

Unitarian Church of Underwood January, 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 January

Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30

January 6 – Mel Duncan – Nonviolent Peaceforce

January 13 – Bob Worner – UU Responses to a Culture of Violence

January 20 – Judge Timothy Baland - What You Can Learn from My Experience in Kosovo

January 27 – Nandani Banerji – Size of the Universe

Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15

January 6 – Adult RE -

January 13 – Strategic Planning Discussion Group – Everyone is invited to attend

January 20 – Writing as Spiritual Practice

Child Care

Betsy Wells will be doing child care during one church service a month. 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”.

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sunday Morning Speakers

January 6 – Mel Duncan

Mel Duncan is the founding Executive Director and current Advocacy and Outreach Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). Modeled on the Gandhian concept of Shanti Sena, Nonviolent Peaceforce is composed of trained citizens from around the world. In partnership with local groups NP applies proven and effective strategies to protect civilians in areas of violent conflict and prevent further outbreaks of violence. Mr. Duncan has 40 years of experience organizing and advocating nonviolently for peace, justice, and the environment. He currently focuses on advancing the recognition, policy and funding support for nonviolent peacekeeping at the UN. He is a graduate of Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2006 he was honored with their Distinguished Citizen award. He also holds a Masters degree from the New College of California. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship honored him with their 2010 Peace Seeker award. The Fellowship of Reconciliation USA awarded him their 2007 Pfeffer International Peace Prize on behalf of Nonviolent Peaceforce's "courageous efforts in conflict regions around the world." The Utne Reader named him as one of "50 Visionaries who are Changing Our World" in November 2008. Mel lives in St. Paul, New York City and is seen occasionally in Pelican Rapids. He and his wife, Georgia, have eight children and twelve grandchildren.

January 13 - Bob Worner – *UU Responses to a Culture of Violence* – Bob will speak to the second UU Principle "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations."

January 20 – Judge Timothy Baland - *What You Can Learn from My Experience in Kosovo*

Tim Baland served as a Minnesota 7th Judicial District Court Judge from April 1984 until April 2006. Judge Baland spent 2.5 years working as an International Judge for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. From October 2008 until October 2010, he served as President of the Independent Judicial and Prosecutorial Commission. The task of the Commission was to vet, interview and evaluate the qualifications of individuals who sought judicial or prosecutorial positions in Kosovo. Working together with his colleagues on the Commission, Judge Baland was directly involved in the selection of the new Chief Justice, the new Attorney General and approximately 340 other judges and prosecutors.

Over the past 20 years, Judge Baland has facilitated dozens of law and literature discussion programs for lawyers, judges and other professionals, in Minnesota and in several other states.

January 27 – Nandani Banerji, Physics Professor at MSate – *Size of the Universe*

Strategic Plan Group Discussion

The last of the three group discussions about our Strategic Plan was rescheduled and will meet on Sunday, January 13th at 9:15 a.m. in the lower level of the Unitarian Church of Underwood. The discussion will focus on Outreach, but there will be an opportunity to discuss other topics. It is important that we get your input about the Strategic Plan, as it will guide us over the next 4 years. If you are unable to attend, you can talk to a board member at any time about the Strategic Plan. That information will be brought back to the planning team. For more information you can contact Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com or 218-731-0803.

U Groups

U Groups are small groups of 8 to 10 people who meet monthly for a more deeply shared community experience, for reflection and spiritual renewal. This month's topic is forgiveness. Groups are meeting in Fergus Falls, Perham and Battle Lake. For more information, please contact Ron Graham (universeron@hotmail.com) or Steph Sanderson (highlife@prtcl.com).

Unitarian Universalist Association

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is addressing the Sandy Hook School Shooting that happened in Newton, Connecticut on December 14, 2012. The following are links from UUA:

<http://www.uua.org/liberty/guns/index.shtml>

<http://www.uua.org/re/families/disaster/281580.shtml>

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/281523.shtml>

Unitarian Church of Underwood Empowerment Grants

The Unitarian Church of Underwood is pleased to offer funding for a program that distributes 'Empowerment Grants'. These grants will be made for the purpose of encouraging 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, to name a few. 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.

Criteria for 'Empowerment Grant' requests:

- 1) must be proposed by Unitarian Church of Underwood (UCU) members
- 2) 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.)
- 3) must address one of the seven Unitarian Universalist principles
- 4) must be non-discriminatory
- 5) projects will not provide direct services to individuals or families - the project may help area charities and non-profits that provide direct services
- 6) Requests may be for total funding or may be for matching funds
 Note: Matching fund requests will be given priority. The rationale for this criterion is to double the impact of UCU initiatives and also to encourage members to get involved with issues and work at raising funds.
 Example: The chili dinner raises \$1,000 for the senior nutrition program. This \$1,000 could be matched by an additional \$1,000, thus giving the nutrition program \$2,000
- 7) The project being funded must be under the direction of an approved, not for profit (501c-3) organization.
- 8) Projects/groups that are funded must wait at least one year before applying for another grant or additional grants.
- 9) 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 deadline for the next funding period is January 30, 2013. If you are interesting in pursuing an 'Empowerment Grant' you need to fill out the attached application. The application must include a timeline for your project and a specific budget for the cost of the project. Please make six copies of your application for review. It would also be a good idea to talk to a member of the 'project committee', which will be accepting applications.

The committee will review all applications and recommend or not recommend project requests to the church board of directors.

For further information or questions contact Ron Roller at rollerolson@gmail.com.

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of anyone else." - Charles Dickens
 (Unitarian, novelist, social reformer)

UU Positioned For Incredible Gains

If the Unitarian Universalists were a business, my advice would be "Buy"! But, UU in the business world is United Utilities traded on the London Stock Exchange (my new motto: Google makes me look way more knowledgeable than I am). You can't buy Unitarian Stock but you certainly can buy into the Unitarian idea of what religion and spirituality are about.

So, how many buy into our way of doing church? The U.S. surveys show about 0.3% self identify as a UU and that is considerably more than are actually on UU membership rolls. But, are only one in every 333 persons in the United States a UU at heart?

My take is that Unitarian Universalists offer the most appealing religion for our time. I have a new Iranian friend and we recently took an all day bike ride/hike in St. Paul. Our conversations kept returning to religion and our beliefs. I was amazed at what this Muslim was saying and finally said, "Aziz, you are a Unitarian!" Of course, he was surprised when I said this, but he did agree to take the beliefnet.com test*. After answering a variety of questions he got the surprising, to him, results: "Unitarian Universalist."

In my travels it seems almost a given that when I visit with those in their twenties and thirties, almost all seem attracted to what I say about our church. And, it isn't just the younger folks. I have gone through our 7 principles in a group of elderly Roman Catholic nuns, lifelong Lutherans, etc. and asked if there was anything they did not agree with. Not surprisingly, without the "Unitarian" label, our principles seem to be almost universally appealing.

The point of this is not to suggest we go out and get converts or even that we finish filling our little church to overflowing. My point is that our friends and those in our community need to know what and who we are as Unitarians. Some will be defensive, but many need the freedom, encouragement and support in finding and following their own path that we offer. Converting is the opposite of what we are about - our task is to support them in finding their own way. What could be more appealing than a group of folks that will love, accept and be supportive of you as you are and encourage you to be even more "you?" We are definitely a strong "Buy!"

*Note: the beliefnet.com site is a great resource. "Even if YOU don't know what faith you are, **Belief-O-Matic™** knows. Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and **Belief-O-Matic™** will tell you what religion (if any) you practice...or ought to consider practicing. "

By Ron Graham

*A fundamentalist Christian asserted to a UU, "I hear you deny the divinity of Christ".
"That's untrue!" said the UU, "We don't deny the divinity of anyone."*

The Church of the Larger Fellowship

Would you like to attend Unitarian Universalist worship services without leaving home? The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) presents an online worship service three times a week: on Sundays at 8pm, and Mondays at 9am and 1:30pm.

What is the CLF?

“The CLF is the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), a Unitarian Universalist congregation without walls. Our 3,500 members, with their children, live all over the world. What brings us together is the desire to connect, seek, share and grow. You are welcome here whether you are a CLF member or not. Take your time, get to know us.

We believe that life is a gift, and that the sacred is to be found in all aspects of life.

We believe that children are born holy and do not need someone else to save their souls. We each are responsible to save our own souls, and because our souls are intertwined with one another, this involves caring for the common good.

We are people who believe that faith is not about doctrine or creed, and that the Spirit of Life cannot be adequately described by any name—though we use every name and no name.

We are atheists and Christians, Buddhists and Jews, agnostics and Hindus, who know that no metaphor or story of the holy is big enough to truly hold what is holy. We are people who value diversity: of opinion, of culture, of language, of life experience, of spiritual practice.

We are people of every race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, nationality, political stripe, economic status.

We draw meaning from science, from art, from poetry, from sacred texts, from the world around us, from one another, and from our own experiences in life. We are people who value action: acts for justice, acts for equality, acts of kindness, acts of self-care, acts of stewardship of the planet.

We are people who believe that the measure of a life well lived is the love that is carried in the hearts of those who knew us. Whatever route has brought you here, and whatever the path you walk with us, we are glad that you are here!” (From the www.questformeaning.org website)

By Stephanie Sanderson

Habitat for Humanity Silent Auction

A big thank you to everyone who contributed items to the Habitat for Humanity silent auction. The things you gave were thoughtfully chosen and of high interest to the bidders.

Members and friends of our church gave 49 items which sold for \$951. In addition, there was a match from our outreach funds for up to \$500 so the total we contributed to Habitat for Humanity, just from the silent auction, was \$1,491.

Again, thank you to each person for each item given.

By Mary Worner

"Life must have its sacred moments and its holy places. We need the infinite, the limitless, the uttermost – all that can give the heart a deep and strengthening peace."

(A Powell Davies, "Why I Come to Church," *Without Apology* (1998) Boston: Skinner House, p.29)

The Unitarian Church of Underwood website can be found at www.ucofu.org

Minutes of the November 28, 2012 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

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

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

The agenda was approved (Minge/Siems).

The minutes of the October 21, 2012 meeting were approved as printed (M. Anderson/Minge).

Reports:

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

John Minge was assigned the task of monitoring the sagging of the floor, and is to report regularly to the Facilities Committee (M. Anderson/Siems).

Old business:

Discussions included (led by): sound system (McRoberts), banner (M. Anderson), strategic plan (L. Anderson), endowment/planned giving (Eastby), UUA and PSA dues (Eastby), and the internal review (audit report).

The proposed By-Laws change regarding membership was rejected for possible consideration by the congregation (M. Anderson/Wass). The membership committee is to consider ideas contained in the proposal.

The internal fiscal review of FY2012 done by Ken Hamrum and Norman Kolstad was accepted (Worner/Wass).

New business:

Vice-chair Siems handled a discussion and vote to approve Ellen Eastby as a Celebrant (Worner/McRoberts).

The total amount available for the next round of Empowerment Grants was set at \$7500 (McRoberts/M. Anderson).

No action was taken on a request to nominate Peter Morales for President of the UUA.

Betsy Wells' resignation from the Kids R.E was accepted with thanks from the board.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Next meeting: December 19 at 6:30 pm.

Norman Kolstad, secretary.