

Unitarian Church of Underwood May, 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.

Coming Up in May

Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30

- May 5 – Bob Worner – Open the Doors and See All the People
- May 12 – David Schachtschieder – God Our Mother: on the re-cognition of the inherent divinity of nature and the mission-critical reclamation of the sacred feminine
- May 19 – Women’s History Play – Four Faces of Fuller
- May 26 – To Be Announced

Sunday Morning Meetings Begin at 9:15

- May 5 – Adult RE
- May 19 – Writing as Spiritual Practice
- May 26 – Discussion about the book *Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander, chosen as the Common Read by the UUA

UU Quotes

“More than any other religious tradition, Unitarian Universalism brings together perennial religious truths across traditions and cultures, and finds contemporary language to communicate them. Together we are creating an evolving, changing, breathing religion for our time.” – Sam Trumbore, UU minister

“...religion is something that happens to you when you open your mind to truth, your conscience to justice, and your heart to love.” – A. Powell Davies, Unitarian minister

“Religion is the fullest sharing of life with others.” – Kenneth Patton, UU minister

Sunday Service Speakers

May 5 – Bob Worner – *Open the Doors and See All the People* – Principle #7 – Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

May 12 - David Schachtschnieder – God Our Mother: on the re-cognition of the inherent divinity or nature and the mission-critical reclamation of the sacred feminine. (This was rescheduled twice due to bad winter weather. Third time's a charm.)

About David: "I'm a highly imperfect, deeply well-intended, more and more humbled, ever-curious, ever-learning, maddeningly inspired, hyper self-critical, evolving, super-cooperative, awakening, humanity serving, nature-devoted, awestruck, imagination carried, heart-driven, hopelessly optimistic, occasional pain-in-the butt, Source-possessed, and certainly helplessly eccentric, grateful human Earthling."

The two UUC Principles that this talk will aspire to expand upon and honor:

- a) Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life.
- b) Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

May 19 – Women's History Play – *Four Faces of Fuller*. (This is also a rescheduled program.)

This play is about Margaret Fuller and will be performed by members of our congregation.

May 26 – To Be Announced

Common Read

The UUA chose the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander for the 2012-13 Common Read. There will be a discussion of this book on May 26th at 9:15 at the church. The book can be purchased for 10% off at the UUA bookstore at <http://www.uuabookstore.org/>. It should be an interesting discussion, so please join us.

"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*

President's Report by Ellen Eastby

Note: The President's Report and the Outreach Committee Report from the Annual Meeting is being included in this newsletter. All of the reports given that day are posted on our website at <http://www.ucofu.org/news.php> or contact Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com for a copy.

This has been an incredible year as I have gotten to know all of you and the church itself much better. I first want to thank each and every one of you for bringing your own unique gifts and perspectives to the table as we worked together to make progress in many area of the church, which I will mention in a moment. I also want to thank those people who served on the board of directors this year. They are Donn Siems – Vice President, - Norman Kolstad – Secretary, David Wass – Treasurer, Luke Anderson, Mary Anderson, Dave McRoberts, John Minge, Alisha Piekarski, and Mary Worner. They are some of the most dedicated people I have met and they have tolerated some mighty long board meetings this year. A big thank you goes out to JoAnn our Administrative Consultant, who works very hard to empower the processes and members of the church to make us the great congregation that we are. There are others that I would like to thank, people like Ron Roller who does our books, Susan Groff who does the janitorial work in the church, Marguerite Andrews who sends out the weekly report, and the many others who are indispensable in carrying out the mission of the church. I just can't mention you all. Thanks to all of you.

As you know, it has been a busy year. We developed a strategic plan that will be voted on by the membership at the Annual Meeting. We installed a new sound system. We created a Membership Committee. A banner was designed, made, and is now displayed upstairs. We are now part of the Adopt A Highway program. We are advertising on MPR and in the *Fergus Falls and Surrounding Area Visitors Guide Magazine*. We invested money with the UUA Endowment Fund. We were part of the Community Thanksgiving Service in Underwood. We installed ceiling fans in the sanctuary. We took a stand on Marriage Equality with a Vote No campaign. The annual Chili Dinner was held. We have wonderful speakers and music at each Sunday Service. We continued to provide monthly newsletter. We have a website - www.ucofu.org. And there is much more. Whew!

I would like to mention a bit more about the new sound system. We had been talking about what to do to make the sound better during Sunday Service for a long time. We decided it was time to just go for it. So we did, with a lot of help from Bill Nead from Sverdrup Lutheran church. He researched, developed, and installed the new system for us. Thank you Bill! Wally Wrahol donated the sound mixing board. Thank you Kris and Wally! We will also have a laptop donated to us that will be connected to the sound system and that will help us in some mysterious way. We have two new headset microphones and two new hand held microphones that we are still getting used to, so please be patient with us. We have a camera installed in the sanctuary that will broadcast to a television downstairs. This will allow people who work in the kitchen or those who are with children downstairs to not miss a thing during the service. It will also be helpful when there is overflow, which may happen with a funeral. I'm sure I have forgotten some of the features of this new system. Once it is all up and running, there will be a

training for those interested in learning how to operate the system. This will make things run more smoothly during Sunday Service.

This next year will be another busy year, as we write goals and objectives from our new strategic plan. I can't say for certain what those goals may be, but they will probably include creating a planned giving program, setting up a cluster workshop for regional UU churches, and fixing the floor. As far as this next year goes, as I am known to say, "it'll be great!

NOTE - If you ever have any questions, feedback, praise, or constructive criticism, please do not hesitate to contact one of the board members. They will be happy to listen or answer questions. Their contact information is located on the bulletin board in the hallway as you enter the building.

Outreach Program 2012-2013

A. Empowerment Grant Program:

The Empowerment Grant Program has given another \$5,500 in funding to four projects for the 2012-2013 year. Recipients for this period were the Non-Violent Peace Force (\$1500), Habitat for Humanity (\$750), MState Sustainable Food Production Program (\$2250), and the School for Shan Refugees (\$1000). This program is funded with interest monies from church investments. Over forty projects, local, regional, and international have been funded for over \$42,500 in the last five years. We hope to continue this program into the future, as giving is just as important as getting.

B. Chili Dinner Benefit:

This year was our 13th annual Chili Dinner benefit for the Underwood Senior Nutrition program. As we all know, many essential human services have been, or will be cut in the near future, including portions of this program. Our continued financial support is crucial in maintaining some of the services this nutrition program offers. We have generated over \$15,000 over the years for this program, and hope to continue.

This year's Chili Dinner served about 150-160 people and made about \$900. A big thanks to all the helpers in this endeavor, cooks, servers, kitchen, set-up, and clean-up. Next year we will attempt to get to our perennial goal of having over 200 happy chili eaters.

Note: A number of people have been asking for the recipe for the chili, but unfortunately this recipe is a closely held family secret. Sorry!

John Minge Membership Profile

John lives northwest of Perham in a building originally meant to be a barn and to be used as part of a petting zoo and small children's amusement park. But, as his circumstances and plans have changed, he has repurposed part of the barn into a habitable—at least for him!—living space. Over time, he will convert the entire building into a comfortable home for himself.

John has three children all of whom live in the Twin Cities. Johnny, his oldest, is 28 and works for Target doing IT troubleshooting. His daughter Ahna is 26 and about to get a master's degree in public policy. His youngest—Raymond—is 24 and a computer programmer.

John grew up in Worthington, MN and has a bachelor's degree with a major in philosophy and a law degree from the U of MN. He has a general law practice in Perham and has been practicing law for almost 37 years.

The Unitarian Church of Underwood is the only church that John has ever joined as an adult—after almost 40 years in the spiritual “wilderness”. (His parents selected the Lutheran church that he diligently—and with significant parental encouragement!—attended as he grew up.) He started coming here about seven years ago because he felt a real need to be part of a church community. He was drawn to the Unitarian Church because it is “a free-thinking church rather than a creed-based church”. (John claims to be a “universalist” rather than a “unitarian”.) He likes being in the midst of a group with which he has so many shared values.

John participates in our church in multiple ways. He is about to complete his sixth year as a member of the Church Board. Many of us delight in his thoughtful teaching of the Adult Religious Education class. In his unique way, he has covered topics in depth and with full participation of class members. John might even be remembered—at least for a while—for the curry dinner that he made for the congregation last December. But he thinks that his “lasting legacy” at the Church will be the wayside pulpit found in front of the Church that he designed and built out of cedar that he carefully selected. He even picked out the quote that he carved into the “pulpit”: “Our celebration of life and common search for meaning bind us together”.

When asked if he had a philosophy of life, John said succinctly that he had a motto: “No man is an island”. He believes we are all connected and need to be sensitive to the needs of others and to truly respond to those needs. My dad was a medical doctor whose heart was truly in service and in Christian missions. He died and is buried in a mission compound in northern Bangladesh. I went over there almost two years later to visit his grave. I spent about three months there doing whatever I could to help out--anything but proselytizing! I attribute whatever humanitarian instincts I have to my parents who were truly service-oriented and generous with their time and resources in ways that I don't even come close to matching.

U-Groups

The Perham U-Group sponsored Fikrillahmat (Fikri) and Elshan Mirzazade (Mary's exchange students) in two informational events about Islam at the NYM Culture Center and the ITOW Veteran's Museum. The guest speaker was Aaron Collins from The Building Blocks Muslim 501 (C) 3 organization in Minneapolis, which provides services and religious education to Muslims and Non-Muslims.

There were about 50 in attendance Saturday night and around 30 on Sunday (April 27-28). John Minge did an excellent job of introducing both nights and moderating on Sunday when there were some in attendance with questions of Quran quotes that seemed to dispute Islam's teaching on peace and tolerance. John handled the questions diplomatically and with respect and the boys and guest refuted them with their understanding and messages of respect, peace, forgiveness, love.

John had also baked bread from an Azerbaijan recipe so we served that with cheeses, pineapple, orange slices, dates, and a tray of cookies with chai and coffee as beverages. "The job was made easy by all of us pitching in to help," said Mary Anderson. "We were glad to see several friendly faces from UCU." (Mary Anderson and Mary Worner are co-facilitators of this group).

The Fergus Falls Tuesday evening group served brunch before church and the annual meeting. We had lots of fun working together and were glad to see such a good turnout for this important church event. And we used the new flatware provided to the church by the Battle Lake group.

Thanks, all of you, for your inspiration, your friendship, and your generous service to the church.

Steph Sanderson

UU Humor

A traveler couldn't find the local Unitarian Universalist church. After looking in the center of town, in the suburbs, and out in the surrounding country side, the traveler asked a farmer, "am I too far out for the UU church?" The farmer's reply: "No one is too far out for that church."

Sparrows **by Stephanie Sanderson**

A pair of sparrows has taken up residence in my little barn. Despite heaps of snow and ice, this brave couple has moved on, not in the hope of spring, but in the proclamation that spring is here, whatever the appearances. A little pile of debris on the barn floor indicates that the sparrows have cleared of an old nest from the top of a light fixture for their own dwelling. They are bold little things, hopping among the hens for oats and seeds, and perching on the cat's dish for crumbs.

English house sparrows aren't appreciated here much and are considered a nuisance. But you have to give them credit – they know how to be sparrows. They know what they are here to do and they do it with diligence, dedication and aplomb.

Why is it so hard for us? Why is it so hard for us to figure out what it is to be fully human? To be the best and fullest expression of our humanness? We are meaning seeking creatures and we need to live a life of purpose. But how do we know it? Can it be that my greatest need is my greatest purpose – to fulfill the whole potential appointed me by the cosmos? Blessed life.

The UUA Announces its New Headquarters

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) will be moving! In mid-March the UUA's Board of Trustees unanimously voted to purchase a new headquarters at 24 Farnsworth Street, in Boston's Innovation District.

This is an historic moment for our movement as we prepare a space that will reflect and promote our values and aspirations. It will allow us to collaborate and work together more collaboratively; promote accessibility and key environmental standards; and allow us to support you and your congregation more effectively.

The decision to move from our headquarters on Beacon Hill was undertaken with much reflection and deliberation. Change of this magnitude can be difficult, but we are excited about the opportunity for us to embrace and celebrate the future of our faith

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/>



Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly

You are invited to attend the 2013 General Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky

FROM PROMISE TO COMMITMENT

The theme of this GA is "From Promise to Commitment." Building on the experience of Justice GA, we will gather in Louisville to examine and renew our covenant to our faith, one another, our congregations and the larger world.

[Programs](#) will explore the kinds of promises our religious communities are called to make as we seek to live out our Unitarian Universalist values; how we make these promises, with whom, and how we hold ourselves and each other accountable. Here are just some of the topics that will be addressed: environmental justice, the next steps in immigration justice, anti-racism, anti-oppression multiculturalism, organizing for justice, multigenerational work, growing Unitarian Universalism, leadership education, spiritual growth and theology. There will also be many, many opportunities to [worship](#).

The 2013 [Public Witness](#) event at General Assembly is scheduled for the evening of Thursday, June 20. Join UUA President Rev. Peter Morales, Wendell Berry (author, spiritual environmental justice activist, economic critic, and farmer) and interfaith and community leaders in a witness for our Earth, our communities, and our future.

REGISTRATION AND HOUSING

- [Register](#) for GA by April 30 for the lowest rates! Rates will increase on May 1.
- [Housing](#) is still available; rates are guaranteed through May 16.

UUA General Assembly

www.uua.org/ga generalassembly@uua.org