

Unitarian Church of Underwood February, 2013 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 Morning Service Begins at 10:30

February 3 – Imbolc Celebration

February 10 – David Schachtschnieder – “God Our Mother: on the recognition of the inherent divinity of nature and the mission-critical reclamation of the sacred feminine”

February 17 – Missy Hermes – Black History Month

February 24 – Nandani Banerji – “Size of the Universe”

Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15

February 3 – Adult RE - We're moving on to the fourth chapter of the book--"Imperfect Though We Are: Wars Against the Great Depression, Totalitarianism, and Jim Crow". As you know, we are reading "American Gospel--God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation".

February 17 – Writing as Spiritual Practice

February 24 – New Member Orientation – Session 1

Child Care

Betsy Wells will be doing child care February 10 during the church service after the offertory. She will be doing Valentine’s Day activities with the children. Please contact her for more information.

Weather Related Announcements

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

Sunday Morning Speakers

February 3 – Imbolc is a very ancient Pagan holiday and we are going to celebrate it in a way western European ancestors might have celebrated it before Christianity came to Europe.

February 10 – David Schachtschnieder – “God Our Mother: on the re-cognition of the inherent divinity of nature and the mission-critical reclamation of the sacred feminine.”

About David: “I’m a highly imperfect, deeply well-intended, more and more humbled, ever-curious, ever-learning, maddeningly inspired, hyper self-critical, evolving, super-cooperative, awakening, humanity serving, nature-devoted, awestruck, imagination carried, heart-driven, hopelessly optimistic, occasional pain-in-the butt, Source-possessed, and certainly helplessly eccentric, grateful human Earthling.”

The two UUC Principles that this talk will aspire to expand upon and honor:

- a) Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life.
- b) Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

February 17 – Missy Hermes – Black History Month

February 24 – Nandini Banerji – “Size of the Universe”

Nandini Banerji teaches physics and astronomy and does research at M State Fergus Falls (since 2006). She earned her Master’s in Physics at the University of Buffalo, New York and her Ph.D. in Applied Physics at the University of Vigo, Spain. Her talk, Size of the Universe, is about the cosmic perspective of our universe and the latest research and telescope findings discovering many earth-like planets.

New Member Orientation

Are you interested in joining the church? Or would you just like to know more about us? Then join us for two sessions of New Member Orientation. The first session is being held on February 24th at 9:15 and the second session is being held March 10th at 9:15. The sessions are designed to help you get to know a bit about the church and Unitarian Universalism. You don’t have to commit to joining the church in order to attend. If you would like to come to the sessions please contact Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com or 218-731-0803 or let JoAnn know you will be coming. We want to make sure we have enough materials for everyone.

New Member Sunday

We will be receiving new members on March 17th during the regular Sunday Service at 10:30. Please join us in celebrating new members to our church family.

U Group News

In February, our U Groups will be turning to the topic of grief. It is a powerful, painful topic and will be a special time of reflection for all of us. Other topics this year were silence, prayer, service, living simply, and forgiveness.

U Groups are an opportunity for spiritual growth, a time for listening and reflecting. We open each session with the candle lighting, pausing to leave our other thoughts aside for this hour. We're introduced to the topic and spend 15-20 minutes on individual reflection. Then we come back together and share our thoughts and at the end of each sharing, we enter the silence to reflect on our or the other person's thoughts. We close by extinguishing our candles. Any sharing in the group is voluntary.

There currently is space available in the Thursday afternoon group in Fergus Falls, if you would like to join. Please contact Ron Graham, (universeron@hotmail.com) 218-739-5669 or Steph Sanderson, (highlife@prtel.com) 218-736-2616.

The facilitators meet prior to the monthly meetings to review the lesson and participate to the fullest in this quiet hour just for them. There are co-facilitators assigned to most of the groups. **We hope more of you will step forward to be U Group facilitators.** Next year we would like to have a group in Pelican Rapids for our folks in that area. But, we need more facilitators! It's a pleasant, rewarding job, and comes with training and support.

Paying Our Own Way +

So far, we have been "paying our own way" and are meeting expenses. But - our Sunday offerings are still down 8%, or \$2,500, from the amount we budgeted. And we do have some of our larger expenses yet to pay for heating oil and for UU dues. We only have two months, February and March, to catch up as March 31 is the end of our fiscal year.

Thanks to all who have contributed generously so far this fiscal year. Let's work together to end the year on budget.

New Sound System

After much thinking, discussion, research, discussion, estimates, and well...discussion, the Board of Directors has authorized the purchase of a new sound system. This is very exciting news for the Unitarian Church of Underwood! This is going to greatly improve our quality of Sunday Services. We had out grown the old system as there were not enough places to input all of the devices. We also needed new microphones that were a little easier for people use. Our new system will include an amplifier, a mixer, speakers, wireless headset microphones and wireless hand held microphones, and a projector. We are also purchasing video camera and flat screen television. The television will be placed in the recess/cubby in the southwest corner of the fellowship room in the lower level. We will then feed the service from the sanctuary down to the television. This will be wonderful for people who have to bring their little ones downstairs or for people working in the kitchen. They won't miss a thing during the service. It will also serve overflow from the sanctuary when we have a larger funeral or event in the church. The television downstairs can be used for watching videos too.

Another exciting aspect of this system is that it will cost less than \$4,000. The low cost is due to a couple of reasons. One reason is that Wally Warhol has donated a sound mixer. Thank you Kris and Wally! Another reason is that Bill Nead who has assessed our needs, researched products, and will help with installation and will train us to use the new system, has donated all of those services to us. Thank you Bill! Of course, we do have to pay for the system. This was not budgeted for in our 2012-13 annual budget. So the amount that we are going to spend on the system is outside of our annual budget. We can take some funds from CD's and savings, but we would really like to give you the opportunity to make donations for the project. Please, keep in mind that our regular offertory collections are down a bit from last year, so it would be helpful if your donation for the sound system was in addition to what you normally contribute to the church.

You can make a donation a couple of different ways. There are envelopes in the sanctuary that you can use if you want to drop your donation in the collection plate on Sunday morning. If you would like to mail your donation, please include "sound system" in the memo line of your check. Checks can be mailed to: Unitarian Church of Underwood, PO Box 58, Underwood, MN 56586.

UU Quote

"Spirituality can be defined as that which puts us in touch with something that is fine and good; if you experience God or some kind of divinity in your life, spirituality is that which puts you in touch with that which is divine; and if your experience of life doesn't include God or divinity, spirituality is that which puts you in touch with that which is highest and best in humanity and nature." – Dan Harper, UU minister

Attention Writers:

We have wonderfully talented writers in our group. Are you aware that Skinner House, our UUA publisher, wants you?

Request for Skinner House Book Proposals: Meditation Manual

Skinner House Books, the imprint of the Unitarian Universalist Association, invites members of Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations to submit proposals for the Spring 2014 UUA meditation manual. Meditations can be poetry or prose, humorous and personal or formal and liturgical. Each prose meditation is typically between 200 and 650 words. Poetry meditations should be no longer than 54 lines each. All meditations should be suitable for both private reflection and public worship.

Your submission should include at least 5 and no more than 10 complete pieces of original work, and a cover letter. In your cover letter, please identify your affiliation with Unitarian Universalism and provide some context for the writing in your sample, such as the purpose for which the pieces were originally written and the themes that interest you. If your work has been published, please give details.

Send your submission to:

Betsy Martin
Skinner House Books
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

OR submit electronically to: <mailto:bookproposals@uua.org>

The deadline for submissions is February 15, 2013. If your proposal is accepted, you will be notified of the decision in May. The author of the spring 2014 meditation manual will need to submit a complete manuscript by October 1, 2013. A complete manuscript should include approximately 40 pieces. Meditation manuals, like all Skinner House manuscripts, are edited; depending on the total length of the manuscript, some pieces may be cut. The author will receive royalties and will be responsible for obtaining permission to use copyrighted material.

If you'd like more information about our meditation manual series, please visit the [UUA Bookstore](#) and select "meditation manuals" from the left-hand menu.

(Quoted from the UUA website/Skinner House Books. For more information, and for other requests for submissions, please go to www.uua.org)



Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly

2013 IS AN ELECTION YEAR

The UUA will conduct its next election on Saturday, June 22, 2013. Absentee ballots will be sent to congregations at least 45 days prior to General Assembly and will be due June 12, 2013. Positions to be elected at the 2013 General Assembly include many important positions including president of the UUA.

For more information, read about the [2013 UUA elections](#).

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

The GA Office and Planning Committee are committed to the goal of making GA accessible to the maximum number of attendees possible. Recognizing that traveling to and participating in General Assembly can be a costly venture, we would like folks to be aware of the following opportunities for financial aid:

- **Become a Volunteer** - The GA Volunteer Committee funds full-time GA registrations in exchange for 24 hours of volunteer work at GA (16 hours for those eligible for reduced registration rates). [Applications for volunteer positions](#) must be submitted by March 31.
- **Apply for a Scholarship** - Secure a pledge of support from your congregation and [apply for a GA Planning Committee scholarship](#). If your application is accepted, the Planning Committee may match your congregation's pledge (up to \$250) and also fund your full-time registration. Apply by March 31.

UUA General Assembly
www.uua.org/ga
generalassembly@uua.org

(quoted from a UUA General Assembly January newsletter)

Member Profile of Ellen Eastby

Ellen has been going to our church about 5 years. It was her mom who finally persuaded her to try it because of her discomfort with the church she was attending. Her first time of worshipping with us literally brought tears of joy, because it felt so right for her. It turns out her history with our church reaches back much further, her great grandfather was one of the founders.

Ellen is very active in the church. The most obvious way she participates is serving as our current President of the Board. Since she feels she is a facilitator who is able to hear from all our members, she is delighted to be in a position where she can practice this interest. But, here involvement goes much deeper. During the recent Marriage Amendment debate, she and Susan got board authorization to place a sign on our property and to actively work to defeat the amendment. The thing she does, "just for me" is to participate in one of the U groups. She enjoys the deep listening and relationships that happen within the silence and space provided. In case you doubt her willingness to serve, she is also a Celebrant, Web Master, Co-editor of the newsletter and occasional service leader.

She is a lifelong resident of Fergus Falls and enjoys her two sons, granddaughter Lilly and is excitedly anticipating the birth of Roland in April. Ellen is active in politics and enjoys crafts, needlework, sewing, etc. However, when it comes to housework, the fact that the interview is taking place at Cally's rather than what she calls her "messy house" should give you some idea of her love for cleaning.

Her struggles with health issues has been a key factor in the views she has developed about life and what is important. Only taking care of herself would be much easier but "it would have killed me to just stay home and do nothing." She believes it is important for herself and others that she contribute to the needs of the planet in every way she can.

Her guiding philosophy is a quote from Oprah Winfrey: "Every experience is an opportunity to choose love over fear."

Written by Ron Graham

UU Quote

"We are all Love's people, held by a Love that will not let us go. As Love's people, we do holy work: We welcome, affirm, and protect the light in each human heart. We act beyond our walls for justice and equality. We listen with our whole being to where Love is calling us next."

Justin Schroeder, UU minister

The origins of the Unitarian Church in Underwood

Excerpts from pages of the Scandinavian Heritage Interview of John Gronner in 1976 by Gerry Anderson, North West History Center of MSU; complete interview available at OTCHS Museum (provided by Marguerite Andrews, Historian Extraordinaire)

John Gronner explains: The local community [Underwood] brought the heritage of their religion with them, so the prevailing religion was the Lutheran Church. The only diversion from the Norwegian Lutheran religion was **the Unitarian Church**, which was organized in 1889. This was a rather unique history in the fact that a man by the name of **Kristopher Jonson** came to America under the auspices of the American Lutheran Church in the late seventies to help organize Norwegian Lutheran Churches. He lost his position with the American Lutheran Church because in coming to America, he had stopped in Cambridge Massachusetts and had visited Harvard University, and had learned that there was a religion that he had never heard of before, that did not subscribe to the divinity of Jesus and had developed a religion which had come here in the late seventeen hundreds.

So Kristopher Jonson lost his position with the American Lutheran Church, and immediately he went back to Harvard and contacted the Divinity School at Harvard which at the time was Unitarian. He was employed by the American Unitarian Association and sent west to organize churches. These churches were organized as Free Christian Churches, without a creed, so that people could worship together without subscribing to a definite belief. The dictates of the conscience was to the basis of their religion.

A man by the name of Hans Bjorge came to the Underwood area in the 1870s with his family and was elected to the Legislature as Populist in 1885. While serving in the Legislature, he met this man, Kristopher Jonson, and he heard him lecture and he heard him preach. He invited Kristopher Jonson to come to Underwood. On Kristopher Jonson's fourth visit to Underwood, January 23, 1889, they organized the *Frikriste Menibeigt* (the Free Christian) congregation of Underwood. Mr. Bjorge was elected the first president of the congregation, so that was the first diversion away from the Lutheran Church. The Free Christian Church became affiliated the very same year that they organized with the American Unitarian Association.

My mother and father became members of the Lutheran Church at first when they came to America. My grandfather built the Lutheran Church which is now located in the village of Underwood. It was first built a mile north east of Underwood about 1915. It was moved into the village. But my father and mother, I find in the records of the present Unitarian Church, affiliated with the Unitarian Church in 1891. That was two years after the church was organized. My father was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1892, and became treasurer in 1893, and remained as treasurer for forty years.

The church is still in existence.

See "Oral History #81 by John Gronner" at the OTCHS Museum for more Scandinavian History of Underwood.

Thanks, Marguerite!!

Minutes of the December 19, 2012 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

Present: Ellen Eastby, David Wass, Dave McRoberts, Donn Siems, John Minge, Norman Kolstad, Mary Anderson, Mary Worner and Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson. Absent: Alisha Piekarski and Luke Anderson.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Eastby at 6:33 pm.

Dave McRoberts offered a meditation/reading.

The agenda was approved (M. Anderson/Siems).

The minutes of the November 28, 2012 meeting were approved as printed (Wass/McRoberts).

Reports:

Treasurer: David Wass
Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson
Program Committee: John Minge
Outreach Committee: no report
Membership Committee: Mary Anderson
Facilities Committee: Dave McRoberts

Old business:

A motion passed to certify 60 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association and to the Prairie Star District for the 2013 year (Worner/Siems). Other topics: banner, strategic plan, endowment plan, and Empowerment Grants. No action was taken on Peter Morales' endorsement request for UUA president.

New business:

An advertisement is to be purchased in the Fergus Falls Area Visitors Guide for 2013 at a cost of \$180; Ellen Eastby to make the determination on the design (Worner/M. Anderson).

Dave McRoberts was authorized to obligate the congregation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to adopt a portion of highway 210 for semi-annual cleanup (McRoberts/M. Anderson).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Next meeting: January 16 at 6:30 pm.

Norman Kolstad, secretary.