

# THE FLAME

February 2015



**The Monthly Newsletter of  
First Unitarian Church of  
Omaha**

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The Next Holland  
Lecture Speaker

# Meet Our Leaders

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Board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month and are open to all members.

## THE FLAME

Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Word limit: 200.

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Omaha Together One Community - Kim Dunovan & Laurie Gift

Partner Church - Janet West

Religious Education - Sheri Conner

Religious Services - Megan Gustafson

Women's Alliance - Nellie Chenoweth

Young Adult Group - Maria Wallace

YRUU - Ben Wallace & Shawne Coonfare



*Photos from our annual  
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service*

## Sunday Services this month

**February 1—Two Services at 9:30am  
and 11:15am**

**“The Liberal Church”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

The past, the present, and the future of the liberal church—and, more importantly, our particular iteration of it.

**February 8—Two Services at 9:30am  
and 11:15am**

**“The Case for Humanism”**

**Jack Perry**

**February 15—Two services at  
9:30am and 11:15am**

**“Love Costs All We Are”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

Following up on Valentine’s Day, we explore the costs of love. The title is a line from a poem by Maya Angelou: “Love costs all we are/and will ever be.”

**February 22—Two Services at  
9:30am and 11:15am**

**Rev. Cari Frus, Hospital Chaplain at  
St. Elizabeth’s in Belleville, IL**

### A Note to Our Visitors:

You are invited downstairs after the Sunday service for coffee and, if comfortable, asked to take a blue cup which indicates you would enjoy conversation with members. Please also visit the Welcome Table where you can find information on Unitarian Universalism and our church. All visitors, their friends and relatives, and friends and relatives of members are welcome to attend all church functions and social events.

## Sunday School

The curriculum taught gives students the opportunity to learn more about Unitarian Universalism, our Judeo-Christian heritage, other religions, science as a shared revelation to be celebrated, anti-bullying, acceptance of differing families, as well as have fun with their friends. Sunday School is at 10:30am. Register your child for Sunday School by [clicking here](#).

## Hospitality at First U

Looking for a way to get involved? Join a Hospitality Team and serve just six Sundays a year. Meet new people, serve with friends and help our church welcome guests. [Click here](#) for more information about getting involved.

# Rev. Elations

## Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

Two months in a row I am speaking about a new program, Brown Bag Lunch with the Rev. What a revelation the program has been for me. I began it on the suggestion of Jaime Alexander, who recalled that Rev. Dick Benner initiated such lunches. I advertised it, but expected an attendance somewhere between 0 and 2. On the first day, about a dozen attended. At subsequent meetings, attendance was between 15 and 20. (One participant explained that I'm a cheap date.) The discussions are animated, direct, sometimes difficult, but each of us leaves with a strong sense of connection: we might disagree, but we are in this together. I have come to understand this hour (or 90 minutes) as a microcosm of beloved community.

Now I want to expand the community. Not everyone is free to drive to the church for lunch on a weekday; so I would like to alternate Thursday lunches with Saturday lunches. Unfortunately, there are scheduling conflicts in February. So here's what I propose. Thursday lunches (at noon) will be on alternate weeks—February 12 and 26. Saturday lunches will be at 11:30am, also on alternate weeks, but we will have to skip February 7; so the first lunch will be on Saturday, February 21. Let's see how this works.

I am delighted that we have begun our Thursday evening classes on compassionate communication. Thanks to Alan Vovolka, Elaine Wells, and Jan Wilson. I like to see our lunches as a workshop for that class.

Blessings and love,  
Frank

## Brown Bag Lunch with Rev. Frank

As mentioned above by Rev. Frank, the lunch schedule will change a bit for February to try to accommodate those who may not be able to meet during the week.

Thursday lunch dates are Feb. 12 and Feb. 26 at noon in the Common Room.

Saturday lunch date is Feb. 21 at 11:30am in the Common Room.

All are welcome to attend and no RSVP is needed.

## Women's Alliance

*"Instructions for living a life. Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."*

— Mary Oliver

Women from First and Second Unitarian are invited to attend the Women's Alliance get-together on Monday, February 9. Socializing and beverages start at 6:30pm with dinner following at 7pm.

Please bring a poem, whether you have written it or just love it. This month we will be sharing our favorite poems and hearing some poems written by our special guests, Cat Dixon and Joy Ill from First Unitarian Church.

We ask for \$12 which goes to the cost of dinner and our Merritt Education Fund. If this will be your first time attending a WA get-together, please be our guest.

Lois Norris, Ann Van Hoff and Barb Dewell will be making their Fantastic February Ham Dinner. The menu will include Elegant Potatoes, green beans and the ubiquitous Jello salad. The vegetarian dish is still to be determined.

It is extremely important to RSVP with an entrée choice so Lois and Barb know how much food to prepare. Please RSVP by emailing [wa@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:wa@firstuuomaha.org) or by calling Janet West at 402-553-3162. Don't forget to include your entrée option: ham or veggie.

We look forward to seeing everyone on February 9!

## Inclement Weather Cancellations

In the event of bad weather and services are cancelled, the church will alert the media. So, please check with your local news stations to make sure the church service is still scheduled. We will update the church webpage, the church Facebook page and group and the church office voicemail at extension 101.

## Book Club

Our next meeting is Monday, February 23 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Book club members will chose to read any of the three choices all by Angela Davis (our next Holland Lecture speaker) for our meeting. This way we will get a broader picture of her works over the years. Here are the three books: *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) *Women, Race and Politics* (2011) *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (Open Media Series 2005).

## Church Directory

If you have moved or changed your phone number or email address, please inform the church office at [admin@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuuomaha.org). We would like to keep the church directory information current and up-to-date. Thanks for your help!

## UU & You

**Sunday, February 15 at 12:15pm in the Whitney Young Room**

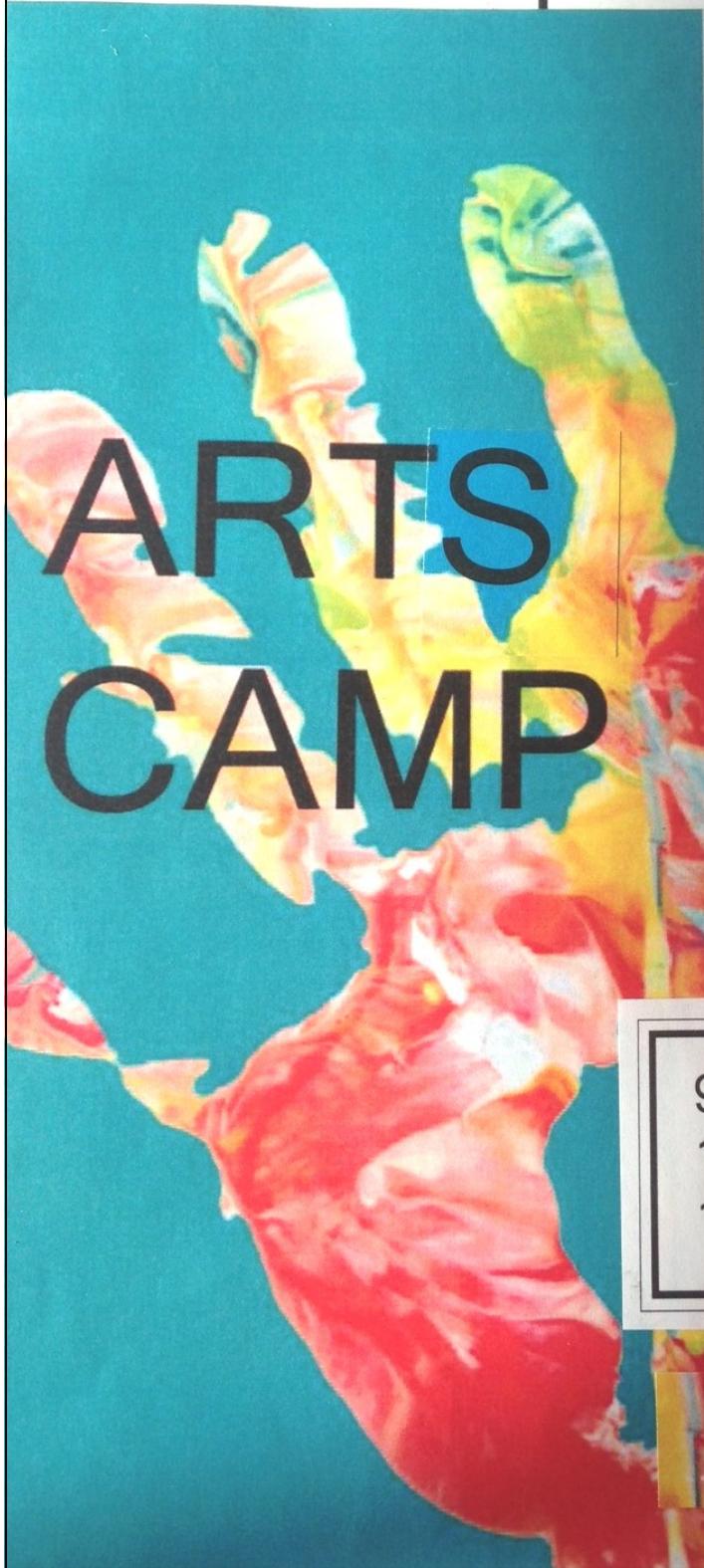
Unitarian Universalism and You classes provide an introduction to Unitarian Universalism and our church, along with an opportunity to share our religious journeys. Visitors, newcomers, and the just curious are cordially invited. The class will convene in the Whitney Young Room 15 minutes after the ending of the 11:15am service. That usually works out to be about 12:30. A light lunch will be served to bolster the always interesting conversation. The class lasts about an hour and 30 minutes, so ending time will be about 2pm, although those interested in a brief tour of the church may be a little later. If you need childcare, please let us know by the Monday before. RSVP or questions can be addressed to [uuclass@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:uuclass@firstuuomaha.org) or call Jaime Alexander 402-657-9386.

## Spirit Circle

**Sunday, February 1 at 7pm in the Common Room**

At our meeting we will be having a ritual to celebrate the Celtic festival of Imbolc which is half-way between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Ritual at 7pm with potluck after so bring a dish to share and a story to tell.

# Arts Camp for Children

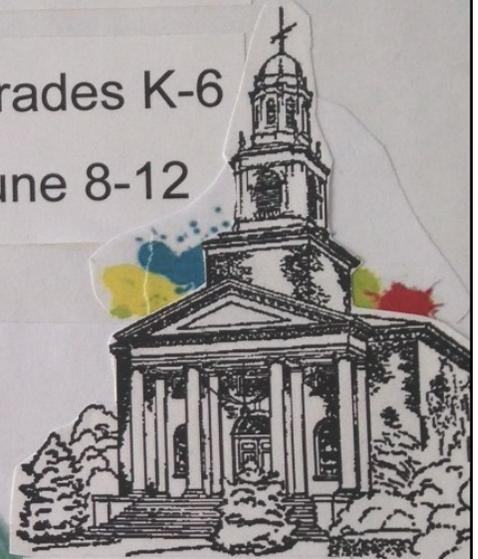


# ARTS CAMP

Summer  
2015

Grades K-6

June 8-12



First Unitarian Church

9:30-12:00 Classes  
12:00-1:00 Sack Lunch  
1:00-3:30 Field Trips

Donations accepted  
for tuition.

Please save these dates for our 2015 Summer Camp. Email Jan for more information at [dre@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuuomaha.org).

The  
**Holland  
Lecture** Series

# *Angela Davis*

## Prison Reform: Real or Imagined?



**SAVE THE DATE:** **Wednesday, March 4 • 7:30 P.M.**  
**Holland Performing Arts Center**

Prison reform became a front and center issue for Nebraskans last year and remains so. For **ANGELA DAVIS**, it has been a life-long cause. She envisions a future without prisons and advocates for dissolving the “prison industrial complex.”

Growing up in Alabama, Davis learned early on about prejudice and discrimination. As a teenager she organized interracial study groups, which were broken up by the police. She later studied philosophy at Brandeis University and did postgraduate work at the University of California, San Diego in the late 1960s. It was there that she became a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, joining several groups including the Black Panthers. She also became a leader in an all black branch Communist Party, the Che-Lumumba Club. In 1970 she was suspected of being a part of an escape attempt made during the trial of one of the “Soledad Brothers.” After spending 18 months in prison, she was acquitted. Today Ms. Davis is Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness and the Feminist Studies departments of the University of California Santa Cruz, and is the author of nine books including *Women Race and Class* and *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

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**FREE TICKETS** for this reserved seating event will be available February 1 at Ticket Omaha. Please put this lecture on your calendar and on the calendar of your friends! The highly regarded Holland Lecture Series is now in its 11th year of presenting internationally recognized, thought-provoking speakers. To help you introduce friends and neighbors to the series, each caller may request up to six free tickets for the lecture and free reception that follows.

## New Year by Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education

I see the New Year as a feast of possibilities. Last summer we offered a summer Arts Camp for our children. We put on a musical production complete with sets, costumes, memorized lines, and musical accompaniment. We played games, created art, and made friends. Next summer we will offer a camp experience based on the foundation of the lessons we learned from last year. This will occur from Monday through Friday the second week of June. (See flyer on page 6.)

We will have art experiences and a variety of quiet and loud activities in the morning. Then in the afternoon we will go on field trips to see some artists at work in galleries and studios in the Midtown area. Students will have an opportunity to learn about art and to make art with these artists. We are still very much in the planning stages. Artists and musicians who have a little something to share are encouraged to get in touch with me.

Is anyone willing to sand oak children's chairs in the RE Room? We have some very valuable and sturdy children's chairs that are in need of some love. I think it would be fun to have a sand-a-thon together. Bring your sander! We will meet Saturday, Feb. 21 at 11am in the upstairs RE classroom. (See photo of a chair at the top right of this page.)

Let me pass along how wonderful it is to have the kids together on Sundays making things and learning and discussing. We have been learning about Compassionate Communication. It's so important for our caring and confident kids to understand how to recognize the positive ways they can make connections with others. We're learning that even people we don't like can be treated with dignity if we know what to say.

Sincerely, Jan Wilson, DRE  
[dre@firstuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuomaha.org)



### Religious Education

Sunday School will start at 10:30am and last until 11:30am.

Sunday School Rooms:

K-2nd grades: RE Office/Classroom

3rd-5th grades: Robert Weston Room (Middle Classroom upstairs)

6th-8th grades: Whitney Young Classroom (Downstairs Classroom)

9th-12th grades: Merritt Lounge

After Sunday School ends at 11:30am, children will all gather in the middle upstairs classroom for snack time (a kid-version of coffee hour). Then at 11:45am they will gather in the Whitney Young Room for community time.

The community time schedule is:

1st Sunday of the month: Movie & Popcorn

2nd Sunday of the month: Choir

3rd Sunday of the month: Art

4th Sunday of the movie: Choir

Community Time ends at 12:30pm.

At the 9:30am service children can either go to community time or sit in the service with their parents.

The RE Council will meet on Sunday, February 1 in Jan's office after the second service.

# Discussions, Forums and Classes at First U

## Flint Discussion Forum

The next Flint Discussion Forum will be held on Tuesday, February 17 at 7pm in the Common Room. More information will be announced later in the enews.



These forums are designed to offer a platform for in-depth presentation of information and dialog on topics ranging from ethics & morals to arts & region. The name “Flint” refers to the rock that is used to create a spark. Each program will run 90 minutes. Attendees wishing to bring their own dinner are welcome to join others at 6pm to share conversation. All are invited. Coffee and water will be available. Questions about the program can be directed to: [forum@firstuomaha.org](mailto:forum@firstuomaha.org) or Nathan Kramer (402) 884-8916.

## Tolerant Atheist Discussion Group meets Thursday, February 12

Rev. Frank Rivas, in his December Flame column Rev. Elations, wrote of atheism and theism as antitheses with both being necessary. He contemplates envisioning together what the church could become in several areas, including what our Sunday services should look like. Wow! What a great segue for TADG’s envisioning of its future and the idea of presenting a Sunday service! Rev. Frank will set the stage for discussion and questions on the church level. Then Jaime will introduce similar items at the TADG level. If you, atheist, agnostic, humanist, theist, whatever, haven’t come to a TADG meeting this would be an ideal time to attend. All are cordially invited to the Thursday, February 12 TADG meeting. The conversation and fun start in the Common Room at 6pm with a BYOD (Bring Your Own Dinner). The meeting starts at 7pm. Questions and RSVPs can be addressed to [jaimealexander@cox.net](mailto:jaimealexander@cox.net).

## Adult RE Class to Begin in March

### SCIENCE, SCIENTISTS AND RELIGION

Mark your calendar for Thursdays at 7pm in March for this class led by Rev. Ron Knapp.

In 2007, ABC news reported on a major study seeking to understand the religious beliefs of the most eminent scientists at 21 top rated American universities. Thirty-one percent said they did not believe in God, another thirty-one percent said that they did not know if there is a god and that there was no way to find out, and only 9.7 percent said they had “no doubt in God’s existence.” This appears to be a mirror image—the opposite—of what the general population in America believes. In this workshop we will discuss the relationship between science and religion and what scientists believe about God and religion and why.

## The Women's Religious Studies Group

The Women's Religious Studies group is exploring the book *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* by Victor J. Stenger. We meet at the church at 1pm most Thursdays. Questions? Contact Rae Barry at 402-422-1404 or [raeb1@hotmail.com](mailto:raeb1@hotmail.com).

## The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group will meet on Thursday, February 19, at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. Rae Barry will be the facilitator for Compassion, the second chapter in *Soul to Soul*. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Harriet Major at 402-391-0248 or at [hmajor323@cox.net](mailto:hmajor323@cox.net). We have a covenant statement which needs to be signed before attending our group.

## Share the Plate—Community Meals

Each month one-half of the loose currency in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism.

This month we share the plate to support our own program Community Meals. Every Saturday a meal is served to our neighborhood at First Baptist Church. For more information please contact [Diane Withem](#). See page 14 for more details about this program.

## Prospectus for Adult RE Class: The History of First Unitarian Church of Omaha

This class will be run by Dave Richardson and will focus on the events and people who have helped shape our beloved community. It will meet on three Thursday evenings in the Common Room in April and May (4/23, 4/30 and 5/14.) This course will follow a presentation/discussion format. Each of the three meetings will be devoted to a 50-year portion of our 150 years of existence, beginning with our founding in 1869. In the process we will look at some photos and artifacts from our archives.

We will also discuss how our church history reflects the changes that took place in the Unitarian movement in general, particularly the westward movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. We will continue this focus by following the events which gave direction to Unitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the Humanist Manifesto of 1933 and the merger with the Universalists in 1961 and how our church responded to these changes. We will also discuss the upcoming sesquicentennial of our founding and the centennial of our building in 2018-9, and how we might celebrate our church's heritage. To sign up for the class please call (402-345-3039) or email ([admin@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuuomaha.org)) the church office.

**Spirit Circle**

*Sunday, February 1 at 6pm in the Common Room*

See page 5 for details.

**RE Council Meeting**

*Sunday, February 1 at 12:30pm in Jan's office*

**Compassionate Communication Class: Adult RE (final class)**

*Thursday, Feb. 5 at 7pm in the Common Room*

**CommUnity Night**

*Friday, February 6 at 5:30pm in the Common Room.*

See page 13 for details.

**Ministry Team Meeting**

*Saturday, February 7 at 2pm*

See page 7 for details.

**Persian Dinner**

*Saturday, February 7 at 5:30pm in the Common Room.*

See page 13 for details.

**Women's Alliance**

*Monday, February 9 at 6:30pm in the Common Room*

See page 5 for details.

**Board Meeting**

*Tuesday, February 10 at 7pm in the Common Room*

**Brown Bag Lunch with the Rev.**

*Thursdays, Feb. 12 and 26 at noon in the Common Room*

See page 4 for more information.

**Tolerant Atheist Discussion Group**

*Thursday, February 12 at 7pm in the Common Room*

See page 9 for details.

**Social Justice Fair**

*Sunday, February 15 during both coffee hours in the Common Room*

See page 16 for information.

**Flame Deadline**

Submit your newsletter articles to [admin@firsttuoama.org](mailto:admin@firsttuoama.org) by February 15 at noon.

## Church Events Coming Up

**UU & You Class**

*Sunday, February 15 at 12:15pm in the Whitney Young Room*

See page 5 for details.

**Flint Discussion Forum**

*Tuesday, February 17 at 7pm in the Common Room*

See page 9 for details.

**Women's Religious Studies****Covenant Group**

*Thursday, February 19 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge*

See page 10 for details.

**OTOC Environmental Team****Monthly Meeting**

*Thursday, February 19 at 7pm — held offsite this month*

For more details see page 16

**Young Adult Night**

*Friday, February 20 at 7pm in the Common Room*

See page 17 for details.

**Care for Chairs (Sanding Party)**

*Saturday, February 21 at 11am in the upstairs RE classroom*

See page 8 for details.

**Brown Bag Lunch with the Rev.**

*Saturday, February 21 at 11:30am in the Common Room*

See page 4 for details.

**Circle Suppers**

*Saturday, February 21 (offsite)*

See page 13 for details.

**Book Club**

*Monday, February 23 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge*

See page 5 for more information.

**Recurring...****Women's Religious Studies Group**

*Meets Thursdays at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge*

See page 10 for information.

**Bridge Group**

*Meets the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month after the service in the Whitney Young Room or in the corner of the Common Room*

**Choir Rehearsal**

*Meets every Wednesday evening at 7pm in the Sanctuary.*

**YRUU**

*Meets every Wednesday at 7pm in the Common Room.*

**Looking ahead...****Holland Lecture with Angela Davis**

*Wednesday, March 4 at the Holland Performing Arts Center*

See page 7 for more information.

**Adult RE Class: Science, Scientists and Religions Led by Ron Knapp**

*Begins Thursday, March 5 at 7pm in the Common Room*

See page 9 for information

# Our Transylvanian Partners

## Part I – Firtsomartonos

*by Dave Richardson*

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UUA's partnership with Unitarian churches in Transylvania, a Hungarian-speaking region of Romania. In the late 1980s, Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceacescu announced a policy of bulldozing a number of small villages in the Transylvania region where 73% of the population is Unitarian. His assassination in 1989 prevented implementation of this policy. However, the period of political instability which followed left the status of these people, their villages and churches in a state of uncertainty. In January 1990 UUA President William Schulz sent representatives to meet with the Transylvanian Unitarian Bishop in Kolasvar Transylvania to determine how U.S. UUs could help the Transylvanian Unitarian villages and churches. The bishop suggested a "sister" or "partnership" relationship. Our church chose to participate in the partnership. Our partner church is in the village of Firtsomartonos. In the second installment of this two-part series we will take a closer look at the role the First Unitarian of Omaha has played in this partnership over the past 25 years. The current article will give a brief sketch of our Transylvanian partners.

Many American Unitarians may be unaware of the long and colorful history of this eastern European branch of Unitarianism. In 1565, Frances David, the founder of Transylvanian Unitarianism, was appointed court preacher by King Janos Sygismund. At the Diet of Torda in 1568 the King declared Unitarianism the official religion of

Transylvania. Unfortunately, Sygismund died a few years later and was succeeded by a king who saw Unitarianism as heresy and imprisoned David where he died in 1579.

There are several differences between Unitarianism as practiced in Transylvania and the American version, but also many similarities. The following synopsis is from the Transylvanian Unitarian scholar, Botond Rezi:

"Theologically, Transylvanian Unitarianism is theistic. It is a Protestant, non-dogmatic, Christian denomination, and a liberal and progressive religious community. Transylvanian Unitarians do not believe in the Trinity. God is one, both in essence and in person. But above all, God is Love.

Transylvanian Unitarians believe that Jesus was a prophet of God. The idea that Jesus died on the cross as a divine sacrifice finds no place in Transylvanian Unitarian belief; Jesus was a leader and a wise teacher, not a savior. Hungarian Unitarians believe that Jesus's teachings about love, compassion and justice are more important than all ideas and dogmas about his life" (Rezi, 2001).

The church at Firtsomartonos is a small but gorgeous structure (pictured at right) serving a population of approximately 2,500 which includes the town and surrounding area. The minister is Reverend Katalin Szasz-Csereny. She and her husband Boti also operate a farm. Many of us got to meet them on their 2013 visit to the

US and to our church. On that occasion Rev. Kati delivered a sermon with assistance from Gabor, a translator who traveled with them.

In next month's installment we will look at the role we play in supporting our partner church. Each year we send funds to help with their expenses and to provide scholarships for the young residents who attend as boarders at the Unitarian High School in a nearby town. Members of First Unitarian have visited Firtsomartonos on seven different occasions and their observations will be part of that article.



## CommUUnity Night

**Friday, February 6 at 5:30pm in the Common Room**

If you haven't participated before, CommUUnity Nights are a fun, laid-back all church event. We gather together for a potluck of side items (the main dish will be provided by RE) and we don't worry about who is bringing what; we may get KFC chicken nuggets, sushi, and guacamole, but we'll have fun. We eat together as a group and then just chill. Kids are free to roam and play. We will give the teens the Merritt Lounge as a fortress of solitude against the chaos of family life. The adults chill, talk, play games, and just enjoy each other's company.

If you can't bring anything or you are feeling too rushed to grab or make something last minute COME ANYWAY! There is always plenty of food and what we really want is YOUU!

## Circle Suppers

**Saturday, February 21 at multiple sites**

UU Circle Suppers are a gathering of 6 to 8 people who meet for an organized potluck dinner. The host provides the home or place, firms up the date with assigned guests and provides the main dish. The host then calls each guest to confirm attendance, gives directions to home or location and assigns the part of dinner the guest would like to bring: appetizer, bread, vegetable and/or salad, dessert or beverage. You do not need to be a host to participate. To reserve your spot [click here](#). To find out more information, please email. [bsgodfrey@cox.net](mailto:bsgodfrey@cox.net).

## Persian Dinner

**Saturday, February 7 at 6pm**

First Unitarian Church Culinary Group will be presenting a Persian Cuisine dinner in the Common Room. Barb Herring will serve as Chef de cuisine and will be assisted by a group of volunteers. The dinner will begin with a social time. Then guests will be seated for a meal of traditionally Middle Eastern (Iranian) foods, including vegetarian options.

A complete menu is available on the event website (see link below.)

The event is limited to 40 guests. There is a reservation fee of \$5 per person. All seats have been reserved, but you can join our waiting list by going here: <http://tinyurl.com/omc9rnh>

This event follows the Oktoberfest dinner from last September and is the second church event planned by the newly formed Culinary Group.

For more information, contact Barb Herring at [bherring623@gmail.com](mailto:bherring623@gmail.com) or (402)-551-9610.

## WHAT IS HOPE IN ACTION?

Our church believes in community, and that is what Hope in Action, a sub-team of the Caring Team, is all about. Any one of us might need assistance, and we want to make it easier for you to ask for support and easier for you to offer support when others are in need.



### WHO IS SERVED?

Church members, friends, regular attendees and their spouses are eligible for assistance from Hope in Action.

### WHO CAN HELP?

Everyone! Hope in Action is an opportunity for everyone in our church community to support each other by sharing knowledge, skills and resources.

Hope In Action will use church communications, including the Enews, to let our church community know when help is needed to respond to a request for support. And we will report back to the church community about how we were able to respond. All communication will be done in a manner that maintains the degree of confidentiality requested by the person seeking assistance.

### WHAT SUPPORT CAN BE EXPECTED?

Hope in Action is there when people are dealing with a medical problem, need transportation or help around the house, can use assistance with referrals to social service agencies or just need someone to talk to about the ups and downs of life. Our response will vary depending on the type of support that is needed in our church community and what resources we have available.

Although Hope in Action is not able to respond to emergencies, short-term financial assistance may be available for lodging, food, clothing, medication, transportation and utilities. Financial disbursements are not made directly to the person making the request for assistance.

### HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

Requests for assistance must be made directly by the person needing help. Hope in Action does not respond to any anonymous or third-party requests for assistance.

Here are the ways you can ask for support from Hope in Action. You may send an email to [hopeinaction@firsttuomaha.org](mailto:hopeinaction@firsttuomaha.org) or use the Hope in Action link on the church website. You may call the church office and press ext. 105 to leave a telephone message for Hope in Action. Or, you may simply complete a Caring Card located in the church pews and place it in the designated box in the church foyer.

### WHO DECIDES WHAT SUPPORT WILL BE OFFERED?

Hope in Action will use a team approach, so at least three members of Hope in Action must participate in determining the nature of the response.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY MEALS?

Community Meals is an outreach to people in need in our church's neighborhood.

Every Saturday members of various "First" churches and others take turns providing a hot meal and groceries to those in need at First Baptist Church (our neighbor just one block east of our church). First Unitarian Church has been part of this effort for several years.

Four times a year our church "caters" and serves the meal and distributes the groceries provided by Trader Joe's beginning between 10 and 11am (based on the meal preparation time needed) and ending at 1pm. There are First Unitarian Church members who work at the site on a weekly basis and additional help is always welcome.

Getting involved can be as simple as providing a pan of brownies or working in the serving line. Want to help? Call or email Diane Withem, 402-679-8916, [dianewithem@gmail.com](mailto:dianewithem@gmail.com).

## Ministry Team Meeting

On the first Saturday of every even-numbered month, our ministry team leaders and interested members and friends gather to discuss church projects ranging from the creation of our new church website to the formation of the Hospitality Teams. These meetings are open to anyone who is interested in the church's progress and work. Our next meeting is Saturday, February 7 at 2pm. Can't attend meetings, but still want to know what is happening behind the scenes of First Unitarian? Sign up or our monthly team leader newsletter entitled *Voluntary Servitude*. This newsletter features articles and updates from team leaders and information from the UUA and the MidAmerican Region. Contact the office at [ad-min@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org) to sign up to receive these emails.

## Why Do We Have Pink Attendance Sheets?

You have probably seen the note in the order of worship announcements that says:

*Please sign in on the pink sheets in each pew. The information gathered will not only help us count attendance at each service but will let us know that someone has not been seen lately and may need assistance.*

These pink sheets were first introduced as a way to track the attendance at each of the services. First Unitarian changed from one Sunday service to two in 2009. We take attendance so we know how many friends, members and visitors are here on Sundays. Attendance helps us determine how many orders of worships to print. Plus, if we notice that someone is missing for a few weeks, we can reach out and make sure that person is okay. The office and its volunteers appreciate that folks have been signing in on the pink sheets. Thank you!

## Thank You for Your Generosity

The Partner Church Team

During December 2014, the Partner Church Fund was designated as the "Share-the-Plate" church's organization. Members and friends of 1st Unitarian Church generously donated \$1,216 to the Fund. Although this is a substantial amount, it is not enough to cover what the church normally sends to our Partner Church in Firstosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania. We have sent \$1,320 annually to Firtosmartonos to help preserve the 109-year-old church and the parsonage since 1999. Since 2005, we have also provided \$1,200 to deter some of the costs of their education while the village teens attend the boarding Unitarian High School and public colleges.

When Val Murray, Virginia Shumate, and Janet West visited our Partner Church village in September/October 2014, they asked the minister (Rev. Katalin) what would be, from the village perspective, the best use of the funds. She said "scholarship money." Currently, the \$1,200 scholarship money that is being sent is split among eight young people.

Again, thank you to those who contributed to the Partner Church Fund. The hope is that those of you who did not contribute in December, would make a contribution in February. To contribute, write a check to 1st Unitarian Church and then in the "memo line" write: Partner Church Fund.

\*None of the contributed money to the fund is used to pay for travel expenses to Transylvania.

## The Next Holland Lecture will be on Wednesday, March 4

**Topic: Prison Reform:  
Real or Imagined**

**Speaker: Angela Davis**



Angela Davis, is a writer, activist and scholar and comes to Omaha to share her unique perspectives on prison reform, a topic front and center in current state as well as national debates. She envisions a future without prisons and advocates for dissolving what she coined the “prison industrial complex.” Ms. Davis grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, giving her a front row seat to the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s, her social activism, involvement in the Communist Party and “alleged” association with the Soledad Brothers attempted courtroom escape made her a controversial figure. The latter led to an intense police search that ended with her arrest, trial and eventual acquittal of the charges. Ms. Davis has written nine books and is Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness and the Feminist Studies departments at the University of California Santa Cruz.

Tickets will be available after February 1st by calling Ticket Omaha at 402-345-0606.

## OTOC News

**February 2015 Environmental Sustainability  
Monthly Meeting**

Date: Thursday, February 19

Time: 7pm

Where: Panera Bread (344 North Saddle Creek Rd.)

The OTOC Environmental Sustainability Action Team will be having its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 19. The team will be discussing the 2015 Nebraska legislative session and possible environmental legislation that may be occurring during the 2015 session. All are welcome to the meeting. We hope that you come and check us out. For more information please contact Laurie by emailing her at [2thegifts@cox.net](mailto:2thegifts@cox.net).

## Social Justice Fair

Social Justice is at the heart of the many ways our membership engages within our Omaha community to make a difference.

Please join us after each service on Sunday, February 15 to learn more about Social Justice and the outstanding efforts that are being undertaken by each of the social justice teams in our congregation.

Learn about ways to get engaged with our existing teams and share your ideas and passions for new efforts that we can participate in.

For more information prior to the fair please contact Lori Hefeli at [lhefeli@gmail.com](mailto:lhefeli@gmail.com) or 920-207-5206.

# The Women's Alliance Education Fund

The Women's Alliance Scholarship Fund Committee has been revamped for the 2014/2015 season and every season hereafter. In previous years the Women's Alliance would allocate funds for a scholarship for an individual from First or Second Unitarian wanting to continue his/her education with the transition from high school to college. The WA has decided to broaden this fund, rename it, and incorporate criteria to attain funding for personal development. The name of the scholarship fund has changed to the Merritt Educational Fund. This fund's purpose is to broaden personal development directly related to church functions. Some examples can include (but are not limited to): help with costs to attend General Assembly, Leadership School or Mid-America District meetings; broadening talent (musical, religious education, technical school, etc); or help with costs for a college course to further one's education for career advancement. These are just examples. The WA team requires some criteria to apply for this educational fund.

1. The recipient must be a First Unitarian contributing member or friend of the church
2. Funding must be used for continuing education or for church-related activities
3. An application must be submitted with the following information: what direction you are headed in and what the funds are for. Applications can be picked up by emailing Women's Alliance at [wa@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:wa@firstuuomaha.org).

## Young Adult Game Night

Join the "young adults" for their game night on Friday, February 20 at 7pm in the Common Room. Bring a game or a snack to share with others. Please RSVP to the Facebook event page or by emailing [youngadults@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:youngadults@firstuuomaha.org).

## Children's Choir

Happy New Year from Caitlin Seguin and Rene Harper, leaders of this year's First UU Children's Choir! Our group of ambitious, talented and fun-loving kiddos had a great time performing at the Christmas Eve service, and they are excited to keep making beautiful music together. The choir rehearses from 11:30am to 12:15pm on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month, and we are always looking for new choir members! If you have a child who would like to participate or want more information, please contact Jan at [dre@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuuomaha.org) or see Rene and Caitlin on Sunday mornings. All ages are welcome. We hope to hear from you soon!



## Scrip Program Endgame

By Donna Neff and Kathi Oliver, co-chairs, Fundraising Team

Last chance to support the church by buying “scrip” gift cards for lots of local stores! Stop by the Fundraising table during coffee hours to see our remaining inventory of cards. Fundraising Team is ending the scrip program to put our energy into other things--and get our coffee hours back. Scrip sales are successfully raising funds for the church, but interest has not been great enough to offset the time investment and shipping costs. A worthwhile experiment, now on to other projects! Thanks to all you scrip customers for your support!



### DO YOU SHOP ON AMAZON??

Visit [www.firstuomaha.org](http://www.firstuomaha.org) and click the **AMAZON** logo at the bottom of the page  
OR

Visit [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) and support First Unitarian Church with **EVERY** purchase you make!!

Update the **CHARITY** information to **FIRST UNITARIAN OF OMAHA**.



First Unitarian receives 4-12% of **EVERY** qualifying purchase. For more information, email [scrip@firstuomaha.org](mailto:scrip@firstuomaha.org) or visit with Kathi Oliver or Donna Neff during coffee hour.

## Outside Opportunity at Second Unitarian Church

Please join Second Unitarian Retirees on Tuesday, February 10 at 1pm for a presentation about Humanities Nebraska. Mary Yager, Associate Director, will describe the projects and programs sponsored and conducted by the organization. Nebraska Humanities inspires and enriches personal and public life by offering opportunities to thoughtfully engage with history and culture.

Second Unitarian Retirees meet monthly for socialization, fun, personal growth and learning at Second Unitarian Church. Second Unitarian Church of Omaha is located at 3012 South 119th Street, on the southwest corner of 119th St. and Westwood Lane near 120th & Center. For directions and a map, visit [2uomaha.org](http://2uomaha.org).

## Automatic Contributions—Electronic Funds Transfer

Did you know that you can have your contributions to the church made automatically? Electronic fund transfer will allow you to designate the amount of the money to be transferred biweekly or monthly from your bank account to the church's account. Your bank statement will provide an itemized list of the transactions. The contribution statement you receive from the church periodically will show each contribution as well.

It's easy to start automatic contributions! You only need to complete and sign a form and then return it to the church office along with a sample voided check. Please contact the church for the form or just [click here](#).

You can start the process any time. After that your contributions will be automatic. They will continue until you notify us to stop. Thanks for your generosity! Questions? Contact our treasurer Walt Jesteadt by emailing him at [treasurer@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:treasurer@firstuuomaha.org).

## Outside Opportunity: Exploring Humanistic Perspectives in Literature

Ron Knapp, in association with the Omaha Metro Area Humanists Association (OMAHA), has been leading a series of discussions with a coffee house atmosphere that explore humanistic aspects of literature. He hopes to engage Unitarian humanists and secular humanists in a shared literary experience. The next session is February 24, 7pm to 8:30pm and will focus on Langston Hughes and will be held at the clubhouse of Embassy Apartments. The site is easy to find. Go directly west from the stoplight on Burt and 90th. The clubhouse is located in a building with a circle drive and a sign that reads "Embassy Park Apartments." There should be adequate parking just west of the clubhouse. The meeting is open to the public. Please join us for some interesting, and we hope, insightful conversation. For more info contact Ron Knapp at [anne53ron@cox.net](mailto:anne53ron@cox.net) or 402-315-1863.





**The Next Holland Lecture will be on  
Wednesday, March 4  
at the Holland Performing Arts Center**

**Topic: Prison Reform: Real or Imagined**

**Speaker: Angela Davis**

**Reserve your tickets by contacting Ticket Omaha at 402-345-0606  
after February 1st. Tickets are free, but should be reserved in advance.**

**First Unitarian Church of Omaha  
3114 Harney St.  
Omaha, NE 68131**