



Unitarian Church of Underwood February 2015 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.

Coming up in February

February 1 – COL Stanley A. Carignan, USAR, "Our Sacred Secular Texts" - Our country's foundational documents speak to our highest aspirations as Americans. The Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Gettysburg Address are our sacred secular texts. They have touched my life in a very personal way and I believe they speak to our Principles. How have they informed your principles and daily lives?

COL Stanley Carignan is a U.S. Army Reserve officer who specializes in Civil Military Operations. COL Carignan has thirty-four years of service that includes time in the Navy aboard the USS Josephus Daniels, ten years in the Minnesota Army National Guard and fourteen years with the Army Reserve. He has served in Afghanistan in 2003/4, in Tikrit, Iraq in 2005, and in Baghdad, Iraq in 2006, and with US Africa Command in Stuttgart, Germany during the Libyan Revolution. COL Carignan has been awarded the Joint Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. He currently serves as the Special Functions Chief at the 308th Civil Affairs Brigade in Chicago, IL."

February 8 – Katy Olson – "Satya-Truthfulness, Search for Truth and Meaning" -

Gandhi took the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita as his guiding principles in his life and work. Katy will talk about truth: personal, cultural and spiritual in the context of the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Yoga Sutra's and Gandhi's life.

February 15 - Victoria Creek – "Hosting."

February 22 – Dr. David Sanderson, Haitian Medical Mission

Haitians have very little access to medical care, especially in rural areas. In 2011 Dr. Lonnie Berger established a medical clinic in Bleck, a small community in southwestern Haiti. He has been making several trips a year with medical teams and Dave was able to go with him last

fall. Since the clinic opened, there has been a significant improvement in the health and well-being of the residents of Bleck. We can make a difference!

Note: Prior to beginning of service at 10:20 a.m., there will be issued a "Call to Gather" to alert folks to assemble in the sanctuary so that the service can start promptly.

Upcoming Religious Education

February 1 - Discussion of Emerson's Essays 9:15 a.m. led by John Minge

February 8 - Children's Religious Education led by JoAnn Larson and Teen's Coming of Age 10:30 a.m. led by John Minge.

February 15 - Adult RE Study of the Gospel of John led by Bob Worner will meet this date at 9:15 a.m. instead of the 4th Sunday. Read part three of Spong's book, *The Farewell Discourses*, pages 163-206 and John's Gospel chapters 12-16. We've missed many regulars the past two months, weather and travel, but hope we can all gather on the 15th for the fine contributions everyone makes.

March 8 – next meeting of Writing as a Spiritual Practice @ 9:15 a.m.

Other Meetings @ church:

February 11 – 5:30 p.m. Membership Committee

6:45 p.m. Foundation Advisory Committee

February 18 – 5:30 p.m. Speakers Committee

6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

Note: AA Meets every Monday evening @ 7 p.m. at UCU

Cancellation/Postponement Due to Weather

Cancellation/Postponement Due to Weather: for weather related announcements, tune to Lakes Radio Family of Stations – 103.3, 96.5 FM and 1020, 1250 AM or online at www.lakesradio.net under "News." You can also check the UCU website at www.ucofu.org or the facebook page.

The Month That Was

January 4 – Service cancelled due to cold. Writers Group will be rescheduled.

January 11 - Bob Worner spoke on UU Principle #7, **The Sacramental Universe**. Bob's readings since the New Year include Reading the Bible Again, for the First Time by Marcus Borg and recommended to him by Don Sweder, Divinity and Dance of the Cosmos by Bruce Sanguine.

Borg refers to "Ecological Citizens" – it is not a literal creation. A Sacramental Universe citizen is a "mediator of the sacred." Unitarians do not have the sacraments like Holy Communion and baptism. But for UUs, everything is sacred: the marvel, the wonder, the awe of 14 billion years, the Big Bang. Humans are the first creatures to give the Universe the awe it deserves, part of the astounding dance of worlds around us.

The creation story in Genesis was written metaphorically, not literally. The mythological stories show layers and depth. The two stories of creation were not written at the same time: the first

written 500 years before Jesus was when the Israelites were living in Babylon so it is the writer's response to: "You have the God who defeated us in battle; we have the God who created us." "God did it. It is good!"

In the second creation story in Genesis written 900 years BC, Adam stands for mankind, and Eve for mother of all living. The serpent represented the creatures around them.

Literalism is the enemy of faith. The Bible was not taken literally until 100-150 years ago with "humans the center of everything." Times before, the Bible was regarded as metaphoric stories passed down.

Sacred is all around us – including us. God of creative process is with and in us. The Universe has intelligence, the earth renews itself. Help see the wonder and beauty of earth and that there is profit in recognizing earth's renewal. Live with thanksgiving for our universe and its wonders.

January 18 - Betsy Wells introduced today's speakers; **Heather Buessler** (who Betsy has known since Heather was 1 ½ yrs old) and **Martine Tchitchi** who spoke on OPPORTUNITY AFRICA, a non-profit organization founded by Heather after her visits to Cameroon in West Central Africa.

When Heather was at Macalister College in 2001, she decided she wanted to go to a different place where she could improve her French speaking skills. She was always interested in education. Cameroon is a friendly place – like Minnesota Nice. People genuinely welcomed her and were most interested in education.

In Cameroon, elementary education is free but high school is not and with large families, often not all children are able to go on. Martine is from a big family with 17 siblings. Boys are educated but not always girls. She graduated with honors but Martine got death threats. Northern Cameroon borders Nigeria and the violence there has spilled over.

Heather and her family helped a young woman with nurses training (\$500/year for 3 years) but Heather wanted to do more & so encouraged by her mother, formed a 501c3 to provide a more structured means to finance students concentrating on education because more education also means improved health and drives down poverty. To date, they have helped 24 students.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS is the cross-cultural learning opportunities OA has initiated between classrooms in Cameroon and the United States. They use skype to connect individuals. Martine is their first paid employee for OA. Martine spent a week at Kennedy High School in Fergus Falls helping with French, etc. (Judy Carpenter filmed it and surprised Martine with the disc).

Heather said she would close with a Paul Wellstone quote: "We all do better when we all do better."

January 25 - Tere Mann introduced speakers: **Candace Simar** and **Angela Foster**, sisters and authors of the book, Farm Girls, Memories of a Dairy Farm. The sisters were born and raised near Underwood; Candice was writing her third book before she found a publisher for her first book and who then wanted all three. Angela now is a farm wife living near Pine City. They commented on seeing one guy's T-shirt that read, "I'm a NDSU kind of guy, north of Dalton, south of Underwood."

The authors read their poems and described the background of the poems:

Angela's first poem, read by Candace "Who reads it better than me!" was "Where I'm From" listing foods: cream, fried everything including eggs and potatoes, cream on bread – with a little sugar on top, a two hole outhouse and a one room school house, coffee in a jar carried barefoot through the field to school.

Poem called "Dirt" - describing their Uncle Louis's life with dirt and in the end, dirt welcomed him home. Uncle Louie chewed snus and was not married because "no one ever asked me."

"Recipe for Soup" - don't make soup on a warm day.

Candace learned in a workshop led by a Chinese American poet that we speak on the outward breath; but the inward breath is used in dying.

"Irene Christine," poem named for the 3 year old child their Grandma Mary lost (1910-1913). When it was popular, Grandma listened to and loved the song, "Good Night Irene."

"We Waited Too Long" – too many things we wait to say at the funeral.

"Secret" – Farm woman Angela's secret is that she loves Eminem's rap music, but in spite of his lyrics... "I'm sure he's a good boy at heart."

One of their poems listed at length listed the family names ending in "son (sen), and ended with "Schachtchneider – yes, we had diversity!"

Candace Simar has written several historical novels including Blooming Prairie. Abercrombie Trail was based on her great grandfather's driving ox carts from Fort Snelling to Fort Abercrombie and is historically accurate regarding the Indian uprising and how people really had to live in those years.

The four sisters in the family are still hoping that someday they will write a book together that Oprah may take notice of and they will be invited to her couch!

Applications Due for UNITARIAN CHURCH OF UNDERWOOD EMPOWERMENT GRANTS

UCU Empowerment Grant applications are **due February 15, 2015**. Complete details are in the December 14th Newsletter, which can be found at www.ucofu.org, with the application to print or you can pick up an application at the church. Please contact Ron Roller at rollerolson@gmail.com or 1-218-495-3235 for additional information.

Beginning in 2007, the Unitarian Church of Underwood has now provided Empowerment Grants totaling nearly \$53,000 to a number of international and very local community projects. Grant recipients have included Habitat for Humanity, Prairie Wetlands Kids Archery Program, Underwood Schools 3-4 Year Old Program, the NonViolent Peaceforce, Schools for Thai Refugees, and the Fergus Falls Food Shelf.

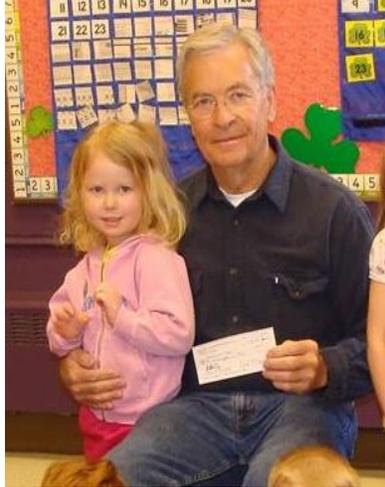
Over the years, these Grants have reflected our UU Principles making a difference in both our large and small communities.

Mel Duncan, Director of the NonViolent Peaceforce and a sometimes resident of Pelican Rapids recently notified UCU that the NonViolent Peace Force Organization will receive 2 million Euro over the next 3 years for their project in Syria. Mel said "That process started with a grant from the Underwood Unitarians. Not a bad return on investment." For more information see: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

Bernice Johnson, originally from New York Mills and a long term resident of Minneapolis, has for the past 14 years traveled to Thailand where she works with the Shan Refugees coming out of Burma and has set up schools for the Shan Children. Not only has the Unitarian Church of Underwood provided grant funding for the last two years to these schools but members of the church have sewed and sent puppets to be distributed to each of the children. Bernice gives UCU members an annual update each year when she speaks to us in August or September. For more information see: www.shanrefugeeschools.org.



Shan Refugee Children Recipients of grant \$'s and puppets



Dave Wass delivering check to Underwood 3-4 year old program
With granddaughter, Greta Larsen, one of the classmates.

www.Underwoodk12.mn.us

Someplace Safe Annual Tea Fundraiser February 14, 2015

Someplace Safe will host their annual Tea Fundraiser Saturday, Feb. 14 at M State, Legacy hall in Fergus Falls. Doors open for silent auction bidding at 10:30 a.m. followed by a program, luncheon and tea at 11:30 a.m. The event will feature the Fergus Falls School of Dance and a fashion show.

Tickets are \$20. You may purchase tickets at: 106 S. Union Ave. in Fergus Falls or by calling 218-739-2853. Space is limited for this event. See: info@someplacesafe.info.

The U Group Facilitators and other UCU members will help serve at the tea. Someplace Safe has also been a recipient of UCU Empowerment Grants.

Invitation to Join UCU As a Voting Member

To become a voting member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Underwood, you indicate your wish by signing the membership book. We invite you to participate in new member orientation and the welcoming new member ceremony that is held twice a year, **the next planned for March 17, 2015**. Please see JoAnn Larson for further details.

The UCU Policy Statement #2 Article II Definitions B. states that: "A voting member is one who has signed the membership book and completed any of the following: has participated in an activity of the congregation in the past year, has made a recorded financial contribution since the beginning of the fiscal year, or expresses verbally, or in writing, a desire to remain a member."

We, like other UU Fellowships, have a number of people who attend regularly, those who attend periodically, some who consider themselves members but are unable to participate, and others who are not members but come to enjoy our featured speakers or other offerings. We welcome everyone: “no single belief includes us here, no disbelief excludes us.”

**“Listener”
Services Volunteered by
Stephanie Sanderson**

As we make our life’s journey, we experience challenges to body, mind and spirit. Often times we wonder what is it about as we seek answers to the loss of a loved one, the question of why we exist, the expectations of others, the demands of daily living. Self-reflection and communion with like-minded others may seem insufficient as we each strive for truth and awareness. A fellow companion to assist us on this quest might be welcome.

Stephanie Sanderson is offering her services as this companion to assist individuals in the search for common meaning and act as “Listener.”

“The purpose of ‘Listening’ is to go beneath the surface of one’s life, to get behind the outward or conventional behaviors and attitudes which one presents to the world, and to bring out one’s inner spiritual freedom, one’s inmost truth. In my role as ‘Listener,’ I will include meditation and study, thinking and writing, in addition to deep listening.”

Stephanie will not be acting as a therapist but rather as a companion and sojourner on the spiritual pilgrimage of a fellow seeker. Contact Stephanie at 218/205-8734 or 218/736-2616 or highlife@prtel.com.

Deep Listening

Let us listen...
Just for a while
Let us silence our minds.
And open our hearts.

Just for a while
Let us listen from within.

Listen...

Not to gain knowledge,
Not to formulate questions.
Rather to chance upon
Sacred bonds and
Profound wisdom.

Just for a while
Let us not seek information
Or answers.

Let us not rouse the intellect
But embrace the spirit.
If thoughts cloud the brain
May we let them pass.

If replies tingle on the tongue,
Let us breathe them away silently.
Return to them later
But here...
Here in this precious time of sharing

Let us listen...

Let the words wash over us
And seep into a still, quiet pool.

Let us listen.

Mary-Elizabeth Cotton
UU Fellowship of the Peninsula, Newport News, VA

**Tribute to
Beverly (Starr) Backstrom
(7/10/31 – 12/31/14)**



On December 31, 2014 Beverly Backstrom passed away peacefully in the company of her family in Santa Rosa, California after a six month battle with cancer. She is survived by her daughters: Ann and Valeri; grandchildren: Nadia, Anthony, August and Adrian.

Beverly began her life on a farm in New York Mills returning to live there later in life to be close to her three sisters, June, Jean and Colene. She graduated in 1949 from New York Mills High School where one of her classmates was Bernice (Koehler) Johnson. The class celebrated their 65th anniversary last summer and Bev helped organize their get together that was attended by 18 classmates, family and friends. She graduated from Iowa State University and worked as a social worker and for the State of California, retiring from the CA Employee Development Department.

Beverly will be remembered as an independent, strong, fun-loving and adventurous woman, as well as a crusader for the Earth. She walked from Oregon to Mexico along the California Coast with the Coast Walk organization and used her bicycle as her primary means of transportation for many years. In 1976 she bicycled with her partner Ronald Backstrom from Santa Rosa, California to Minnesota in 28 days. She was one of the original members of the Santa Rosa Unitarian Universalist congregation where a service was held in her memory on January 31, 2015.

Beverly Backstrom was a member of the Unitarian Church of Underwood since 2001. She had a quiet presence but was one of the first to greet newcomers at coffee. She was interested and curious to learn more about others. She had a twinkle in her eyes and a gleam from the star embedded in her tooth. Bev was also a member of the Perham U Group where she offered wise observations and a wry sense of humor. She was also an active participant with the New York Mills Cultural Center.

Bev traveled widely from places ranging from Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt, South America, and Finland. Her favorite city was Prague. She also enjoyed bridge cruises with several friends as she was an avid bridge player, the last cruise last year to South American.

Bev had a presence that we will miss. And we will miss stories of what happened when she helped others, something that she often did with little fanfare.

A post-winter memorial gathering is planned for New York Mills, date to be arranged.



*How about a special Valentine's dinner with your sweetie?
Elsie Mae's. Watercolor by Mickie Edmonds.*

We Need One Another

"We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.
We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid
We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation,
And need to be recalled to our best selves again.
We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose,
And cannot do it alone.
We need one another in the hour of success,
When we look for someone to share our triumphs.
We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure,
And stand again.
We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands
Prepare us for the journey.
All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us."
George Odell

MidAmerican Regional Assembly April 17 – 19, 2015 Napierville, Illinois (near Chicago)

The Topic: Religious life in our country is undergoing significant change. Unitarian Universalism, with our heritage of working for justice, is also changing – especially as we observe and engage in the movements sweeping our country for racial equity. This is a liminal moment for us as a religious people – we have an opportunity to shape our future right now if

we are willing to support and join those on the front lines; if we are open to the changes that will follow. The foundations for our “New Era” are being laid as you read this. With the well-publicized trends of “spiritual but not religious” and the different needs of younger generations in their embrace of faith and spirituality, how can we make our congregations ready to welcome, embrace and engage all who seek us out? What do we need to pay attention to, to prepare for it? Our keynote presenters will tell their stories and share their experiences in ministry, ministerial formation, and congregational life as they explore possibilities for the future.

For complete session and registration information see:

<http://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly>

Early bird registration until Monday, March 16. If you are interested in attending, please contact Ellen Eastby.

U Groups

As part of the Behavior Covenant, each U Group each year completes a church project and a community project. For their church projects: The Underwood/Fergus Falls U Group plans to provide brunch for New Member Welcoming Sunday, March 15. The Battle Lake U Group is planning its second annual pancake brunch on Palm Sunday, March 29 immediately after church. The Perham U Group acts as greeters for Sunday Morning Services and will also be providing a brunch for a special occasion, possibly the annual meeting Sunday, April 19. The Fergus Falls afternoon U Group provided the winter outside décor for church.

For community projects: The U Group Facilitators plan to again help serve the lunch for Someplace Safe’s Annual Tea February 14th. The Perham U Group will be providing soup ingredients to the Perham Alternative Learning Center students’ cooking classes and help with the cooking. The Underwood/Fergus Falls U Group will be filling 1000 seed bags for the “One Vegetable, One Community” Farmers’ Market project. The Fergus Falls afternoon U Group helped with Luke Andersen’s Boy Scout Project last fall.

If you wish to join a U Group, you are welcome at any time. Just contact Connie Stigen at dcstigen@gmail.com or phone: 218/731-1445 or Tere Mann at teremann@gmail.com or phone: 218/205-1064 or 303/641-7381. Each U Group has a chair empty at each meeting to welcome a new member.

- Battle Lake Afternoon Group – 2nd Tuesday of each month beginning at 2:45 p.m. co-facilitated by Bob Worner and Joanne Cress or Kris Warhol at the home of Ross and Mary Larson
- Fergus Falls/Underwood Evening Group – 2nd Tuesday of each month from 7-9 p.m. co-facilitated by Diane Johnson and Carole Mitchell at the home of Sandy Barnhouse (corner of Highways 1 and 35)
- Fergus Falls Afternoon Group – the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 4:30-6:30 p.m. co-facilitated by Tere Mann and Bonnie (Bell) Albers at the home of Diana Ziesemer

- Perham Afternoon Group – the 2nd Thursday of each month co-facilitated by Mary Anderson and Mary Worner at the home of Mary Anderson.

January Topic: Our Family

“What families have in common the world around is that they are the places where people learn who they are and how to be that way.” Jean Hisley Clarke

UnitarianChurch of Underwood Board Minutes for December 17, 2014

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

The meeting was called to order at the church by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 6:35 p.m.

Donn Siems shared a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (Warhol/Sanderson).

The minutes of the November 19, 2014 meeting were approved as printed (Warhol/Siems).

Reports:

Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson

Program Committee: Mary Worner

Outreach Committee: no report

Facilities Committee: no report

Membership Committee: Mary Anderson

Treasurer: presented by Ron Roller

Celebrants: no report

Foundation Advisory Committee: David Sanderson

Old Business: topics discussed: Safe Congregations Policy, Empowerment Grants, snow removal, electric boiler quote.

New Business: proceeds of the June garage sale will be donated to a fund to upgrade the Underwood City Railroad Park (Anderson/Sanderson).

The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 18, 2015 following the church service.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Kolstad, secy.