

## Unitarian Church of Underwood November, 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 November

#### Sunday Morning Service Begins at 10:30

November 4 – Bob Worner – What Happens Now?  
November 11 – Ron Graham – Unitarian Sources of Truth  
November 18 – Elshan Mirzazade – Where the Heck is Azerbaijan?  
November 25 - TBA

#### Sunday Morning Meetings – 9:15

November 4 – Adult RE – Chapter 2 – *American Gospel* by Jon Meacham  
November 11 – Strategic Planning Discussion Group – everyone is invited to attend  
November 18 – Writing as Spiritual Practice

### Sunday Speakers

To get updates on Sunday Morning Speakers, you can go to the website at [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org) and click on **Sundays** at the top of the home page. Information about speakers is also posted weekly on the facebook page Unitarian Church of Underwood.

### Daylight Saving Time

Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 a.m. Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>. Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour!

### Weather Related Announcements

Find weather related announcements on Lakes Radio Family of Stations – 103.3, 96.5, 99.5 FM and 1020, 1250 AM or online at [www.lakesradio.net](http://www.lakesradio.net) under “News” or KSAX TV Alexandria, MN or online at [www.KSAX.com](http://www.KSAX.com) under “weather”.

## **Sunday Morning Speakers**

**November 4** – Bob Worner – What Happens Now?

**November 11** – Ron Graham – Unitarian Sources of Truth

Ron received his Masters of Divinity from Methodist Theological School in Ohio (1966) and served as a United Methodist Minister until 1977 when he became an ordained Presbyterian Minister. From 1988 until his retirement in 2006 he was Executive Director of North Country Food Bank in Crookston which served 21 counties including Otter Tail. In addition he "bought and rehabbed houses no one wanted and rented to those no one wanted." He discovered the UU Fellowship in Grand Forks in 1993 and is currently a member of this Church.

**November 18** - Elshan Mirzazade – Where the Heck is Azerbaijan?

Elsan is a 17 year old foreign exchange student here with a scholarship from the FLEX program with ASSE/World Heritage. The FLEX program is sponsored by the U.S. State Department. With his scholarship, Elshan has certain responsibilities including making at least 3 presentations about his country and his Islam faith. He must also volunteer 50 – 100 hours during the time here. And he is that by helping with Special Olympic bowlers Tuesdays and working at the Boys and Girls Club after school on Thursdays and Fridays. H also joined the Boy Scouts here in Perham.

Elsan has a twin brother. His father is a trade consultant and his mother is a post engineer. Elshan has greatly expanded his English vocabulary since coming to America. He loves movies, has a great sense of humor, has the Mitt Romney face down to a tee and thinks his time in Perham living with Mom, Mary Anderson, and brother, Fikirrahmat from Indonesia, is going much to quickly.

## **December 23, 2012**

On Dec. 23, we will have a Christmas/seasonal celebration. Everyone is invited to participate!! Please contact me if you have a story, poem, song that you would like to share.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service**

Come join the Underwood Lutheran Parish for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service, being held Wednesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at the Underwood School. The time is to be determined later. Dave McRoberts is the contact person for UCU. [mcroberts\\_pd@hotmail.com](mailto:mcroberts_pd@hotmail.com) (For updates check the UCU website at [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org))

## Habitat for Humanity Dinner

The 7th annual Habitat for Humanity Harvest Dinner will be held Tuesday, November 13 at Legacy Hall on the MNSCU campus in Fergus Falls. It begins with a Social hour and Silent Auction at 5:30 with a lasagna dinner at 6:30 with a program to follow. The tickets are free, but must be reserved by Sunday Nov. 4. Our attendance has exceeded that of any other group. We anticipate having at least 6 tables of 8 Unitarians and friends attend. We also exceed all other groups in gifts to the Silent Auction. Thank you for wonderful, wonderful, wonderful support for this event! The night has raised \$20-30,000 for Habitat most of which goes toward providing safe, decent and affordable homes for those who do not have them. – Bob Worner

## Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations and Sandy

*Note from Ellen: I looked for an announcement from UUA regarding the storm and how it was affecting UUA. I couldn't find anything, so I sent them an email letting them know that we were concerned about them and asking them if they could keep us all updated...like they didn't have anything better to do. They were kind enough to send an email to me today, October 31st. Here is what they wrote:*

Thank you for contacting the UUA and for your concern. The UUA offices in Boston, NYC, and DC are all open as of today. We had some interruption to our email and web services in Boston due to the storm, but email is back up and the other online services are being repaired now. The Boston staff is all safe and healthy today and working hard to catch up on work interrupted by Sandy. We are still receiving reports from around the East Coast but I do not have specific information to share with you about any damages to congregations. Peter Morales will be issuing a statement in the next 24 hours which you will most likely find on the UUA.org homepage, or on his blog: <http://president.blogs.uua.org/>. Keep checking for updates and a message from Peter!

Please feel free to contact me again if you have any other questions.

The UUA website address is: [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)

## Paying Our Own Way +

Our cash flow has improved since last month. Our giving is now keeping up with our expenses. We do have some major expenses coming up, fuel oil bills and our UU dues. As of September 30 we were halfway through our fiscal year and at this point our giving is 6% below our budget. With just a slight adjustment in giving, we will meet our budget by the end of the fiscal year. Thank you to everyone that supports the church.

## **From Prairie Star District (UUA):**

Already looking forward to spring? Here's news from Prairie Star District to put on your calendars! This is particularly timely as we are now considering our 5 year plan.

**Cedar Rapids, Iowa**  
**April 5-7, 2013**

What do you want for your church? For your spiritual life? For the world? How are you going to achieve it? Great things don't just happen. They start with a vision, take shape with a plan, build with hard work, and continue with nurturing.

Our conference, "Inspire the Future We Envision", begins Friday night with a keynote lecture by the Rev. Stefan Jonasson, the UUA Director of Growth Strategies and Large Congregation Development. He will look back at what Unitarian Universalists have accomplished in our district's 50-year history. The Rev. Christine Robinson from Albuquerque, New Mexico, addressed the future when she delivers the Judy Memorial Lecture on Saturday. Much as plants and animals have to adapt to change, we must also adapt or risk extinction.

The day heats up with workshops and the District business meeting which will include a vote on regionalization, sizzles with a youth-led service Saturday night, and concludes on Sunday. Can you really think of any better company that 250 UUs? Join us!

### **Sermon Contest**

Prairie Star District is seeking a sermon that could be delivered in pulpits across the District on the Sunday of our 2013 Annual Conference that reflects our conference theme, "Inspire the Future We Envision." Deadline is November 19, 2012.

### **More Information**

More information about the conference and the sermon contest is at <http://www.psduua.org/AnnualConference2013>

## **Strategic Plan Group Discussion**

The second of three group discussions will be held on Sunday, November 11 at 9:15 a.m. at the Unitarian Church of Underwood in the lower level. This discussion will focus on Programs, but there will be an opportunity to discuss other topics. The third meeting being held December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 will focus on Outreach. It is important that we get your input about the strategic plan, as it will guide us as a church over the next 4 years. If you would like, you can talk to a board member at any time about the strategic plan. They would be happy to bring your information back to the strategic planning team. For more information you can contact Ellen Eastby at [eastofellen@hotmail.com](mailto:eastofellen@hotmail.com) or 218-731-0803.

## **Worship Workshop with Marcia McFee**

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Ron Graham and Ellen Eastby will be heading to Mankato to attend a Worship Workshop sponsored by Prairie Star District. Some of the topics to be covered are: sensory-rich communication, effective use of new media, why we are drawn to various styles, and the “politics” of change. Look for an article about what was learned in the December Newsletter.

## **Thank You Mary Anderson**

Mary Anderson says she has a thing about decorating, which is a good thing for us. Just in case you didn't know, she is the one who decorates the fellowship area in the lower level of the church. As the seasons change, so do the decorations. And Mary does it all. She has purchased the fabric for the tablecloths, then measured, cut and hemmed it. Much of the décor comes from the dollar store in Fergus Falls or is part of what she already has. Some of it, like the shells we saw this summer and a Christmas Table Runner we will see soon, is given to her by friends or church members. Although most would think it has been a major contribution Mary says, “None of it has been a big deal and I'm just glad people seem to enjoy it and appreciate it. It's been fun for me to do.” We appreciate the decorations and the energy Mary puts into everything she does at church. Thank you Mary!

## **Empowerment Grants**

The Empowerment Grant cycle will start soon. Look for more information about Empowerment Grants in the December Newsletter.

## **Interesting Links**

Stitching It Together - [www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/220151.shtml?utm\\_source=facebook](http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/220151.shtml?utm_source=facebook)

The College of Social Justice - <http://uucsj.org/the-ocean-refuses-no-river/>

Prairie Star District - [www.psduua.org](http://www.psduua.org)

Unitarian Church of Underwood – [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org)

## The History of “Vote No” at UCU

By Ellen Eastby

It's been more than a year and a half since I became involved with Minnesotans United for All Families, the campaign that was formed to defeat the amendment that will limit the freedom of same sex couples to marry. As I looked at their website, [www.mnunited.org](http://www.mnunited.org), I found that they were organizing faith communities in Minnesota. Late in the summer of 2011 I asked the UCU Board of Director if we could form a committee to explore what we as a church could do in our community to defeat this amendment. The idea was discussed and a motion was passed to form an ad hoc committee for this purpose. At some point that fall I became aware of Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance or MUUSJA [www.muusja.org](http://www.muusja.org). Between MUUSJA and MN United, I found that UU churches across the state were organizing and working hard to defeat the amendment. Many UU churches were passing resolutions opposing the amendment. At the April 2012 Annual Meeting the question of passing a resolution was brought before the congregation. The resolution stated, “we oppose any amendment to the Minnesota Constitution that prohibits marriage for same-sex couples.” The motion to accept this resolution was passed unanimously. At the April 18, 2012 board meeting a motion was made and passed that UCU join the Minnesotans United coalition. There are now nearly 700 members of that coalition, many of them churches.

During the summer of 2012 I became involved with a group formed by MUUSJA called UU's Out for Marriage Equality. I attended monthly meetings via the internet and learned a lot about what other UU churches are doing in the state of Minnesota. MUUSJA worked closely with MN United and eventually committed, on behalf of the UU churches in the state, to have 25,000 conversations with people about the amendment. UCU committed to having 500 of these conversations. We would record how many conversations people had by adding a link to a paper chain for each conversation. We have far from 500 links in our chain, but after talking to people in the congregation, we are very close to having 500 conversations! That is very exciting!

When “Vote No Don't Limit The Freedom To Marry” signs became available, I was asked if a sign could be placed in our church yard. Being the congregation had already passed a resolution against the amendment, I thought that the issue was the presence of a sign on our property and it was a facilities issue. I told her that she should talk to the facilities committee. The facilities committee thought that a sign on the grounds would be ok. So, the Vote No sign went up. There were members of the congregation who felt we might lose our 501C3 status because of the sign, but this wasn't the case. There were also those afraid that we were not honoring our chalice lighting reading – no single belief includes us here, no disbelief excludes us. So the sign came in and went out over the course of a couple of weeks. After some discussion among members, it stayed in the church yard. At some point the sign was stolen and a “Vote Yes” sign was put in its place. That sign was taken down. I notified the County Sheriff's office and filed a report. The sign was not immediately replace, because it was hard to get those signs. Next, someone suggested that we have both a vote no and a vote yes sign out

front. This issue then went to the board of directors during the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. A motion was passed that only a vote no sign be placed in the church yard.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been involved with MUUSJA. They have been working very hard to help organize all the UU churches across the state to rally against both amendments this year. Most UU churches in the state have been working very hard to make sure the marriage amendment does not pass. Other churches are spending hours and hours with both paid staff and congregants working together. They are having conversation drives, making DVDs, phone banking, and putting signs on their church lawns. At least one UU church is calling every one of their members to encourage them to vote no. The President of UUA, Rev. Dr. Peter Morales, made a video encouraging UUs to vote no. That video can be viewed at [www.muusja.org](http://www.muusja.org). UCU has not been as involved in the movement as many of the other churches in our state. But we have taken steps to bring awareness within our church and our community of the importance of voting no on November 6<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions about either amendment you can contact Ellen Eastby at [eastofellen@hotmail.com](mailto:eastofellen@hotmail.com).

## Letters to the Editor

*Note: Letters to the Editor is new to the newsletter this month. It is a way for readers to submit opinion pieces to be published in the newsletter. Please remember to share your opinions with respect and love. All letters must reach us before the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. You can send your letter to Ellen Eastby at [eastofellen@hotmail.com](mailto:eastofellen@hotmail.com) or Stephanie Sanderson at [highlife@prtcl.com](mailto:highlife@prtcl.com).*

Letter to the Editor

This is submitted as a Letter to the Editor with the hope we can begin to use our newsletter as a forum for discussion as well as its current uses.

A Word of Caution and Awareness

Our church overwhelmingly attracts those of one political persuasion, just as my mom's church is filled with those of another. Unfortunately, each of these situations leads to an unhealthy reinforcing of one viewpoint and to sometimes wondering out loud how the "other" could be so wrong. This, of course, results in a diminishing, and even disappearing, minority. Why fight it when you can just leave and find those who understand and appreciate your politics, religion, etc.

"They" may not need us, but we need them. We may not be so right as we suppose and "they" may have some important gifts to give in the form of helping us to see there might be some truths we have missed. Unfortunately too often the "other" is so "wrong" that we don't

even value them enough to understand their position.

So, here is a reminder I wrote for myself with the hope I would be more open and sensitive to the views of others:

"This is not a political arena – this is a church! Not just any church – it is a Unitarian Church. In our first principle we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, even those who hold religious and political views different from our own. I pledge to participate in helping those of all political and religious persuasions feel safe and welcome. I will not write off 49% as being stupid, wrong, ill-intentioned, deceived and misinformed."

O.k., I admit, I am just hoping, in the swing states at least, it isn't more than 49% that vote differently than me..... That understood, will you take the pledge also? Ron Graham

### UU Quotes

As a religious people who affirm human compassion, advocate for human rights, and seek justice, we must never make the mistake of confusing a legal right with a moral right...our duty is to create laws founded on our highest sense of justice, equity, and compassion...We must choose a path that is founded on the recognition that we are connected, that we are all in this together. – Rev. Peter Morales, *"We Are One", A People So Bold* (Unitarian Universalist Association President)

The theology of doubt is the underlying theology of Unitarian Universalism...it's a theology which keeps us from self-righteousness, but not action. So let's cherish our doubts. They not only lead to larger truth, but they make us wise, keep us humble, and allow us to live together in love. - Christine Robinson (Unitarian Universalist, minister)

## Minutes of the September, 2012 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

Present: Ellen Eastby, Dave McRoberts, Luke Anderson, Donn Siems, David Wass, John Minge, Norman Kolstad, Alisha Piekarski, Mary Anderson, Mary Worner, Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson, and Ron Roller Absent: David Wass

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Eastby at 6:32 pm. Norman Kolstad offered a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (Minge/Siems).

The minutes of the July 15, 2012 meeting were approved as printed (M. Anderson/Minge).

Reports:

Treasurer: Ron Roller.  
Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson  
Program Committee: John Minge  
Facilities Committee: Dave McRoberts  
Outreach: none  
Endowment Committee: Mary Worner

Old business: Dave McRoberts reported on quoted costs for a new sound system. A motion passed to spend up to \$500 to install ceiling fans (M. Anderson/Minge).

Ellen Eastby reported on the membership committee. The proposed by-laws amendment was discussed.

L. Anderson gave an update on the strategic planning process. Congregational meetings are scheduled for October 14, November 11, and December 9 to prioritize identified goals. The annual goals until April, 2013 are: membership, planned giving, and the banner.

Chair Eastby will arrange an internal audit of the books.

New business: The use of exit interviews as a tool for membership retention was discussed.

Other topics: InterConnections UUA newsletter, and the UCU newsletter.

The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday morning, October 21, 2012, following the service and a potluck meal.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Norman Kolstad, secretary.