

May 2017

The Flame



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

Sunday Services — All Are Welcome

Sunday, May 7 at 10:30am
“Entropy: It’s Not Just for Physicists Anymore”
Rev. Frank Rivas
Vision and entropy in church and nation.

Sunday, May 14 at 10:30am
“Youth & Community”
The YRUU youth of both congregations will lead a worship service focused on building community. It’ll be fun & interactive—bring your family and get to know our YRUU youth!

Sunday, May 21 at 10:30am
Annual Choir Concert
The First Unitarian choir, under the direction of William Miller, will present a variety of pieces sung since September. The anthems, chosen by choir member votes, represent a varied spectrum of messages and music types. The gifts of friendship, love, perseverance and forgiveness are just a few of the themes represented in the selections. The prelude and postlude will be offered by organist, Pat Will. Come support your exceptionally talent First U musicians.

Sunday, May 28 at 10:30am
Henry Lemon Sermon: “Faith, Guilt, and Marketing for Unitar”
Kate Wiig
I’ve grown up as a humanist Unitarian Universalist in this very church. My personal search for truth has been chaotic, circuitous, and guilt ridden.

Sunday Forums This Month

Each forum is held at 9:30am in the Common Room.

May 7: “Carbon Fee and Dividend: Your Best Chance to Stop Climate Change”
An informative presentation by local members of the Citizens Climate Lobby about the bi-partisan plan to transition to a low-carbon economy.

May 14: “Neo-Liberalism”
Join Frances Mendenhall and Ken Anderson for a discussion on Neo-Liberalism. What is it? How does it relate to you and to us?

May 21: “Summer Solstice”
How do we celebrate the longest day of the year? Join Mark Tipton as he takes us through the meanings behind Summer Solstice and how the Pagan community celebrates the warmer days of the year.

May 28: No Forum. Since this is the official start of summer for many and a long weekend, there will be no forum. There WILL be one more forum on June 4th before we officially break for the summer. If you have any questions please contact the forum coordinator at forum@firstuomaha.org.

Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

I want to write about the "Gather Our Spirit, Dream Our Future" workshop, but it has not taken place as I write this. So instead I will write about Rev. Peter Morales' vision of our denomination's future, at least as I understand it. Morales was until recently president of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

He pointed out the discrepancy between people who call themselves Unitarian Universalists and those who actually join one of our churches. There are about twice as many in the first category. So he suggests that we make our boundaries more permeable; that we actively welcome non-members into rallies, justice projects, classes, and whatever might interest them; that we focus less on the growth of individual congregations and more on growth of the movement.

I admire Morales's broad vision and his encouragement to welcome allies. At the same time, I believe that the future of our denomination lies in strong congregations. As the culture makes direct, authentic connection more optional, the church needs to be a place in which people speak openly and compassionately with one another and with the broader community. Virtual relationships have a place, but human beings need face-to-face contact. We need strong congregations.

Congregations can, however, become static; so they always need to welcome new, challenging voices. Starting in October, I'm beginning a series called "New Voices of our Faith," a series in which third-year Unitarian Universalist seminarians will be invited to preach at our church. I'm working to identify individuals who embody new ways of thinking about our liberal faith and individuals who envision changing how Sunday worship is done. I look forward to hearing these sermons, and I hope that you will too.

Ours is a strong congregation as well as a congregation open to change. Churches like ours are the future of the movement.

Blessings,
Frank

Church Events

Book Club

Monday, May 1 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Book: *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper* by Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. Hacker will deliver the final Holland Lecture on May 10.

People's Film Festival

Monday, May 1 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie we'll watch is *Constructing Rebellion*. In this DVD, Chris Hedges names the most dangerous institutions in America, chronicles the rise of corporate tyranny, and exposes the "sacrifice zones" where society's most vulnerable members are exploited. He offers a forceful plea for resistance and provides a blueprint for revolt.

Examined Life Group

Tuesdays, May 2 and 16 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. This is a group determined to become democratic with each participant presenting a topic related to how we assess ourselves personally and as members of society. The ultimate aim is to foster mutual understanding among ourselves and the others attending. We meet the first and third Tuesdays. Interested? Contact Jack at jackheidel@yahoo.com.

CommUnity Night

Friday, May 5 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. All are invited to this potluck event. Kids play in the nursery and teens can hang out in the lounge. Come for games, social time and bring something to share. If you're running late and can't bring something, come anyway!

New Member Celebration

Sunday, May 7 at 6pm. New members will be celebrated at this special invitation-only event. Are you interested in joining the church? Please contact Carrie at coordinator@firstuomaha.org today!

Women's Alliance

Monday, May 8 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Women, and those who identify as women, are invited to attend this gathering. Our final meeting of this church year will be a

"Women's Appreciation of WA" or, what Kathi likes to call, "Schmooze With (or without) Booze". We will introduce the new leaders/volunteers of Women's Alliance, reflect on past presentations, discuss future plans and enjoy appetizers, desserts, conversation, and laughter. Drinks and gathering starts at 6:30pm. Please join us! When you RSVP, please advise whether you can bring an appetizer or dessert. We ask for \$10 which will go to the Merritt Education Fund at First Unitarian. If this will be your first time attending, please be our guest! You can RSVP by email: Kathryn.lewis.kl@gmail.com or phone: 402-214-2718. Please leave a message. RSVPs needed by May 5.

Holland Lecture

Wednesday, May 10 at the Holland Performing Arts Center. See page 6.

AHA (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists) Discussion Group

Thursday, May 11 at 7pm in the Common Room. For those interested in "bring your own dinner," doors open at 6pm. The series "Trumpism vs. Humanism" presented by First Unitarian Atheist, Humanists, Agnostics continues with special guest speaker Susan Walsh. She is Assistant Professor and Director of Health Administration and Policy Program in the Department of Cultural and Social Studies at Creighton University. Susan has been invited to talk to us about the state of health care and the development of policy under the Trump administration. The program will include Q&A. Everyone and all viewpoints are welcome. Questions may go to aha@firstuomaha.org.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 14 at 12pm in the Common Room. See page 6.

People's Film Festival

Monday, May 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie will be *The Mask You Live In*, which explores how our American culture's narrow definition of masculinity is harming our boys, men and society at large. It then further unveils what we can do about it.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, May 18 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. We have begun a new book, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, by Karen Armstrong. Reuline Nightingale will facilitate the third chapter, *Compassion for Yourself*. We welcome all self-identified women. If you are interested, please contact Harriet Major at hmajor323@cox.net or 402-391-0248.

Young Adult Game Night

Saturday, May 20 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Join us for games! No RSVP needed. Just come by!

CUUPS Book Study Group: 12 Wild Swans

Sunday, May 21 at 11:30am in the Merritt Lounge. CUUPS will lead a book study on *The 12 Wild Swans: A Journey to the Realm of Magic, Healing and Action*. In this book, renowned leaders in the Wicca movement use a fairy tale to teach about the "reclaiming" model of witchcraft that blends magic and personal growth.

Arts and Crafts Night

Sunday, May 21 at 7pm in the Common Room. Bring your current project and supplies and join us for some artistic fellowship! Contact Kate Godfrey at coachkate@cox.net or 402-880-1327 for details.

First Steps: A Class for Visitors

Sunday, May 21 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. New to First U? All are welcome to attend this session. See page 17 for details.

Omaha Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, May 22 at 7pm in the Common Room. We invite any who embrace and support ethical non-monogamy-based loving relationships. We strive to offer a safe place to meet and discuss topics, issues, and hardships we face as polyamorous individuals and families. If you have any questions, please contact Susan at iamdosh@msn.com.

More events on next page...

Church Events Continued...

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, May 23 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Join us to discuss anything and everything related to Taoism! As Taoism is best understood through practice rather than theory, the goal of this group is to provide a participatory space to explore how Taoism is applied in daily life, with an emphasis on experience. With our direct experiences as a reference point, we can then delve into the main texts of Taoism. This group will be led by Geoff Erikson. Contact him at: gerickson03@yahoo.com.

Omaha Gives!

This online one-day only giving campaign happens on Wednesday, May 24. See page 7 for details.

Board Talk Back

Sunday, May 28 at 11:30am in the Common Room. The church board wants to hear from you and will have a table set up in the Common Room to discuss issues that are important to you and the congregation.

Recurring Events

Women's Religious Studies Group

This group meets every Thursday, except for the 3rd week of the month at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. This group explores a wide range of religious beliefs through reading, study, and discussion. New members welcome. We will be reading *The Mindfulness Survival Kit* by Thich Nhat Hahn. Questions? Email Margaret Miller: mmiller7243@gmail.com or call 402-964-2860.

Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month in the Whitney Young Room at 12:30pm. All D&D role players are invited. Questions? Contact Roman at RobertmNoriega@gmail.com, 402-769-4260.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the Conference Room at noon. If you've played before, come for some entertainment and time at the

game table. Novices welcome too.

Contact Scott Kemper at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

Lunch With the Minister

This group is on break and will be back in September.

Ways You Can Get Involved

Listening Circles Forming Now!

Q: What is a Listening Circle?

A: A small group of individuals – friends, visitors, or members of UU who listen and discuss various topics. Both the topics and format of discussion are designed to encourage active listening, which strengthens and deepens relationships. More details on page 15 in this newsletter or see here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/circles>.

Garden Help

Volunteers needed this spring to help spread donated mulch on the church grounds. Work in 1-3 hour increments, shorter time commitment when more people show up. Once the grounds are covered, you're off the hook for the season. Thanks! Contact Sharon Conlon, Garden Team Leader sharonconlon@msn.com, 402-332-7086.

Young Adult Team Leader

We are looking for a new leader. Are you 18-35? Can you help lead the once-a-month discussion group and participate in the Young Adult Game Night? Contact mte@firstuomaha.org if you're interested.

Church Anniversaries Approaching and Heritage Task Force Forms

We are looking forward to celebrating in 2018-19, the Centennial of our church building and the Sesquicentennial (150 years) of the signing of the articles of incorporation of our church. Anyone interested in helping with planning and organizing our 2018-19 "Year of Celebrating our Heritage" — we need you! We are looking for people with a variety of skills and interests: event planners, publications and public relations types, techies, writers, editors, archivists, architects, artistic types and of course people who love this place and its history. Interested?

Contact Dave Richardson at drichardson821@gmail.com.

Free Garage Sale Offsite

Save your reusable clothes, household items, etc. for our Sister Church's Clair First United Methodist Church (56th and Ames) Annual 'Free' Garage Sale for the residents of the Clair neighborhood. The May date has yet to be set but will be announced in the enews.

For more ways to help or get involved, go to: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/help>

Future Events

POPs (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, June 10 at 6pm. All parents of preschoolers (from littles through primary grades) are invited to attend POPs Nights to connect with other parents from both First and Second Unitarian. Childcare is provided on-site (please RSVP). Please bring a dish to share. Grown-ups will gather in the Common Room. Kids will eat and play in the nursery. Kindly RSVP (for adults and children) to Sarah Eades Hamilton. Email: seades.hamilton@gmail.com or call/text: 402-306-6339). We will NOT meet in May.

Pride Parade 2017

Saturday, June 17 in Council Bluffs, Iowa

Pride 2017 is right around the corner! We are looking for several enthusiastic individuals, couples and families to work on organizing our efforts. Please email or call me if you are interested in being a part of the planning committee. We need your help to make it happen. Contact Lori Schaaf at lhefeli@gmail.com or (402) 800-8528.

Thank you!! We are looking forward to another strong year of support!

Holland Lecture

Speaker: Jacob Hacker

Topic: American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper

Wednesday, May 10 at the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Description:

This lecture in 2017 will cover material in Jacob Hacker's most recent book, *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper*. Like every other prospering democracy, the United States developed a mixed economy that channeled the spirit of capitalism into strong growth and healthy social development. In this bargain, government and business were as much partners as rivals. Public investments in education, science, transportation, and technology laid the foundation for broadly based prosperity. Programs of economic security and progressive taxation provided a floor of protection and business focused on the pursuit of profit—and government addressed needs business could not.

The mixed economy was the most important social innovation of the twentieth century. It spread a previously unimaginable level of broad prosperity. It enabled steep increases in education, health, longevity, and economic security. And yet, extraordinarily, it is anathema to many current economic and political elites. And as the advocates of anti-government free market fundamentalism have gained power, they are hell-bent on scrapping the instrument of nearly a century of unprecedented economic and social progress. In *American Amnesia*, Hacker and Pierson explain how—and why they must be stopped.

More information about the lecture series can be found here:

<http://www.firstuomaha.org/holland-lecture-series>.

Tickets will be available by calling Ticket Omaha at 402-345-0606.

Church Annual Meeting

The 148th Annual Congregational Meeting of First Unitarian Church of Omaha will take place at the Church on Sunday, May 14 at 12pm.

Eligible voting members* of the church will adopt an operating budget for the 2017-18 church year and elect a President-elect, members of the Board of Trustees, a Trustee of the Trust Fund, and Nominating Committee members, hear select reports from church leaders, vote to approve a new mission statement, vision statement, and a covenant, and reveal our Unitarian of the Year!

Childcare will be provided and your Board of Trustees will host coffee hour following the 10:30am service and provide snacks and drinks to help tide you over during the meeting.

We encourage all members to attend this important church event.

If you are not able to attend this meeting in person and would like to view it online, please contact the church office (admin@firstuomaha.org) by Thursday, May 4th to let us know. We will attempt to stream the annual meeting online for those who cannot attend in person. Please note: our streaming process still faces some technical challenges and we cannot guarantee that it will work perfectly. We will not stream the meeting unless we have church members who have notified the church office that they need the meeting streamed online.

**Individuals are eligible to vote who have been members of the church for at least three months and have made a financial contribution in their name to the church between April 14, 2016 and April 14, 2017.*

Board of Trustees

First Unitarian Church of Omaha

OMAHA GIVES!

a 24-hour charitable challenge

AND SO CAN YOU!!!

Wednesday, May 24th 12 am-12 pm

A 24-hour, online, charitable challenge to benefit metro-area nonprofits.
YOU can participate in Omaha Gives! with a minimum gift of only \$10.

First Unitarian Church of Omaha will be participating, with all proceeds supporting our **Midtown Helping Hands** program (formerly called Neighborhood Ministry).

This program provides support to the many people who come to our church door each week asking for emergency help (food, bus ticket, toiletries, etc). This particular church program was selected to appeal broadly to Omaha residents and because it is not budget supported. To learn more about Midtown Helping Hands, please contact Royal Carleton (Team Chair) or the church office. *(Note, you may use Omaha Gives! to support church programs other than Helping Hands, but you will need to contact the church office to specify the program you want credited. Please do not pay your pledge this way, however.)*

**Please go online on May 24th to support First Unitarian Church's
Midtown Helping Hands team, and encourage your friends to join us!**

Link: <https://www.omahagives.org/>

Direct link to **Midtown Helping Hands (First Unitarian Church)
Omaha Gives! profile:**

**[https://www.omahagives.org/index.php?
section=organizations&action=overview&fwID=1540](https://www.omahagives.org/index.php?section=organizations&action=overview&fwID=1540)**

We Don't Come Here to Be More Alone...

We come to this church for many reasons, but never to be more alone. Whatever the reasons to be at First Unitarian, maybe we are also here because of loss or yearning...for connection, to share experience, to be less alone.

My husband, Jim Anderegg, died in 2002. He was the most alive, vital man I ever knew and he was 59 years old. He had a Ph.D. in organic chemistry. It was just astounding to me that a man who was so much fun found chemistry (so complicated and so dull to normal people), so intriguing. Which he did. And that is what killed him. He was exposed to carcinogenic lab chemicals over enough time that his bone marrow collapsed. It was catastrophic.

I had close friends, a very small close family, a career and colleagues I treasured, and a life that felt smugly satisfying in its perfection. The instant he died my little perfect life moved to the edge of a crater of grief and loneliness. Every breath was pain. So, I came here the winter he died, wearing sunglasses, hoping not to speak to anyone, but believing I had commonality with all of you. And this church was a place of beauty, peace, and comfort. So I kept coming, met many of you, and gradually woke up to my life again.

This church has been part of creating my life again. After Jim died, I asked two questions of everyone I knew that lost a spouse. One question was whether the surviving spouse had contact with their dead partner. I heard nothing credible. The other question was whether the survivor had achieved the same level of happiness they experienced when they were coupled with their loved one. Fifty percent said yes. I couldn't imagine it.

And slowly, imperceptibly I became happy again. As happy as I have ever been with a different life, a man I love, my little family, and friends...and you.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have served this community and I am extraordinarily grateful. I treasure my experience with this church.

Jackie Anderegg, President



Spring Time at First Unitarian Church
Photo by Carol Cronin

A Note from Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education

Our Spring Carnival was a success! Thank you for all the volunteers who made this happen. We had 61 children participating in games and egg hunts. Photo below by Sarah Hamilton.



Photo to the left by Scott Kemper.



Photos on this page by Scott Kemper.

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@firstuomaha.org or use the Hope in Action link on the church website. Or, you may simply complete a Caring Card, located in the church pews and place it in the offering plate.

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.

Community Meals

Every Saturday churches in our area join together to cook a meal, serve their neighbors and bring a sense of community to our neighborhood at First Baptist Church (401 Park Ave).

Did you know? You may be reimbursed for money you spend making food for one of our meals or you may choose to donate it.

Share the Plate This Month

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

In the month of May we share the plate with **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**, the United States' largest organization for parents, families, friends, and allies united with people

who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ).

By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

- Support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ
- Education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ
- Advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.pflag-omaha.org/>.

Change for Change

Each week generous people put change in the collection plate. This change goes to the Sunday School kids who decide what to do with the money. In the past they have helped Community Meals and International Bridges for Justice. The kids are now donating this change to the Neighborhood Ministry Team, which purchases bus tickets and food cards and gives out blessings bags to people who come to the church door from our area. Your change makes a difference! Thank you for your generosity!

Outside Opportunities

OTOC Candidate Accountability Session Monday, May 1 at St. Leo's the Great (102nd and Blondo street) at 7pm

One of the most important activities of OTOC is to organize Candidate Accountability Sessions. To prepare for the Candidate Accountability Sessions, each OTOC Action Team prepares questions that will be asked of the candidates who are participating in the specific Accountability Session.

The mayoral candidates and each of the city council candidates have been invited to participate in the Accountability Session to be held Monday, May 1. The questions to be asked of the candidates will include the topics of: Safe Rental Housing, Reducing Predatory Fees in Pay-Day Lending, Environmental Sustainability, and Community Policing of Immigrants.

All residents of Omaha are invited and encouraged to attend. For more information, go to www.otoc.org or call OTOC at 402-344-4401.

Please join in Celebrating the 95th Anniversary of the Flower Communion on June 4!

The UUPCC (Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council) is happy to share this invitation on behalf of the Unitarian communities in the Czech Republic and the ICUU (International Council of Unitarians and Universalists). In the words of the Rev. Dr. Petr Samojsky and the Rev. Mark Shiels:

"Unitarians in Prague are celebrating the 95th Anniversary of the Flower Communion on Sunday, June 4, 2017 at 10:30am in the Capek Hall (Central European Time). We want to make this annual event particularly special this year. We would like to invite Unitarians throughout the world to join us in this joyful event on Sunday June 4th. We would be most grateful if you would let your churches know of this special service and invite them to celebrate the Flower Communion service with us.

A Global Flower Communion will mean that Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist communities throughout the world will be celebrating the Flower Communion service at different times on June 4th depending on their local Time Zone. We see this as a wonderful way of enriching the 95th Anniversary of the original Flower Communion service held here in Prague.

We would also welcome photographs and greetings

from our sister churches participating in this Global event. We will display these at our service. Our service will be filmed and broadcast live on social media. We will send you more details about this in the near future. We realize this is an ambitious project and deeply appreciate your help in making this Global celebration happen."

For more information about UUPCC (Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council), please visit: <http://www.uupcc.org/>.

What's in a Name Tag?

By *Carrie Helmberger*,
Membership Coordinator

Have you ever wondered, "Why do we wear these name tags and why are there so many different versions of them?" Let me shed a little light on these burning questions for you.

- We wear nametags because, let's be honest, a lot of times we see people week after week and we don't always remember their names. A nametag helps take away a little of the pressure, making it easier to do that whole face-with-name recognition thing.

- Black plastic nametags (with pin backs)-- belong to our members who have been a part of the church the longest.

- Blue metallic nametags (with magnetic backs)--belong to our long-term members who just wanted a pretty blue name tag, to our more recent members, those who have just joined, or those of us who have lost our original name tag and needed a replacement*

- Visitors who fill out the yellow information sheet are greeted at their second visit with a white, paper nametag because members want to get to know them and make them feel welcomed. We want them to feel as if they belong, because they do!

- After a visitor has been with us for a while (8 or more visits), they will see that their plain white nametag now has a pretty blue stripe. This indicates that they are further interested in what our church has to offer. The blue stripe mirrors the blue cup at coffee hour, indicating the visitor feels safe enough at First Unitarian to stick around. It also means the visitors have been

attending service long enough that their faces will be familiar to our members.

*By the way members, can fill out a nametag request form, and with a \$12 fee you too can have a blue magnetic nametag of your own! Please contact the office at admin@firstuomaha.org today.

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. 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!

What's the Sarah Joslyn Society?

Sarah Joslyn, a member of this church for 47 years, signed the membership book in 1893. She was a trustee and she and her husband George were strong financial supporters at the time of the 1918 dedication of our building. The Sarah Joslyn Society was created in her memory in 2004 to recognize and honor those members of First Unitarian Church who have made a commitment to leave a bequest to the church.

How can you do the same? Include First Unitarian in your will. If you already have a will, add a codicil. Or make the church a beneficiary on a life insurance policy. You can give a dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or even stock. Only you will know the details. You don't have to part with your money right now. This is about looking forward, about investing in the future of this church as Sarah Joslyn did.

"We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant. We drink from wells we did not dig."

What have you received from First Unitarian? What do you love about it? Why not ensure that future generations can find a place of religious freedom as you have. Will you join the other 70 members of the Sarah Joslyn Society who have decided to provide security to our church by investing in its future? After you do, you will receive an invitation to our annual luncheon in October where we will welcome new members and reaffirm our thanks to old members.

For more information, contact Deb Duggan at deb.duggan1117@gmail.com or 402-553-5477.

Listening Circles Now Forming!

What is a Listening Circle?

A small group of individuals – friends, visitors, or members of UU who listen and discuss various topics. Both the topics and format of discussion are designed to encourage active listening, which strengthens and deepens relationships.

What Can Listening Circles Do For Me and Our Community?

A listening circle develops and enhances relationships of participants, builds trust, strengthens listening skills, and develops a safe space for everyone. These skills and relationships will improve all First UU activities as we grow and connect with one another.

What Kind of Topics Will We Discuss?

Both challenging and fun topics are explored. Currently we have prepared these topics: play, living simply, justice, forgiveness, expectations, endings, confronting evil, aloneness, and addictions.

How Often and For How Long Do Groups Meet?

Groups will meet twice a month for an hour to an hour and a half either at church or in homes.

What Does a Meeting Look Like?

A clear format is used for listening circles to ensure everyone is heard. We read several quotes on a single topic, followed by a short period of contemplation, and then discuss the quotes in three rounds.

- Round 1: Each member shares impressions without response.
- Round 2: Discussion. Follow up on ideas expressed, question, and expand.
- Round 3: Final thoughts shared by each individual. Did your viewpoint change from the conversation?

What if I Want to Facilitate One Meeting or More?

Great! The set format for listening circles makes guiding easy. Facilitators do as much or as little as they would like and have the opportunity to receive a vast amount of support. Minimally, just bring the topic of the day. Before your first meeting, you will receive a quick 5-10 minute one-on-one orientation, a manual with suggestions and topics, become a part of an on-line facilitator's community, and have the option of attending a group training meeting.

What Do You Expect of Me if I Join?

We ask that you be committed to attending and let the facilitator know if you cannot. We ask participants to listen and share deeply, be aware how much time they are taking to share, welcome new members, avoid cross talk, avoid judging, avoid giving feedback, avoid "fixing" people, and keep stories shared confidential.

We Want You!

We would like to grow and learn with you in small groups. We hope this will bring together people who may not normally interact with one another, and we hope to strengthen our community. Please email listeningcircles@firstuomaha.org or go to <http://www.firstuomaha.org/circles> to fill out the online form.

“Democracy and Unitarianism: Past and Present” Part V: First Unitarian and the Transformations of the late ‘60s & early ‘70s

By Dave Richardson

Our church and the denomination as a whole have adapted to social change, often serving as agents of change and ultimately finding themselves changed as a result of that role. This five-part series has looked at the pre- and post-war periods and continuing through the upheavals of the civil rights struggle and the war in Vietnam, the last two issues being the focus of the most recent installments.

Reverend Vester Vanstrom was our minister from 1964 – 1976. During that 12-year period our country saw change at an unheard of rate. “Van” was by no means merely a sideline observer of these dynamic times. His role in civil rights and opposition to the Vietnam war were discussed in previous installments. This piece will look at several important issues that also took place during “Van’s” tenure and played a significant role in changing our church and our community.

His strong convictions in terms of democratic principles was evident when, in 1966, Van and Rev. Charles Stephan, minister of Lincoln Unitarian, co-founded the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union, the local branch of the ACLU. Van also served as its first president. His previous experience as a lawyer proved invaluable in establishing this organization, which supports the Constitutional rights of all citizens. Over the years the leadership of the NE-CLU has often included Unitarian members and ministers. It is no secret that a large number of Unitarians are, in the words of Mike Dukakis, “card-carrying members of the ACLU.” Some of the first issues the NE-CLU took on included a challenge to the “Loyalty Oath” the University of Nebraska required for its professors. Another task involved guaranteeing the rights of the mentally handicapped in Nebraska. Van also introduced some changes that were controversial within the congregation.

One of his first acts was to re-configure the pews in the sanctuary. He called it “Church on the Square.” The pews toward the front now faced the back of the sanctuary, the middle pews toward the center thus forming a rectangle. Van felt this allowed for more interaction with the congregation and enhanced

musical and dramatic performances. It was noted that long-time member of First Unitarian, U.S. Senator Roman Hruska, upon first seeing the new pew arrangement remarked, “What the hell is going on here?”

Many progressive and inclusionary moves took place during “Van’s” time at First Unitarian. He approved the request of the predominately gay congregation of the Omaha Metro Church to conduct services in our sanctuary on Sunday afternoons. In those less tolerant days, this was a bold action.

He also hailed the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. In a sermon, Van noted that it was a “church vs. state” matter and that banning a woman’s right to choose should not be decided on theological grounds.

In 1965 the Midlands Memorial Society was founded by Charles and Grace Scudder, both members of the church. The church was the primary sponsor of this venture. During this era, the Funeral Director’s Association continually lobbied against the practice of cremation and simpler, more dignified memorial services. The MMS was officially incorporated and many church members served on the board and actively assisted individuals and families with more dignified arrangements.

The late ‘60s and early ‘70s were “heady times.” Many of the values, policies and attitudes that are commonplace today were not so common before and during those years. Many dedicated and courageous ministers and members helped transition this church into the thriving progressive place we enjoy today. The tradition did not end in the early ‘70s. It continues to this day thanks to many who came before and since those days. In the future, this column will look at the progress we have made since those “heady times.”



New to our church?

Join us for an informal introduction to Unitarian Universalism and our community.

The First Steps Class will take place on **Sunday, May 21 at 11:45am** in the Whitney Young Classroom (downstairs on the west side of the church by the nursery).

If you are interested, RSVP to Carrie at coordinator@firstuomaha.org or stop by the visitor's table (in the Common Room downstairs) on the 21st and we'll get you to the right room.

Grab a cup of coffee and we will see you there!



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Word limit: 200. Send submissions to

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Meet Our Leaders

Board MembersJackie Anderegg (President), Alan Vovolka (President-Elect), Sheri Conner,
Joe Schaaf (Secretary), Linda Parker, Kabin Thomas, Floyd Prine, Cy Leiseboard@firstuuomaha.org**Trustees of the Capital Trust**

Steve Hutchinson (2017), Evelyn Whitehill (2018), Dean Christensen (2019)

Committee on Ministry

Skip Ciulla, Jack Round, Donna Tubach-Davis

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Archives—Dave Richardson

Black Lives Matter—Rene Harper

Caring—Louise Jeffrey

Chalice Guild—Kay Lynn Goldner

Community Meals—Diane Withem

Fellowship—Judith Wright, Nadine Keith & Nellie Chenoweth

Finance—Walt Jesteadt

Fundraising—Donna Neff

Hope in Action—Kim Dunovan

Hospitality Teams—Carolyn McNamara

House and Grounds—Pierce Carpenter

Membership—Caitlin & Tom Seguin

Neighborhood Ministry—Royal Carleton

Office—Carolyn McNamara

Omaha Together One Community—Janet West

Partner Church—Janet West

Religious Education—Sheri Conner

Social Justice—Lori Schaaf

Women's Alliance—Nellie Chenoweth

Worship Arts Team—Megan Gustafson

Young Adult Group—Open

YRUU—Adam Sagert and Caroline Miller

Church Events

Book Club

Monday, May 1 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

People's Film Festival

Monday, May 1 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

Examined Life Group

Tuesday, May 2 and 16 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

CommUnity Night

Friday, May 5 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

AHA Meeting (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists)

Thursday, May 11 at 7pm. See page 4.

Women's Alliance

Monday, May 8 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 9 at 7pm in the Common Room.

Holland Lecture

Wednesday, May 10 at the Holland Performing Arts Center. See page 6 for details.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 14 at noon. See page 6.

Flame Deadline

Submit your newsletter articles to admin@firstuuomaha.org by May 15 at noon.

People's Film Festival

Monday, May 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, May 18 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Young Adult Game Night

Saturday, May 20 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

First Steps: A Class for Visitors

Sunday, May 21 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. See page 4.

CUUPS Book Study Group

Sunday, May 21 at 11:30am in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for information.

Arts & Crafts Night

Sunday, May 21 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, May 22 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, May 23 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 5 for details.

Omaha Gives! Online Event

Wednesday, May 24. See page 7 for information.

Board Talk Back

Sunday, May 28 at 11:30am in the Common Room. See page 5 for information.

Recurring...

YRUU Meetings

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Common Room.

Choir Rehearsal

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Sanctuary. Note: due to the Holland Lecture we will rehearse on Tuesday, May 9 at 7pm.

Lunch with the Minister

Group is on break. We'll start back up again in September.

Women's Religious Studies Group

Meets most Thursdays at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5.

Dungeons & Dragons Group

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month. See page 5.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. See page 5.

Future Events...

Teams Meeting

Saturday, June 3 at 2pm in the Common Room. More details in the enews.

POPs (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, June 10 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

Pride Parade 2017

Saturday, June 17. See page 5 for details.

CALL FOR PHOTOS!

Like to take pictures? If you capture a great photo of the Sunday service or the garden outside or an event in the Common Room, please send your photo to the church office at admin@firstuuomaha.org. We are always looking for new photos we can share in our newsletter, on the church website and social media. Thank you!

SOCIAL MEDIA AND FIRST U

Like our Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/First-Unitarian-Church-of-Omaha-158134657609262/>

The church creates Facebook events for Sunday services and often for other church events. This is a public page meaning if you post to the page, anyone on Facebook can view that post.

Join our Facebook group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/77808136080>

The group is a little different than the page. You need to request to be added to this closed group. This way the posts are private and only be seen by other church members and friends who are already in the group.

Follow us on Twitter

[@FirstUOmaha](https://twitter.com/FirstUOmaha)



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