

UCU  
Newsletter  
December 2021



Thank you to the Battle Lake U Group for the decorations and to Linda Quigstad Berg, Susan Groff, & Ron Graham for getting the tree prominently displayed in the church window.

*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.*

## Unitarian Church of Underwood

PO Box 58, 206 North Main Street

Underwood, MN 56537

Phone: 218/826-6553

Website: [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org)

[www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org](http://www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org)



*Join us for Christmas Eve  
Traditional Service 4:30 p.m.*

**Sunday Services will  
continue 10:00 a.m.  
via Zoom pending a  
decrease in COVID-19  
variant risks.**

**(check in 9:45-10:00 a.m.)**

[bit.ly/UCUSunday](https://bit.ly/UCUSunday)

Meeting ID: 970 8841 4602

Passcode: 424091

Call this number to hear the  
service on your phone: +1 312 626  
6799.

Watch for [ucofu@ucofu.org](mailto:ucofu@ucofu.org)  
messages, the Sunday “UCU  
Weekly” and check:  
[www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org) or  
[www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org](http://www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org)

## *Speakers for December Sunday Services*

### **December 5 – Celebrant Ellen Eastby, “We Covenant to Affirm and Promote.”**

Ellen will take us on a tour through the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles. Recent reading gave her the opportunity to see the current Unitarian Universalist Principles in a new light. How might you think about the Unitarian Universalist Principles if you were focused on our place in the larger community?



**1st Principle:** The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

**2nd Principle:** Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

**3rd Principle:** Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

**4th Principle:** A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

**5th Principle:** The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

**6th Principle:** The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

**7th Principle:** Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The seven Principles and six [Sources](#) of the Unitarian Universalist Association grew out of the grassroots of our communities, were affirmed democratically, and are part of who we are.



**December 12 – Edie Barrett on Arts and Healing.** Edie will discuss her current class and her art project exploring the Japanese art of Kintsugi, an art form of repairing broken ceramics with gold. Edie is a Master of Public Administration Candidate (2021) at Humphrey School of Public Affairs, U of M, and a Graduate Minor from the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing (2022).

**December 19 – Steven Posch on Paganism.** Storyteller, scholar, author, and poet, Steven Posch is part of a strong tradition of modern Wicca, and ancient Paganism in Minnesota, and the keeper of the Minnesota Ooser. Steven will share stories and insights into Winter Solstice, and the Wheel of the Year.



## *Traditional Christmas Eve Service*

*Friday, December 24 @ 4:30 p.m.*

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97088414602?pwd=Qm1PVjlrSnlpbDhjeVZsTklyWGsyQT09>

Meeting ID: 970 8841 4602

Passcode: 424091

Call in on your phone:

+1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 970 8841 4602



**December 24 –Celebrant, Ellen Eastby, “Rekindling the Flame.”**

Candles are symbolic in many ways and in many faiths. In our own Unitarian Universalist Church, we traditionally have a candle light service. As we pass the flame from one to another we are bathed in the light of safety, serenity, and sacredness. We listen to the Christmas Story and sing Silent Night. The feeling is like no other at any time during the year. It feels like Christmas. As we come together online this Christmas Eve let’s not forget that we can still light the flame of our candles. Not just in our own homes, but also in our hearts. A flame that we can take with us to illuminate our lives with the Spirit of Christmas. Join us on Zoom at 4:30 on Christmas Eve to rekindle your flame.

**December 26 – Community Celebration, “What Brings You Joy?”**

Join us Sunday as our writers share their own unique answers to this question. Stories of Christmas past, poetry, meditations in the garden are just some of the topics we’ll touch upon. How would you answer the question “What brings you joy?” Presenters will include: Diane Johnson, Edie Barrett, John Miersch, Melody Shores, Ozzie Tollefson, and Stephanie Sanderson.



**Podcasts of these and previous programs are found at:**

<https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278> or click link in Sunday church reports.

Note: The text of **Rev. Karen Van Fossan’s talk, “The Incarcerated Body”** that she gave on September 26, 2021 can be found in the Shared Drive/Public/Sunday Service Speakers folder; Link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bQGevaPEW\\_UOJqVIG-xKuVdM2HbJBLUG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110453278634571122727&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bQGevaPEW_UOJqVIG-xKuVdM2HbJBLUG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110453278634571122727&rtpof=true&sd=true)

**The Unitarian Church of Underwood Public Calendar is available on our website at [www.ucofu.org](http://www.ucofu.org) or [click here](#).**



Use this link to the [UCU Members and Friends calendar](#)  
(Open with your ucofu email address to find meetings and events  
with the Zoom links)

# Church Happenings

## Message from Board President, Norm Kolstad



"Social distancing," is a term we have been hearing a lot these days. It refers to the recommended physical distance of 6 feet between people to inhibit the spread of Covid-19. But the term "social distancing" for psychologists can refer to the nature of connections to others.

Joan C. Tronto, in her book, *Moral Boundaries, A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, uses the term, "social distancing" to describe the extent to which "individuals can depend on others to aid them in understanding themselves, others, and society. '...(H)ow much do we

rely on others?' or how responsive are we to the needs of others?" are questions that can give us a measure of our social distance.

It seems that society is trending toward increased social distancing as described by Tronto. The Internet (Facebook) has certainly contributed to this by allowing one to create his/her own online persona. Remote work and virtual entertainment are factors, and in politics, we have disagreements over basic facts and movements toward authoritarianism. Corporations are often oblivious to environmental degradation and the response to Covid has been politicized. And of course, the pandemic is forcing us to have increased physical distance.

Our Unitarian Church members are not immune to these social forces. Many of us are affected by the isolation, disinformation, and angst created by this cauldron of bad news and social craziness. It can be challenging to maintain the social connections that sustain us as individuals and as a congregation.

Yet within most of these trends are opportunities for individuals to respond to, and engage with, those who would widen our social distance. Tronto suggests that social distance could lead to more individualism. We may "...no longer rely on our family, household or neighbors to guide our actions but instead form "anthropological" bonds based on our common humanity." Could this lead to agreement on fighting climate change? Or perhaps a resurgence of democratic principles? Or perhaps other causes dear to the Unitarian heart.

The Unitarian Church, with its emphasis on the individual as integral to a just society, can help members answer the questions; how much do we rely on others? and how responsive are we to the needs of others?

## November Board Meeting Highlights

Financially, both collections and expenses have slowed. Sverdrup Suites income remains predictable. Investments continue to do well.

Congregational Administrator Bonnie Graham notes that after months of a routine, it seems like there is new energy, and people are becoming more active.

The Personnel Committee has invited responses to the draft position descriptions and job announcements. To view the documents, click on [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13WgdbN9B\\_cbP84DVJeynEaV3-jM\\_vbY2?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13WgdbN9B_cbP84DVJeynEaV3-jM_vbY2?usp=sharing)

A Google Drive folder will open showing the 5 documents in the folder:

- Tech Mgr Job Description - word document
- UCU Children's RE Coordinator Oct 2021 - word document
- UCU Church Director draft pd 2021 - word document
- UCU Job Posting Announcement Nov 2021 - word document
- UCU Office Assistant draft PD 2021 - google doc

If you wish to comment, send your response to the Personnel Committee: Norm Kolstad, Mary Anderson, Ron Roller, John Salmen at [personnel@ucofu.org](mailto:personnel@ucofu.org).

There will likely be a special congregational meeting before the April annual meeting on the need for a budget increase for hiring staff.

The Family Planning Group presented their proposal with their vision and mission objectives for an invigorated UCU Children's Religious Education program.

COVID restrictions on in-person gatherings remain because of the high numbers in MN and Otter Tail County. Masks will be "strongly recommended (not "required") for outside events; the Christmas Eve service will be by Zoom only; 3) there should be no church sponsored small group in-person meetings. The Board will continue to review COVID status monthly.

Based on the by-law change definition of member, the Board accepted the recommendation of the Membership Committee to certify 100 UCU members.

Work continues in progress to determine what is wanted/needed to technically support a hybrid, multi-platform model worship service.

Community Outreach is sponsoring an IDI workshop to be held December 11 from 9 a.m. – 12.

Next Board Meeting: December 15 @ 6 p.m.

***Suggestions on  
How to Navigate the rapidly changing world we live in  
regarding conflicting things on the internet***

From Rev. Roger Wolsey United Methodist pastor as featured in the Progressing Spirit publication received and shared here by Norm Kolstad



\* Make a point to listen/read/watch news sources that are rated as being more objective and factual (PBS, NPR, ProPublica, AP, Reuters, WSJ, CBS, ABC, Forbes, The Hill, The Economist, BBC, Newsweek, New York Times, The Guardian, etc.) – and to avoid sources that are rated as being less so. See [adfontesmeia](#).

\* If you come across a story about, or “quote” from, religious or political leaders who you are opposed to that seems to really get your heart rate up, and causes you to feel outrage, before you share it on social media, take some time to verify whether it’s true or not, or taken out of context. The last thing we need to be doing is to mindlessly feed the “outrage machine” – simply because of “[confirmation bias](#).”

\* Similarly, if you come across a quote that you really love and it’s attributed to Plato, the Buddha, etc. before you pass it on, take some time to search online if it’s a vetted and verified quote. If you really like the words, it’s better to find the original source and provide proper attribution - or, if you can’t find the original source, simply type out the text and put – source unknown.

\* If you come across seemingly “remarkable” studies about Covid-19, masks, vaccines, Ivermectin, etc. online (esp. on YouTube), before you share that information, search (“Google”) to see if those claims have been verified or debunked. These links can also help: <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check> ; <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-fact-check> ; <https://www.usatoday.com/news/factcheck/> ; <https://www.snopes.com/> ; <https://www.politifact.com/> ; & <https://quoteinvestigator.com/>

\* Finally, here is an article, and two podcasts that address these matters:

1. [“Science, Nonscience, and Nonsense”](#)
2. [Developing Media Literacy](#)
3. [Disinformation Society](#)

## *Living Out Our UU Principles*

**Intercultural Development & Fluency Workshop**

**Saturday, December 11 - 9 am to noon**

**Watch for link**

The Social Justice Interest Group is excited to welcome Victoria McWane-Creek of The Organization 4 Full Participation as she presents a virtual workshop, "Intercultural Development and Fluency." The workshop will introduce skills and insights needed to live, learn, work, and play in a diverse environment that appreciates cultural commonalities and differences. The session will allow opportunities to define intercultural fluency, examine personal values and beliefs, explore strategies for managing change, and explore dialogic strategies. Register by emailing Amy at [amy.beckman@ucofu.org](mailto:amy.beckman@ucofu.org).

**Unitarian Church of Underwood**

**Board Minutes**

**October 20, 2021**

Attendees: *Mary Anderson, Amy Beckman, Marianne Bryan, Molly Delarbre, Norm Kolstad, Ron Roller, John Salmen, Wally Warhol, Mary Worner; Congregational Administrator, Bonnie Graham.*

**30 minutes of circle discussion on October's Powerful Questions:**

Round 1) "Tell us a story about one of your ancestors."

Round 2) "Why do you care about the decisions the UCU will be making about staffing?"

**Meeting called to order** by President, Norm Kolstad at 6:38 p.m.

The meeting **agenda was approved** (Ron Roller/John Salmen).

The **Board minutes** of September 15, 2021 were approved with one clarification added by Mary Worner (John Salmen/Marianne Byran).

Treasurer Ron Roller presented the **Financial Report** showing no changes in income or expenses. The investments are doing well with no significant changes.

There will be consideration at the annual meeting regarding possible merger of the Foundation Advisory Committee under the Finance Committee. Meanwhile, efforts will continue to update the Foundation Operational Plan.

Guest, Cedar Walters joined the meeting via telephone to update the Board on Children's RE. The in person outdoor gatherings have gone well and have a core group of about 10 children. Cedar knows of other families interested in a consistent program with potential use of a private Face Book group to foster connections.

**Congregational Administrator's Report:** Bonnie Graham reported that during October, she spent her time primarily on the speakers and learning how to add documents to the website, commenting on the amazing job that Ellen Eastby has done for years working with a cumbersome program. She has also found that the only need for use of one's church email address is when using google. Suites. The phone does not work for access. (See full report at end of minutes.) She gave information on upcoming UUA offerings. Bonnie consented to a request for her to lead a future discussion on the changing UU Principles. Ellen Eastby will be addressing this subject in her scheduled talk December 5.

Amy Beckman will bring to the attention of the Social Justice Interest Group, UUA's suggested common read, "*Defund Fear.*"

Wally Warhol reported that he and Kris had attended the law enforcement community event where there was good conversation and support for each other.

**Personnel Committee Report:** John Salmen on behalf of the Personnel Committee presented their proposal for identification and hiring of staff that after lengthy discussion was endorsed by the Board (John Salmen/Mary Anderson). (See proposal at end of minutes.)

**Program Report:** Coordinator, Mary Worner validated what Cedar reported and asked that they have input on the recommendations for hiring of a Children’s Religious Education Coordinator. Mary also reported that Bernice Johnson is now retiring her role with the Shan Schools, and that their Board of Directors, of which Mary is a member are considering their options for the future.

**Safety Committee** Chair Norm Kolstad with comments from Ron Roller shared that the COVID surge is at high to severe levels in Otter Tail County thus in-person service gathering remains on hold.

**Membership Committee** Chair Mary Anderson asked the Board what they’d like the Membership Committee to focus upon. It was agreed that the Board of Directors will make phone calls to congregational members and friends after Mary provides them with a call list and conversation outline.

**Community Outreach Report** – Co-Coordinator Amy Beckman reported that the Social Justice Interest Group will meet the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays following services. Arrangements are underway with Victorial McWane Creek to do a virtual IDI workshop on December 12 at the formerly agreed upon cost of \$1600.

Motion carried to contribute \$50.00 to the benefit of local COVID victim, Bruce Albjerg with Amy selecting the item for the silent auction (Mary Anderson/Marianne Bryan).

There was **no unfinished business**.

There was **no new business**.

Next meetings:

Officer Team – November 10, 2021

Board – November 17, 2021

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

## **Administrator’s Report October 2021**

Time spent:

Most of my time is spent with the Speakers Committee. Attending Speakers Committee meetings, writing to speakers, confirming details of plans for speakers, sharing monthly speakers lists,

And with the Programs group. The families have been organizing, and they can use significant support.

Website:



I can now update the website with program information and Sunday Service Speaker information. But I need further instructions from Ellen on how to add documents to the website. To be honest, I find editing the website not very intuitive and somewhat frustrating. Ellen Eastby did an admirable job managing the website – she was willing to spend time to figure out its quirks.

### Google Suites

When asked I've been storing documents on the Shared Drive. For example, U Groups wanted a place to store source documents, I placed the documents in the U-Groups folder on the shared drive and made them available to people by sharing a link and telling them how to find the Shared Drive.

I helped Susan Groff get connected to the G-Suites. She set up her @ucofu.org email account after several conversations with me. Susan helped me learn that a person really needs to set up their @ucofu.org email address while on a computer. It can't really be done from a phone. And there is no special app available. Other than that, Susan confirmed that following the instructions that Melody Shores created worked like a charm.

Honestly, the main reason people would need to use their @ucofu.org email addresses is to access documents in the Shared Drives.

### Next projects:

Complete the UUA Survey.

Learn how to add documents to the UCU website (for example: the monthly newsletter.)

### An important event sponsored by UUA

#### ***Compass, Navigating the Paths to Liberation Together***

Sat Dec 11 (noon – 7 pm) and Sun Dec 12 (noon – 3:30 pm) – Online fee \$25 to \$60 sliding scale  
Register now:

[https://www.uua.org/leadership/events/compass?mc\\_cid=f885ce74a3&mc\\_eid=292c7a8742](https://www.uua.org/leadership/events/compass?mc_cid=f885ce74a3&mc_eid=292c7a8742)

**Our very own [Article II Commission](#) will ask for your input on our ever-evolving Purposes and Principles. This is Unitarian Universalism, our living tradition, at its theological best: striving to change and be better in a changing world, bending its arc toward a greater inclusivity and a more profound justice for all.**

Join us to find our collective “compass” as we explore interdependence as a path to wholeness. In February of 2020, the Commission on Institutional Change published its report, ["Widening the Circle of Concern,"](#) which called for a deepening in relationship with and a call to explore our shared theology as Unitarian Universalists. The next month, the Global Pandemic caused a nearly complete shutdown of all gathering spaces, including our congregations and communities. This extended time of social distancing has taught us just how much we need each other as individuals and collectives; our interdependence has never been clearer. If the question is, "What is an everyday theology of Unitarian Universalism?" one way we have answered back is, "Interdependence."

With so much uncertainty in the wider world, sometimes it can be hard to find one's bearings. Which way is up? Which turn to take? Which risk is worth managing? You are invited to reach into your spiritual toolkits and grab your "compass," your way finder, that inner voice that points you toward goodness, and join us in charting a path toward a deeper knowing of Unitarian Universalism. Join us for Compass: Navigating the Paths of Liberation Together.

UUA Common Read announced

[https://www.uua.org/read?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=211016%20Seasons%20of%20Giving%20%20October%202021%20Issue%20Non-Sustainers&utm\\_content=211016%20Seasons%20of%20Giving%20%20October%202021%20Issue%20Non-Sustainers+CID\\_2dd87b8ca90c55c529d96951258d9f96&utm\\_source=stewdev&utm\\_term=View%20Common%20Read%20reflection%20questions](https://www.uua.org/read?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=211016%20Seasons%20of%20Giving%20%20October%202021%20Issue%20Non-Sustainers&utm_content=211016%20Seasons%20of%20Giving%20%20October%202021%20Issue%20Non-Sustainers+CID_2dd87b8ca90c55c529d96951258d9f96&utm_source=stewdev&utm_term=View%20Common%20Read%20reflection%20questions)

The UUA has chosen [\*Defund Fear: Safety Without Policing, Prisons, and Punishment\*](#) by Zach Norris (Beacon Press, 2021) as the next Common Read.

The UU Common Read builds community in our congregations and our movement by giving diverse people a shared platform for reflection and a shared focus for action. Further, a Common Read can take us on a powerful faith journey as we explore—each of us, and together—what it means to be human and accountable in a pain-filled world.

### **Guidance to the Reader: *Defund Fear***

As Unitarian Universalists, the matters raised in *Defund Fear* invite us to respond to public safety in the U.S. today through a lens of faith. We urge you to grapple theologically with big, tough questions about who we are and the meaning and purposes of our lives.

Resources will be available for a book discussion by the end of 2021.

## **Personnel Committee Proposal**

**Board Approved**

**October 20, 2021**

The Personnel Committee proposes that the UCU Board approves the following plan for support staff for the UCU. This process is based on the assessment of work to be performed and development of job descriptions, operations documentation, conversations with other UU's, and input from UCU leadership.

**Project Goal:** Identification of church staff needs and follow-up action to advertise, interview, and recommend selected candidates who provide the best matches to do the work of UCU that cannot be provided solely through volunteers and paid consultants.

We based the goals on the assumptions that the UCU congregation holds the following values and wishes to:

1. Look to the future in our thinking and planning.
2. Maintain and expand administrative processes and tools for operational efficiency.
3. Retain and grow the membership, the spirituality, and the fellowship of the church.
4. Build, expand, and enhance UCU's children's religious education program to address and provide intergenerational faith community opportunities that attract and appeal to families with children.
5. Provide faith community opportunities and events beyond Sunday services that build, expand and enhance both adult and children's religious education.
6. Expand our technology and communication systems to better facilitate internal communication within UCU and promote greater visibility of UCU.
7. Acknowledge the reality of the need for an increased budget to provide sufficient salaries for new hires.
8. Continue to encourage and provide opportunities for volunteers to contribute their time and abilities on short term and long-term tasks, thus increasing their investment and involvement of this faith community.

#### **Need for Paid Staff/Services**

We have identified four (4) areas that we believe require paid staff support:

1. Administrative/Coordination/Operational Management Support
2. Clerical Support
3. Children's Religious Education Support
4. Technical/Communications Support.

We have identified several technical tasks that will likely require short term contracted services: i.e., web design & development.

#### **Preparation, Publication and Search Process**

1. We will produce job descriptions that define the support services needed.
2. We will produce job announcements seeking applicants with multi-cross functional skill sets.
3. We will conduct an open-ended interview process to review applicants until finding a match of skills within a team of hired individuals supplemented by volunteer support.
4. We will submit the final candidates to the Board of Directors for hiring approval and terms of employment/contracts.