

Unitarian Church of Underwood September, 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 September

Sunday Morning Services Begin at 10:30

September 2 – Bob Worner – *Living In Two Worlds*
September 9 – Janell Miersch – *Water Works – Broad and Deep*
September 16 – TBA
September 23 – TBA
September 30 - Chris Schuelke

Sunday Morning Meetings

September 2 – No Adult RE
September 9 – 9:15 – Adult RE
 Kids RE will meet during Sunday Service
September 16 – 9:15 - Writing as Spiritual Practice
September 23 – 9:15 - Social Justice Committee

**Please note that Sunday Morning Services will begin at 10:30 starting
September 2nd**

Sunday Speakers

To get updates on Sunday Morning Speakers, you can go to the 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.

More About Sunday Morning Programs

September 2nd – Bob Worner - Living in Two Worlds – Bob will speak about the first principle that Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

September 9th – Janell Miersch – Janell will talk about the core function of being a DNR hydrologist and the challenges we face with multiple demands on fresh water. She will explore water use in Minnesota and how current laws and the Clean Water Act attempt to control it.

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. Although Adult RE will normally meet on the first Sunday of each month, it will meet the second Sunday (the 9th) in September due to it being Labor Day Weekend. Adult RE begins at 9:15 a.m. The introduction to the book will be discussed the first session. The book is available through Amazon. For more information contact John Minge.

Writing as Spiritual Practice – Resumes on September 16th.

You are welcome to join our writers' group every third Sunday at 9:15 A.M. at the Church. We share what we have written the preceding month, expressing ourselves through the art of the written word, much like art of making music, painting, or sculpture. Words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs are our tools. We write alone at home and share with the group, only when we are ready. We do not critique one another's work unless it is requested.

Our group has listened, sometimes in tears and sometimes with laughter, as members have shared deep personal struggles, thoughtful insights, fictional tales, and life memories. Through the art and craft of writing we wrestle with our demons, celebrate our angels, and explore our own identities. Writing for us is a spiritual practice. Join us. You'll be welcome.

Social Justice Committee

The Social Justice Committee meets at 9:15 a.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month. We are currently working toward defeating the Amendment that will be on ballot in the November election that limits the freedom for same sex couples to marry. We will also be working on the plan that will allow us to become a Unitarian Universalist Association Welcoming Congregation for the LGBT Community. Your help is urgently needed in these areas, so please join us. For more information contact Ellen Eastby at eastofellen@hotmail.com.

Strategic Plan

It's time once again for our congregation to take all the wonderful feelings in our hearts and the great ideas in our heads and put them down on paper as we work together to create a strategic plan that will cover the next four years. Our current strategic plan, otherwise known to us as our five year plan, has been a great tool to guide us as a church along a path that we envisioned together. Although, we didn't meet every objective of every goal in the plan, we did meet most of them and even surpassed our expectations in some areas. That took dedication and hard work by everyone in the congregation. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do.

It's helpful to remember that strategic planning is a process, not a single event. We are very fortunate to have Luke Anderson facilitating this process. He has had a lot of experience with strategic plans and is very talented in this area. You can find his Member Profile in this issue of the UCU Newsletter.

The strategic planning process began when the Board of Directors met together to assess our accomplishments from the previous strategic plan and talk about how we should approach building the next plan. Following this article, you will find the document that resulted from that meeting. It is entitled UCU Board Orientation to Strategic Planning. It is the beginning of what the Board of Directors envisioned for the church and an outline of the process.

Of course, what the members of congregation envision is the driving force of the strategic plan. Members will be receiving a survey in September, which will be just the beginning of their part in the process. There will also be opportunities to attend group discussions in October, November, and December. And, anyone on the Board of Directors will welcome input from members of the congregation at any time. The final opportunity for input by members is at the Annual Meeting in April when they will vote to approve the strategic plan.

The following is a quote from the booklet *Governance for Unitarian Universalist Congregations* published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. *Respectful opinions should be respectfully heard. Still, no one or two persons should halt actions that have broad support. All decision making is imperfect. All decisions are imperfect. Each member should search his or her heart and mind to discern the truly important from the personal preference and should take care to listen with openness and to "speak truth with love."* We will have different opinions at times, but keeping these ideas in mind will make the strategic planning process a positive, productive experience for everyone.

Thanks in advance to everyone who will participate in the process. Working together we will once again have a plan that will help guide us on a path that we envision together.

Ellen Eastby, President, Board of Directors

UCU Board Orientation to Strategic Planning

The Unitarian Church of Underwood

July 18, 2012

What have we accomplished during the last round of strategic planning?

- Organized around functions of Governance, Program, Outreach, and Facilities.
- Membership has grown. (Net membership gain not measured)
- UCU Mission and Principles featured on written material (Brochure, Bulletins, etc.)
- Association with UUA strengthened. (Members to conferences, Use of resources.)
- Regular R. E. sessions (Youth, Adult discussion, writers)
- Year around services (52 Sundays)
- Celebrants (four officially registered)
- U groups (two veteran, one new)
- Pianos (basement upright and sanctuary grand)
- Increased contributions (Annual budget increased from 25 to 42 thousand dollars)
- Increased quality and variety of speakers and performers.
- Quarterly Sunday/potluck Board meetings for easier membership access.
- Emailed newsletter, w/land mail service, added features.
- Website improved – linked to UUA website.
- Groundwork for endowment and planned giving program
- Enhanced building and grounds features. (highway pulpit, shrubbery, and lawn care)
- More attractive and flexible-lower level social room
- More involvement by more members
- External financial audit conducted
- Special musical events (Mikko Cowdery and Patty Kakac concerts)
- Involvement with community (Habitat for Humanity, Community Thanksgiving service and continuation of the Chili Dinner benefit for Meals on Wheels)

Note: Some accomplishments were planned, others emerged within the context of the plan.

What is Strategic Planning?

Simply Stated it is the process of answering the following three questions:

1. Where do we want to go?
2. How will we get there?
3. How will we know we have arrived?

See Exhibit: "Simple Analogy to Understand Strategic Planning."

Why do Strategic Planning?

- Maximize Performance
 1. Focus organizational (peoples') energy
 2. Efficient intake and expenditure of financial resources.
 3. Maintain an appropriate home base.
 4. Establish an organizational identity.

- Maximize Value to Members.
 1. Find quality relationships
 2. Develop trusted leadership
 3. Opportunities to learn and grow
 4. Develop enthusiastic loyalty
 5. Safety

What is the scope of the plan?

- Three to five years.

Planning Terms:

- Mission – a brief, enduring statement of purpose all can understand.
- Vision – consistent with the mission, what U.C.U. will look like in 3-5 years.
- Strategic Goals – Broad agreement to accomplish challenging priorities in pursuit of the organization’s mission over a multi-year time-span.
- Annual Objectives – work consistent with the priorities to be accomplished within the time-span of an annual budget and is assigned to an organizational unit to achieve measurable/observable results.
- Action Steps – What will get done by who, where, and when.

What are the key components of the planning task?

- Issues?
 1. External (our issues with the world around us)
 2. Internal (issues within our organization)
- Vision?
 1. Consensus (What we want to look like in 3 to 5 years?)
 2. Viability (A realistic commitment to making it happen.)

See Exhibit: “Components of a Strategic Plan”

Is there a standard model for Strategic Planning?

- Top – Down
 1. Authority (given through the organization)
 2. Accountability (required by the organization)
- Bottom – Up
 1. Responsibility (assumed by the individual)
 2. Influence (offered by the individual)

Note: Effective Strategic Planning involves both processes to be authentic and achievable.

The Strategic Planning Leadership Team.

- Chair – Ellen Eastby
- Governance -- Donn Siems
- Program – John Minge

- Facilities – Dave Mc Roberts
- Outreach – Alisha Piekarski/Ron Roller
- Facilitator – Luke Anderson

How shall we schedule the Strategic Planning Process?

- Leadership training -- August 14, 6:30 P.M. at Church
 1. Identify objectives for 2012/13
 2. Develop survey of UCU members
- Report to Congregation – Sept. 22nd?
 1. 2012/13 objectives
 2. Present survey results
- Hold planning hearings by organizational functions. (throughout Oct. Nov. and Dec.)
 1. Governance (operations)
 2. Program
 3. Facilities
 4. Outreach
- Draft a four year Strategic Plan (In January)
 1. Review mission
 2. Draft Vision for 2018
 3. Write Long term objectives.
 4. Develop Phases
 5. Draft 2013/14 objectives.
- Revise and Refine the Strategic Planning document for presentation in Feb. and March.
 1. Governance
 2. Program
 3. Facilities
 4. Outreach
- Present for approval at the congregational Annual Meeting.

What materials and information will we use?

- UUA resources – trends, support systems, written information.
- Regional demographic trends.
- Internal financial trend info.
- Accurate membership info.
- Interview similar UU churches in Prairie Star District.
- Congregation survey results
- Notes from hearings.

Initial thoughts about our vision for 2016/17

- Sustain the energy in the congregation
- Reduce the average age of membership by adding:
 1. Young adults
 2. Young families

- Increase community involvement
- Many ways to involve members
- Able to identify and serve individual and family needs effectively
- Continue dynamic speakers
- Future of Marguerite's weekly reports?
- Air conditioning
- Programs and services for teens
- Pastoral services in addition to admin. Coordinator
- Leader training – Celebrants, U Groups, Officers
- Linking up with other area UU churches
- Membership count is fully consistent with UUA dues payments
- Address new trend of participation w/o membership
- Accessibility – physical (car pooling, etc and communication, Social Media, etc)

Some Cautions as we proceed:

- Communication with individuals
- Emphasize our UU values
- Clarity about who we want to serve.
- Promotion/attraction
- Follow through on plans
- Flexibility to modify when things change
- Dealing with resistance.

Member Profile

As I sit here in the cooling shade of my giant old oaks, I am astounded again by **Luke Anderson's** resume. We have such talent among us at our little Unitarian Church of Underwood – talent like we might not even guess. Who would have known, for example, that Luke wrote the speech that was delivered to NGO's (non-governmental organizations) by the president of the YMCA of the USA at the First World Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, Sweden? And that achievement is only one item on his bulleted list of professional achievements.

Luke has resided in Battle Lake with our lovely JoAnn Cress for the past seven years. He has lived and worked far and wide, but ended up not too far from his beginnings. He grew up on a farm in Hoffman, and is the oldest of four siblings – having a brother and sister, and a brother who died at young age. Luke has three children: Mark, who teaches at Red Lake Reservation; Kari, who lives in the Bryn Maur community in Minneapolis and works for Wells Fargo in Wealth Management; and Derek, who lives in Little Canada and works for the Park Department.

Luke divides his career life into about three chapters. The first chapter spans nearly 30 years and includes his career in the non-profit world. He started at Augsburg College with the intention of going into the ministry, decided against it, and after earning his B.A. at Augsburg,

earned a Masters at George Williams College in Group Work Administration. Over time, he followed that up with programs at the U of Wisconsin and Harvard Graduate School, among others.

His first job was with the YMCA, working with adolescents in the southwest Chicago suburbs. He was instrumental in creating “YMCA on the Move” to take programs to teens and teens to new experiences. He ran a drop-in center where “greasers, hippies, and socialites” intermingled. A program called “Youth in Industry” brought industry execs and teens together, and “Youth in Government” encouraged and educated teens about political involvement. Luke played key roles in initiating programs that became models for YMCA’s throughout the nation. He then worked at National YMCA headquarters in Manhattan, developing strategic planning for YMCA’s in the Tri-State Area around NYC. Luke finished up as Operations Manager for all nine branches of the St. Paul Area YMCA. He worked with the United Way to develop “Results Oriented Funding” which became a model for other United Way’s. He continued in following years to play a consulting role in other initiatives and turnarounds.

Chapter two begins with his retirement from the non-profit world in 1988. During the next years, he lived on a hobby farm south of Evansville, and was a wood sculptor and co-owner of “Anderson’s Wood and Earth Works” which he owned with his wife – a Sicilian Italian from the Bronx – who was also an artist. They opened “The Little Red School House”, a consignment shop for 25 artists. Later they established a gallery in Alexandria where he and his wife both sold their work.

It was while going through a divorce that he remembered how much he loved to write, and writing got him through that time. He got involved with the Jack Pine Writers in Park Rapids and then the Fergus Group. And so began his third chapter: in the past ten years he has become a published creative author and founded Lake Region Writers Network (LRWN). LRWN’s website, www.lakeregionwriters.net, includes a writers’ Blog and FaceBook link, as well as information about area literary events, the Fall Writers’ Conference, and the literary magazine, *Lake Region Review*. His work has been published in *The Talking Stick*, *The Ottertail Review*, the *Lake Region Review* and has won several region-wide literary contests and awards. We cherish the writing he has shared with us, and you’ll find another piece in this newsletter.

It is JoAnn we get to thank for introducing Luke to the UCU. His first memory of Underwood Unitarian, though, comes from listening as a teenager to his uncle from Ashby, who talked about those “free-thinkers” in Underwood. Luke has traveled a ways theologically, too, since his Augsburg days. He says he’s “ready for the Higgs particle.” He is satisfied with recognizing himself as “a micro-blip in the grand scheme of things.”

Luke is a results oriented kind of guy. He was the brains behind our first five year plan, which has contributed to the dynamism we currently enjoy. Thankfully, he is organizing us for a new five year plan which our Board of Directors will take on this fall.

Luke, I salute you.

Farmhand

The exhausted farmhand rests his forehead on swarthy forearms held flat across the wooden gate. His lanky body leans bent and beaten. Years scrolled by as he pitched tons of manure, stacked thousands of bales, and plowed hundreds of acres. Today, he hangs on the gate with nothing saved – only tales to tell. He lifts his head to scan the farmstead and wipes his sweaty face. He plants fists on hips and barks, “I quit.” Tomorrow, he’ll throw everything in his dented pickup, cash his first social security check, and head south where the rivers never freeze.

By Luke Anderson

(“Farmhand” won 1st place in MN Post’s 2012 short-short {100 words or less} fiction contest)

Call for Workshop Applications

PSD Annual Conference 2013, April 5-7, Cedar Rapids, IA

Conference Theme: Inspire the Future We Envision

Help Prairie Star District explore this theme in greater depth by presenting a workshop at the Annual Conference. The application deadline is Monday, September 24, 2012. Information about the conference and the online application are available at

<http://www.psd.uua.org/AnnualConference2013>

Submissions

In order to bring you a quality newsletter and to prevent burnout of its editors, submissions are needed from you. If you have something you think might be of interest to the readers of the UCU newsletter, please submit it to Stephanie Sanderson or Ellen Eastby no later than the 26th of each month. We would also love to have your original poetry or prose. You can reach Stephanie at highlife@prtel.com and Ellen at earofellen@hotmail.com. Thank you!

Wish List

We are still in need of an easel. We would like a lightweight, portable, collapsible easel. If you have one you would like to donate to the church, please speak with JoAnn. Thanks!

U Groups to start in September!

It's time to sign up for U Groups. There are four times and places being offered:
(All groups will have the same topic each month, and each group will have its own facilitators.)

Option 1:

Place: The home of Diane and Bob Johnson in Fergus Falls

Time: 2:30 to 4:00 PM, on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

Option 2:

Place: The home of Mary Anderson in Perham

Time: 3:30 to 5:00, on the 2nd Thursday of the month

Option 3:

Place: Underwood/Battle Lake Area

Time: First organizational meeting a Sunday evening at church. The regular time and place will be decided by those attending that meeting.

Option 4:

Place: Home of John and Janelle Miersch in Fergus Falls

Time: 7:00 the second Tuesday of the month

Option 5: I am interested but I need a different time or place.

Sign-up sheets will be available Sunday, September 2, after the service. After that, they will be available on the bulletin board in the entry. So far, there are enough participants to support three groups! Thanks to all of you who participated in our "trial size" U Group on Sunday, August 26.

Interesting Links

<http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/seasia/whatis/book.php>

<http://president.blogs.uua.org/>

www.uuworld.org

500 Conversations

Don't forget to add a link to the rainbow chain for every conversation you've had about the marriage amendment with someone. The Unitarian Church of Underwood has made a commitment to have 500 conversations before the election in November. We are a part of a much larger effort of the Unitarian Universalist churches in the State of Minnesota, who together have committed to have 25,000 conversations. Having conversations with our friends and families is the only way that we will defeat this amendment. If you would like to know how to best have a conversation with someone you can attend the How to Have the Conversation training. The information is below.

How to Have the Conversation

A Training for People of Faith Who Want to Defeat
The Amendment Limiting the Freedom to Marry

Conversations with people we know are the key to changing hearts and minds.
Despite all the media attention, marriage for same-sex couples is an issue many people haven't had a chance to really discuss. You can open that door.

The kinds of conversations we need to have can be tough. This training will prepare you for these conversations and help give you the tools to get started.

Will you join us?

Date: Wednesday, September 5th, 6:30-8:30pm

**Place: Unitarian Church of Underwood
206 N. Main Street, Underwood, MN**

**To register or for additional information please
contact Ellen Eastby at
eastofellen@hotmail.com or 218-731-0803**

This training is offered for members of every faith tradition.

There is no cost for the training, but a basket will be passed to help offset the travel expenses of the trainer.

*A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions ...
Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.*