

UCU Newsletter October 2021



UCU all "spiffed up," thanks to
Ron Graham & Susan Groff.

*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.*

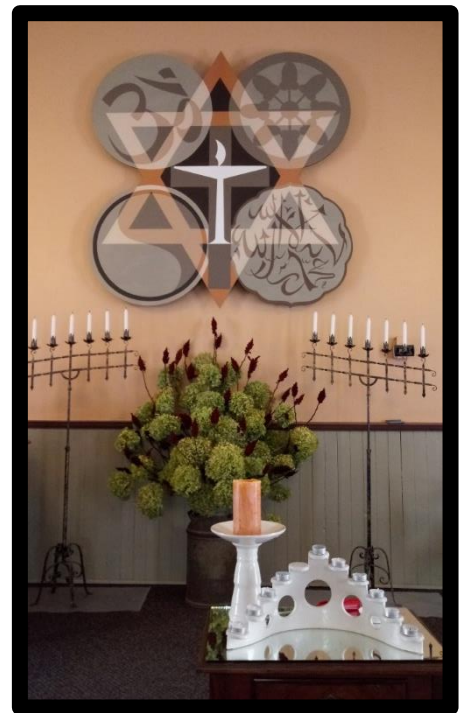
Unitarian Church of Underwood

PO Box 58, 206 North Main Street
Underwood, MN 56537

Phone: 218/826-6553

Website: www.ucofu.org

www.facebook.com/www.ucofu.org



**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 October Sunday Services

Oct. 3 "Reflections of 'Beloved Conversations': What We Learned."

UCU sent six members to participate in the "Beloved Conversations" course – a program that helps UUs who are seeking to embody racial justice in their lives. They will share some of the things that really made an impression on them, and participate in after service discussions to discuss, demonstrate and respond to questions.

Oct. 10 Nancy Combs-Morgan, "A Whole Community Vision"

This time of COVID19 has brought greater focus of what is truly central and essential in congregational life. Curiously, the challenge of pandemic adaptation also provides a deeper opportunity to go deeper to find that which is central in your community. The role of narrative and centering UU values will help to inform a whole community vision of Unitarian Universalist faith development. We will endeavor for this worship service to look up and out at that broader horizon.



Nancy Combs-Morgan has been serving as a Congregational Life Consultant in the MidAmerica Region for 18 years with a focus in faith development.

Nancy will invite us to share stories of a time and way we have grown in our UU faith. What was the experience? What were the circumstances? Was there long-lasting impact? How so?



Oct. 17 - "Fertile Soil, Deep Roots, Many Branches: Social Justice in UU Identity" with Karen Wills, MUUSJA Director.

The Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance, networks 30 congregations in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, with community partners. We lift leadership and followership of every UU in this region, link with UUA organizing resources, resist exploitation and oppression of all sorts and reach towards beloved community. We believe there are many ways to belong in this movement, and to make a difference. Our whole lives -- our identities, relationships, and purpose -- not just particular causes or projects -- are why and how we organize. Karen will present information about this model, how MUUSJA interfaces with congregations, partners, and UUA national organizing, and give an overview of current initiatives, followed by a chance to chat about how our UU social justice ministry has and will play out locally.

Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) builds capacity for justice work: We help Unitarian Universalists do powerful, sustainable, accountable, spiritually rooted work.

Here's a fun intro from Karen Wills:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/xmwjhczip8i4vvux/Video%20Sep%2028%2C%2010%2049%2031%20AM.mov?dl=0>

Karen (she/her) is a “born and bred” Unitarian Universalist who has led MUUSJA since January 2020. She had previously volunteered as a religious education teacher, high school youth advisor, and facilitator of adult/parenting curricula, and a leader in UU faith development, social action, and racial justice committees. Currently a member of both Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship in Bloomington and First Universalist in Minneapolis, Karen has attended 13 different UU congregations. Her mother (Bonnie Wills) was a UU organizer, and her fathers (Frank Wills and Arthur Pike) were gay rights activists. Her ancestors were Scots Irish, Dutch, Welsh, and French-Canadian laborers, servants, farmers, and tradespeople.

Oct. 24 – "Women of Islam" with Memoona Ghani's whose day job is as a business analyst at Ameriprise Financial. But most of her nights and weekends are dedicated to serving the community. She leads the IMPACT volunteer initiative for Qabeelat Madinatayn (the MN chapter of the AlMaghrib Institute). IMPACT is a community-based initiative that helps the AlMaghrib student body put knowledge into action by volunteering for different causes such as for homeless shelters, food drives, food shelves, elderly services, and highway cleanup. She is also part of the Speakers Bureau for the Islamic Resource Group and has given many presentations using IRG's model. Her passion is breaking stereotypes and myths about Islam and Muslims through blogging. Her favorite topic to blog about is Muslim female leaders and their positive role in the community. She also serves on the board for RISE (Reviving Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment).



Oct. 31 – Plan in process – details to be announced.

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

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)**



You're invited and encouraged to help lead UCU's Sunday Services on Zoom. How? Be the Chalice Lighter or act behind the scenes as the Zoom Host. Signing up to help is easy: find the [click here](#) in the Weekly to add your name to the participant list. You will receive an email reminder 3 days before your volunteer date. Thank you for helping to create our congregation's Sunday Service.

Church Happenings

Message from Board President, Norm Kolstad



"The great gift and witness of the Unitarian-Universalist tradition is and has been that they engage without fear the theological issues of the day. Servetus was one of the great pioneers of that tradition and the Unitarians keep the torch of theological learning alive at the congregational level." ~John Shelby Spong

The world lost a progressive religious leader when Episcopal Church Bishop John Shelby Spong died in September at the age of 90. He was the author of dozens of books, one of which was the subject of our UCU book study group a few years ago, led by Bob Worner. We had many interesting discussions as we parsed the pages of this pioneering theologian. Eventually, I read a couple more of his books and subscribed to an online forum, Progressing Spirit in which he answered questions about religion.

Bishop Spong championed the inclusion of women and LGBTQ people in the clergy. In the 1970's, he made national headlines when his diocese became one of the first to ordain women to the priesthood. In 1989, he ordained the first openly gay man to the Episcopal priesthood, for which he was censured by the church's House of Bishops. After retiring as bishop in 2000, he delivered more than 175 speeches a year, preaching a message of love and justice.

As a theologian, he was known for questioning some of Christianity's fundamental doctrines, including the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus and the existence of miracles. Those views infuriated Christian leaders who labeled him a heretic, although he was part of a long tradition of theologians who argued that taking the Bible literally was to miss the truth behind its teachings.

*

The following are some of his quotes from the Progressing Spirit newsletter:

"I have great admiration for the Unitarian-Universalist tradition. They bring an intellectual openness to theological discussions that I admire. Their commitment to social justice seems to me to be the deepest of any religious tradition."

"Perhaps God is the journey and not the destination."

"I do not believe that Jesus died for my sins, nor am I attracted to that guilt producing, God destroying kind of pious rhetoric."

"The great tragedy of the church has been that by clinging to biblical literalism to the point of profound ignorance, we have made it possible for people ...[to assume] that there is a single biblical point of view. There isn't."

"Biblical literalism is a fatally weak reed upon which to base a claim of religious authority."

"Why anyone thinks there is such a thing as the 'true faith,' the 'orthodox position' or the 'final truth' in a set of doctrines and dogmas sets my teeth on edge. Such talk has done nothing except turn the concept of God into a human idol."

"For me it is simple: the dictionary definition of the word 'atheist' is wrong. An atheist is not literally one who says there is no God. An atheist is one who says there is no God who can be defined in theistic terms! That is a crucial difference."

"I view history, not just as the passing of time, but also as the unfolding of consciousness. Consciousness rises in different places at different times and in different circumstances. Human beings are today largely embarrassed at the way we once treated people of color, women, homosexual people, Jews and members of religions different from our own. Consciousness does not move backwards. No society re-enslaves those who have been set free, nor does it re-segregate those who have now broken that barrier. No society takes away the woman's right to vote, to be educated, to enter the professions, or to control her own reproductive processes once those rights have been extended. No society ever forces back into their closets of anonymity those who have come out of those closets."

"What people tend to call 'traditional Christianity' is, in fact, a fourth-century creation imposed on the original Jesus story. It would have been quite foreign to Jesus, and it has become quite foreign to the world we inhabit today.".... Unbelievable by John Shelby Spong

And finally, "I have great admiration for the Unitarian-Universalist Church. ...When I taught at Harvard Divinity School in 2000, several of my pre-ordination students were Unitarians. I think that all but one of them are now pastors in Unitarian-Universalist's churches today."

I believe UU's have lost a kindred spirit in John Shelby Spong. We should mourn his passing and remember him.

**The Washington Post's obituary*

Highlights of September 18, 2021 Board Meeting

(Full minutes will be published in the November Newsletter)

Thirty (30) minutes were spent dialoguing the question, "What do you assume the members and/or friends think of as the purposes of UCU?"

Approved proposal to address "When Hate Comes to Town." (Full plan will be included in the Board minutes published in the November newsletter.)

Treasurer, Ron Roller reported that the church is doing reasonably well financially considering income and expenses are lower with rentals from Sverdrup Suites remaining steady,

Norm Kolstad, Personnel Committee Chair reported that there is need for a comprehensive review of volunteer capacity and early assessments show that 2-3 staff may be required: a church administrator, clerical support, and technical support that could include website and google suite administration. Leadership input will be solicited. The Personnel Committees recommendation to extend the terms of employment for the Congregational Administrator to January 31, 2022, was approved.

UUA's recommendations on COVID precautions was added as an addendum to UCU's COVID Preparedness Plan. Masks will be required inside, and small groups as well should follow mask wearing and inside ventilation requirements. If meeting in the church, meeting groups are reminded to inform Susan Groff, Janitor. (The full plan will be included in the minutes published in the November newsletter.)

Program Coordinator, Mary Worner reported that families will be invited to gather the 3rd Sunday from 1-3:30 p.m. September-December to focus on rebuilding relationship between children, leaders, and families.

Attendees from the Beloved Conversations offerings will do a presentation October 3 that may be a model for training/workshop participants to share their learnings with the congregation.

There was little feedback on the Board members' review of the 2018-23 Strategic Plan with the 2021-22 Annual Goals and Objectives.

The Board reviewed the powerful questions dialogue process and determined that 1) this process was intended for board members to get to know each other for the purposes of board development and decision making, 2) the process will be continued for the next 3 meetings but held prior to the call to order of the Board and the notes will not be included in the Board minutes.

The next Board meeting is October 20, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m. The Zoom link for these open meetings is on the church calendar. The October Powerful Question will be "How do you think the UCU can make a difference in people's lives?"

Stay Informed & Connected

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 @

luce Reese@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](mailto:Givelify@ucofu.org)

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.



To acknowledge just some of the UCU Volunteers this past month(s), thank you to:

Susan Groff and **Ron Graham** for their work to “spiff up” the church in readiness for the Underwood Harvest Festival as it sets as anchor at the north end of Underwood’s main street. Ron pressured washed the exterior while Susan pulled weeds, cleared cobwebs, and did other chores to make the church stand pretty.

Deb Wallwork who submitted the application for an Empowerment Grant for the Nibi Walk and then worked closely with the walk organizers to provide such a successful event giving thanks to our water and waterways. And thanks to all those from UCU who walked the walk! (See description of the event experience below.)

Betsy Wells as Chair and Speaker Committee Members, Alison Francis, Amy Beckman, Diane Johnson) for continuing to find and provide UCU with such interesting and inspiring services 52 Sundays of the year!

Mary Worner Program Coordinator for working with volunteers to lead Adult Religious Education, U Groups, and families with children seeking a sustaining and fulfilling Children’s Religious Education Program. And thanks to the **RE leaders** for volunteering their time and talents!

Our Sunday service **Technical Support Team** making “Zooming” easy; our **Sunday service leaders** for guiding us through the order of service, selecting meaningful readings for our reflections, and keeping all on track and on schedule; our **musicians** with their instrumentals and lyrics to bring us joy, a tapping foot, and the desire to sing along and aloud.

John Salmen for bringing to the attention of the Board, a land acknowledgement statement so that *“We acknowledge the people upon who’s shoulders we stand to be here and give thanks to those who have cared for this land of the Mdewakanton, upon which we live and gather here today.”*

The **Personnel Committee (Norm Kolstad, Chair; Mary Anderson, Ron Roller & John Salmen)** as they work through the process to identify UCU volunteer capacity and need for hires. And to all those assisting them with this effort!

The **Social and Environmental Justice Interest Groups** for bringing awareness, education, and opportunities to participate in action! As they build the fall and winter agenda, watch for further announcements.

Kris Warhol for her continued weekly mailings to keep connections with the children of UCU.

To **all those** who continuously contribute financially, through volunteering, and other acts of participation to maintain and sustain the Unitarian Church of Underwood. Thank you!!

Please send your recognitions of appreciation to this newsletter to include as a thank you from the congregation and/or give your own words of appreciation via a note, an email, or a phone call to those persons to whom you are grateful. Those expressions will need to suffice for the smiles of welcome, hugs, and pats on the backs that we would ordinarily give if we were together in person.

Adult Religious Education

Three Options for Adult Religious Education



Wellspring Sources, a curriculum developed by the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association), began with a retreat the last weekend of September. The sessions will begin in October meeting Thursday afternoons, every other week, for two hours. There are over a dozen enthusiastic participants. Co-facilitators are Dawn Jordan (ihc.dawn@gmail.com) and Katy Olson (katyjolson@gmail.com). All sessions will be on Zoom with the link found on the church calendar at [click here](#).

Soul Matters Writing Group

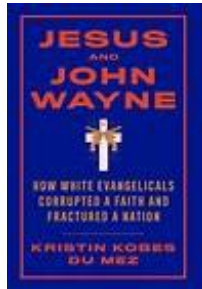
"Writing is a long-loved path to personal insight, spiritual discernment and self-expression. By bringing the practice of writing to the exploration of our monthly themes, we hope to provide participants not only with another channel of self-discovery, but also with the gift of being witnessed in a new and precious way." "The Vision" ~ taken from Soul Matters Website.



This small group opportunity is a mix between a writers' group and our own UCU U Groups. Facilitated by Ellen Eastby, using a curriculum by Soul Matters Sharing Circle, this group will meet the fourth Wednesday, beginning October 27, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom for about 2 hours each month. Prior to the meeting a packet will be given to each participant. The packet contains the month's theme, a reading, and some prompts so they can prepare a piece for the meeting. The meeting is formatted to allow for time for participants to share their piece if they wish. After all the writings have been read participants may share how a piece spoke to them. Please note, this is not the place to critique or make suggestions as to how an individual could improve their writing skills. This group is about listening and relating. While this may appeal more to writers, it is not just for those who consider themselves writers. This is for anyone who wishes for deeper spiritual discernment through writing.

We have a small group and would welcome others to join us. We had to cancel our September meeting, so we will begin October 27th.

If this is of interest to you or if you would like more information, please contact Ellen Eastby at ellen.eastby@ucofu.org.



Book Study - When we begin to meet in-person, John Minge will begin a study of the book, *Jesus and John Wayne*. Watch for more information.

A word of gratitude is due each of the persons facilitating these offerings, especially since they volunteered without being asked, to lead us in our spiritual growth.

Fall Intergenerational Religious Education



A big circle of families with children of all ages met at Maplewood State Park Sunday afternoon, September 19. The whole group met for circle time to introduce themselves after more than a year of not being able to gather in person. Barbara Honer led the children in talking about covenanting with each other. Then everyone hiked all the way up Holloway Hill. After that it was walking through the woods to the gnome village.

Eleven-year-old Violet said that she “had fun going to Maplewood and seeing the kids again.” Lilly, also 11 said, “It was fun. I enjoyed myself. I want to go again.”

The next gathering will be the third Sunday in October, details to be announced.

Living Out Our UU Principles



Reflections on the Nibi Walk for the Otter Tail by Deb Wallwork

What an extraordinary experience the Nibi walk turned out to be.

Miigwech, and many thanks to Sharon Day for leading us in this powerful journey along our beloved river. As Katy said during the walk, “I had respect and love for this river but to honor it in this way gives me a new reverence for the river as a life-giving force.”

Saturday morning, September 18th, we held the first ceremony of the Otter Tail Nibi Walk and sang the water songs for our river, an eagle swooped directly over Sharon and the small circle of walkers.

Something magical was happening.

What is prayer? What does it mean to pray for the water? To carry water from the source of a river to its mouth. “We move like the river,” Sharon says. The river never stops, it flows over rocks and under culverts and through dams. We hold the copper vessel in one hand and the jingles sewed around the rim tinkle as the covered copper vessel swings up and down in our hands with its own gentle wave.

Water we respect you. Water, we depend on you. Water, we love you.

To experience the world anew from the perspective of an indigenous cultural view is transforming. I’ve known this from my own experience and saw this walk as an opportunity to share that with others.

As an artist who also works in an area of social practice and social engagement, Sharon recognizes the power of traditional ceremony to alter consciousness, to work from the foundations of our thinking, our very being-in-the world.

These Nibi walks, unlike most other Native spiritual traditions, are open to all. Sharon's vision, and that of Josephine Mandamin before her, encompasses the understanding that all of us from the four directions are needed if we are to transform our thinking, and reassess and confront dysfunctional aspects of our Western philosophical social foundations.

That work must be broad and deep if we are going to reach people to make the changes that are essential for this precious gift of life to continue this planet for generations to come. It is work that is urgent and necessary.

When I heard first Sharon talk about the Nibi Walks at a conference at Hennepin Theatre Trust — before the Line 3 Protests, before the death of George Floyd and ensuing racial justice movement, before the pandemic — I saw the Nibi walk as an unprecedented opportunity to provide an experiential, immersive action deeply aligned with our seventh principle.

Like water itself, that principle: *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence* is one we easily take for granted. It represents so much more than it says. Our love of the natural world has its source in reverence, a profound understanding that we are one with that web of life, not separate. That these beings and forces beyond our human-centric perspective are vital, and sustain us, bring us joy and a sense of vivid aliveness.

Often our most profound spiritual experiences come with an awakening or realization of that connection.

When I formally proposed to Sharon we do a walk for the Otter Tail, almost three years ago, the gift that I brought her was a monarch chrysalis. And I saw later, by her posts on social media, delight and wonder when, a few days later, the monarch chrysalis cracked open and she had that experience, so familiar to me, of witnessing the monarch emergence, the wings unfolding, expanding and when ready to lift off, the release of a newborn butterfly to the air.

Miigwech to Sharon for that auspicious beginning and many other magical moments along the walk.



This Nibi Walk experience is a culmination, for me, of three years of work. I sponsored The Indigenous People's Fund to apply and write an Empowerment grant. To engage our UU's and others who joined, I built a Facebook page, Honor the Otter Tail. Using email, texts, the UU newsletter and that FB group, I engaged potential Nibi Walkers through articles, posts, and short relevant films.

With the larger goal of building engagement with, and awareness of the river's environment issues, I posted walk protocols, made films to build cultural understanding, did lots of social engagement, and extended invitations to our White Earth neighbors for their extent of the walk.

Melody and I organized a socially distanced cleanup of the Otter Tail by Fergus Falls area kayakers in advance of the 2020 walk. John and I traversed the route, finding the quiet backroads, the would be direct and those aligned with the most river crossings.

I worked to engage the public in cities we were walking through with a positive awareness of our presence, so I compiled press releases and talked to reporters about doing articles to engage and enlighten the public the we encountered with our presence in their communities.

And John and I committed to Sharon for all four days, providing route advice and safety as the follow car.

John volunteered as staff carrier all four days so walkers would have the option of being accompanied by that traditional symbol of spiritual protection.

And then the pandemic hit so
a year later I did it all over again.



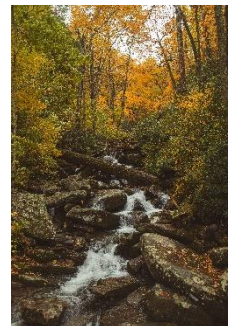
At the conclusion of the 2021 Nibi walk as John and I were leaving the confluence of the Otter Tail and the Red, what to our wondering eyes should appear, fluttering brightly against the dark trees, but a newly emerged monarch butterfly.

There were many of these magical and profound moments we all experienced during the walk.

As Kat LaDuke, an enrolled member of the White Earth Tribe told me: “I was honored to be invited. I didn't realize how deep my sense of connection would be for those who walked before me.”

There is so much more. Unitarians are sometimes skeptical of “thoughts and prayers” rather than direct action to engage a social issue.

I want to relate a story that Sharon told during our walk. A young girl, watching the ceremonial prayers for a source of water belonging to her tribe that was being threatened by mining— in the innocent way children have of saying what adults are thinking— “Will this really do any good? The mining companies are so powerful, and we are just a small tribe. How can what we are doing possibly stop them?” And Sharon said “Yes, but water is more powerful than that. Water is most powerful force on earth. It brings forth life. All this life around us. So, when we pray for the water, when we sing for the water, we align ourselves with that power with our prayers.”



Migwech!!! Sharon, and Josephine before her, for this vision. We’ve all been touched by this gift of four days with this wise and thoughtful elder and moved and inspired by our meditations and the many insights and Ojibwe teachings those four days of walking for the river brought our way.

As Paul, another faithful eagle staff carrier said, “the river will never be the same.” It is encircled with our prayers.

270,419 steps

270,419 prayers.

Migwech!!! for the Otter Tail Nibi Walkers and support persons:

Katy Olson, Betsy Wells, Shirley Mauch Spanhanks, Bonnie Albers, Tere Mann, Peggy Maxwell, Ron Roller, Janell Miersch.

Sharon, Chas, Barb, Pearl, Evelyn, Paul, Dawn, Angel, Silas, Harmony, Nicole, Sue, Sharon H., Jacob, Kelly, Zach, Reba, Kat, Molly S., Kat, Heidi, and Laura.

Nibi Bimadiziwin
Water is Life



For local media's portrayal of the event, see:

Perham Focus

<https://www.perhamfocus.com/news/science-and-nature/7205779-Ojibwe-woman-leads-sacred-water-walk-from-White-Earth-Reservation-through-Otter-Tail-County>

Fergus Falls Journal

https://www.fergusfallsjournal.com/news/honoring-the-river/article_a247fde0-1caf-11ec-a7b3-d7e5ef9beeff.html

Wahpeton Daily News

https://www.wahpetondailynews.com/news/ngah-izitchigay-nibi-ohnjay-i-will-do-it-for-the-water/article_68e96b0a-1d78-11ec-a9fd-17195cae188f.html

Katy Olson's portrayal of her Nibi walk experience will be shared in the November newsletter.

We Are Part of the Larger UU



2021 Pride Report

With the first fall colors we can tell the season of LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations is winding down. What an amazing privilege it has been to travel the state to meet

with and provide support to local UU congregations as they work to promote who we are (the people who affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people), and what side we're on (the side of love).

We kicked off the Pride season this year with the return of the Twin Cities Pride festival in July. MUUSJA collaborated with many helpful and joyful volunteers from First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, and Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship to staff the booth for two full days!

In August and September, we travelled to pride events in Bloomington (their first ever pride festival!), Fargo/Moorhead, Duluth, and Mankato (and St. Cloud still to come) where we helped to staff tables and engage our LGBTQ+ neighbors and allies with the both the social justice work we're focused on across our UU congregations and the underlying principles that drive our work in the world for justice and beloved community. We met and talked with folks who had never heard about Unitarian Universalism, those that recognized us as the "Side with Love" people, and those who had grown up as UUs in other places and were looking for their congregational home in a new place. And we reminded all of us of that UU congregations are places where folks are held as whole and loved, just as they are.

We've had such a lovely time as guests in UU community across the state, and we have also learned so much from seeing all the different ideas that local congregations had for engaging folks and making connections and we plan to incorporate this learning into our approach toward next year's pride season. Look for more information on this project early in the new year as we prepare to assist congregations in making the most of pride event outreach.

Note: Fergus Falls held its first Pride Festival in June and several members of UCU helped. Their comments were included in the UCU July Newsletter. Most of the events of the Fergus Falls Pride Festival served as a fundraiser for SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance) Youth. They were recently organized by a group of local parents and community members to create an inclusive space to provide support and affirmation for LGBTQ+ youth.



The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and UU MidAmerica Region offer many resources, including virtual workshops. If interested, check out their websites <https://www.uua.org> and <https://www.uua.org/midamerica>.

MidAmerica
Region

Excerpts from:

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Dismantling White Supremacy Culture Resource of the Month: Beyond Basic Representation Webinar

A new video has been added to the UUA's WorshipWeb series "Decentering Whiteness in Worship." The newest webinar, "Beyond Basic Representation: Taking Our Anti-Racist Commitment into Worship," is a conversation about why and how UU worship leaders need to do more than include readings by authors of color in worship, and why the next stage of our collective spiritual growth calls for the (often uncomfortable) creation of new processes and relationships.

Recorded in June 2019, this conversation between Julica Hermann de la Fuente, Aisha Hauser, and Rev. Erika Hewitt begins with the question ***Why can't we search WorshipWeb for authors who are people of color?*** and extends into an expansive discussion of applying anti-racism work to Unitarian Universalist worship. You can find the webinar at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/decentering-whiteness-worship-webinar>.

While you're there, check out the first two webinars, "Decentering Whiteness in Worship, Part 1" and "Decentering Whiteness in Worship... Continuing the Conversation." These webinars are designed to help UU worship leaders learn how they can decenter whiteness, take apart models and habits that uphold white supremacy culture, and find new ways to create worship.

UUMUAC MONTHLY "THIRD WEDNESDAY" WORSHIP SERVICE

For October through December 2021

7:00 pm Central Time

The Religious Professionals Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council is sponsoring "Third Wednesday" evening worship services on the third Wednesday of each month. To get Zoom information, whether for the next Worship Service or those in subsequent months, please send your name, email address, and congregation (if any) to: richard3point@gmail.com.

DATE: October 20

PREACHER: Rev. Craig Moro

SERMON: "Heads Up!"

DESCRIPTION: Harvard professor Charles Darby Knock once said that “Religion is what people in community do, say, and think with respect to those things over which they have no control.” What are some of those things, the ones that challenge us most deeply? The story of Adam and Eve gives us a timely “Heads up!” on this important question!

DATE: November 17

PREACHER: Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell

SERMON: “Thanksgiving: A Multiracial Vision of the New World”

DESCRIPTION: A meditation on multicultural interaction

DATE: December 15

PREACHER: Rev. Richard Trudeau

SERMON: “Christmas for Grown-Ups”

DESCRIPTION: What we can infer from biblical evidence about Mary and Joseph, and what light these sheds on the career of their firstborn son.

**Unitarian Church of Underwood
Board Minutes
August 18, 2021**

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by President Norm Kolstad.

The meeting agenda was approved adding an additional item from John Salmen under new business of “land acknowledgment statement” (Mary Anderson/Mary Worner).

The minutes of the meeting of July 21, 2021, were approved as written (John Salmen/Marianne Bryan).

Thirty minutes were devoted to a circle discussion on the question, *“What does the changing nature of the community and world require of UCU?”*

Board members had agreed to do the circle discussion for three months. The sub-team will then re-evaluate and pass their recommendations for continuance to the Officer Team.

The general meeting was resumed with the Treasurer’s Report. Ron Roller reported that taxes had been filed and paid. There were no changes on the balance sheet. The Profit and Loss Statement shows that monthly contributions and expenses have been steady. One Empowerment Grant is still outstanding as the awardee is waiting 501(C)3 approval. Bank keys to the two deposit boxes are in process of being transferred to the President and Treasurer.

Congregational Administrator’s Report – Bonnie Graham reported that 1) Beloved Conversations will be offered by UUA for fall, 2021: 2) Mary Worner attended Re-UUP, a UUA

presentation on religious education planning; 3) Director Karen Mills from MUUSJA is booked as a speaker October 17; 4) For Hybrid Worship, she is still investigating licensing requirements. She's also arranged with Susan Groff to be present for hard wiring for internet @ \$108.45/month; 5) re-writing speaker's information so ready for in-person; advise to temper expectations for Children's RE; 6) Reassumed website administration; 7) will present on GA attendance; 8) relayed the many thanks for the Treaty People's Walk. They appreciated the fresh produce, the \$400 in contributions and especially, the pies. (See the complete report at the end of the minutes.)

There was some discussion and reassertion of the decision to continue Zoom services pending further reduction or change to COVID risks.

Program Coordinator's Report: Mary Worner reported on her webinar attendance facilitated by Nancy Combs Morgan, MidAmerica Region. UU continues to advise safety from bodily harm that includes COVID. Recommend children and families have meeting hook ups outside. Parents were invited to the Phelps service resulting in two parents and one child in attendance. Re: Adult Religious Education- volunteers themselves initiated the offerings of three fall opportunities: 1) *Sources* to be led online by Dawn Jorden and Katy Olson; 2) writings with Ellen Eastby; 3) Jesus and John Wayne book discussion with John Minge. Mary Worner/John Salmen moved to request \$110 for the writer's curriculum. The amended motion was passed (Mary Worner/John Salmen) to increase the line item to \$500 for the balance of the year for Adult Religious Education. The plan for U Groups will be discussed next month.

Other reports were deferred as most committees have not been meeting over the summer months.

Community Outreach Coordinator's Report: Amy Beckman reported that plans are pending regarding further book discussions, support for LGBTQ youth, the Harvest Festival, and IDI follow-up.

Unfinished Business:

An electronic vote was made to accept a resolution of the Social Justice Committee. The vote was affirmed with the amendment to change "We" to "UCU" (John Salmen/Mary Anderson): *UCU stands in solidarity with Northwoods UU Fellowship, UUA, MUUSJA and other social justice organizations to publicly support the protest of Line 3. We are acting as allies under their leadership for the Treaty People's Walk for Water and hope to build friendship between UCU and the native people.*

Discussion on COVID protocols for small groups. It was agreed that we will look at the UU referenced chart and insert these recommendations into the COVID-19 protocols upon Board consensus at the next Board meeting. The Technical Support team will wait to have their meeting until the protocols are revisited.

Regarding expectations for attendee follow through after workshop attendance, the individuals who attended Beloved Conversations are meeting soon and will help provide the model on how

to share their learnings, with an assumption of allowing flexibility for other attendees of other offerings on the means and methods for how learnings may be passed to the congregation.

New Business:

The Congregational Administrator's term of employment ends August 31, 2021. The motion for a term extension of 60 days was granted (Norm Kolstad/John Salmen). The Personnel Committee will meet to determine further recommendations.

The inclusion of a Land Acknowledgement Statement proposed by John Salmen will be incorporated into the Board agenda at the next meeting.

Next Officer Team meeting – September 8, 2021 @ 6 p.m. via Zoom

Next Board Meeting – September 15, 2021 @ 6 p.m. via Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Addendum: Congregational Administrator's report for August 2021

OPPORTUNITY:

1. Beloved Conversations - fall 2021

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS SATURDAY! REGISTER NOW!

Use Early Bird Registration code and get 10% off! Use code **FALL21BCVEB** (6/29 through 8/14)

Register here: <https://www.meadville.edu/faqs-collaborative/beloved-conversations/within-phase/within-how-to-register/>

The Beloved Conversations Team is excited to announce that registration for our Fall 2021 Within courses is now open! Please join us for another term of community building, learning, and spiritual growth! You can find more information about all of our Beloved Conversations programming on our website at www.meadville.edu/beloved

Important Dates

Fall Term Within Registration: June 22nd- August 31st, 2021 at www.meadville.edu/beloved

Fall Term Within Begins: September 21st, 2021

Fall Term Within Ends: Mid-December, 2021

Cost: \$250 USD per person (lay folks and religious professionals). White folks and anyone with economic privileges/ample professional expenses will be encouraged to pay more. Full and partial scholarships will be generous and easily accessible.

*No one will be turned away for a lack of funds. Please email JeKaren at belovedconversations@meadville.edu to request a full or half scholarship.

2. Offered by MidAmerica UUA:



Here is a link to the recordings and the notes from both sessions.

Here is another link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kS3Fh2F-Bi8U_9jcrDKrHeJqpWd-mSXS?usp=sharing

Mary Worner reports that the conversations were both interesting and were not as much focused on just Religious Education, but more focused on opening up again. That we acknowledge the anxiety, and that people got tired during the covid restrictions. And that it's ok to start again slowly.

3. MUUSJA

Karen Wills, Director of MUUSJA would like to connect with what's happening at UCU. <https://www.muusja.org/>

She was interested to learn more about the Social Justice Interest Group, and the work of the Board in training. She would

like to sit in on a meeting and learn more about UCU's work and see if she can connect people with others doing similar work, and connect our group so they are supported. Members of the Social Justice Interest Group have been reporting back that they would like to connect with Karen Wills and think this would be a useful meeting for both sides. The Social Justice Interest Group is taking a break for spring. October 17, Karen Wills will be speaking at UCU's Sunday Service.

Mary Worner reports that MUUSJA is starting a group for youth across the congregations so they can make connections too. Also working with Mary Worner on the Children's Religious Education Program.