

UCU 
Newsletter
January 2022



*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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**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

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
messages, the Sunday "UCU
Weekly" and check:
www.ucofu.org or
www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org

Speakers for January Sunday Services

January 2 – Bob Worner, “The Long Journey.” Bob will refer to the 4th Principle in his talk about how we move through our lives. Our journey is not only from childhood to adulthood, but also from learning to care instead of being indifferent... and more. Our lives keep moving, we can't stop life from moving. We must actively choose our path. The choices we make, make all the difference.



January 9 – Sara Thomsen, “Somewhere to Begin,” a message in song, speaking to the 2nd and 7th principles. For more information about Sara and her work, check out her websites: sarathomsen.com and echoesofpeace.org.

January 16 – To be announced.

January 23 - Charissa Verdoorn, from Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, “Climate Conversation” addressing the 7th Principle. Join us for our Sunday worship and stay afterward for an extended conversation where you're invited to a meaningful conversation about the climate crisis, how to connect to our deepest values and faith, and how we can act as a community. Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light (MNIPL) is an organization working to build the interfaith climate justice movement.



Charissa is the Outreach & Policy Manager at MNIPL. She lives in Minneapolis and works to help people of faith act for climate justice, both within their congregations and as part of state-wide campaigns to influence decision-makers. She loves reading, hiking, and spending time with her husband and cat.

January 30 – The Social Justice Interest Group will do a presentation on **“Reproductive Justice”** using resources provided by Side with Love, LREDA, and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association. **Find more details at: sidewithlove.org/reproductive-justice.**

Tess Galati - In commemoration of the anniversary of Roe v. Wade and the ongoing fight for reproductive health, rights, and justice, join UU congregations across the country for a Sunday of solidarity, support, and reflection. Abortion and reproductive healthcare have long been inaccessible to many communities and our faith compels us to take action for reproductive rights, health, and justice.



Podcasts of these and previous programs are found at:
<https://soundcloud.com/user-927528278> or [click link in Sunday church reports.](#)

The Unitarian Church of Underwood Public
Calendar is available on our website at
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



Search for UCU staff

With an eye toward the future and, considering the changes that have happened in the last year, the UCU Board of Directors directed the Personnel Committee to assess our church needs and hire paid staff (to team with the members of our lay-led church) to meet those needs.

The urgency of this process has become especially apparent with Mary Anderson's recent relocation to the Moorhead community. Besides being our current Board Secretary, Mary has voluntarily provided many long-standing and critical services, including writing our monthly newsletter and chairing our Membership Committee.

Over the last 4 months, the Personnel Committee has solicited input from all parts of the UCU congregation as well as from the UUA community. They found:

- An evolving membership, and the need to provide a robust children's religious education program.
- An increased reliance on electronic communication and the need for virtual services caused by the ongoing pandemic.
- Our ethical need to respond to our society's social and environmental justice crises.

They assembled detailed lists of existing tasks and anticipated activities that were organized into three main areas: Administration/Coordination, Religious Education and Technical Support. However, after discussions with UCU committees and leaders, the Board believes that our members can address our technical support needs with a few small consulting engagements. At its December meeting, the Board approved advertisement of three paid staff positions: [Executive Director](#), [Church Office Assistant](#) and [Religious Education Coordinator](#) (click links for details).

The Board also authorized the Personnel Committee to adjust the position descriptions to flexibly negotiate with applicants to meet our needs. The Board hopes to open the application period in the first quarter of 2022. A special meeting of the UCU congregation may need to be called to authorize a budget modification.

The Board continues to be committed to transparency in this process and is very interested in whatever input members may have. Please contact Board Chair, Norm Kolstad. *Submitted by Norm Kolstad, Board President and Personnel Committee Chair and John Salmen, Board Vice President and Personnel Committee Member.*

Highlights of December 15, 2021, Board Meeting

The Personnel Committee presented announcements truncated from the Position descriptions for job postings/announcements. The Children's Religious Education Planning Group presented a draft position description for a Children's Educator.

Mary Anderson requested and received Board consensus that she, Susan Groff, Ellen Eastby, and Marianne Bryan review the COVID Preparedness Plan and present a re-write of a less restrictive plan for Board approval next month.

Mary Anderson will continue efforts to update and revise the UCU Policy and Procedures Manual.

Ron Roller on behalf of the Technical Support Team under the Communications Committee updated the Board on the progress toward hybrid worship, aka multi-platform readiness.

Amy Beckman, Community Outreach Co-Coordinator reported that the 17 attendees at the Cultural Competency Workshop were very satisfied with the offering. Katy Olson and Marianne Bryan worked together on a drive using \$500 from the SJIG's budget for the Rosebud Soup Kitchen and Allen Youth Circle under the One Spirit organization with Marianne expressing much appreciation.

The UCU Board of Directors approved the Membership Committee's sponsorship of the UU's 4 UU's program (see below).

Ron Roller reported that he, Tere Mann, and Bonnie Graham have revised the process and on-line forms for \$15,000 approved Empowerment Grant Award application process. Further announcements will be made with a submission deadline of February 21, 2022.

Board members will continue their calls to UCU members and friends.

Full approved Board minutes will be published in the February newsletter.

UCU Empowerment Grant Applications

Now Open for 2022-23

Application Deadline February 25, 2022

The Unitarian Church of Underwood has been fortunate to have received many generous donations from our members over the years. The Empowerment Grant Program was developed in 2007 to share this generosity and to encourage church members to develop and engage with projects which have a positive effect on our community at large and demonstrate our church's mission and Unitarian Universalist principles.

Over the years we have granted over \$120,000.00 dollars to local, regional, and international organizations to address several social or environmental issues, including poverty, education, ecology, alternative energy, and nutrition. These projects have been of varying time and scope, and all are initiated by church members.

Empowerment Grants are excellent opportunities for church members to make an impact on issues they feel strongly about in their community. Recent examples of projects are the Forum on Climate Change by Mark Seely, sponsored by the Battle Lake Indivisible Group; North Country Regional Food Shelf: Pine Ridge One Spirit Organization: and the Schools for Shan Refugees Project, to name a few. We have funded over 90 projects over the last 12 years.

We have updated the Empowerment Grant Guidelines and Application process that is stored in Community Outreach/Empowerment Grant folder on the Google Suites drive.

[Empowerment Grant Guidelines:](#)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VC0GIZCZ_xxU_xDsG47AI4CNhFNwRsHU/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110453278634571122727&rtpof=true&sd=true.

You can also find it at <https://ucofu.org/getinvolved.php> on the tab: Grants, U Groups and Celebrants.

All applications must be completed and submitted using the [Online application](https://forms.gle/J3zPiAVtarLRddoh6) (<https://forms.gle/J3zPiAVtarLRddoh6>).

Grant Application Deadline is February 25, 2022.

For Further Information Contact Ron Roller at ron.roller@ucofu.org.

Powerful Questions

by John Salmen



Questions are the path to learning

My service as a member of the Board of Directors of UCU, over the last year, has privileged me in a way to engage with groups in a dialogue that educates and empowers each of us in the efforts of establishing beloved communities.

In a seminar with Rev, David Pyle of UUA Mid-America, the UCU Board and I learned about the process of constructing questions that generate deep responses from the participants.

Subsequently, the UCU Board has spent the first half hour before each of our monthly meetings sharing our thoughts and feelings in a circle conversation about one or two Powerful Questions. This dialogue among the Board members has provided an excellent counterbalance to the way that we democratically run the Board business meetings with Roberts Rules of Order.

A copy of *The Art of Powerful Questions: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation and Action*, by Eric E Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs now resides on the UCU Google Drive for your review at: [this location](#).

The pamphlet explains the potential impact, and how to construct and use powerful questions to help organizations address important issues that they face. The authors contend that:

- “Powerful questions generate curiosity in the listener, stimulate reflective conversation and are thought-provoking.
- Powerful questions bring underlying assumptions to the surface and invite creativity and new possibilities.
- Powerful questions generate energy and forward movement channeling attention and focusing inquiry.
- Powerful questions stay with participants touching a deep meaning and invoking more questions.”

The authors suggest that we need to keep three things in mind as we develop Powerful Questions:

1. How the question is constructed.
2. Matching the scope of the question to the time, place, and participants, and
3. Becoming aware of the assumptions imbedded within the question and using those assumptions appropriately.

The UCU Board learned earlier this year that it is important to illuminate those assumptions as much as possible. We considered a Powerful Question about Covid precautions at our church during a short period, before Delta and Omicron when it looked like Covid was coming under control. Those later developments made our earlier discussion appear naïve.

We have placed a spreadsheet of Powerful Questions on the UCU Google Drive at [this location](#). We invite you to review, consider and submit additional Powerful Questions” to help us all create a more cohesive community.

Note: You will need to login to the UCU google Drive with your UCU email address to access the files listed above, and all the other UCU information that we are compiling there.

“UUs 4 UUs”

Sometimes the only answer people are looking for when they ask for help is that they won't have to face the problem alone.
-Mark Amend

The UCU Board of Directors approved the Membership Committee's sponsorship of the "UU's 4 UU's" program: small construction/maintenance projects that will improve the accessibility and safety of the homes of (elderly) UCU congregation members who want to remain and age safely in their own homes. John Salmen, an expert in residential accessibility, will act as the program Coordinator. He refers to [Rebuilding Together](#) as the inspiration for this idea.

The program will use volunteer UCU members and friends skilled in construction type tasks to implement home improvements for UCU members. There will be no cost to the homeowner outside of materials and supplies.

To learn more about the program, volunteer or request a home improvement project, visit www.ucofu.org.

Intercultural Development and Fluency Workshop

Victoria McWane-Creek of the Organization 4 Full Participation presented a workshop that was attended by 17 members of UCU. The opening exercise was each person sharing *their I Am From* poem to express their cultural and familial roots. The importance of understanding one's values and positions of power was explored as vital to developing intercultural competence.

Through small group discussions and individual exercises, members were able to interrogate their strengths and areas of growth when dealing with cultural differences. Strategies for engaging in constructive dialogues were also explored. Humans are hardwired for conflict, but by recognizing the difference between discomfort and danger, deep and meaningful connections can be established in many situations. Obtaining consent, establishing guidelines, attentive listening, and being inquisitive are all necessary parts of effective communication.

Learning more about connecting across cultural differences, whether gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, religion, political beliefs, or others, is an important, ongoing strategy in an increasingly diverse world and this was a great beginning.

Note: Social Justice Interest Group Meetings will take place on Jan 2 and 16 following Sunday service in one of the breakout rooms. Submitted by Amy Beckman, Community Outreach Co-Coordinator

Stay Informed & Connected

Commented [ma1]:

U Group Zoom Meetings 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: **Last Wednesday @ 6:30 p.m.** Facilitator: Mary Worner

You are welcome to join a U Group – see Zoom links on the church calendar.

For details or questions, Contact U Group Coordinator, Luce Reese @ lucereese@gmail.com or 218/495-2449

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: [Ellen Eastby](#)

[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.

Need help with Zoom?

Email: techhelp@ucofu.org

UCU Weekly

(Designed and written by Ellen Eastby)

If there is something you would like to appear in The UCU Weekly, please send an email to the attention of Ellen at newseditor@ucofu.org by the Friday before the publication comes out. Please have the article written in its entirety using no more than 175 words.

As appropriate, some will be forwarded for inclusion @ www.ucofu.org and [Facebook Page](#).

Watch for these and other

ucofu@ucofu.org email messages.

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

[UCU Members and Friends calendar](#)

Website Administrator: [Bonnie Graham](#)

Facebook Administrator: [Melody Shores](#)

Gifts in Gratitude

To Contribute to UCU:

Use the electronic application

[Givelify @ucofu.org](https://givelify.com)

or

Sign up for automatic funds transfer*

or

Mail your check to:

Unitarian Church of Underwood

PO Box 58

Underwood, MN 56586

***(For AFT form, contact**

newseditor@ucofu.org)

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.

Adult Religious Education Comments from Wellspring Participants



Wellspring is a spiritual deepening course for Unitarian Universalists. We have about 10 participants and meet for a two-hour session every other week. We read, view, and respond to pre-session assignments that are focused on spiritual topics and UU Theology and engage in bi-weekly “heart-opening” sessions.

Following are some quotes from some of our participants about Wellspring.

From a participant and healthcare professional:

“So many of the things I read about keeping the aging brain healthy suggest that we should continue to learn new things and engage with folks in stimulating discussions. I would say this class helps with both of those concerns. I am finding the materials we are given to prepare for the sessions are very interesting and the group discussions are most engaging.”

From Katy Olson, co-facilitator:

“I am thoroughly enjoying the development of this circle of trust. Engaging in what it means to engage with our Unitarian Universalist faith formation and what it calls us to do in the world is pertinent and potent in these times. Past and present UU's have all struggled with how to answer the call of social justice in response to social inequities. I gain strength to join them in the fight to create a more just and equitable world.”

From an anonymous participant:

“I like the potential to figure out, via inner work, our community, our place in the universe. I'm liking it that there are similar interests of Wellspring participants about who we are and how we live out our lives, making the most of them according to our individual and unique truths. I really like the wisdom of Parker Palmer's idea of pursuing that undivided life.”

From Kelly Barrett, participant:

“I have enjoyed a number of aspects of UU Wellspring. My favorite might be captured simply as being in community. I appreciated the sharing of people's spiritual journeys. Even more so I appreciate the check-in process where people share how their lives are going, what's in their hearts. The willingness to be vulnerable and open with one another seems to me to be a precious gift.”

There will be an opportunity for others to participate in this experience with new session starting next fall. *Submitted by Mary Worner, Program Coordinator*

Recipe for a Picnic

By Kelly Barrett



Today's menu was simple. We had wild rice brats on buns, and potato chips. A little thermos of coffee, a jug of water, and you're good to go.

There have been years of Christmas tree and other winter picnics. We used to gather up as a family with our kids, Ross's mom, and his brother's family. Usually there were at least a couple of dogs. Bev favored wrapping bacon around hot dogs, and she made marvelous deserts to share. Ross' brother liked to bring his caramel rolls fresh from the oven, served as an appetizer with coffee.

But things change. The kids are all grown and off on their own. Bev passed years back. And the brothers have parted ways. We lost our old dog in October and haven't looked for a pup yet. So, it was just the two of us this year.

And yesterday was hard. I reached the conclusion it was time to put down an old horse that has been struggling for a while now. "Old horse" doesn't adequately describe her. Bugz was a treasured friend. A big pet, both my girls rode her. She was with us 20 years and is now buried on the farm. Her pasture mate calls for her yet today. That may go on a while.

The man who brought his backhoe so we could bury Bugz was having a tough time. His wife died around Thanksgiving, 9 years ago now. He misses her still. Probably more so this time of year. We visited for a couple hours, often through his tears. He told us of his abusive father, how his wife had helped him deal with his issues, how he could never possibly have deserved her. Again and again, in many ways, he told us how he loved his wife. When he left, Ross said, "there goes a lonely man". It gives you pause to see such grief and think about what it is you take for granted.

So, the Yin and Yang of the holidays. We found a nice tree and had a simple picnic. Not much of a menu, but some key ingredients were there.

It goes something like this: To a mild winter day, add full measures of love and gratitude. Look to the sky and give thanks for the one who holds your hand on good days and bad. The quiet woodsman who navigates the back roads, cuts the tree, makes ready the camp. He brings a shovel to clear a spot in the snow; a chair on which one might sit a spell and watch the fire. He finds for you a place amongst the pine, out of the wind yet touched by the sun. He shares with you his simple, peaceful ways.

Listen as the breeze sings overhead amidst the trees, the raven chortles, and chickadees troop on through. Stir the fire again as we reflect on lives lived, lives lost. How we wish our friends stayed forever. But we all grow a bit gray in the face. And realize though the sands of time can't be halted, friendship is timeless. Love is forever. Love is.

Love from Kelly Barrett, Talmoon MN

The World's Oldest Yule Recipe? From Steven Posch who spoke on December 19, 2021

"Have You Spoken to the Sun Lately?"



This is my personal version of what might just possibly be the oldest Yule recipe of all. In one form or another, this dish is ritually served literally Europe-wide—from Ireland to Armenia, from Russia to Sicily—and virtually always at some occasion constellated around the Winter Solstice (Christmas, New Year's, Epiphany, St. Barbara's Day...).

The form that it takes is simple: whole grains (wheat, barley, rice) boiled in liquid (milk, water, almond milk), sweetened with honey, enriched with nuts and/or dried fruits. In Poland, it's said to date from the time "before there were mills to grind the grain." Ancestral to England's plum pudding (*frumenty*, as it was called, was an invariable part of the medieval English Yule-board), the origin of Scandinavia's Yuletide rice puddings, the recipe surely dates back to—if not precedes—the advent of agriculture.

Remember that the ancestors didn't get sweets very often, and probably reserved them for the highest of holidays (such as the Winter Solstice, a date of major significance to agricultural communities virtually everywhere). Then the standard boiled-grain pottage that everyone ate everyday would be embellished with a hoarded lump of honeycomb in honor of the occasion. Bear in mind also that virtually everywhere religious ritual tends to preserve archaic cultural forms that have otherwise died out in everyday usage.

So it's more than possible—likely even—that this dish dates back to Neolithic times, perhaps to the very discovery of cereal agriculture itself, more than 11,000 years ago.

Below is the version that my coven serves on Midwinter's Eve, based originally on a Russian recipe. It's the first dish in our thirteen-course Yule feast (one course for each moon of the coming year). By the light of a lone beeswax taper thrust into the middle of the *kutya* (literally, "cooked"; that's how primal this dish is), we ritually renew our familial solidarity by together eating from the shared central bowl, just as our ancestors did more than ten thousand years ago.

Kutyá: Yule Wheat

1 cup wheat berries (for a truly ancestral taste, try using spelt or einkorn)
2 cups blanched almonds
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup whole blue poppy seeds
honey to taste
1 tablespoon rose water

Soak wheat berries overnight in water to cover. In a separate bowl, soak 1½ cups of the almonds in 3 cups of water, also overnight.

Next day, puree the soaked almonds with their soaking water. Add 3 more cups of water to the puree and strain through a cloth, wringing well to extract as much almond milk as possible (I use an old pillowcase). Discard almond pulp.

In a non-reactive pan, bring drained wheat berries and almond milk to a simmer. Lower heat and continue cooking until wheat berries become tender (this is likely to take 2-3 hours, depending on the age and variety of the wheat berries). You'll need to stir frequently (sunwise only, please!), especially towards the end of the cooking as the almond milk thickens. When the wheat berries are tooth-tender, add poppy seeds and salt, and cook 15-20 minutes more. Add more water as necessary.

During the cooking, dry roast the remaining ½ cup almonds until golden brown, either in a skillet (stirring constantly) or in a 325° oven; this will take approximately 5 to 7 minutes.

Sweeten the kutya with honey to taste and stir in rose water. Turn out into serving bowl, and garnish with dry-roasted almonds. Serve hot, room temperature, or chilled.

Serves 13. (Of course.)

Living Out Our UU Principles

To Supporters of Schools for Shan Refugees

*Submitted by Mary Worner,
SSR Board Member*

Here is a part of a recent email from Aom Phon, a Shan Youth Power member in Thailand, about the migrant camps we support.

“COVID-19 is still spreading in Thailand now. In October and November, there were high infected numbers with migrant workers in Chiang Mai. So, our school was still closed because they didn't allow people from outside to get into the construction site. I tried to set up an online class for them to learn with a volunteer teacher, but it didn't work for long term.

We visited our students one or twice per month to follow up on their lives and regularly bring them masks and sanitizing wipes. Some families lost their work, and most people can work for some day a week. I contacted some of the organizations to cooperate and donate some basic needs such as foods and medicines to migrant workers in the camps. Most of them are willing to cooperate and donate rice, oil, fish cans, dry fish, and eggs.

This year most of the budget will be used on transportation to carry the donated things to migrant workers in the camp and buy the masks, sanitizing wipes and medicines. *(Bernice said transportation is expensive.)*

However, the COVID-19's situation seemed to get better in December. We plan to start activities this month and if the situation goes well, we will start our class in camp again. Moreover, many migrant workers have been vaccinated. I hope everything will be Ok soon.”

From Mary Worner: Bernice has announced that she is "retiring" from SSR at the end of 2022. The board is reorganizing, each of us taking on some of the work that Bernice did.

Yvonna Garcia, retired lawyer, from California, who visited the UCU a couple of years ago with Bernice, has committed to spending the winter months in Chaing Mai and monitor the SSR work. Also, Josh, who was Bernice's banker and a long-time board member who has visited the camps several times, married his girlfriend who lives in Chaing Mai. They plan to divide their time between Chaing Mai and Minneapolis. My new job is treasurer of SSR.

We did not hold in-person fundraisers this year, either in Minneapolis or here, because of Covid - so this is it. If you would still like to contribute to SSR in 2021 you can do so on-line with PayPal at <http://shanrefugeeschools.org/>, or send me a check made out to School for Shan Refugees. If you donate on-line be sure you are on the website with the above address; there are others that look similar.

We have contributions of \$18,500 so far this year with a goal of \$20,000.



Hopefully, we will gather in person next year.

Mary Worner
218-282-6557
SSR Board Member

Editor's Note: Bernice's oldest son, Bryan Johnson died unexpectedly In December 2021. Both her sons, Bryan and Brent supported Bernice wholeheartedly in her work with the Shan refugees. Pictured is Bryan with Bernice visiting the schools because Bryan "wanted to help repair the school floor. He too loved the children."

Gifts to One Spirit Sponsored Organizations

"In thinking about Christmas and the List of Needs that Marianne Bryan shared from One Spirit I was inspired to do something! I knew that we had quite a lot of budget left in the SJIG pool, so I asked the group if we could donate gifts to Pine Ridge. After receiving an enthusiastic YES from the group, I joined Marianne on zoom to do some shopping. We sent \$500.00 of gifts for all ages, coloring books, dolls, purses, light boards, puzzles, and games. Cedar went through her house and donated a lot of stuffed animals and puzzles and books, which Betsy Wells generously shipped for her. I did the same for all the kid stuff at my house. It was a good effort for this time when we were tight for time. Next year I want to start earlier and shop local and make our money go further. Thank you to everyone who helped and contributed!" *Katy Olson*



To give at any time, see: <https://www.onespiritlakota.org/direct-needs-donation>. (Photo Credit: Aaron Burden @ Unsplash)

Mutual aid is a corrective for an individualistic culture **by Tressie McMillan Cottom**

Katy Olson shared this article from the New York Times. For the full article, see [Times Opinion's Holiday Giving Guide 2021](#). Here are extracted highlights:

This holiday season, I am thinking a lot about the difference between charity and mutual aid. Perhaps it's something about the pandemic that has made me crave social connection. Or perhaps I am returning to my roots. My family was not wealthy, or even solidly middle class, for most of my childhood. But we had a big appetite for giving to people.

My great-great-grandfather offered small loans to his rural Black community long before banks would lend to Black people. For my parents and their siblings, it looked like taking people into our homes when they needed it, feeding people when we noticed someone skipping meals and giving away a car when someone was struggling to get to work. My great-grandmother was fond of reminding all of her children and their children of the two rules of giving: Always give better than you would buy for yourself, and never call attention to your giving. It was implied that doing so for others — giving your best and affording people their dignity — would mean that when our time came to be on the receiving end of someone's giving, they would afford us the same. This reciprocity is what distinguishes mutual aid from other types of giving. ...

There are a lot of reasons for this, but I believe there is one in particular on which we should meditate this year: Lower-income people give more because the giving establishes a culture of reciprocity, one that not only meets material needs but also builds the political power and social connections that makes them more resilient.

... In concrete terms, mutual aid looks like members of a community sussing out what another member needs — through conversations held over a text or email chain, in an online social media group, during a kaffeeklatsch in the park — and then learning how best to meet that need by collaborating with that community member....

Mutual aid encourages relationships among people, whereas philanthropy builds ties between people and organizations. They may both be useful amid a patchwork of care. But mutual aid has the added benefit of expanding a community's capacity to build more ways to give.

... Mutual aid reflects one of my most deeply held beliefs: that every big political problem is rooted in our everyday lives. When our nation-states fail us, it is because we have already failed one another. Mutual aid is a corrective for our culture's competitive individualization, which has isolated us from one another. Connecting with your neighbors to solve a real, immediate problem for someone you might bump into while you're out walking the dog or doing errands is ultimately a gift to yourself....

We Are Part of the Larger UU



Save the date for the virtual MidAmerica Regional Assembly set for Saturday, April 30th, 2022, 10am - 2pm ET/9am - 1pm CT. CB Beal will speak, we will hold our Annual Business Meeting, and there will be time for break out rooms for connection and conversation. Mark your calendars! Registration opens January 21, 2022. See details at [MidAmerica Regional Assembly | MidAmerica Region | UUA.org](https://uua.org/midamerica/ra).

Unitarian Church of Underwood Board Minutes November 17, 2021

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

Guests: Cedar Walters, Katy Olson, Jon Solinger.

Thirty-minute circle discussion of powerful questions:

1. What new fact have you learned recently that has stuck with you?
2. How important is spirituality to you as a UCU board member?

The Board meeting was called to order by President Norman Kolstad at 6:28 p.m. with reference to the words of the Covenant of Guiding Values and Land Acknowledgement.

The Board agenda was approved with the reminder that the Family Planning group would be joining the meeting at 7 p.m. (John Salmen/Marianne Bryan).

The Board minutes of October 20, 2021 were approved as submitted (John Salmen/Ron Roller).

Financial Report: Treasurer Ron Roller gave the financial reports. The Profit/Loss statement shows no surprises. Both collections and expenses have slowed. Sverdrup Suites income remains predictable. Investments continue to do well. For details see the financial reports submitted by Tere Mann or contact Ron with questions.

Administrator's Report: Bonnie Graham, Congregational Administrator reported that she had completed the UUA survey and learned how to add documents to the website. She further reported that church groups are starting to meet and thinking of the future. She has been part of the Family Planning group that she finds vibrant and full of ideas, seeing this as a growth opportunity. She will be attending the UUA Compass workshop December 11-12. She plans to call a meeting of the Sunday Service Coordination Committee to discuss copyright and licensing and what is needed for order of service changes for hybrid worship. She reported that the Speakers Committee would like to continue to have remote speakers. (The full report is at the end of the minutes as Addendum A.)

Personnel Committee: The Personnel Committee has invited Board members and others to review the draft position descriptions under consideration along with the draft job announcements. The intent is to find job applicants with skills and qualifications adaptable to flexibility between the job descriptions. Ron Roller reported that members of the technical support team have met and determined that hybrid worship may or may not require hired staff outside the existing volunteers. The Family Planning Group will be determining the job responsibilities for a Religious Education Coordinator. Reviewers are asked to respond with their comments or questions to the Personnel Committee by November 30th so that final position descriptions may be submitted to the Board at the December meeting. Because of the impending proposed budget increase for staff hiring, there will need to be a special congregational meeting for budget increase approval prior to the April annual meeting.

Family Planning Group Report: Cedar Walters, Katy Olson, Jon Solinger joined the meeting. They along with Mary Worner, Program Coordinator and Bonnie Graham, Congregational Administrator planned the fall monthly family outside activities. Further, they have developed the vision and mission objectives for an invigorated UCU Children's Religious Education program. After their presentation, the group asked 3 questions of the Board: 1) What do you want? 2) Who do you want to serve? 3) What difference will it make in the world? Board members expressed support for the direction of the Planning Group. (See the full proposal at the end of the minutes as Addendum B.)

Personnel Committee continued their report with Ron Roller's research and estimation of proposed staff costs based on UUA's General Estimated Pay Scale using the mid-range. The combination of hours between 3-4 part-time staff equals that of about one full-time position somewhere in the \$34,000+/year range meaning at least a \$27,000 increase to the annual budget. Further research will be done before presenting this to a special meeting of the membership.

Facilities Report: Norm Kolstad relayed information from Susan Groff on needed repairs and refurbishment of Suite 100 that will total close to the \$2000 budgeted for Sverdrup Suites this year.

Safety Report:

The Family Planning Group proposed a modification to the UCU COVID protocol with the amendment to change “require” to: “Masks are strongly encouraged for outdoor gatherings of any size in counties where transmission is Very High or Severe (per the COVID Act now data) (Mary Worner/Wally Warhol).

Because the media reports that Minnesota is leading the nation in new COVID cases and Otter Tail County shows high numbers, the Board will continue to review COVID status at each monthly meeting. For now, it was decided that 1) Christmas Eve service will be offered through Zoom only and that 2) there should be no church sponsored small group in-person meetings inside.

Membership Committee: Based on the amended bylaws on the definition of a UCU member, the Membership Committee recommends certification of 100 members (Mary Anderson/John Salmen). At the next Board meeting, the Membership Committee and John Salmen will present their proposal for helping elders remain safely in their homes. Board members are continuing their phone calls to members with some good conversations.

Communications Report: Ron Roller reported that Amy Beckman, Melody Shores, Bonnie Graham, Wally Warhol, and Ron met to discuss what is wanted/needed to technically support a hybrid, multi-platform model worship service. They did an inventory of current equipment to determine what is compatible/ useable when/if adding enhanced equipment. They will continue to meet with the idea of streaming services with interaction between attendees virtually and in person.

Community Outreach: Amy Beckman, Co-Coordinator reported that the IDI workshop will be held December 11 from 9 a.m. – 12. The Social Justice Interest Group is considering the UUA Common read. The Group has a standing meeting on the 1st and 3rd Sundays during an after-service breakout room.

There was no unfinished business.

There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Next meetings: Officer Team December 8, 2021 @ 6 p.m.

Board Meeting December 15, 2021 @ 6 p.m.

Addendum A: November Administrator’s Report

Bonnie Graham
Congregational Administrator

Completed:

Responded to survey request from UUA - no results available.

Learned how to add documents to the website. Check!

Info to pass along to the Board:

After months of a routine, it seems like there is new energy, and people are becoming more active.

Children's and Youth RE Planning group is a vibrant group that is excited about what they are accomplishing. They have planned events for families and are seeing great turnout. They are creative, are a great team, and have a vision for what they would like to see in the future. They put in time and effort - and the result is a mission/vision for religious education that they will discuss with the Board. They will continue to work toward hiring a staff person. My role is to help with communication - and to seek out resources at the MidAmerica Region UUA and at LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Assoc.)

Principles Workshop in January

Talking to the Speakers Committee and Ellen Eastby, we will create a workshop on the UU Principles in January, following the holidays. Ellen is giving the Message at the Dec. 5 Sunday Service, there is a UUA event: Compass, Navigating the Paths to Liberation Together <https://www.uua.org/leadership/events/compass>. We will share how the UUA is looking at the Principles and how they are thinking about possibly changing them in the near future. UCU Community will have the opportunity to learn and give feedback.

Need to meet with the Sunday Coordinating Committee

Questions about worship themes over the year - whether they want to have some pattern emerge.

Questions about worship service when meeting in person, how that format will change.

Questions about how to handle copyright issues.

Met with Tech Group

Questions I'm working on following that meeting:

1. Photographing people in the service - what needs to be considered from a safety perspective, especially children.
Plan to ask Safety Committee.
2. Copyright licensing requirements needed when streaming a full service.
Plan to see how the licensing services work to cover music in the hymnals, and music shared by musicians
- on UUA website
- from other small congregations - find out their procedures and considerations.

Speakers Committee says they would like to continue to have the opportunity to have remote speakers.

Children and Youth Planning Group meets with the UCU Board 11/17/21.

Addendum B. Children's and Youth RE Planning Committee Proposal Presented to Board of Directors 11/17/2021

DRAFT VISION STATEMENT:

A vibrant religious community where all children and youth are welcome.

DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide an inclusive and inspiring place where children and youth participate in their own faith creation in an intergenerational church setting.

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

Integrate children and youth from different schools, cultures, ages.

Opportunities for children and youth to participate in Sunday services.

Intergenerational participation that supports the RE program through mentoring, volunteering, and modeling UU principles.

Communication with the larger community - outreach and promotion, invitation.

Involvement in congregational social justice initiatives.

Age-appropriate spiritual development through RE curriculum and engagement in our UU community.

Mary Warner - Conversations with UU Families

In September I phoned each family with children or youth in their households and some of the past volunteers, asked each person the same three questions, and noted their responses. The features of religious education that several families mentioned as important were structure, consistency, behavior management, and support of the board and congregation.

When talking about structuring events they are looking for a good balance between not too much and not too little. They see a need for consistency in programming on the part of UCU and support from the families involved. Behavior needs to be managed by the adults and the children themselves to provide a comfortable environment for all children of all ages. The volunteers have felt a need for more support from the board and the congregation.

We do have space, some volunteers, good curriculum resources, and professional guidance from our UCU Administrator. There are about 10 children, ages 3 to 11, and their families presently participating.

The Family RE Planning Committee members are Bonnie Guyer Graham, Barbara Honer, Katy Olson, Jon Solinger, Cedar Walters, and me. I have been facilitating the group as Program Coordinator.

Jon Solinger - Ideas from Nancy Combs Morgan

- 1) Education, UU heritage & values – love, hope, joy, courage.
- 2) Not just intellectual but welcome to the church community; faith formation relational, experimental, and values oriented.
- 3) Place to be inspired and to share relationships, experiences, UU principles.

Katy Olson - From Starting to Parting

Step One:

You view your religious education and music programs as essential ministries that support the overall mission and health of your congregation.

Think Big: Your Congregation's Values and Mission

Support for the Search Process - UUA SUPPORT resources

Timeline - Choosing professional leadership is not a decision to be made in haste, so allow enough time for a thoughtful search.

Prepare for the Search- Clarify roles and responsibilities.

Clarify or recommit to your vision- for the religious education program

Search and Select • Advertise the position.

Finalize • Choose the final candidate.

The Role of the Board: The official hire comes from the BOD

The Role of the Personnel Committee - general matters of process and policy

The Role of the Personnel Committee - Diverse perspectives and identities are valuable

Budget - What do we want vs what can we afford? Are they in conflict or congruent?

New Position/Religious Education Position Titles

Cedar Walters - Reports of RE Gatherings

September - 10 kids, 10-12 adults

Outing to Maplewood with circle time, a hike, and visiting a secret gnome village.

October - 10 kids, 9-10 adults

Outing to Prairie Wetlands Learning Center with circle time, exploring the prairie, and a scavenger hunt and snack.

Bonnie Guyer Graham - Nancy Combs-Morgan, MidAmerica UUA Consultant ready to help with search

[Nancy Combs-Morgan](#) would be able to help work with the church on the search process for a UCU religious educator. And act as a support for a new hire, connecting the person to other religious educators, training and mentorship opportunities.

A message from [Nancy Combs-Morgan](#):

"This is so wonderful. Am excited that you all are moving forward [with a plan to hire a religious educator] in such an intentional way.

In the short term, I am the regional consultant to work with you all in terms of preparing for a DRE search.

On a regional level we do support and welcome new religious educators and plug them into ongoing continuing education opportunities. Such as right now, I am co-leading a "New DRE: Settling In" national series through the UU Leadership Institute.