

Unitarian Church of Underwood June, 2013 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.

Reminder: Sunday Morning Service begins at 9:30 a.m. in June, July and August

Coming Up in June

Sunday Morning Service Begins at 9:30

- June 2 – Ken Pentel from the Ecology Democracy Network
- June 9 – Don and Maryjane Westra - Zimbabwe
- June 16 – Bonnie Jean Straight – LCC International University and the Impact of Lithuania and its Neighbors
- June 23 – Solstice, Summer, and Songs
- June 30 – Roger Parks

Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 8:15

- June 2 – Adult RE

UU Humor

A UU Bumper Sticker: “Honk If You’re Not Sure”.

Visitors on a tour on heaven noticed a group of Unitarian Universalists, who were arguing about whether or not they were really there.

A visitor at a Unitarian Universalist church sat through the sermon with growing incredulity at the heretical ideas being spouted. After the sermon, a UU asked the visitor, “so how did you like it?” “I can’t believe half the things the minister said!” sputtered the visitor in outrage. The UU replied, “oh, good - then you’ll fit right in.”

Sunday Morning Speakers

June 2 – Ken Pentel

For the last 26 years I (Ken Pentel) have mostly volunteered and worked in Minnesota for Greenpeace and the Green Party as an all-purpose organizer. I was also a three-time Green Party of Minnesota endorsed candidate for Governor in 1998, 2002 and 2006. In 2010 I was the endorsed candidate for Governor for the Ecology Democracy Party (kenpentel.org).

For more information about Ken Pentel visit - <http://www.ecologydemocracynetwork.org/>

June 9 – Don and Maryjane Westra – spent 3 years doing economic development in Zimbabwe

June 16 - Bonnie Jean Straight – LCC International University and Impact of Lithuania and its Neighbors.

In 1991/2 when the Soviet Union was coming apart, they (the Straights) heard there was a need for teachers and business people in the Soviet Union as it was coming apart. They found a conference in Ukraine in May 1992, for Christian business people. They sought contacts for a place to work over there. They met the founders of a Liberal Arts College in Lithuania. They needed English teachers. They sold their car, stored their stuff, and stayed 4 years. Then they returned to the US and Bonnie got her Ph. D. and returned again to teach for 7 years. She will discuss key elements of a good society, compare what they saw of the left-overs from the Soviet materialistic society, then talk about the purpose and vision for the school to develop a new generation of leaders to help Lithuania develop a good society. Also, they will discuss student graduates and their contributions.

Bonnie Jean Straight is a college teacher, business person, life-long learner....

June 23 – Solstice, Summer, and Songs. This service will celebrate the solstice and the arrival of summer through readings and songs.

June 30 – Roger Parks

In this two part series, I (Roger Parks) will be working with the writing of Brian Thomas Swimme and Bruce Sanguin as they outline the epic story of the emergence of the universe and the community of life, with a new vision for how we might bring forth a vibrant Earth Community. Because of the new advancements in science and theology we can tell the story of the emergence of the universe, and of life in its totality here on earth in a new way. This approach weaves the findings of modern science together with the enduring wisdom found in the humanistic traditions of the West, Asia and indigenous peoples. In the first talk on June 30, I will focus on the Journey of the Universe from its beginning to the emerging reality that is still unfolding. In the second talk on July 28, I will focus on evolution as the Divine Unfolding of life. As always I look forward to the dialogue that we can have following my opening words.

Adult RE

We're going to continue with the discussion of the law can require of us even if the requirement runs afoul of our religious beliefs. An email that went out to church members on May 3 announced this as the topic for the early May Adult RE class. There were some attachments to that email. At the end of the May session we were discussing a specific example or two of this as well as some of the legal analysis that is done in dealing with the issue.

We are going to continue with the same discussion during the Adult RE class on the first Sunday of June. (If church starts earlier in June, then Adult RE will also start earlier.) I would like to focus on the legal analysis as that might be of future use to those in attendance. So, review the materials that accompanied the May 3 email. And look at the following additional materials available online (which I am having a hard time attaching!) which provide additional food for thought on the legal analysis side of things:

1. Free Exercise Clause found at www.firstamendmentcenter.org/free-exercise-clause (which is four pages in length);
2. Free Exercise of Religion and the First Amendment which I think can be found by googling just that (which is also four pages in length);
3. The Contraception Mandate and Religious Freedom found at www.pennumbra.com/debates/debate.php?did=48 (which is seven pages in length);
4. The Religious Freedom Restoration which is easily findable at Wikipedia--six pages in length; and
5. The Free Exercise Clause which is also easily findable at Wikipedia--five pages in length.

I should add that we are going to continue to have Adult RE through the summer--always 1.25 hours before the beginning of the church service. We are going to explore issues of interest to the group. At present, we're exploring an issue that arises out of our discussion about the Founding Fathers and how they crafted our founding documents so as to keep religion at arms length from the government and government at arms length from religion.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME! I'll bring muffins for those of you who need some enticement.

John Minge

"Religion is belief in someone else's experience. Spirituality is having your own experience."
- Deepak Chopra

Membership Profile of Connie Stigen

Connie and Duane (semi-retired carpenter and avid golfer) live on 5 secluded rural acres by a small lake. Their acreage is full of a variety of birds and wildlife. Much of their property is covered with prairie grasses which Duane planted by hand from a variety of hand gathered seeds.

Connie and Duane have two sons Jamie (31 - Food Scientist) and Tyler (28 - getting his P.H.D. in bio-medical engineering). They also have a granddaughter, Kaley (8) whom we have often seen in church.

Connie works as a systems analyst at Lake Region Healthcare. She has worked there for 31 years beginning as an L.P.N., then to management and then to systems analyst. This is challenging work but she still finds time for a multitude of other interests.

Her favorite activities are golf and spending time with nature, often in her peaceful gazebo by the lake. Her extensive reading includes historical biographies and history, especially WWII. She plays Scrabble several times a week and would love to show you her skills if you are brave enough to play her. She also finds time to help Maria and her family in Pelican Rapids with their English skills and is proud to have assisted the entire family to become American Citizens (2010 and 2012). She also acted as the Driver Training Coach when Maria learned to drive.

After growing up as an Apostolic Lutheran, you might wonder how Connie came to be a Unitarian. For a while she tried to fit in with the Lutherans, but never felt comfortable. A bit wary by this time, she did a fair amount of research before coming to visit us and then spent a year asking questions of church members, as well as gathering outside community impressions of us. She came to the conclusion that the Unitarian Church was somewhat misunderstood. What she found was a very caring, diverse, welcoming community. After 6 years or so she is totally convinced that she has always been a Unitarian, but didn't know it. She has helped out in the kitchen, with child care, committees, etc. Currently she is a trained U- Group facilitator and shares in leading of two of our groups.

Connie feels blessed to have been raised by "great parents" who taught her the values she still lives by today. Among these are: "Always be Kind" and "Always take the high road no matter how difficult the situation."

Ron Graham

UUA President Issues Statement on Marriage Equality in Minnesota

May 15, 2013

The Rev. Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), issued the following statement applauding the legalization of same-sex marriage in Minnesota:

“Last November, Minnesotans defeated an anti-marriage ballot amendment. And yesterday, the governor of Minnesota signed the marriage equality bill that made Minnesota the 12th state to ensure equal rights for its citizens. I applaud the great efforts of all who helped change minds in such a short amount of time in order to secure this victory.

The Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance mobilized countless Unitarian Universalists who went door to door to help educate citizens and promote equality for all families. It is in part, thanks to this type of grassroots organizing, that marriage equality is realized in Minnesota.

Minnesota is the first state in the Midwest to legalize gay marriage by legislative vote, and the third nationwide in just 10 days, joining Rhode Island and Delaware.

These decisive victories demonstrate that more and more Americans realize that marriage equality strengthens families, protects children, and ensures the basic rights of citizenship for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender couples. It is not just a phenomenon on the West and East Coasts. We are witnessing a cultural shift unparalleled in our nation’s history. It is the time for equality for all loving and committed couples.

Unitarian Universalists will continue to stand on the side of love in this struggle for equality until marriage equality is the law nationwide.”

Rev. Peter Morales

Taken from the UUA Website, <http://uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/285957.shtml>

“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

Visitors Welcome

The Board of Directors of the Unitarian Church of Underwood has had many discussions about how we can reach out to people and invite them to join us for Sunday Morning Service. We would like to be a safe and welcoming place for people who are in our beautiful lakes area on vacation or who are here for the summer. As a result of those discussions, we are now a proud sponsor of programming on MPR on 91.5 FM, the Fergus Falls station. We thought MPR might be the station many UU's listen to as they travel to the area, so we decided to sponsor programming during the time between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Friday, Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Won't it be fun to hear MPR announce our sponsorship on the radio?

Also, this year, we placed an ad in the Fergus Falls and Surrounding Area Visitors Guide magazine. This is a publication that comes out every summer and is available throughout the lakes area for free. (There is a copy of the magazine at the church if you'd like to see the ad.)

As we extend an invitation for visitors to join us, it is ultimately the joy and the responsibility of the members of our congregation, to welcome these visitors as soon as they walk in the door and continue to make them feel welcome until they leave us. We are a church that opens its doors to all people. As the Universalist pastor Lee Richards is quoted as saying, *"I will meet the world with open heart, open mind, and open arms and, in so doing, the singular "I" shall become "We"*.

New Email Address

You may have noticed that the June Newsletter was mailed from a new address. This is because the Unitarian Church of Underwood now has a new email address. It is ucofu@ucofu.org. This change was made because all of the email addresses we used in the past were attached to a person's name. The new email belongs to the church alone. It is part of the package we got with our webpage www.ucofu.org. You will see that the new email address will be used on our church bulletins, our letterhead, and future publications.

UU Quote

"Life is a lot like a Yahtzee cup...we get to be with people 'randomly' who we might fall in love with, create something amazing with or, simply, enjoy a few moments in time." – Don Southworth, UU minister

Summer Read

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches chose the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander as their Common Read for the 2012-13 year. After seeing some interest to read and discuss this book by a few members of our congregation, a Common Read was organized at UCU. Two of us read the first couple of chapters of the book and met to discuss them.

Just to fill you in, the first chapter tells about the history of black women and men in America in a way that is different from any history class most of us have ever attended. The second chapter talks about the current culture of the justice system with particular attention to race. Both of these chapters are eye opening and shocking. They left us with a feeling of “now what?” We felt our first step was to encourage others to read the book. To do that, we are creating a Summer Read.

The Summer Read gives everyone time to read the book. We will come together September 22 at 9:15 to begin to discuss the book, perhaps extending the discussion over two or three sessions. (Look for more details in the September Newsletter.) The book can be purchased at the UUA bookstore at <http://www.uuabookstore.org/>. Please read the book and join us for a discussion.

“We could choose to be a nation that extends care, compassion, and concern to those who are locked up and locked out or headed for prison before they are old enough to vote. We could seek for them the same opportunities we seek for our own children; we could treat them like one of “us.” We could do that. Or we can choose to be a nation that shames and blames its most vulnerable, affixes badges of dishonor upon them at young ages, and then relegates them to a permanent second-class status for life. That is the path we have chosen, and it leads to a familiar place.”

— Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

UU Quote

“Felons, however fallen, still are men...the heart that is buried in a dungeon is as precious as that seated on a throne. Suppose that one only may be caught up from the gulf of vice, misery and perdition, and restored to repentance, virtue and usefulness, this would be gain enough to reward all the exertions that may be made to effect the reform, for there is upon earth no gem so precious as the human soul.” - Charles Spear, (Universalist) *Essays on the Punishment of Death* (1844) p. 35.

UUA Update

Big changes are happening in our corner of the UUA. It has been voted by representatives from the Heartland District, the Central Midwest District, and the Prairie Star district (of which we have been a part) to combine the 3 districts into one region named MidAmerica. MidAmerica will include the states of Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky and a portion of Ohio.

From a recent email from MidAmerica: “Moments like this are bittersweet. Our districts have been known and loved for 50 or more years in some cases. We know that even as we seek to preserve what was best in our three districts, things will change. Our first year will be a year of firsts, and a cause for celebration. It will also be a year of reminders of how things used to be... We know, too, that we are making history, and that we have an opportunity to create a new kind of UU institution that combines vision, empowerment, and growth at all levels – as individuals, as congregations, in yet-to-be-formed clusters, and in our new region.”

“As we transition from being three district presidents to three members of a nine member regional board, we pledge to you to work with our new colleagues on those things you told us you most want:

- Connections among UUs, among UU congregations, and with other UU communities, both face-to-face and virtual
- Opportunities for participation in the work of the region
- Opportunities to work with other UUs for justice
- Opportunities for your voices to be heard in the governance of our region, and in shaping service priorities

To be successful, we will continue to need your help. Our new board can't do it all, and our staff can't do it all. We'll need volunteers to create and carry out the programs that will make the MidAmerica Region the best it can be. We look forward to working with you to create our future. “ –Amy Taylor, President, Heartland District; Rev. Bill Sasso, President, Central Midwest District; Kathy Burek, President, Prairie Star District.

From Ian Evison, Congregation Life Consultant and Lead Staff Person for the MidAmerica Region of the UUA (ievison@uua.org): “Some of you have been asking what is next. The votes set in motion a sequencing of steps that needs to synthesize-somehow-legal care and deliberateness with the frenetic activity necessary to operate within the new structure July 1.” There will be a MidAmerica regional ingathering at the UUA General Assembly in Louisville and approval sought to make regions an official part of the structure of the UUA.

Watch UUA General Assembly Online June 19 – 23, 2013

<http://www.uua.org/ga/virtual/30754.shtml>

Minutes of the Board of the
Unitarian Church of Underwood
March 20, 2013

Board members present: Ellen Eastby, Dave Wass, Don Siems, Norman Kolstad, and Mary Anderson. Absent: John Minge, Luke Anderson, Dave McRoberts, Mary Worner, Alisha Piekarski.

Others in attendance: Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson and Ron Roller.

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 6:33 p.m. No quorum was present. Eastby offered a reading/meditation.

Reports:

Treasurer's report: David Wass

Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson

Program Committee: no report

John Minge joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and a quorum was achieved.

Outreach Committee: Ron Roller. Four Empowerment Grants were awarded totaling \$5500 (M. Anderson/Siems):

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| Habitat for Humanity | \$750.00 |
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| Shan Refugees | \$1000.00 |
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| Non-Violent Peace Force | \$1500.00 |
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| M-State Sustainable Food | \$2250.00 |
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The agenda was approved (Siems/Wass).

The minutes of the February 20, 2013 board meeting were approved as printed (Minge/M. Anderson).

Program Committee: John Minge

Membership Committee: Mary Anderson

Facilities Committee: no report

Old business: sound system, banner, floor, strategic plan, regional workshops, UCU annual meeting, stewardship, planned giving, budget. A motion passed to purchase 15 weeks of MPR ads for a total of \$120 (Siems/M. Anderson).

New business: nominations, Administrative Consultant performance review, 125-year church anniversary celebration. The \$700 in net proceeds from the sale of fair-trade coffee is to be sent to the Social Justice Committee of the UUA (Minge/Wass).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Norman Kolstad

Minutes of the April 14, 2013 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

Board members present: Ellen Eastby, Dave Wass, Don Siems, Norman Kolstad, Mary Worner, Dave McRoberts, Luke Anderson, and Mary Anderson. Absent: Alisha Piekarski

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 11:33 a.m.

A renewal of the Administrative Consultant's contract for fiscal year 2014 for JoAnn Larson was approved (McRoberts/Siems).

A fiscal year 2014 budget, to be proposed to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, was approved (L. Anderson/Siems).

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Kolstad

Unitarian Church of Underwood

Visit our website at www.ucofu.org and on Facebook at Unitarian Church of Underwood - <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/216475333813/>. We have a new email address. It is ucofu@ucofu.org.