

Newsletter January 2021

*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

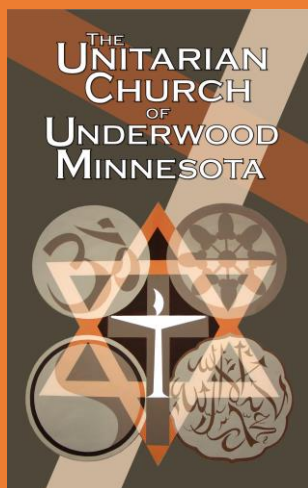
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Underwood, MN 56537

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Website: www.ucofu.org

www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org



Painting by Mickie Edmonds
"Prairie School"

Happy New Year!!

Due to continued precautions
against the spreading of the
COVID-19

In-person church services,
meetings & activities are
conducted via Zoom.

Watch for ucofu@ucofu.org
messages, the Sunday "UCU
Weekly" and check:

www.ucofu.org or
www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org



Stay Informed

U Group Zoom Meeting Schedule

- Alexandria U Group: 4th Sunday each month @ 7 p.m. Facilitators: Lee Becker/Susan Sanford
- Battle Lake U Group: 2nd Tuesday each month @ 3 p.m. Facilitators: Bob Worner.
- Perham U-Group: 2nd Thursday @ 6:30 p.m. Facilitator: Mary Worner

You are welcome to join a U Group – watch for the Zoom links.

For details or questions, Contact Lead

Facilitator, Luce Reese @

lucereese@gmail.com or 218/495-2449

Tzedakah

Hebrew word “Tzedakah” means both justice and righteousness. In the Jewish faith, it is a moral obligation to share your time, skills, and money to make the world a better place.

At UCU we call that

Gifts in Gratitude

To Contribute to UCU:

Sign up for automatic funds transfer or

Mail your check to:

Unitarian Church of Underwood

PO Box 58

Underwood, MN 56586

Building Access

For safety and sanitation purposes, if you access or need to access the church building, please call or text Susan Groff (Janitor) @ 218/205-0439.

UCU Weekly

Watch for these and other

ucofu@ucofu.org email messages.

Participate in the **Zoom** invitations for Sunday service, social hour & other meetings

Note: Send Announcements for UCU Weekly and monthly newsletter to

newseditor@ucofu.org. As appropriate, some will be forwarded for inclusion @ www.ucofu.org and Facebook Page.

Need help with Zoom?

Email: techhelp@ucofu.org

Want to volunteer to be part of the Tech Help Team?

Also email: techhelp@ucofu.org

Newsletter Submissions due prior to Issuance the 1st of each month

Please submit your ideas, articles and photos to:

Writer/Editor: Mary Anderson @

newseditor@ucofu.org

Editing: Stephanie Sanderson

Emailing/mailling: Ellen Eastby and Mary Anderson

Website: Ellen Eastby

Facebook: Melody Shores

Photos courtesy of Norm Kolstad & credited others.

Credited Articles

Note: For security, personal telephone numbers and email addresses will not be used within the newsletters except with the express permission of the individual.

UCU Weekly:

Designed and written by Ellen Eastby

Church Happenings



Message from Board President, Norm Kolstad

Most of us by now have become all-too familiar with the virtual meeting. It is the new normal for maintaining relationships ("let's zoom") but meeting virtually is a poor substitute for in-person interaction, where subtle clues can be the key to understanding and relationship building. As we begin a new year, there is hope for a future of renewing relationships that have been tested by the pandemic.

A few years ago, Kris Warhol proposed to the Church Board a Covenant of Right Relationship (see text below), which was incorporated into our policy manual. It is a corollary to the Unitarian Principle of respecting the "...worth and dignity of every person" and provides a guide to how we can act to honor that principle.

Let us all begin the new year with a resolution to keep the Covenant of Right Relations, not just within our Congregation, but in the world.

Norman Kolstad

UCU Covenant of Right Relationship

(From UCU Safety Plan as Board approved 2015)

The Unitarian Church of Underwood is a place of safety and integrity for each person's mind, body, and spirit. We are a supportive and nurturing faith community, honoring and respecting the rich diversity of those gathered here. Recognizing that warmth, beauty, kindness, and passion will shape us as a congregation of goodwill, generosity, and presence, we covenant to affirm and promise:

- Honesty and authenticity in our relationships
- Words that are supportive and caring, not belittling or demeaning
- A welcoming and non-judgmental attitude
- To respect each person's boundaries of mind, body and spirit
- To listen to one another
- To refrain from displays of temper
- To honor the gifts and blessings of thought and deed.

This is our covenant of right relationship.

Viable Futures

The UCU Board of Directors is continuing efforts to gather information to assess where the Unitarian Church of Underwood's congregation is at and where we want to be in the future.

As part of what we are calling the “Viable Futures Initiative, sixteen (16) individuals took part in the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment. IDI Administrator, Victoria McWane-Creek will be the Sunday presenter January 10. She will talk about what the IDI is and what the results mean. We will hold focus groups following her talk to discuss if the showing of UCU Intercultural Competence is reflective of the mindsets of the total membership and if we are satisfied with our place on the intercultural competence continuum. We are looking for ideas on what we might do to further accept and adapt to cultural differences.

In addition, 38 members and friends responded to the Viable Futures Questionnaire. A summary of these responses has been compiled and is being shared with the UCU Board and other church leaders. Responders offered good feedback and were quite positive.

Meantime, Mary Worner has been sharing with the Board Rev. David Pyle’s thoughts on a new form of board leadership that is more focused on relationship than efficiency, while also providing congregations with Religious Leadership rather than business management. Rev. Pyle is Regional Lead at the UU MidAmerica Region.

There will be a leadership retreat to assess what we have learned and determine what we want to include in the UCU Strategic Plan 2020-21 annual goals and objectives. Information will continue to be shared along the way with the membership with a full presentation at or before the annual meeting.

Thank all of you who have taken the time to respond to the inquiries and to provide your thoughts.

UCU Board of Directors



Values We Treasure
Inclusion,
humility,
fairness,
kindness,
seeking truth,
learning to listen,
listening to learn.

REPLACE judgement with Curiosity



The Unitarian Church of Underwood now has a Public Calendar. It is available on our website at www.ucofu.org or [click here](#)



Commented [ma1]:

Use this link to the [UCU Members and Friends calendar](#)



Budd Andrews was most pleased to get so many cards and well wishes from his family and many friends in celebration of his 100th birthday on December 22.



The Gift of Christmas Eve Service

Thank you to Celebrant, Ellen Eastby who plans, organizes, and presents the annual traditional Christmas Eve Service. Thank you, musicians, readers and the members, friends and visitors who attend – this year a total of 50 – on Zoom, none the less. This UCU Christmas Eve service is a highlight of the season.



Empty pews just waiting for us!

Speakers for January Sunday Services

**Via Zoom
10:00 a.m.**

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

See the ucofu.org emails and Weekly for link specifics)



January 3 - Bob Worner, "New Beginnings." Bob will share thoughts about the elections, and the need for unity in the nation and about a new and important moment for our church referencing the 2nd principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

January 10 - Victoria McWane-Creek, "Practicing Community Through Changework." A risk worth taking again and again. Showing up authentically, engaging wholeheartedly, and giving the best we have to offer in support of peace, liberty and justice for all, while simultaneously understanding that we don't get peace until there is liberty and justice for all.

6th Principle: The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All.



Victoria is a 2020 Minnesota Women's Press Changemaker and a performance improvement specialist with the talent and expertise to guide individuals, teams, organizations, and communities towards their ideal performance by designing and executing strategic interventions that close knowledge and performance gaps.

She has been involved with instructional and curriculum design for eleven years, and her most recent curricular and instructional design activity includes Fergus Falls Diversity Equity and Inclusion Community of Practice, Lakes Country Service Cooperative Equity and Support Workgroup, Minnesota Campus Compact, Minnesota Council of Churches, Minnesota Housing Partnership, and Tri-College NEW Leadership Institute. Victoria has been designing, hosting, and facilitating meetings and conversations that matter for fourteen years.

Commented [ma2]:

Her most recent conversation design and facilitation include Respectful Conversations at M State and the 2020 MLK Day Rural Racial Equity Summit. From issue identification to evaluation, she provides full spectrum design and development services for adult learner's deliverable in real time, face to face modalities, or through virtual and asynchronous modes.

Victoria was pursuing a Doctor of Education at Concordia University - Portland and had three chapters of her dissertation written when the university closed its doors this spring forcing her to re-evaluate her pursuit. She is a graduate of the University of North Dakota with a Masters in Instructional Design and Performance Improvement, and she earned a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology, Business and Sociology from Eastern Oregon University.



January 17 - Joseph DeMasi, "Living the UU Life, in Music and Song." UU singer/ songwriter/ humorist Joseph DeMasi presents a program of original songs that speak to the themes, values, and challenges of being a UU. Joseph was born into a nice, big Italian Catholic family in Brooklyn, NY but somehow managed to find his way to North Dakota where he now resides and found Unitarian Universalism, his true spiritual home. Come and share, the long, strange trip it has been!! He addresses Principle #4, a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Joseph is a lifelong musician who grew up in New York City. He has used his music to spread the UU principles of love, inclusion, ability awareness and equality for all throughout this country.



January 24 - Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, "Heart and Hearth." Rev. Ruchotzke shares a message of the connection to nature, the wheel of the year, and nurturing community by giving our hearts. She begins by sharing what she learned from a visit to Latvia and learning Latvian folk songs. On a visit to the Seneca Art and Culture Center she learned of winter practices of the "Haudenosaunee" (which means "People of the Longhouse"). What is it we can be doing during this winter season, and how can we move forward?

Rev. Renee Ruchotzke (ruh-HUT-skee) has served as a Congregational Life Consultant in the Central East Region since September of 2010. She spends half of her time working on [LeaderLab](#), [The UU Leadership Institute](#), and other online UUA leadership resources. Renee lives in Kent, Ohio and is a local community organizer and activist. She serves on the boards of the Kent Environmental Council, Edible Kent, the Kent League of Women Voters, and the City of Kent's Sustainability Commission. She also served as president of the Kent Natural Foods Co-op and helped them transition their governance. She and her spouse Randy practice sustainable living with solar panels, an electric car, a backyard permaculture food forest, and a front yard pollinator on their city lot.



January 31 - Ben Schierer, "Leading Local." Ben, mayor of Fergus Falls will be referencing the 2nd Principle, Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. What can we do at the local level to address the divides we face as a state and a nation? What role do each of us play in ensuring our communities are confronting the challenges of equity and justice in 2021?

Notes from December Programs

For a summary of the notes from the November speakers, see the Church Reports issued via ucofu.org email the Monday or Tuesday following each Sunday service. Below are the readings from writers: Ozzie Tollefson, Edie Barrett, and John Miersch that was facilitated by Diane Johnson and given on December 27 and video produced by Melody Shores.

Unitarian Church of Underwood presentation, Dec. 27, 2020



Several years ago, when Luke Anderson created the UU writer's group, he envisioned that, going forward, writers would participate on occasional Sundays during the year, perhaps by elucidating on the meaning of one of the Principles, using personal explanations or setting a topic that was reflective of our spiritual world by creatively sharing thoughts and insights.

The UU service on December 27th consisted of readings and presentations by writer members of the congregation. Ozzie Tollefson, Edie Barret, John Miersch and Melody Shores who creatively explored the theme of Moving Forward into the New Year. *Diane Johnson*



Melody Shores created a truly inspirational video with the musical voices of her daughter, nephew and niece and Melody's photos. Here's the link: <https://youtu.be/V4Vw7iyJC70>

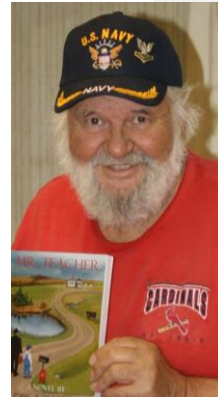
"A Father's Words"

Published in Echoes Magazine, 1995
by Ozzie Tollefson

I carried the rain-soaked Amish boy out of the ditch and laid him on the front seat of my pickup. "I want to see Josie," he cried. I wiped the boy's face with a paper towel and turned again to the scene of the accident.

Minutes ago, I followed a semi that was passing an Amish buggy slowly, with plenty of room. Then the horse reared to the left. The tractor-trailer swerved, rocking and almost tipping. Brakes howled and horse, buggy, father and boy flew into the ditch as if the windshield wipers of my pickup had tossed them.

In the ditch, the steady rain washed the color and life from the picture. The trucker's wife sat in the mud and held the horse's head in her lap. The horse lay on its side,



motionless, except for an occasional twitch of one front leg. The trucker had helped the Amish father sit upright against a fencepost. He was holding the father's black hat. The gray buggy sat on its top near the dying horse. Some groceries lay scattered. A triangular orange caution sign hung on the back of the buggy and was the brightest item in the picture.

Up on the narrow country road, the diesel engine of the black Kenworth idled. It was the only sound I could hear except for the crying boy.

"Josie, Josie," he screamed, and before I could hold him, he jumped from my pickup, slid down the bank, and stumbled toward the horse. The trucker's wife caught him in her arms and turned his head from the horse.

His father struggled to his feet and took his son to the edge of the field. He made the boy stand, while he knelt before him and spoke into his crying eyes soft words that I could not hear.

Comments from Ozzie:

"I left this story open-ended, with a question for the reader. What did the father say to the boy? Perhaps it was similar to what parents should tell their children today, after the tough year we've gone through. The boy in this story is saddened by the loss of his beloved horse, Josie. Children today are saddened by the loss of grandparents or even parents from the deadly virus. I believe the father is saying. 'We are still alive and must go on, with hope, faith and courage.'" *Ozzie Tollefson*

Watch Ozzie at: [Ozzie Tollefson Interviewed on his book, "MR. TEACHER" - YouTube](#)

That's What I Needed
By Edie Barrett



Really needed.

I needed to curl-up
in the hollow
of an old tree

like some wild animal

a squirrel
a fox
maybe a badger.

Then circle
round and round
rearrange the dirt
prepare my bed

make my own warmth.

I needed to fall into a deep
winter slumber.

A hibernation.

That's what I needed.

To be still
and silent
and find my way
back

to myself.

I needed to sleep
through the cold darkness
of winter
with the aurora borealis
swirling
overhead
my dreams
merging
with the miracle
of the blues and greens.

I needed to awaken
in a soft
spring rain.
Smell the mustiness
of the earth
now mingled
with my roots

*deeply
planted.*

From the inside of the tree
I needed to watch
the white clouds
gently float
across the blue sky.

Effortlessly.

I needed to feel
my own wings
open and spread
with the call
of the wild geese
gathering
in
migration.

And that's exactly
what I did.
I slept
and dreamt.

And now

I rearrange
my bird's nest hat
and tilt it
ever so gently
to one side.

Learn more about Edie and her creative works at <https://ediebarrett.com/>.

"COVID Ghosts"

By John Miersch

OK,
So, Christmas time is past.
Don't you wish that it could last?
We just don't want another year
Living with the COVID fear
Want a shot right in the arm



I know it will not do me harm
Hurry doctor don't be late
Please protect me and my mate...

OK, enough already, it's too late for you to give up pouting and shouting. If should you cry, you'll know the reason. Didn't get what you wanted; you know the list was checked twice. Get something you didn't want? Like a dose of COVID-19? Well, aren't you special! As you've sown, so you did reap. Or weep?

Is life boring, dull, repetitive, uninteresting, it could be fun again depending on where you are in line for the vaccine. For the shot you don't have to be good, just old and living in your children's basement or some facility catering to those over the age of dissent. If like most of us you're a long way off from the protection offered from Pfizer or Moderna or any of the other big pharma's, you'll just have to continue with the new normal. This is where the past meets the present to make the future. Be quite the adventure, won't it? In keeping with the newness of things don't forget to mark your calendar for the second injection. Then be on your way to that new normal.

There will be a great deal to look forward too, and to look out for. If you think the country was split over the election just wait. The globe is going to split into those immune and those not so much. Besides being old, those deemed essential may get vaccinated. The ones who aren't declared as such will go to the end of the line. Do you think they're going to put up with that? Science disbelievers won't sit still once they realize it's the ones with the vaccination who are not getting sick and more importantly not dying. We've already seen a move by some politicians to put themselves at the front of the line and the line hasn't even formed yet.

A pretty picture for the new year is it. Of course, there's no reason for this scenario to take place. Be Christian, behave like Jesus, even though it upsets conservatives. How hard can it be to wear a mask while waiting for your neighbors to get vaccinated? Remember the science says even if you have the antibodies you can still carry and spread the virus. So, it's a gift to be spread around amongst friends and neighbors.

You can be moving the virus over, under, around and through everyplace you go without your knowing it. Then again, maybe you know it and it's your way of getting even for some perceived wrong. You wouldn't do such a thing, would you? No matter, within a certain amount of time the herd immunology will set in (like maybe sometime in 2022 or 3). So, see there is something to look forward to. Remember this is a vaccine and like the flu vaccine it may only be good for a year. Then when you go to get next year's shot you find the virus has mutated in fact; we have already been told it has. The whole process now starts over. If that's not forward looking, what is?

We don't want Jakob Marley's ghost of Christmas past to be our present for the future. Here's the perfect opportunity for those of you to use or reuse your advent calendar to count down to the inauguration.

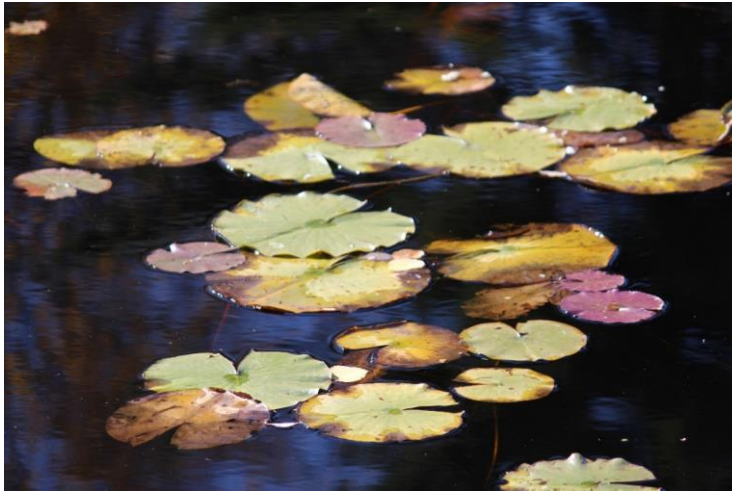


Photo by Kelly Barrett

Soul Strings

Written by Kelly Barrett

I sat by her bed in the room where geese rise with the sun
and fly by the window.
Day four of the watch.
The day before Mom drew her last breath.

Not yet quite dawn, light just starting to grow.
A long, wispy-fuzzy cloud ribbon streams
up and down, in and out, all around.
Perhaps not even all inside the room.
Surely some has made it through the roof
now rising above that Fergus hospital.

My ribbon joins hers in an undulating dance,
Twisting and turning, joining and parting
in a lifting, tilting way.

A crusty coffee pot perks in the background
my mother's breathing, and yet not her entire being.
I ease into the stream as Mom leads me to let go of this distress.
She has.

The body is the place where the soul shows itself. And also,
it's not the only place.



UCU Virtual Dinners Karibo sana



**You are Invited to an
African Safari with Mary Anderson
Saturday, January 9 @ 6 p.m. via Zoom**



<https://zoom.us/j/96754347298?pwd=MIJMdUdtYm9CckZLaW94Z3I5SG5sUT09>

Meeting ID: 967 5434 7298

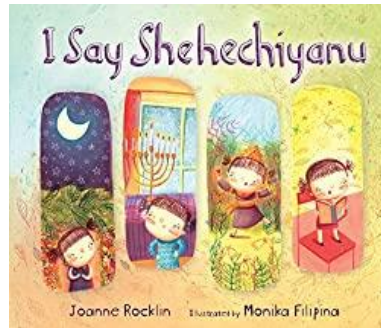
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Mary Anderson has made three trips to Tanzania, one that lasted 5 ½ months. Mary met many Tanzanians and went on lots of safaris. Share her experiences with an African dinner and photo ecotour safari! To find a recipe or share a recipe, sign into your church Gmail address, and go to: [Tanzania dinner recipes.docx - Google Drive](#).



Next month, we will celebrate on Tuesday, February 16 at 6 p.m., Mardi Gras with Alison Francis so grab your masks and beads to join her!

To learn more on hosting your own virtual dinner, contact Janell Miersch at 218/531-1445 or janell.miersch@ucofu.org. Pick your theme, pick your date and time, pick your menu, and have some fun.



Pure Gratitude Giving Thanks – Loving What Is

Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky

“In Judaism, the most common blessing of thanksgiving is known as the *Shehechyanu*. We recite this 2,000-year-old blessing at the start of Holy Days, upon eating a new fruit or donning a new garment, dwelling in a new home — all moments of pure gratitude. In shorthand we refer to this blessing as *birkat hazman* — the blessing of time.

Shehechyanu consists of three acknowledgements, praising God for: 1) giving us life; 2) sustaining us; 3) and for causing us to reach this moment.

We can easily break these down into the way we navigate time. “Causing us to reach this moment” represents the here and now, the present. “Giving us life” leads us to reflect on yesterday and the past. And “sustaining us” is tomorrow and the future. We pause and offer gratitude for every chapter of our life, all at once — yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

And that is really the message we need to assimilate right now. So many supporters of President-elect Joe Biden want to erase the memory of President Donald Trump. But we have to accept and acknowledge the path we took to get here, what now looks like and the mountain left to climb. And we give thanks to the Divine for granting us the clarity of understanding to discern this moment from the next and the previous.

We are not in a better place than we were four years ago — far from it. But we can recognize the potent seeds of progress. How many more people are now registered to vote? How many more people are engaged in advocacy, in the fight for social justice and civil rights? How many more people are awake and paying attention? How many are standing up against oppression and suppression? And how do we ensure progress?

There is one nuance about the blessing that is not commonly known. We only recite it to give thanks for moments that we hope (and pray) and believe will be repeated — like those beginnings of holy days, like eating a new fruit, like giving birth to a child. Now is the time for us to recite *Shehechyanu*, for the future we have struggled to manifest is upon us — but there is still much progress to make and work to repeat.

Now is the time for us to offer thanks, not just at Thanksgiving.

Now is the time to offer thanks because we have arrived, we are alive, and because we need every ounce of strength to keep on fighting.”

~ Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky is a senior rabbi at Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, MN.
(provided by Carole Mitchell & Cindy Johnson from their 2020 Christmas letter)

Living Out Our UU Principles

Note: The Social Justice Interest Group is meeting January 5th to determine their next social justice activities. If you have ideas, please contact Alison Francis at alison.francis@ucofu.org or 218/457-0929.



Women's Prison Book Project

<http://wpbp.org>

Sponsored by UCU Social Justice Interest Group

The Women's Prison Book Project (WPBP) is giving us an opportunity to help women who are incarcerated to feel their inherent worth and dignity through donating books. The WPBP is an all-volunteer, grassroots organization (501 c3) that:

- Seeks to build connections with those behind the walls, and to educate those of us on the outside about the realities of prison and the justice system.
- Recognizes that flaws and inequities throughout the “justice” system act to control and suppress the lives/movements of the poor, women, and all people of color.

Watch a short video on their website @ <http://wpbp.org> and see what the prisoners say this program has done for them.

The following are high need books: *Arts and crafts, horror, Christian, dictionaries, coloring books, mystery, self-help, romance, cookbooks, Lesbian, Transgender, Women's health, books in Spanish*. The books need to be soft cover and like new with NO tears, worn covers, yellowing pages or writing in it.

Visit their website above for a link to their Amazon wish list or make a monetary donation to paypal.me/wpbp. Email any questions to: barbara.honer@ucof.org.

Our goal is to collect five (5) boxes by **January 8, 2021**. You can drop off your donations in the Sverdrup Suites #300 front porch. Barbara Honer will transport the books to the collecting site in Minneapolis.

Your donations are appreciated!

Social Justice Interest Group: Amy Beckman, Alison Francis, Barbara Honer, Melody Shores, Shirley Spanhanks

**Unitarian Church of Underwood
Empowerment Grant
Applications Due January 31, 2021**

Full details are available in the December newsletter. Please contact Ron Roller at 218-770-0374 or at: ron.roller@ucofu.org for further information and/or assistance.

To apply for an Empowerment Grant, fill out the application online here:
<https://forms.gle/zppKA5hUk78edRENA>.

OR print the application at the end of the December newsletter and mail to: Unitarian Church of Underwood, PO Box 58, Underwood, MN 56587, Attn: Empowerment Grants.

**Feed the Hungry
Fergus Falls Food Shelf**



Because of the pandemic, our neighbors are even in more critical need of help from our local food shelves. When we donate money, the food shelf can buy \$2000.00 worth of food for every \$500 donated. So, donating funds buys more food than donating items you paid full price for. City staff and volunteers are working out of the Community Food Shelf building from 1:00-4:00 p.m., Monday Wednesday and Friday.

The need is great right now. Give as you can.

Donate directly to: Community Food Shelf, 1512 N. 1st Avenue, Fergus Falls, MN 56537. Or check with your hometown food shelf and see if they need your donation.

We Are Part of the Larger UU
In This New Year
By Aaron Stockwell,
(UUA Worship Web)

In this new year, let us be amazed.
Let us search for new life and hope in our midst.
Let us nurture creativity in every form.
Let us be reminded that new insights of the universe are always being made.
In this new year, let us be amazed.



Congregations rise to resist Line 3

UU clergy and lay leaders from Bemidji and Duluth [gathered in Palisade, MN, and online via Zoom](#), for Winter Solstice witness and solidarity with water protectors resisting the construction/destruction of the Line 3 pipeline. First Universalist Church of Minneapolis' Environmental Justice team hosted a forum last week (contact Rev. [Roberta Haskin](#) for more info and video).

[UU Church of Willmar, MN will focus their January 3rd service on this issue](#) -- which reflects the environmental destruction and treaty-breaking that's going on all over the country. That service will be presented by Rita Chamblin, a Unitarian Universalist lay leader, environmental justice advocate, resident of Northern Minnesota and Bemidji liaison for Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light. Rita has been active in Line 3 work since she moved back to Minnesota four years ago. To join the ZOOM service in Willmar:

<https://zoom.us/j/91647871084?pwd=eVBGaENsRIRZT2VUL2J4N0JCVTNRQT09>

If you join by dialing your phone:

- Dial 312 626 6799 - Meeting ID: 916 4787 1084# - Password: 920017#

[Unity Church - Unitarian Sustainability team is hosting an online forum on January 10th](#) to educate and mobilize congregants, in collaboration with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light and with local Indigenous leaders (if that hyperlink doesn't work for you, copy and paste this link in the browser to view: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KNSNamrUBxT64xtOjCfyh7Hluo7IyiCz/view>). You can also learn more at www.mnipl.org and WelcomeWaterProtectors.com and [in our earlier post](#) about Line 3 resistance -- this is an urgent and ongoing fight.

Faithfully, with justice and joy –
Karen Wills, Executive Director
director@muusja.org or (612) 927-2072

Message from the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers:

"As you move through these changing times... be easy on yourself and be easy on one another. You are at the beginning of something new. You are learning a new way of being. You will find that you are working less in the yang modes that you are used to.

You will stop working so hard at getting from point A to point B the way you have in the past, but instead, you will spend more time experiencing yourself in the whole, and your place in it.

Instead of traveling to a goal out there, you will voyage deeper into yourself.

Your mother's grandmother knew how to do this. Your ancestors from long ago knew how to do this. They knew the power of the feminine principle... and because you carry their DNA in your body, this wisdom, and this way of being is within you.



Call on it. Call it up. Invite your ancestors in. As the yang-based habits and the decaying institutions on our planet begin to crumble, look up. A breeze is stirring. Feel the sun on your wings."

With permission from Carole Mitchell & Cindy Johnson 2020 Holiday Greeting Letter

Unitarian Church of Underwood Board of Director's Meeting Minutes November 18, 2020

Attendees were: Norm Kolstad, Mary Anderson, Amy Beckman, Tim Lanz, John Minge, Ron Roller, Shannon Smith, Wally Warhol, Mary Worner. Also, in attendance: Bonnie Graham, Congregational Administrator.

The meeting was called to order by Vice President, Shannon Smith at 6:50 p.m. Norm Kolstad, President had asked Shannon, Vice President to preside because he was driving on-way to the start of the meeting.

The Board Agenda was approved with a reorder of topics so Mary Worner could present first on the David Pyle Practices of Board Leadership (Ron Roller/Amy Beckman).

The Board Minutes of October 21, 2020 were approved as published (John Minge/Ron Roller).

Reports:

Practices of Board Leadership: Mary Worner continued sharing highlights on the Practices of Board Leadership, *Planning for the Future* as it was presented by Rev. David Pyle. Notes used are included at the end of these minutes.

Treasurer's Report:

Financial: Treasurer Ron Roller presented the financial report. Of the Sunday collections reported, 60% result from automated payments now numbering over 20. Although collections are reduced, so are expenses. Federal income taxes have been paid. It was recommended that the unactualized income/lost be reported at the end of the fiscal year. Ron expressed that despite the COVID challenges, finances are better than he expected. The full financial reports are available on Google Suites shared drive.

Empowerment Grants: Approximately \$4000 has been declined by the 2020 awardees unable to do their projects because of COVID safety restrictions. Motion was made and passed that these funds be moved into the 2021 Empowerment Grants process (Mary Anderson/Mary Worner).

Records Committee: John Minge, member of the Records Committee reported that he has done a first draft revision of the Articles of Incorporation and the By-laws. He will send a copy to the full Board understanding that this is a work in progress. Mary Anderson, also member of the Records Committee reported that she is on hold with UCU Policy and Procedures Manual revisions pending responses from the Safety Committee, Foundation Advisory Committee, and others.

Facility:

Norm Kolstad reported changes in tenants at Sverdrup Suites: Gerald & Darlene Germann, Unit 1 have given notice to vacate effective January 1, 2021. The Schies, Unit 2 have indicated interest in also leasing Unit 1. Gordan Hanson, Unit 4 died this week so awaiting a decision from his wife, Mary as to her continued leasing.

Safety: Norm reported that the Safety Committee will consider appropriateness and/or conditions for use/non-use of Unit 3 and also consider safety provisions for if, when and how to resume in-person gatherings still expected to be restricted until at least May 2021.

Membership Committee: In response to Mary Anderson's inquiry on making the circle of calls, two Board members responded in the affirmative. Theme dinners by Zoom are planned for the next several months beginning with John Minge's curry dinner December 5, a January African Safari with Mary Anderson, a February Mardi Gras celebration with Alison Francis and hopefully others to follow.

Program Coordination:

Program Coordinator Mary Worner reported on information received from Betsy Wells, Chair of each: 1) the Speakers Committee that meets monthly noting that: Zoom has expanded the pool of potential speakers, planning for intergenerational services, involving the children, and involving UCU attendees and members for potential speaking. Mary will relay to the Speakers Committee the comments of Board members in appreciation of their good work. 2) UCU Connections Task Force meets twice/month and deals with: Sunday service technical support and order of service, member support, ideas on how to include children, plans for some extras for Thanksgiving and Christmas services.

Community Outreach:

Community Outreach Co-Coordinator Amy Beckman reported that the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was taken by 16 individuals, 13 of whom attended the IDI debrief. The Inventory's combined scores reflect test takers on the continuum of minimization with the perception of being in the acceptance/adaptation stage. Board members expressed positive responses to the experience and recommended that we move forward to explore further offerings. Amy will forward a copy of the summary to the full Board and make inquiries to Victorial McWane-Creek, IDI Administrator on additional workshop offerings, including a presentation to the congregation on the findings. Budgeted training funds remain available.

The Social Justice Interest Group is proceeding with activities including film discussions.

Congregational Administrator's Report: Bonnie Graham, Congregational Administrator reported that she has been working with Betsy Wells, Chair of the Speakers Committee on contacts, expectations and logistics for guest speakers. Work is in progress on separate spread sheets to provide information as needed to others, ie., Ron Roller, Treasurer. Bonnie has provided information to announce the UUA Thanksgiving workshop on the American Conquest. She and Melody Shores continue to work on the Google Suites training materials.

Unfinished Business:

Terms of Contract for the Bookkeeper will be sent to Tere Mann to complete. Tere is contracted to provide UCU bookkeeping services.

Viable Futures Initiative: Mary Anderson reported that the Viable Futures Initiative Plan laid out at the last Board meeting is proceeding (although not under the first timeline she acknowledges as "overly ambitious"). To date, 32 responses to the questionnaire have been received. The details for when and how to conduct focus groups is yet to be determined. Once information is sufficiently gathered, plans will be finalized for a leadership retreat for further discernment as to the church's mission and goals.

Identity as "Interest Group":

John Minge brought to attention the deferment of a matter recorded in last month's Board Minutes: the identity change of Social Justice Committee status to "Social Justice Interest Group" status. He expressed concerns that without the identity of a committee, this group's actions could not be considered church sanctioned. After discussion, motion was made and carried that the Social Justice Interest Group be sanctioned as an "interest group" representing the church (Shannon Smith/Mary Anderson) with 2 objections (John Minge/Tim Lanz), 2 abstentions (Ron Roller/Mary Worner, and 5 voting in favor of the motion (Shannon Smith/Mary Anderson/Amy Beckman/Wally Warhol/Norman Kolstad).

Secretary's Note: From October 21, 2020 Board Minutes: "An Interest Group would be defined as 'individuals working together on interest and action areas that meet the UU Principles and UCU mission and with their efforts, providing other UCU members and friends opportunities to

at-will creatively and actively engage. Activity communication and leadership would be shared among and between the group members.”

New Business:

Bonnie Graham posed questions for future Board consideration: 1) Who has the right to speak for the congregation? 2) How to clarify the message in creating voice of “I, the member” when working in the community?

Meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 18 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom
Executive Team – November 11 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anderson
Board Secretary

Addendum: Practices of Board Leadership 5 from Practices of Board Leadership Workshop by Rev. David Pyle, MidAmerica Regional Assembly, April 18, 2020, # 5 - Planning for the Future

- Strategic Planning is explicitly naming the congregations intentions to fulfill the mission over the short term of 3-5 years
- Long Range Planning is the congregation’s intentions to fulfill the vision over the next 5-25 years

When I was teaching the Five Strategic Board Tasks, I framed this practice as “Strategic Planning”, but I learned from engaging with congregations and leaders over the years that not only was that phrase so overlain with experiences people have from their professional lives, it was one of the primary ways that we were disempowering the Religious Leadership of congregational lay-leaders. And so, while strategic planning techniques may be helpful in fulfilling the Board Leadership Practice of Planning for the Future, the practice itself is much broader than Strategic Planning. Remember, most of the ideas of Strategic Planning that we bring into our congregations come from the corporate world, where the goal that you are trying to achieve is different than the transformation and relationships that we are trying to build in religious community, and bring with them often unacknowledged patterns of white supremacy culture cloaked as “efficiency” and “Professionalism”.

Instead, what I mean by this practice is that it is the role of the congregational Governing Board, having developed a deep understanding of the living mission and vision of the congregation, having a understanding of the sustainable resources of the congregation, having looked closely at the congregation’s ministries and ad ministries and seen what is possible, to then chart a course of the congregation’s future for the continued fulfillment of the congregation’s mission and vision.

I have to admit that, for myself, I have almost become agnostic about how a congregation fulfills this Practice of Board Leadership. I think it is different in every congregation. I have seen some congregations develop highly detailed Strategic Plans that took a task force six months of work and then successfully implement that plan. And I have seen congregations that have just set a few new goals each year, with an idea of a future set of goals they want to achieve a few years out meet those goals and even exceed them. I myself am personally attached to teaching congregations what I call the “3 Year Rolling” strategic planning process as an ongoing aspect of the work of the Board.

So, this practice is more about an attitude than it is about a particular way to do it. There are tons of resources on planning for churches out there, in the Leader Lab and beyond. But this practice is really about a congregational governing Board developing practices that draw its vision towards the future and looks for ways to fulfill the mission and vision of the congregation. So much draws our attention to the present and the past in congregational leadership that it takes intentional effort to look towards the future. The key to this Practice of Board Leadership is that the Board maintains its focus on fulfilling the mission and building the vision of the church and is intentionally planning the steps that will get the congregation and our world there.