

Unitarian Church of Underwood March, 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 March

Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30

- March 3 – Anne and Sean Taylor - “Nordic Reflections: Insights from a Family Living Abroad”
- March 10 – Women’s History Play – “Four Faces of Fuller”
- March 17 – Stephanie Sanderson and Ellen Eastby – Celebration Sunday
- March 24 – Rev. Stefan Jonassen - "Going Back: Toward Simplicity and Refinement
- March 31 – Rebecca Davis – Piano Concert

Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15

- March 3 – Adult RE – Chapter 5 – “American Gospel – God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation”
- March 10 – New Member Orientation – Session 2
- March 17 – Writing as Spiritual Practice

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”. You can also check the UCU website at www.ucofu.org or the facebook page.

Daylight Savings Time

Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday March 10th at 2 a.m. Don’t forget to set your clocks ahead one hour!

Sunday Morning Speakers

March 3 – Anne and Sean Taylor – “Nordic Reflections: Insights from a Family Living Abroad.”

Sean and Anne Taylor of Fergus Falls spent last year living in southern Norway with their two teenaged children as part of the Fulbright scholar exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Through their shared experience of living in a foreign country, they each gained individual personal experiences that have helped them understand their lives in a broader context.

Sean Taylor is an associate professor of history at Minnesota State University Moorhead, specializing in early American history and the history of medicine. Anne Taylor is an instructor in English at North Dakota State College of Science, specializing in academic writing. They previously lived in Norway through study abroad opportunities in the late 1980's and were thrilled to finally achieve their goal of taking their children to Norway to experience living abroad as a family. They are both graduates of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and received their graduate degrees from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

March 10 – Women's History play – “Four Faces of Fuller”

March 17 – Stephanie Sanderson and Ellen Eastby – “Celebration Sunday”

A joyous service is planned as we welcome new members, share together in Flower Communion, and hear about other spring celebrations. Please bring a flower to share. Flowers will be available to those who aren't able to bring one. There is more information about Flower Communion in this newsletter.

March 24 – Rev. Stefan Jonassen - "Going Back: Toward Simplicity and Refinement"

William Morris said that "simplicity of life, even the barest, is not a misery, but the very foundation of refinement." This nineteenth-century English artist and philosopher imagined an ideal society in which life would be generous, pleasant and beautiful with each person enjoying meaningful work and abundant happiness. What is the ideal world of which you dream?

Rev. Stefan Jonasson is a Unitarian Universalist minister in Winnipeg and long-time friend of the Unitarian Church of Underwood. He presently serves as Director of Growth Strategies for the Unitarian Universalist Association.

March 31 – Rebecca Davis – Piano Concert

Rebecca Davis is a Juilliard graduate, former Juilliard faculty member, and performs worldwide. She will be playing, what she describes, as introspective music – music to reflect upon – our joys, sorrows – just about any emotion the music may bring up for each individual.

New Member Orientation

Are you interested in joining the church? Or would you just like to know more about us? Two sessions were planned as an introduction to the church. The first session was held on February 24th and the second session is being held March 10th at 9:15. You don't have to commit to joining the church in order to attend. You are welcome to attend the second session, even if you missed the first. 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

New members will be recognized during the March 17th Sunday Service. Please join us as we welcome new members and celebrate current members.

The Flower Communion
A Service of Celebration for Religious Liberals

by Reginald Zottoli (taken from the UUA website)

The Flower communion service was created by Norbert Capek (1870-1942), who founded the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. He introduced this special service to that church on June 4, 1923. For some time he had felt the need for some symbolic ritual that would bind people more closely together. The format had to be one that would not alienate any who had forsaken other religious traditions. The traditional Christian communion service with bread and wine was unacceptable to the members of his congregation because of their strong reaction against the Catholic faith. So he turned to the native beauty of their countryside for elements of a communion which would be genuine to them. This simple service was the result. It was such a success that it was held yearly just before the summer recess of the church.

The flower communion was brought to the United States in 1940 and introduced to the members of our Cambridge, Massachusetts, church by Dr. Capek's wife, Maja V. Capek. The Czech-born Maja had met Norbert Capek in New York City while he was studying for his Ph.D., and it was at her urging that Norbert left the Baptist ministry and turned to Unitarianism. The Capeks returned to Czechoslovakia in 1921 and established the dynamic liberal church in Prague; Maja Capek was ordained in 1926. It was during her tour of the United States that Maja introduced the flower communion, which had been developed in the Prague church, at the Unitarian church in Cambridge. Unfortunately, Maja was unable to return to Prague due to the outbreak of World War II, and it was not until the war was over that Norbert Capek's death in a Nazi concentration camp was revealed. From this beginning the service has spread to many of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and has been adapted along the way.

People were asked to bring a flower of their choice, either from their own gardens or from the field or roadside. When they arrived at church a large vase stood waiting in the vestibule, attended by two young members of the Church School. Each person was asked to place their own flower in the vase. This signified that it was by their own free will they joined with the others. The vase that contained all the flowers was a symbol of the united church fellowship. The young attendants helped with the arrangement of the bouquet. Later they carried the vase up to the front of the auditorium and placed it on a table there. Dr. Capek then said a prayer, after which he walked over and consecrated the flowers while the congregation stood. The two attendants then took the vase back out into the vestibule.

After the service, as people left the church, they went to the vase and each took a flower from the vase other than the one that they had brought. The significance of the flower communion is that as no two flowers are alike, so no two people are alike, yet each has a contribution to make. Together the different flowers form a beautiful bouquet. Our common bouquet would not be the same without the unique addition of each individual flower, and thus it is with our church community, it would not be the same without each and every one of us. Thus this service is a statement of our community.

By exchanging flowers, we show our willingness to walk together in our Search for truth, disregarding all that might divide us. Each person takes home a flower brought by someone else - thus symbolizing our shared celebration in community. This communion of sharing is essential to a free people of a free religion.

Please bring a flower to church on Sunday, March 17. If you aren't able to bring a flower, one will be provided for you.

Life Again

by Steph Sanderson

The red stems of the dogwood and the green of the pine are all that breaks the monotony of the grey-brown wintery spring day.

The birds that sang in yesterday's sunshine are hushed today. Down by the woods the grey goose sits. The ice is rotten and dark.

Still, his mate doesn't come. I yearn for Persephone to return from the land of the dead to bring the verdant green blades of spring.

Not too many years ago, I sat in the choir loft of a lovely old church.

It was Good Friday and the church was draped in black. We sang dirges. We repented for our miserable lives. Jesus – tormented, then dead – lay in a cold, dark tomb. “Why am I doing this?????” I asked myself. “Why, because,” came the answer, “it is the life of Everyman.”

Who has not lain in a tomb of grief and despair? It is cold, damp, chilling. The dark emptiness presses down heavier, then heavier still. The silence becomes deeper and deeper. Life is gone from me.

But in the silence I at last begin to hear. I hear the throb and drone of life, the sizzle and pop of hadrons and photons and suns and moons and swirling galaxies, humming and pulsing. I sit in the darkness of my tomb waiting the dawn of resurrection.

The stone is rolled away. I take a breath.

MEMBERSHIP PROFILE – Diane Johnson

Diane and Bob Johnson moved to Fergus Falls in May of 2011 from the central coast of California. After attending a family reunion along the Red River Valley five years ago, they fell in love with Fergus and everything Minnesota Nice and immediately made it their retirement destination. “I even love the weather!” Bob says.

They first met when Diane was 16 and dating Bob’s brother. Their paths diverged for a time, but when they finally married 37 years ago, they had a combined family of six children. Diane’s son, Kevin died of AIDS seven years ago, after twelve years of illness, which has understandably had a major impact on her life. Along with the remaining five, they now have four grandchildren.

Diane knew her Minnesota aunts would be horrified if they didn’t attend church (this wasn’t California anymore) so they decided to try each of the 16 Lutheran churches nearby, but they were saved by Bob’s observation that there was a UU Church in Underwood. The first Sunday they attended they knew they were “home.”

In the short time they have been with us they have become very involved in the life of our congregation. You will see them most Sunday mornings, but in addition Diane is a U Group facilitator and a member of the Writing as a Spiritual Practice group. She writes the blog snowbirdredux.com, which is subtitled “a journal of transformation in the making – California to Minnesota.” In addition, she is a Master Gardener and through the Fergus Falls Garden Club became in charge of the F.F. Farmer’s Market. She is also a member of the Lake Region Writer’s Network.

Her background is in Folklore and Mythology, which is always a subtext for her writing, along with her experience of working for the international Arcane School, whose principles are presented through esoteric meditation, study and service as a way of life.

Diane and Bob both regard their guiding philosophy and principle to be steeped in the words of the mythologist, Joseph Campbell – “Follow your bliss.” And they have.

Annual Chili Dinner Benefit

The Annual Chili Dinner Benefit is scheduled for Friday, April 5th from 5-7pm at the Underwood Community Center. This is our main community event of the year and provides funding for the Underwood Senior Nutrition Program. Three types of chili, salad tray, fresh breads & desserts are served to an average of 150-200 people. We will need 15-20 volunteers on the day of the dinner (sign up sheets at the church) for serving, prep, and cleanup. Tickets and posters will be available at the church also. Our goal is to sell 200 tickets before the dinner this year. Contact Ron Roller at rollerolson@gmail.com for more information.

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.

Sunday Offerings

Our Sunday offerings are still down 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 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.

A Humanist's Guide to Prayer

(excerpts from "A humanist's guide to prayer" by Patricia Montley in the spring 2013 issue of UU World)

"I miss praying. It was comforting, calming. It gave structure to the day and provided a sense of purpose. Prayer of praise and thanksgiving offered a way of showing appreciation for the wonders of the natural world. Prayer of contrition let me atone for my faults and reminded me what I needed to work on. Prayer of supplication was a way of giving to those in need, of doing something about situations that left me otherwise helpless ... I stopped believing that there is a distinct divine being outside of me who is listening. And yet, I've sometimes wondered: Why should that keep me from praying? I desperately want to give that very real gift of caring and comfort, and I have come to believe that is possible – that what I can offer is the prayer of blessing..."

"Remember the story in the book of Exodus in which God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush? Moses asks, 'Who are you? What is your name?' The answer comes back: 'I am who I am.' "

"I am who I am. What if 'god' is all that is? What if 'god is all who are?"

"Blessed be all that is! A prayerful version of Margaret Fuller's 'I accept the universe'? Blessed be all who are! The Universalist's prayer of inclusion?"

"Perhaps this – simple as it is – could be our humanist prayer: Bless all that is. Bless all who are. Amen."

(Prayer was a U Group topic in October, 2012)

UU Quotes

"Belief lives in the mind. It is a cognitive, intellectual dimension of religion, made up of ideas. Faith is deeper. It is a profound, existential sense of trust. Faith lives at the mysterious spiritual center of our being."

"Engaging in conversation is an act of love. It is listening, hearing the cries of the other's heart, and offering the cries of our own heart in return."

Both quotes are from Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar, *Fluent in Faith: A Unitarian Universalist Embrace of Religious Language*



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)

Prairie Star District – Annual Conference 2013

Annual Conference 2013



Annual Conference 2013:
Inspire the Future We Envision
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
April 5-7, 2013

Marriott Hotel
1200 Collins Road NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
319-393-6600

For more information go to: <http://www.psduua.org/AnnualConference2013>

UU Quote

“It is in the round of the common everyday life that to many of us religion must have meaning, if it is to have any meaning of all. Not in formal observances, not in creeds or doctrines...but in the lives we live, in the home, in the community, and in the world, is the religious way to be found. A religious person is one who fulfills one’s highest function as a human being in one’s relations with other persons.” - Clinton Lee Scott (Universalist, minister)

“A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.”
– Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (Unitarian, Supreme Court Justice)

**UNITARIAN CHURCH OF UNDERWOOD
MINUTES OF
JANUARY 20, 2013, BOARD MEETING**

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

Others in attendance: Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson and some Church members

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 12:15 p.m. She then offered two readings.

The Agenda was approved after the MPR item was stricken from "Old Business". (Don/Dave W.)

The minutes of the December, 2012, Board Meeting were approved. (Mary/Luke)

Treasurer's Report. Dave W. presented this report and mentioned the following: that the Board will have to decide what to do with the \$108,000 CD that is coming due, that the endowment has done well and is now worth \$109,582, that the endowment grants of \$7500 (for 2013) will come out of savings, and that collection income and expenses are both down. Dave W. suggested that the \$108,000 CD be split in half with one half going into UU funds (through the Boston UU office) and one half going into CDs. That recommendation was approved by the Board. (Mary/Don) The term of the new CDs is to be 2.5 years. (Dave M./Luke) There was also some discussion regarding taking some money out of the \$28,000 CD when it comes due in a month to cover the proposed new sound system. No action was taken on that at this point in the meeting.

Administrative Consultant's Report. JoAnn gave a brief report and said that 4 or 5 people have been suggested to her as possible new Board members.

Program Committee Report. A brief oral report was given by John.

Outreach Committee Report. No report was received from this Committee.

Membership Committee Report. Mary provided a written report. JoAnn indicated that the membership committee needed about \$100 for new member packets and visitor packets. No formal action was taken, but JoAnn was told that she could spend up to \$150 on these items. .

Facilities Committee Report. Dave M. reported that there is no adopt-a-highway sign available on Highway 210 but that some such signs are available on county highways. It was decided that the Church adopt—or at least look into adopting—a space on County Highway 1

west of Water Street. (Dave W./John) This means a cleanup project for a mile or two along said highway. With regard to the concern regarding the strength of the floor, Dave presented an engineer's drawing with some recommendations. Dave will get some bids for the recommended work with the understanding that money would be held back out of the \$28,000 CD to cover the cost. No action was taken regarding this matter. Finally, Dave reported on the new sound system that the Church needs. He passed out a spec sheet and the four estimates—reflecting various options—that he's received. It was decided that the Church should do everything, including purchasing a 44" to 46" flat screen TV, up to a total cost of \$4000. Again, the needed money is to be taken out of the soon-to-mature \$28,000 CD. (Dave M./Luke)

Old Business—the banner. Ellen reported on this.

Old Business—strategic plan. Luke reported on this. Bob Worner (who was in attendance as a member of the congregation) said that the new 5-year plan should include a part-time pastoral person on a 3-year contract. He presented a written recommendation.

Old Business—endowment/planned giving. Ellen reported on this. She has been in touch with Wes Binner. She will provide the Board with a proposal regarding what he could do for us and what his fee would be. Ellen also presented a proposed letter to the UUA regarding our position regarding dues to be paid for church members. Some changes to the proposed letter were suggested.

New Business—miscellaneous items. Ellen asked if we might want to host a regional UU workshop here in Underwood. No action was taken. Ellen will explore this a little further and bring the idea back before the Board at a later date. Ellen presented a written proposed "photo release form" and a written proposed "budget process" for the Board's consideration. No action was taken. Finally, she mentioned that the annual Board meeting would probably be on April 21, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at about 2 pm.

Next Board meeting is on February 20, 2013,

Respectfully submitted,

John Minge

(filling in for Norm Kolstad who could not be present at the January 20, 2013, Board meeting)