

Unitarian Church of Underwood October, 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 October

Sunday Morning Services Begin at 10:30

October 7 – Kent Runge - My hero Peter Maurin: The aging, struggling, itinerant peacebuilder of false starts, poverty, wisdom, words and wandering.

October 14 – Mickie Harmon - The Evolution of Law Enforcement, my perspective of 33 years in the business.

October 21 – Sustainable Foods Forum - "How far does your food travel, and why you should care". This will be a panel presentation and discussion on the politics, economics, and ethics of the food we all use. The new Slow Food Movement and 100 mile food clubs will be discussed, along with the rapidly burgeoning local movement. A wonderful local foods lunch will be provided after the service.

October 28 – To Be Announced

Sunday Meetings

October 7 – 9:15 - Adult RE

October 14 – 9:15 - Congregational Discussion - Facilities and Strategic Plan

October 21 – 9:15 - Writing as Spiritual Practice

Board meeting following the meal after the service – everyone is welcome to attend

October 28 – Social Justice Committee will no longer meet

Children's RE will meet during the Sunday Service

Sunday Speakers

To get updates about Sunday Morning Speakers, you can go to the UCU website at 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.

Adult RE

American Gospel – God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation by Jon Meacham will be the topic of discussion for Adult RE this year. Chapter One, *God and Mammon* will be discussed at the October 7th meeting.

Board Meeting

There will be a Board Meeting October 21st after the local foods lunch that is being provided following the Sunday Service. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Strategic Plan Update

The surveys are back and the responses are being tabulated. A big thank you goes out to everyone who returned a survey. The survey was the first of several opportunities the congregation will have to give input during the strategic planning process. The process was started earlier this year, when the church's first strategic plan or 5 Year Plan ended with great results. Goals were met or surpassed in almost every area! We are now working on a plan to guide us over the next 4 years. That cannot be accomplished without the help of the congregation. So what's next? The answer is congregational group discussions.

Group discussion sessions will be held as a time for congregants to come together and talk about what is important to them at the Unitarian Church of Underwood. There will be three sessions. Each session will have a topic that will focus around the three main committees of the church. These committees are Facilities, Program, and Outreach. Although, the discussion will focus on these topics, there will be time to bring other ideas to the table too. The sessions are being held the 2nd Sunday of the month at 9:15 in October, November, and December. The Facilities session is October 14th, Program is November 11th, and Outreach is December 9th. As always, you can take your ideas to any board member, at any time, and they will bring them back to the strategic planning team.

Thank you for helping shape the future of this church. Together we will have a plan that, in four years, we can once again report great results.

Quote: *Anybody can create community with people who believe just like they do. The true test of community rests in the ability to create it with people who disagree with us.*
Lee Barker (Unitarian Universalist, minister, educator)

Member Profile

It doesn't take long to figure out that **Florance Thompson** is proud of her Norwegian heritage. We sat among her many Scandinavian treasures while we chatted about her incredible life. Her grandparents all came from Norway – on her father's side were farmers, who settled in Rollag, MN; and on her mother's side were fisherman and merchants. Her maternal grandfather came to the US, settled in Iowa, but went back to Norway to find a wife. Isn't it nice when there is a little romance in the family lore? Her grandfather met her grandmother on the beach at a midsummer festival.

The ties to the Underwood area started a generation before Florance. Her father's mother died, leaving 4 young boys who were sent to the Underwood area, mostly to the Petersons. And her cousins on her mother's side lived in the Rural Phelps Mill area. Florance was born on the Barclay farm and grew up on farms around the Rothsay area, then moved to attend school in Pelican Rapids. She was the middle of five children, and was considered by her mother to be the "heart" of the family. Florance treasured a little porcelain heart that someone loved her enough to give her, and which became her comfort as a child. The depression years were hard years for the family, but during the depression everybody made their fun with music – the fiddle, piano, and singing. Everyone in her family was expected to learn music. And everyone danced, or "played games" as it was called when their strict grandpa was around. Music and dancing have taken a central role throughout her whole life. Florance remarked about how important music is in our church, too, how people love to sing, and how we sing together in harmony whatever other discord may be happening.

As a girl, Florance went to Sunday School and church but even then always had to make up her own mind about things – and things had to make rational, scientific, mathematical sense to her. Fortunately, she had a pastor during her confirmation study years who told her, "Don't believe anything, including your religion, unless it makes sense to you." She would find a home in Unitarianism and Humanism.

Florance's children Mikkel, Victoria (who is the mother of Florance's 3 grandchildren), Jay, and Valerie were born during her years in Moorhead. Mikkel is married and lives in Stockholm, and while he is mostly retired, he still teaches and has a band. Victoria earned a degree in Child Psychology and is the mother of Alexander, Tiffany, and Astrid. Jay lives in San Jose with his partner and works in the construction industry. Valerie is a musician, a member of our church, and is married to Anders Persson, who enriches our services with his fiddle music. He and Mikkel have performed recently together in church, to everyone's delight. Valerie, who also sings and plays the fiddle, performs with Anders in the community.

Shortly after Valerie was born, the family moved to California. There Florance attended the University of California in Santa Cruz and graduated with a degree in psychology and sociology. She earned her master's in psychology at California State University, San Jose. After a 2 year internship, she was licensed and started her business, "Family Affairs Counseling Service," and a

referral service. In addition, she taught college classes and was active in the American Humanist Association. Her Ph. D. was completed through Columbia Pacific.

Our UCU members have such busy, productive and interesting lives, but really, Florance, this story is just over the top. While the family was on a visit to Florance's mother in California, little Mikkel became very ill with rheumatic fever and was too weak for the car ride home. Meanwhile, Florance helped her mom achieve her dream of attending a filming of "Queen for a Day" (remember "Queen for a Day"? I do) where everyone wrote their wish on their ticket for a chance to become a contestant. Florance, of course, wished for a plane ride home for Mikkel. As life would have it, the judges were moved by Florance's story, and she was selected "Queen for a Day" with the robe, the crown, the parade ride in the convertible, the ride with the Budweiser horses, the introduction to Governor Brown, Nat King Cole and other celebrities, the prizes, and on and on, until the flight home to Fargo for her and Mikkel, and the big reception at the Fargo Airport. Uffda! Now THAT's a story and a half. You'd better ask Florance about it!

Florance was part of a dance group for 25 years that traveled and danced all over the US, Scandinavia, and other parts of the world. She continues to belong to a group that gets together around performances of Dixieland bands. As a representative of the "UU Women in Religion" Task Force, Florance attended the International Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, to study how elderly women are treated and cared for in other societies. She traveled with the same group to China and Japan, but under the auspices of the United Nations.

Florance became a Unitarian at about age 24 as a charter member of the Fargo-Moorhead UU Fellowship, and she and her children became active participants there. She was active in the Unitarian Church in San Jose, CA., played all the leadership roles in the church, was on "every kind of committee that ever there was," and there became acquainted with the concept of "covenant groups". During the years that Florance belonged to the Fargo/Moorhead church, when Mikkel was a little boy, she visited UCU and attended Gronner's annual picnic at their place near the church. Many years later she started attending here as she gradually moved back to Minnesota from California. Florance is a celebrant for the UCU and participated in the initiation and facilitation of our covenant groups, which we have dubbed "U Groups".

Florance describes herself as a humanistic Unitarian. She believes in logic and reason and in the basic goodness of all human beings. She values honesty and the pursuit of scientific study: everything is always open to further exploration and improvement. "Children are our future and we must liberate our children's minds by rational thinking."

We thank you, Florance, for your long and faithful contribution to advancing the Unitarian ideals.

This will be my last regular Member Profile. Would a few of you like to take a turn? It's fun, and I think that it's time for new ideas. Please contact Ellen Eastby or me if you would like to pitch in.
Steph Sanderson

From UUA's United Nations Office:

Bruce F. Knotts, Director of UU-UNO, writes that "this year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the UUA's United Nations Office, a remarkable history which has always included the steadfast support of the Canadian Unitarian Council. We can all be justifiably proud that our presence has been felt and our voices have been heard in the international community for the past five decades. This is why we need your support to continue our programs such as:

- ❖ Every Child is Our Child (a project to help AIDS orphans in Ghana)
- ❖ Work to empower women, especially in security and peace building
- ❖ LGBTO Advocacy at the UN (which has changed the UN forever)
- ❖ Our Climate Change Initiative
- ❖ Leadership of the Faith and Ethics Network for the International Criminal Court
- ❖ Leadership of the UN NGO Committee of Disarmament, Peace and Security
- ❖ Leadership of the UN NGO Committee on Human Rights

The UU-UNO has attained a commanding place of very important influence in all areas of human rights at the United Nations. We are unique in the international faith community for our ability to speak out in defense of the world's most disadvantaged: the marginalized, the poor, the weak, the young, the old, and those whose very lives are threatened by injustice and neglect. Every day, we have proved that we can change the world for the better because our advocacy attracts others willing to follow our lead and who learn to speak out from our example. The United Nations is a place where Unitarians Universalists have clout and influence to change the world for the better."

You are invited to attend the gala 50th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, November 3rd, 2012 from 6:30 PM to 10:00 PM at The New York Times Center, 242 West 41st Street, New York, NY. Featured speakers will be: Rev. Peter Morales, Gillian Sorensen, Former Senator Adlai Stevenson III, and Maura Roosevelt.

If you would like to support the UUA's work with the United Nations, or would like addition information, go to www.uu-uno.org.

Heads up!

Our church treasurer reported at the last Board meeting that we are 25% behind last year's contributions from members. We are five months into our fiscal year. Please do what you can to help accelerate our pace of giving in October to avoid having to squeeze our budget downward before we head into the winter heating season. Thanks for doing what you can!

The Stewardship Team, Mary Worner and Luke Anderson

Thank You

Thank you to all of those who make our coffee time after Sunday Service such a wonderful occasion. There are about 15 individuals or families that have provided treats so far in 2012. Treats might be an understatement. Feast might be a better word to describe the food that is provided during coffee time. There are also five people who have served as Kitchen Assistants. They set up the coffee and help those who provide the food. Thanks again to you all. We appreciate what you add to the quality of our fellowship Sunday mornings.

Interesting Links

Maps of demographic information of religions including Unitarian Universalism:

<http://philebersole.wordpress.com/2011/02/22/the-geography-of-american-religion/>

At each board meeting, someone takes a turn providing a reading or meditation that is read aloud at the beginning of the meeting. The following link is the text of the reading at our last board meeting:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/faithforward/2012/04/how-to-live-as-a-christian-without-having-to-believe-the-unbelievable/>

Article by WCCO about lawn signs and churches:

<http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2012/09/13/good-question-are-churches-allowed-to-say-vote-yes-or-vote-no/>

Video of UUA President Rev. Peter Morales speaking of the Minnesota marriage amendment on the MUUSJA Website: (Scroll down to the bottom of the page to where it says Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance on Facebook. Scroll down on that box to the video.)

<http://www.muusja.org/>

Unitarian Church of Underwood Website:

www.ucofu.org

Quote: *I am not anxious to be the loudest voice or the most popular. But I would like to think that at a crucial moment, I was an effective voice of the voiceless, an effective hope of the hopeless. Whitney M. Young (U.S. Civil Rights Leader, educator, Unitarian Universalist)*

Minutes of the July 15, 2012 Underwood Unitarian Church Board

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

The meeting was called to order by Chair Eastby at 11:17 am. Ellen Eastby offered a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (M. Anderson/Siems). The minutes of the June 20, 2012 meeting were approved as printed (L. Anderson/Siems).

Reports:

Treasurer's report – Dave McRoberts
Administrative Consultant – JoAnn Larson
Program Committee – John Minge
Facilities Committee – Dave McRoberts
Endowment Committee – Luke Anderson

Old business:

Ellen Eastby presented the recommendations of the Membership Committee, which included changes to the Church by-laws.

Other discussions: LGBT Welcoming Congregation; annual goals/strategic planning; production of a banner; convention hosting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 pm (M. Anderson/L. Anderson).

Norman Kolstad, secretary