

Unitarian Church of Underwood June, 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 June

Please note that Sunday Services begin at 9:30 a.m. in June, July, and August.

Sunday Services

June 3 - 9:30 – Roger Parks

June 10 – 9:30 - Steve Marquardt – Amnesty International

June 17 – 9:30 - Michele Anderson - Springboard for The Arts – “Cultural Sustainability and Ecology of Expression”

June 24 – 9:30 – TBA

Sunday Morning Meetings

June 3 – 8:15 – Adult RE – Earth Religions will be the topic of Adult RE this summer.

Writing as Spiritual Practice will not meet in June, July, and August. It will resume September 16th at 9:15.

The Social Justice Committee will not meet in June, but will meet the third Sunday in July (the 22nd) at 8:30.

Children’s RE will not meet over the summer, but will resume in September, the date is to be announced.

Summer Solstice Church Potluck

In celebration of summer solstice, on Sunday, June 24, there will be a potluck lunch, from 11am on at Bob and Mary Worner’s home. They will provide barbequed hamburger with buns and beverages. The address is 28424 Water Street Road, Underwood; written directions will be given out at church. Their phone number is 218-826-6998.

More Information About Sunday Morning Programs

June 3rd – Roger Parks - My topic for this first time is (he is speaking twice this summer—next date TBA): "Citizenship and the Common good." I will be drawing on the work of Parker Palmer in his newly published book "Healing the Heart of Democracy." I hope to raise some questions about defining the common good, and how our actions as individuals serve to bring healing to the heart of democracy.

For 40 years I have served as a United Methodist pastor in congregations around Minnesota. My focus has always been on social justice and I have served for some time as Chair of the Board of Church and Society for the Minnesota Conference of the United Methodist Church. I have a Doctor of Ministry degree focusing on Liberation Theology and currently seek to highlight the work of progressive Christian thinkers. My last parishes were at Dent and Perham. I currently live near Clitherall.

I am married to Beverly and we have two daughters, one a teacher in Minneapolis and another a Family Practice physical in Chelan, Washington. We have three grandchildren that we spend time visiting and babysitting for.

In my retirement I have given more time to photography and am focusing on accumulating as many images of birds as possible. Some of my work is displayed at Art of the Lakes in Battle Lake.

June 10th – Steve Marquardt - "Stranger at the Gate" concerning US immigration reform and the Dream Act. The DA provides a gateway to citizenship for younger people who have been here and are going through the US school systems--predicates on US military service or 2 years higher education, then that in conjunction with schooling in US, is path to citizenship.

BIO: Career academic librarian, Ph.D. in history from U of MN, traveled to Cuba, Mexico, China, Egypt 3x, and Western Europe. From Lake Lillian, MN. For last 5 years has been Amnesty International legislative coordinator for MN.

June 17th – Michele Anderson - "Cultural Sustainability and the Ecology of Expression"

Discussing an emerging field that combines folklore, ethnography, social entrepreneurship and non-profit management to identity, enhance, and protect cherished places, traditions, and relationships that are at risk in an era of increasing homogeneity and globalization. When I first began my graduate studies in this field at Goucher College in Maryland, my focus on the role of the arts and family life and the "ecology of expression" brought me back home to MN after 11 years living in Portland, OR. In June it will be 1 year since I took a leap of faith and moved here and I'd like to share how I am applying theories of cultural sustainability to my work with local artists, my own creative practice, and my relationships with my family.

Bio: Michele Anderson just moved back to MN from Portland, OR, where she studied classical piano and composition at Lewis and Clark College, and later worked in the Oregon Symphony's education dept. where she wrote scripts and designed teacher curriculum for youth concerts. Most recently she managed after school, music classes and school assemblies for a nonprofit community music school, Ethos Music Center. Michele moved to Fergus Falls in June to open Springboard for the Arts' office here in town, and hopes to continue teaching music to students of all ages.

June 24th – To Be Announced

U-GROUP NEWS

What a great first year this has been! U-Groups, referred to as covenant groups or circles in other UU fellowships, were initiated last fall and met monthly until May. We are taking a break over the summer and then will have sign-up again starting in August.

Thank you to all of you who took a chance and tried the U-Group experience. The groups lived up to their promise of deepening relationships between us while we pondered some pretty interesting stuff together – from “Growing Older” to “Being Born Again”. Thanks to Deb Ferguson, Kae Honeman, Florance Thompson, Bob Worner, and Connie Stigen for facilitating groups; to Cindy Johnson for her participation thoughtful ideas; and to Ron Graham for his leadership in program development. Partnering with Ron to work with these great facilitators has been just a wonderful heart-warming, strength gathering, friendship building, and soulful experience.

Each U-Group is asked to perform a service for the church and community each year. The facilitator's group chose **Somali Sunday** for their project. Thanks to all of you generous donors who made that day such a success, to Joanie Ellison without whom it probably couldn't have happened, and to you generous friends who brought extra items for the silent auction. You contributed about \$1000!!! This will be divided between the UUA Service Committee for the project in Somalia and the “Giving and Learning” program in Pelican Rapids which helps refugees learn English and become citizens, among other things. Thanks to the U-Group members who volunteered time on Sunday mornings, and others who are going to make sure that our social room downstairs has clean carpeting! Very nicely done, and greatly appreciated.

For more information on U-Groups, or to inquire about becoming a facilitator, contact Ron Graham: universeron@hotmail.com; or Stephanie Sanderson: highlife@prtel.com.

Steph Sanderson

Committee Volunteers Needed

We are looking for members of the congregation who are willing to serve on the Finance Committee and/or the Endowment Committee. The Finance Committee is charged with developing the annual budget; fundraising; recommending to the board management of all church funds; and auditing the congregational financial records annually. There are three places open on the Finance Committee for members of the congregation who are not board members. The Endowment Committee is newly formed and it is to establish an endowment program for the Unitarian Church of Underwood. For more information contact Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com.

Poetry Corner

Age of Enlightenment - Ron Graham

My age is a subject of some amusement.
Some think they find it by subtraction.
But, after doing the math
They are not much wiser.

If you are living, growing and open to change,
It is impossible to be more than a few years old.
Only the hardened and stagnant do not change
Into selves much different than those that were before.

Also, I have discovered a multiplicity of ages
Within each rendition of "me"
Being both retarded and advanced in different ways,
"For my Age"

When you hear a person exclaim,
"I can't believe I'm this old!"
They are using the date of their first version
Rather than the forming of the person they are now.

Like a child exclaiming, "I'm Four"
While holding up two fingers..
Some say "I'm 70" against convincing evidence,
They are all ages from 1 to 101.

At my age, whatever it may be
I playfully thought I would get it all together
So, for instance, my 40 something body is not older
Than my relational skills.

Thinking that at least my beard should match my hair.
 Years ago I gave my hair another decade to become grey,
 Correctly guessing the beard would not return to red.
 Recently, the razor of integrity struck and the beard is gone.

Perhaps I should just settle on a number
 And play the part of being whatever age I choose.
 I enjoy being eight when playing with young children,
 A teen longing for love, and even the wise elder.

So, I think I will set it down as truth
 That my best ages are not my calendar age,
 But the various ages I manifest at any moment.
 As I play my parts on the stage of this incredible Universe.

Member Profile

Ellen, David, and I spent a warm, sunny afternoon sitting in a shaded garden sipping cool drinks with **Kati Sasseville**. We listened to the soothing sounds of water splashing in garden pools, and the efforts of Kati's daughter Rea and her husband Fred planting and replanting surrounding gardens. When I asked Kati how she felt about my interviewing her for the newsletter, she just grinned and said, "I love being the center of attention." And it's such a joy and privilege to be in her company.

Kati describes her house and property as the best spot one could possibly be in, and it is a real treasure. The house sits on the central part of the quarter section that her great-grandfather, James G. Shonts, a land speculator, bought in 1880. It's Tract 4 of section 24, township 134 of Ottertail County," Kati said. He moved to California in the mid 1920's and sold the farm. The family "Red Cabin" a few doors down was retained and she lived there every summer as a child. Some of the original farm has been reclaimed by Kati's family. Her brother (Steve) and sister (Liz Sweder) also live on this strip of beach, with the families still sharing the "Red Cabin" in between. James Shonts built a stone house, parts of which still stand a stone's throw from Kati's door. When it burned in the early 1930's, the owner at that time moved the miller's house from the Elizabeth mill onto the property. Kati bought the house in 1982 when she moved back here from Fargo, where she had a law practice, to work for Otter Tail Power. She always liked the idea of having a Bed & Breakfast, and "I felt I could justify adding onto the house if I did a B & B," she said, her eyes twinkling. She had the house moved again, a little down the hill and closer to the lake for a better view, to become Forest Lodge Bed and Breakfast. This has been a welcoming place for many gatherings of family and friends.

One of seven siblings, Kati spent her first few grades at Jefferson Elementary in Fergus Falls, lived for several years in Washington, DC, attended 7th grade here, and then moved to Minneapolis where she graduated from Washburn High School. She received her law degree from the University of Minnesota. Kati didn't fall too far from the tree. Her father and grandfather were both lawyers, and both were mayors in Fergus Falls. Kati ran for public office on three occasions, starting in 1988. She was the first woman invited to join the Fergus Falls Rotary Club. She even wrote and directed a play about 10 years ago.

Kati had 6 children - Laramie, an artist; David, an attorney; Melanie, Alaska Airlines/ Gustavus, AK Convention and Visitors Department and Gustavus City Council; Jon Erik, with Blue Cross and Blue Shield; Jolie; and Rea. Rea, too, has taken up the family mantle for political involvement, and Rea and Fred operate Forest Lodge Bed and Breakfast. Daughter Jolie had many friends among the Underwood Unitarians, and is sadly missed since the tragic car accident in 2000 that killed not only Jolie, but husband Jim Alzheimer, and daughter Chelsea.

There is a new crop of attorneys in the family – a granddaughter just graduated with a law degree from California State, and a grandson is a student at William Mitchell. Kati has 8 grandkids – 6 girls and 2 boys – in addition to Chelsea.

Looking ahead, Kati sees the future as being very different and more difficult for our children and grandchildren. She hopes we would finally learn that “war is futile, and that it just perpetuates itself, as all violence does.” One of Kati's favorite family memories involves a conflict over the remodeling of the beloved “Red Cabin”, and the familiar breakfast nook. Despite having strong differing beliefs about what should be done, the family was able to resolve the conflict, (“it was miraculous almost”, Kati said), through thinking of alternatives, and thinking ‘outside the box’. “People don't have to fight. So often people are stuck, as we were for weeks. But the solution brought harmony to our situation,” she said. “I felt the same sense of miraculous harmony,” Kati said, “in working on the building committee for the church renovation. There was a classic opportunity for friction, but we completed our work without so much as a cross word. I'll bet no other church can claim that.”

What Kati wants most for people to know is how much she values her membership at UCU. Unitarianism wasn't entirely unknown to her before she joined us- during high school, Kati attended a Unitarian youth group with a friend in Minneapolis. She has been attending here since about the time Jolie died. Jolie had attended here many times, especially to hear Bill Holm. So when the Christian Science fellowship closed in Fergus Falls, she headed our way.

Despite Kati's physical limitations, she is active in political, social, and church activities. She is an avid reader, and is currently reading a book by Kevin Phillips, After the Fall, which tells the story about our 2008 financial disaster.

We have all been inspired by Kati's keen mind, her wonderful sense of humor, her generous spirit, and her unrelenting love of life. We're sure glad you chose us! - Stephanie Sanderson

Stories From Our Past

I believe in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the leadership of Jesus, and salvation by character. This is the creed that my mother remembers learning for her confirmation that took place at the Unitarian Church of Underwood on July 2nd, 1945. My mother is Beverly Eastby, daughter of Otto and Jennie Kolstad, great granddaughter of Christian and Lydia Kolstad. Christian Kolstad is a founding member of our church.

Stephanie Sanderson and I had the privilege to record an almost 2 hour conversation with my mom while she was in Minnesota for a visit. She told us many stories. Like the time as a young girl, she climbed to the top of the windmill and her mother had to go and get the men out of the field to get her down. Or the time she hit the garage when she was first learning to drive. She didn't think her Dad knew about it, but the next morning he looked out the window and said, "It looks like the garage might be leaning." But most of the stories that she told us were about her memories of the Unitarian Church of Underwood.

During the confirmation classes it wasn't just the creed that the kids would have to know. She said they had a lot of learning to do, including memorizing the books of the Bible. They used a little black book for much of their classes and she believes she still has it somewhere in our home. The minister that confirmed her class was Philip M. Petursson of the First Federated Church of Winnipeg. The girls got dressed up in white dresses for that special day. The picture of her confirmation class still hangs in the lower level of our church today.

My mom was married in the church on November 2nd, 1950. She remembers the day well. The minister, Reverend Ewing from Staples, was running quite late. Mom was waiting outside for him and her cousins played their violins for guests inside the church. The violinists had to play and play and play while waiting for the minister. Finally, Mom spotted a Model A coming up over the hill with Rev. Ewing standing on the running board, putting on his robe. He had had a flat tire and hitched a ride into town with someone. That story ends well for everyone. My parents were married one month short of 59 years, when my dad passed in 2009.

It isn't just major life events that Mom remembers about the church. There was Sunday school for the children and they would perform Christmas Pageants for the congregation. Ethel Gronner was a Sunday school teacher and the kids went to her home for rehearsal. One year they did a scene from Little Women. Mom was thrilled to play the part of Beth. The Sunday morning music was as good then as it is now. The Moen sisters would sing regularly. Mavis Johnson would play the piano while Valdeen Moen played the organ. "There was a concert every Sunday" my Mom said. There was also a Ladies Aide at the time. Her mom would sometimes sing at a Ladies Aid meeting or maybe during church. (I did not know my Grandmother could sing, but I knew that she played a mean harmonica!)

The building itself has changed over the years. When Mom was young, there was a heating grate at the front of the church. The children would play and the grown-ups would visit while standing on it as the church warmed up on Sunday mornings. There was also a plaque with the

creed, mentioned earlier, hanging on the basement wall at the front of the coffee line. Up until a few years ago, the staircase was on the outside of the church and you entered the lower level from a door to the side and under the stairs. For the younger ones that passage was a little scary and I remember it as being that way too.

Mom accompanied me to church in May. It was the first time she had been in the building since it had been remodeled. She thinks the addition to the church is beautiful and couldn't get over how you could walk right in the front door to the lower level. She looked at the pictures that hang on the wall from her childhood. Pictures that we have all looked at and perhaps wondered who they were and what stories they might have to tell. Now we know a bit of one person's story. Thanks Mom for sharing with us a little bit of your history, a history that as a church we share together. – Ellen Eastby

UUA President Applauds Statement on Same Sex Marriage by President Obama

May 9, 2012

The following statement was issued by Unitarian Universalist Association President Rev. Peter Morales:

President Obama's announcement today that he supports the right of same sex couples to marry is a courageous step forward in the direction of justice and equality for all Americans. I applaud the President's decision to declare his support for the freedom to marry for all loving couples. Like many Americans, President Obama says his position on this issue has evolved over the years, and today it seems clear that the arc of the universe is bending toward justice.

The Unitarian Universalist Association called for the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in 1996. Unitarian Universalists will continue to stand on the side of love for marriage equality until the freedom to marry belongs to all.

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is a faith community of more than 1,000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance, and social justice.

The UUA has supported civil rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people for several decades. The denomination voted in 1996 to advocate for full legal marriage equality. For more information on the UUA, including recent press releases and news article, please visit our online press room (www.uua.org/news/pressroom/index.shtml).

Newsletter Submissions

If you would like to submit something for the July Newsletter, please send it by June 23rd to Stephanie Sanderson at highlife@prtel.com or Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com.

Minutes Of The April 18, 2012, Board Meeting Unitarian Church Of Underwood

Members present: Donn Siems, Dave Wass, Norm Kolstad, Kathy Kensinger, Mary Worner, Ellen Eastby, and John Minge

Others in attendance: Stephanie Sanderson (departing/departed Board member) and JoAnn Larson (Church Administrative Consultant)

The meeting was called to order by Board President Kathy Kensinger at 7 p.m. There was no formal agenda.

The following items were discussed and acted upon as indicated:

1. Minutes of March 21, 21012, Board Meeting: These minutes were approved as presented. (Mary/Ellen)
2. Board officers and positions: Mary presented a chart of Board positions and committee positions to be filled. After some discussion, the following were elected as new Board officers; Ellen Eastby as President, Donn Siems as Vice President, Norm Kolstad as Secretary, and Dave Wass as Treasurer (with the understanding that the position can be shared – see below- with Ron Roller who will be responsible for the accounting and reports and with Dave to handle the money.) (John/Donn) The following Board members will serve on the following committees: John, Dave Wass, and Donn on finance, Dave McRoberts (hopefully) on Facilities, John on Program, Alisha (hopefully) on Outreach (which includes empowerment grants, the chili dinner and perhaps social justice), and Ellen and Stephanie on Communications. There are many other committee positions (including committee charis) to be filled.

We then returned to the Treasurer's position to further refine how the division of responsibilities would be shared. It was decided that Ron Roller would be the "assistant treasurer" and that he would have access to all Church financial and bank information and data and that he would collect and deposit Sunday morning offerings and other cash received outside of the Sunday morning service in Cave Wass' absence. Otherwise, Dave will receive and deposit the money. (Dave/Mary)

(At this point in the meeting, Ellen took over the meeting as the newly elected Board President.)

3. Church Celebrants: Stephanie wanted this topic to be addressed. She mentioned that the Board designates those who can be celebrants for the purpose of conducting wedding. To date, Bob Worner, Florence Thompson, Richard Kagan (who has moved out of the area), and Stephanie are designated to conduct weddings and have been identified as such in the Office of the County Recorder. Deb Ferguson would like to be approved as a celebrant – for weddings and resumably) for other Church functions. Stephanie supports Deb’s wish. Deb was approved. (John/Donn)

4. Welcoming Congregation: Ellen will address this topic at a later Board meeting. The question is what it takes to be a “welcoming congregation”. (This pertains to welcoming gays, lesbians, transgender individuals, and bisexuals – am I forgetting anything? - into our church.) Ellen encouraged the Board to take further action regarding the proposed anti-same-sex- marriage amendment to the Minnesota Constitution. (The Board has already taken a position against the amendment.) The Board decided to join the “Minnesotans United for All Families” coalition. (Norm/Mary)

5. Administrative Consultant comments: JoAnn said that the Church’s Yahoo email will be mothballed if ok with the Board. No one voices any objection.

6. Newsletter: Stephanie said that she would like to put officer contact information in the newsletter. Ellen said her phone number and email address could appear there. Donn said that his cell-phone number and email address could appear there. Norm said that his cell-phone number could appear there. And Dave said that his home phone number could appear there.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm. The next Board meeting is at 6:30 pm on May 16, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
John Minge, Secretary