was an amazing experience to meet so many vital women, all living with a chronic disease. The most startling aspect of the experience is that most of them were much younger than ourselves. We don't expect women to have heart disease, but if they do, we expect them to be old. Well, I guess I maybe qualify on that account, having just celebrated my 76th birthday. We were also amazed by the complexity of the Mayo Clinic. We are fortunate to have such a facility in our state.

Newsletter Submissions

All submissions for the March newsletter should be given to Stephanie Sanderson highlife@prtcl.com or Ellen Eastby eastofellen@hotmail.com by February 23rd.

Volunteers Needed!

Would you like to influence the future of the Unitarian Church of Underwood? Now is your opportunity.

Our church is in the last quarter of the fiscal year. That means that two very important processes will soon occur: 1. a new budget will be created, and 2. a new board will be created. Both will be approved at the annual meeting on Sunday, April 15.

The Budget: .If you have questions or opinions about the church budget, this is the time to share your views. The church bylaws call for a finance committee. According to the bylaws, "This committee shall consist of the executive committee of the Board plus, at least one congregational member and is charged with developing the annual budget ..." It is expected that the work of the finance committee will be especially important this year, because it will interface with the work of the stewardship committee which has recommended that a new endowment fund be created. Therefore, please consider this your invitation to join the finance committee.

The Board of Directors: A nominating committee will be formed to consider openings on the board. The committee will find new candidates to replace board members who will leave the board in April. It is expected that the committee will also nominate some current board members for re-election. Board members can serve two terms of three years each. Please consider this your invitation to serve on either the nominating committee or the board.

For more information, please contact any board member, JoAnn Larson, or me.

-- Kathy Kensinger, 218-826-6216

Poetry Corner

1/28/2012

Chime and sheen of reed grass in the early light
 Walking brightly atop the stiff and sleeping carpet field
 Into the dense cathedral and open canopy
 I listen to the shiver of red oak and iron wood leaves
 Silent and still we exhale slowly
 No longer a stranger
 But, co-creator in this ancient earth sanctuary

Cindy Johnson - Author

Member Profiles

This month we are featuring our church pianists, Mary Worner and Susan Groff. We are very appreciative of the gifts of talent and time that they give us Sunday after Sunday, year after year.

Mary Worner loves the piano. She studied piano as a girl and later as a student at Concordia in Moorhead. In those years, she did all the accompanying of High School choirs, church services, and other events. Since then, she has always wanted to resume lessons and feels privileged now to be a student of Rebecca Davis, a Julliard graduate who has learned from many sources including the likes of Arthur Rubenstein. Mary says that studying piano is a different experience this time around – now it's all about interpretation. And I guess at this stage in life, well, that is what it's all about.

Mary and her husband, Bob Worner, have lived for 20 years in their warm and charming home on West Lost Lake, where they have hosted many an event for our church community. Mary has 2 sons living on the west coast and 3 granddaughters, one of whom is a new mom. That makes Mary a new great-grandmother! Bob has 2 daughters, both living in Colorado, one of whom is an educator and one in the restaurant business.

Mary grew up on a farm in Amenia, ND, and was the middle of 5 children. Recently, her high school class of 10 students held a 50 year class reunion. She thinks they have a very unique bond in that they basically grew up together, moving through all 12 grades together. After high school, Mary attended Concordia College for 2 ½ years, got married, had her 2 sons, and then returned to Moorhead State University to finish her Bachelor's Degree. She taught special education classes at the LSS Children's Home. She started work on her Master's Degree at Moorhead State University, and then met and married Bob. She taught math to middle schoolers (oh, my) while also serving as the grade school principal. Following that was 20 years working in teacher education at Moorhead State University. She retired 5 years ago.

Retirement activities have been rich and varied. Mary is devoted to her volunteer efforts at UCU and Habitat for Humanity. Besides resuming the study of piano, she opened an antique and collectable shop on their farm.

Her favorite things include visiting family and friends; cooking (especially desserts); flower gardening; walking in the woods with dog pal Jackie; and book club. She loves reading nonfiction, even cookbooks and "fix-it" manuals, and her favorite books are from their Great Books collection and from book club.

We look forward to hearing more classical pieces which you perform so beautifully. We thank you, Mary for your contribution to us.

Susan Groff comes from a musical family, and playing the piano came naturally for her. She grew up in Harlow, North Dakota, and her father co-founded a storefront charismatic Christian ministry called the Revival Center. She and her sisters sang for church, conferences, talent shows, county fairs, and on street corners. Susan didn't ever have piano lessons, and played "by ear". She later taught herself to read music. But her family's brand of Christianity never quite clicked with her, and in her words, this charismatic upbringing didn't "take".

Susan moved to the Twin Cities after high school and worked for the Billy Graham organization, key punching addresses. She then became a chair-side dental assistant – and it was the first job she was ever fired from. She couldn't sit still (really) and the job was too repetitive, and her creativity was not appreciated! Deciding she needed a college education, she attended the University of Minnesota for a Social Work degree. After graduation, she worked as a social worker for Ramsey County. Her first car was an orange Duster. You can just see it, can't you.

Susan married Dave Wass after a whirlwind romance. Susan says that the people she comes from are like Pernella, a woman from Leeds who reached in her purse and sent along 50 cents with a neighbor for their wedding. They spent two months knocking around Europe, especially Norway and Sweden where they looked up relatives. They lived in River Falls, Wisconsin, where Dave was a professor at the University of Wisconsin. Looking for a community to live in half-way between families, they found and relocated to Fergus Falls. Susan started work at Otter Tail County as an intake worker while Dave taught agriculture at FFHS and started farming.

Dave and Susan's daughters Signe and Katrina were born here. Susan worked at Lake Region Hospital, helped set up the social services department for Home Health, and was a social worker for the Hospice organization.

Susan got involved in the social justice programs of a liberal Baptist church while at the U of M. After moving to Fergus Falls, she and Dave were members at Peace Methodist Church, but that little Unitarian Church out in Underwood always intrigued her. They started attending UCU in the mid 1980's and it wasn't long before she was playing the piano here, too.

Susan and Dave's family includes Signe Wass and Tim Goldsmith (both veterinarians) with Solveigh (5) and Svea (3), living in Zumbrota, MN; and Katrina Wass (attorney) and Lee Larsen (high school ag teacher in Pelican Rapids) with Esme (4) and Greta (1 ½), soon to move into their new home near Underwood.

Susan loves to play the old gospel songs that just roll off the keyboard with their fast and upbeat tempos. She loves to read and belongs to a book club, with a lot of fun coming from trying to cook something from the book they are currently reading. You'll likely find her outdoors where she loves to garden, swim, ice skate, and has 14 chickens and one pygmy goat. For a rollicking good time, I'd suggest that you ask Susan the story of her life.

Establishment of Endowment Fund Recommended by Board

We are a fortunate congregation to have had generous gifts given to us over the years which have made possible the beautiful improvements on our church building and programs such as community outreach with Empowerment Grants. The Board of Directors has felt a deep responsibility to invest and spend our gifts wisely.

The Stewardship Committee took on the project of exploring whether we would be served well by establishing an endowment fund to receive future gifts. (An endowment fund receives money and/or property to provide an income to support church programming.) The committee invited any member of our church to join an Endowment Task Force and about ten members participated. In November, after months of meetings and investigation the Task Force provided a report of their activities and findings to the board.

Following is a summary of the report to the Board. (This recommendation applies only to gifts our church receives after the endowment is formally begun). The Board voted to establish an Endowment Committee to follow up on the recommendation of the Task Force as that recommendation is set forth in the written report.

Summary of Endowment Task Force Committee Report to Board November 2011

Charge from the board to the Endowment Task Force: Explore the possibility of establishing an endowment fund and make a recommendation to the board

Activities of Task Force

- Reviewed current situation
- Listened to presentation by representative by West Central Initiative
- Researched benefits of UUA Common Endowment Fund
- Consulted with Roger Parks who has experience with other churches' endowment activities

Findings of Task Force

West Central Initiative is structured to:

- Manage and operate dedicated permanent funds
- Receive gifts as the owner and manager of the funds
- Provide fund maintenance services
- Manage investment of the funds
- Approve & process disbursements

Positives: Local administration for localized projects and higher return on investment

Negatives: We lose ownership of funds investing with WCI

Note: The rep from WCI stated they currently do not manage any church endowment funds and it was their experience that churches tend to go with their own headquarters for these services.

UU Common Endowment Fund is a way for UU Congregations that currently manage or direct investment of their assets to use professional investors to assist in the management

- Uses professional advisors and investment managers
- Investment decisions reflect UU values and contribute to positive social and environmental change
- UUA has investment agreement whereby we would retain ownership of investments
- Accessibility to our funds is available in case of emergency or to borrow against for major project funding

Positives: History of good returns, we maintain ownership of funds, shared values and principles

Negatives: None seen

The four options under consideration were:

1. Continue as is with CD's (current bequested funds are on deposit locally in CD's accounts at 1.25%)
2. Invest with private bank or firm
3. Invest with West Central Initiative
4. Invest with UUA

We recommend that the Unitarian Church of Underwood establish an endowment invested with and maintained by the Unitarian Universalist Association. We do so for the following reasons:

- Ownership of the funds is retained by our church
- We receive a greater return on investment of merged or "mutual funds"
- The UU principles and values that we follow are respected in our investments
- Our investment with UUA encourages future legacy gift giving by helping assure confidence for the giver that the bequested funds will be well managed and offer greater value of their gift over the long term.
- The return on our investments is expected to provide sufficient income to meet the goals of the Unitarian Church of Underwood
- The structure of the UUA Common Endowment Funds gives us options for applying the benefits
- Investment of funds in an endowment account honors the donor(s) over the years by providing a "legacy account."

PLEASE NOTE: A permanent committee is being created to form and maintain an endowment program. Any interested church member is invited to become a member of the committee.

Marriage Amendment Committee

On November 6, 2012, Election Day, we will be asked to vote on a proposed amendment to the Minnesota Constitution that defines marriage as being between one man and one woman. The exact language on the ballot will read as follows: “Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota? Yes_____ No_____” Checking yes means that you are voting to make same-sex marriage unconstitutional in the state of Minnesota.

The Unitarian Church of Underwood formed a Marriage Amendment Committee last fall. This purpose of this committee is to learn about the various issues involved with the proposed amendment and make recommendations as to how our church should respond to those issues. We have brought a couple of items to the Board of Directors. The first was regarding Outfront Minnesota and a list found on their website of Minnesota’s LGBT – Welcoming Places of Worship. The Unitarian Church of Underwood has now been placed on that list. The second item is about our church making a resolution against the constitutional amendment to ban marriage for same-sex couples. This proposed resolution will be brought to the congregation during our Annual Meeting on April 15th, to vote for or against it. The resolution would state: *We oppose any amendment to the Minnesota Constitution that prohibits marriage for same-sex couples.* Your input is encouraged during this process.

One resource that I have been using is Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance or MUUSJA. (Pronounced moose jaw) MUUSJA has formed a group called UU’s Out For Marriage Equality. It is a group that has representation from many of the Unitarian Universalist Churches in the state of Minnesota. I have been attending the meetings that are held in the Twin Cities via the internet. We talk about what our churches are doing in relation to the proposed amendment and share resources. It has been a wonderful experience connecting with other UU’s and hearing about the activities of their churches around this issue. For more information about MUUSJA and UU’s Out For Marriage Equality go to: www.muusja.org/uuo4m.

The UCU Marriage Amendment Committee meets the fourth Sunday of every month at 9:30 a.m. in the lower level of the church. Attendance has been inconsistent and it would be great to have a group of committed people attend the meetings regularly. I invite you attend. Anyone is welcome to come at any time. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the committee or the proposed amendment.

Ellen Eastby - eastofellen@hotmail.com

Paying Our Own Way +

Sometimes no news is good news and that is the case with our cash flow. We continue to meet our budget and pay our bills. As we approach the end of our fiscal year we may have about a \$2,500 excess if giving continues at its current level. This is good news as it will allow us to make up for a short fall of about that amount our last fiscal year.

SUMMARY OF THE 1/22/12 BOARD MEETING

The Board of the Underwood Unitarian Church met on January 22, 2012, shortly after the Sunday morning service. In addition to several Board members and the Administrative Consultant, several congregation members were in attendance.

The items discussed and the actions taken are as follows:

1. The Administrative Consultant—JoAnn—gave a written report. There was some discussion of how many members to report to the regional UU body and the national UU body. Membership dues for each reported member total almost \$90 a year. The Board decided that 55 should be reported.
2. The Treasurer's Report—"profit-loss" for December 2011—was passed out by Wally. The fact that most (if not all) of the interest income for the year was available to be placed into the Church account in December results in significant investment income for that month. Most of that money will go into empowerment grants. The Board decided to allocate \$7000 for empowerment grants. (That is about \$1700 more than the interest income for 2011.)
3. The Program Committee had no written report. Betsy did say that the Committee is functioning well and is always looking for input.
4. Dave reported for the Facilities Committee. The "hearing issue" in the sanctuary is being addressed as the Board has recently instructed. Dave estimates that a suitable "sound system" for the sanctuary will cost around \$700. That system should be in place in a few weeks. Dave also reported that the downstairs carpet should be cleaned soon.

5. Ron Roller said that the chili dinner is tentatively scheduled for March 30. A license will most likely be required from the State Department of Health—about \$80. Another “outreach” activity of the Church is the upcoming “Peace Works” workshop which is scheduled for February 5 in the afternoon at the Church. It will be limited to about 20 to 25 attendees. All of the revenue from this event will go to the Non-Violence Peace Force.
6. Florence Thompson reported that the “U Group” that she’s participating in has been very successful. It would like to do something for the Church and has decided that a sit-down dinner—somewhat formal in nature—would be the activity that is sponsors. Money raised by this activity—perhaps in March—will be used to improve the acoustics in the Church basement. The Board approved this idea.
7. Wally said that eight applications for empowerment grants have been received. The total amount applied for is \$12,500. As noted above, \$7000 is available.
8. A written recommendation from the Stewardship Committee to place significant funds in the national UU fund was passed out. After some discussion, the Board decided against the recommendation which would have resulted in placing almost \$150,000 in the UU Fund. (The proposal to make such a transfer was not meant to establish an endowment. Rather, it was meant to increase Church revenue.) The decision to not make this transfer was based in large part on a concern that this was a dramatic step and that input from the congregation should be sought first.
9. Ellen; reported on the activities of the “marriage amendment” committee. It was decided that the Underwood UU Church should be included on a Minnesota LGBT list of welcoming worship sites.
10. Mary passed out a draft “facilities use” policy. The policy was adopted by the Board.
11. The proposed privacy policy was presented. The Board accepted it.
12. The nominating committee members will be appointed—to the extent of current vacancies—by the Board Chair. Vacancies on the Board and on the Finance Committee need to be filled.

**MINUTES OF THE
DECEMBER 21, 2011, BOARD MEETING
UNDERWOOD UNITARIAN CHURCH**

Members present: Wally Warhol, Betsy Wells, Alisha Piekarski, Kathy Kensinger, Dave McRoberts, Stephanie Sanderson, and John Minge

Others in attendance: JoAnn Larson

The meeting was called to order by Board Chairperson Kathy Kensinger at about 6:30 p.m.

1. Agenda. The Agenda was approved.
2. Treasurer's Report. Wally presented a fiscal-year-to-date Profit and Loss Statement. Following some discussion and the announcement that about \$7000 would be available for empowerment grants, the report was filed for audit.
3. Minutes of previous Board meeting. the Minutes of the November 16,2011, Board meeting were approved. Betsy/Wally
4. Administrative Consultant's Report. JoAnn passed out a sheet in which the "welcoming process" was described. JoAnn was told that it would not be inappropriate to ask repeat attendees if they would like to join the Church. She was encouraged to do so tactfully. JoAnn continues to work on the Church membership list which she said should be done by the next Board meeting. This list will be the official membership list. JoAnn indicated that those who may be active in the Church but who are not members will not be in this list but will be dealt with at a later time. JoAnn also reported that there was a respectable turnout for a reading by someone in Luke's writing group.
5. Speakers Committee. Betsy said that she'd like more members on the Committee which is continuing in its efforts to find good speakers.
6. Habitat for Humanity. Wally said that the Underwood Habitat house had been dedicated the previous Saturday. The event was "a big deal" for the Underwood community and the dedication program was good.
7. Facilities Committee. Dave said that there wasn't anything to report at this time.
8. Long Range Goals. These Goals were reviewed and discussed as follows:
 - a. PEG access: A media team (or teams) will be recruited by a solicitation in the January Newsletter.
 - b. Website: Kathy is doing some work on this. She wants to link the website to a "hidden" website. That has advantages for the Church and should be completed in January of this year.
 - c. Facebook: Dave said that this has been used to good advantage thanks to the efforts of Ellen Eastby.
 - d. The Banner – Goal A/Objective 4: The banner should say "Underwood Unitarian Church" and should include the chalice. Alisha will work on the design of the banner. The size should be four feet by two feet or bigger

- John will get an estimate of the cost of the banner from Canvaswork in New York Mills. the banner is to be finished by the end of March of this year.
- e. Volunteer Effort – Goal B/Objective 3: Kathy asked if anything had been done on this. To date the answer is no. Betsy will work up a spreadsheet form. But, first, Ellen will be consulted to see what (if anything) she’s doing. This is to be discussed further at the February Board meeting.
 - f. Collections and Donations – Goal C/Objective 1: Wally said that these are up about 10% over the past year. Wally was asked to provide a written statement regarding this item at the next Board meeting.
 - g. Programming for Teens – Goal E/Objective 3: Betsy said that this was not being worked on.
 - h. Pulpit/Microphone – Goal M/Objective 3: Betsy said that there had been some discussion regarding the lectern. Betsy was asked to talk to Sandy about this and to have Sandy, in turn, discuss I with Bob and then report back.
 - i. Hearing Devices – Goal J/Objective 2: Stephanie said that she would like for this matter to be dealt with and put behind the Board. Wally said that there is a person at A Center for the Arts who should be talked to about this. Dave said that the people that he has talked to in the congregation say there is no problem. Kathy suggested a lapel microphone. Dave suggested that the congregation be asked for some additional input.
 - j. Green Projects – Goal I/Objective 3: We now have a “green” committee. JoAnn noted that the size of the committee is small and that the committee is not likely to be able to do “big things” as a result. Stephanie said that the committee should be asked to make a recommendation regarding a “green sanctuary”. JoAnn said that she’d put something together and get back to the committee to see what it’s willing to do. Stephanie said that the Board should be more supportive of those who are working on these issues. JoAnn said that she’d like to talk to Stephanie and Alisha more about this goal.
 - k. Growing the Church – Goal B: There was some discussion of this broad goal. Stephanie said that who we are has become more of a question since the receipt of the Ellison money. She also said that growth has its pros and cons and that some in the Church don’t like the idea of growing the church. She knows that a few members have been lost because of the strategic planning that has been done in recent years and because the church has felt like less of a home to them as a result.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Then next Board meeting is on Sunday, January 22, 2012, after the morning service and the social period that follows.

Respectfully submitted,
John Minge, Secretary