

June 2017

The Flame



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

Sunday Services — All Are Welcome

Sunday, June 4 at 10:30am
“5:1”

Rev. Frank Rivas

Research shows that marriages in which there are five compliments to every one criticism are the most effective. The same may be true in congregations. Creating a culture of gratitude.

Sunday, June 11 at 10:30am

To Be Announced

Maria Wallace

Sunday, June 18 at 10:30am

“What Happened to God-the-Father”

Rev. Sarah Voss

Sarah Voss, retired UU minister and a member of this church, preaches this Father's Day. Her sermon includes a personal reflection on "What Happened to God-the-Father." Rev. Voss will look at what we've gained and what we've lost in our UU faith tradition as we've worked over the years to become more inclusive in our practice.

Sunday, June 25 at 10:30am

“Steel Magnolias” by Herbert Ross

In September, a group of us had so much fun presenting a scene from “Our Town” in the sanctuary, that we have decided to do it again! The Worship Associate Players present the final scene from this iconic play about the vast power of having and holding onto a Beloved Community. From the stage script, not the film. Might we suggest you bring your hankie?

Sunday Forum

Forum: Iowa’s Unsung Prairie Transformation to Farms and One Room Schools 1870-1900

Sunday, June 4 at 9:30am in the Common Room

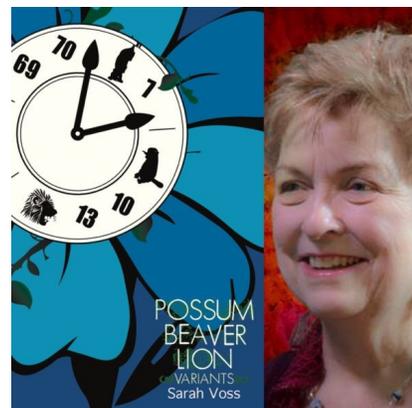
Please join Sandy Host as she screens this new 22-minute documentary by the Iowa Rural Schools Museum of Odebolt, Iowa. It will challenge what you think you know about how three-fourths of Iowa was settled. In less than 30 years, Iowa’s unprecedented and successful plan eradicated a tall grass biome by transforming it into a quilt of farms and small towns beginning in 1870. Our own John Wagner narrates the story of these schools.

Note on Forums:

June 4th is our last forum until this fall. If you have a topic you would like to share, please contact the Forum Coordinators, Denise and Bebe, at forum@firstuomaha.org.

Special Coffee Hour

Please join Sarah Voss on Sunday, June 25th, during the coffee hour for the pre-publication promotion of her forthcoming poetry chapbook, *Poosum, Beaver, Lion: Variants*. This is Sarah's first formal poetry book "success." She will read four short poems from her manuscript about ten minutes into the coffee hour, and there will be a table set up for pre-purchases. Your support is greatly appreciated. More information about her book can be found here: <https://www.finishinglinepress.com/product/poosum-beaver-lion-variants-by-sarah-voss/>



Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

The last church year (which corresponds roughly with the academic year) has been an extraordinary one for us. What comes next is a challenge.

The last year was characterized by growth. There were many contributing factors, among them, the decision to return to a single, higher energy service, the decision to hire Carrie Helmberger as our membership coordinator, and, outside the church, the election of our current president. About 15% of the current congregation are new this year.

And growth brings significant challenge. It turns out that these new congregants have ideas of their own, both about what religion is and about how the church and its programs ought to be organized. They did not leave their ideas at the door, but carried them right into what had been a relatively stable congregation. We are going to have to adjust to change.

This is a good adjustment. A living congregation, like a living religion, is a congregation in transition, always open to new ideas and to new ways of doing things, but we've grown a little out of practice. Our membership had been consistent, and our congregation, comfortable for some time.

With a significant number of new voices, our change muscles will develop. No, we don't have to accept every new idea, but we do have to fully engage with new ideas and new ways of doing things—at least we do if we want to grow, to become the dynamic congregation that has always been our potential, to thrive through a difficult time in this nation's history.

May we welcome new members and not expect of them docility. May we welcome them, listen to and engage with them, and, in the process, become a more open, liberal faith community.

By the way, in October I will begin a new series, "New Voices of Liberal Religion." I am asking a few outstanding Unitarian Universalist seminarians to preach about some of the new directions in our movement. Get ready to be challenged again.

Blessings and love,
Frank

Church Events

CommUnity Night

Friday, June 2 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! No RSVP required.

Teams Meeting

Saturday, June 3 at 2pm in the Common Room. Team leaders and other interested volunteers are invited to attend.

First UU Young Adults

First Sundays after service (11:45am) in the Merritt Lounge beginning June 4th. First Unitarian Young Adults welcomes everyone ages 18-35 from all over the Omaha metro. We invite you to come build community, deepen relationships, and grow with us.

Bethany & Ryan Cook's Baby Shower

Sunday, June 4 at 1pm in the Common Room. They've taken care of our teens on Sundays and in YRUU. Help us celebrate the upcoming birth of their first child. Appetizers and cake provided. Registry: Giftster.com.

Book Club

Monday, June 5 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Book: *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi. Questions? Please contact: drichardson821@gmail.com.

People's Film Festival

Monday, June 5 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie we'll watch is *The Brainwashing of My Dad*. Alarmed and intrigued by her father's gradual conversion to hard-right political views, documentarian Jen Senko examines the ascent of right-wing media, which whips up civic resentments daily through an army of conservative talk-radio pundits.

Examined Life Group

Tuesdays, June 6 and 20 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.

AHA (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists) Discussion Group

Thursday, June 8 at 7pm in the Common Room. For those interested in "bring your own dinner," doors open at 6pm. The series "Trumpism vs. Humanism" will continue with our very own Dave Richardson and Ron Withem. They will address education policy under the Trump administration. Are you concerned about a diminished role of federal money in education; challenges to teachers' unions; the fate of early childhood education; a greater presence of charter schools; or other topics that challenge Humanist values toward education? Please join AHA for our last meeting before the summer break to explore these topics and more. Questions may go to aha@firstuomaha.org.

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).

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, June 15 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. Suzanne King will lead our group on the fourth step, "Empathy", in *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. We welcome all self-identified women. If you are interested, please contact Harriet Major at hmajor323@cox.net or call 402-391-0248.

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!

CUUPS Book Study Group: 12 Wild Swans

Sunday, June 18 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, June 18 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.

People's Film Festival

Monday, June 19 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie will be *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.

Shakespeare on the Green

Saturday, June 24, offsite. See next page for details.

First Steps: A Class for Visitors

Sunday, June 25 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. New to First U? All are welcome to attend this session. See page 17 for details.

Church Events Continued...

Board Talk Back

Sunday, June 25 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.

Mystic Sojourn CUUPS

Sunday, June 25 at 6:15pm in the Common Room. We will celebrate the summer solstice. We will meet up at 6:15pm in the Common Room. Childcare will be provided. At 6:30pm we'll leave for the labyrinth at First Congregational at 36th and Harney. The evening will end with a potluck celebration at First UU and all are welcome.

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, June 27 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.

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're 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.

Ways You Can Get Involved

Community Meals

Saturday, June 3 at First Baptist Church. Please join us in serving our neighbors in the community at the First Baptist Church. Volunteers are needed to help make desserts and to work. Can you help? See page 12.

Shakespeare on the Green

We'd like to keep up the yearly tradition of volunteering for Shakespeare on the Green. It's both fun to sit with other UUs during the performance and be of service to others! We're looking for 15 volunteers and 5 alternates for Saturday, June 24 (*King Lear* is performed). Volunteers arrive at the park around 5pm for training and then commit about 2.5 hours to volunteering before the performance. They also lend a hand during intermission to collect additional donations. Volunteers will enjoy reserved ground seating near the stage for the performance. Email Katrina.Schmidt@gmail.com or text/call 402-206-7774 to get involved! Go here:

Listening Circles!

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 11 in this newsletter or see here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/circles>.

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 at dritchardson821@gmail.com.

Audio Team

Want to help on Sunday mornings? Join the audio team and be trained on the sound system so you can be a part of church service. Questions? Interested? Contact the office: admin@firstuomaha.org

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

Future Events

Brush Up Nebraska: Paint-A-Thon

Saturday, August 19, offsite

The paint-a-thon is a community-based volunteer program that paints homes of qualified low-income elderly and low-income permanently disabled homeowners, in the Omaha Metropolitan Area, so that they may maintain their property, increase energy efficiency and beautify the community. Each year, our church has a paint team. Interested? Contact Alan at alan.v@cox.net.

Sign-Up Fair for Small Groups

Sunday, Sept. 10 during coffee hour.

Learn about the many discussion groups and Listening Circles happening in our church. Find the right group for you! Group leaders will be available during coffee hour to introduce you to what they are all about. A few groups that will be featured: Listening Circles, Women's Religious Studies Group and Covenant Group, The Book Club, and the Examined Life Group, plus many more! Need info? Want to participate? Contact Katrina at Katrina.Schmidt@gmail.com

2017 Annual Meeting Recap from the New President

By Alan Vovolka, Church President

This year's annual meeting included consideration of three statements: a mission statement, a vision statement and a covenant statement. The question before the congregation was whether or not the membership would agree to support each statement as they were produced by a weekend-long process involving about 70 members of the congregation. In short, all three statements were supported. I will list the statements here briefly followed by some lessons learned, next steps, and editorial opinions.

Mission:

Fostering the Whole Person, Compassion, and Justice.

Vision:

An Inclusive Community that Listens, Engages, Inspires, and Acts.

We covenant to:

- Listen to understand and grow
 - Seek and value all voices
 - Model respect and kindness
 - Assume good intentions
- Resolve conflicts directly and compassionately
 - Contribute time, talent, treasure
 - Respect people's time
 - Celebrate, support, appreciate

First, holding an annual meeting on Mothers Day is sub-optimal.

As the church by-laws give authority for the mission statement to the Board of Trustees and suggest that they be reviewed every 3-5 years, I expect that the board will adopt these statements in the near future. Also, since the by-laws do not restrict the board from changing these statements as they see fit, I am hoping to find ways to continue the spirited (if I might use that term) discussion of whether the terms “spiritual” or “religious” belong in the mission statement or are implied by the fact that we are a church. I’ve participated in a Listening Circle where people really focused on understanding each others' thoughts and feelings about spirituality and religiosity rather than attempting to bring others to acknowledge the intrinsic “rightness” of one's original attitude. I believe that this sort of conversation, in small groups, with open minds and hearts, will move our church community in a positive direction on this important topic.

I'm also hoping to find ways (and people) to help move the covenant into practice in the congregation. It's been a while since we've had an active Right Relations team. If you have interest and energy to be a team member, or have a friend that you can talk into becoming one, please let me know.

I also liked the old mission statement which was too long to memorize and therefore basically just collected dust. Perhaps it could become the church elevator speech. Maybe I'll try to get a copy of it framed and mounted near the elevator, so that people can review it while waiting for the hydraulics to do their job.

If you have ideas on these or any other church topics, please contact me early and often, so that I don't forget. Did I mention anything about not holding meetings on Mother's Day?

Alan Vovolka
Board President
president@firstuuomaha.org
(402) 344-3988

P.S. If you actually read this, let me know. The rumor is that no one does.
A.V.

Nominees Elected at Annual Meeting

President-Elect: Wendy Hessler

New Board Members: Catherine Plumlee, Donna Tubach-Davis, and Maria Wallace

New Trustee of the Capital Trust: Daniel Byrd

New Nominating Committee Members: Kathi Oliver and Marie Sedlacek

Photos from the Hootenanny — April 29, 2017



Photos by Wiig



Annual Awards Given Out in May

Annually, the Nominating Committee solicits congregational input to award and recognize volunteers and to select the Unitarian of the Year. The Nominating Committee selected the following individuals to be honored for their contributions to First Unitarian Church of Omaha. Congratulations to everyone who was nominated and to our award winners who were recognized at the Annual Meeting on May 14.



Judith Wright and **Harriet Major** were both awarded the Unsung Unitarian Universalist Award for lifetimes of action that inspire, support, and express Unitarian Universalism.

According to Harriet's son Jamie, "If there's a march, there's a good chance we'll be there."

Of Judith, one church member said, "no one is more committed to making visitors and new members feel welcomed."

Photo by Kate Wiig.



Ami Al-Fatihah was awarded the Youth Social Justice Award. Ami has volunteered at our church and with the organization "Foods Not Bombs," and with Benson High students in the "More Than Just a Village Academy" program. Photo by Elaine Wells.

Not pictured: **Laurie Gift** was given the Social Justice Award for witnessing to the ideals of social justice and responsibility that are so important to our UU heritage. Laurie created and chaired the OTOC Sustainability Action Team and has been one of the main organizers and participants in important OTOC forums about OPPD management.



Royal Carleton received the Keeping the Faith Award for touching the lives of the congregation and community in positive ways. Royal helps provide opportunities for the church to support our community through the Thanksgiving Dinner and Blessing Bag Day. Both of these activities help our neighborhood's homeless and low-income residents.

Photo by Kate Wiig.



Ron Knapp was given the Heritage Award for significant contributions to preserving and celebrating our UU history. Ron has been a frequent speaker at AHA meetings. He occasionally gives sermons from the pulpit. For more than a year, Ron ran a very popular series at church called Exploring Humanist Perspectives in Literature.
Photo by Kate Wiig.



Ryan and Bethany Cook were given the Religious Education Award. (Not pictured: Bethany) This award is for outstanding achievement and excellence in religious growth and learning. Ryan and Bethany have been leaders of the Sunday morning Spielbound group and active with the YRUU (youth group).
Photo by Kate Wiig.

The Unitarians of the Year:

Frank Norris and Shelton Hendricks



Awarded posthumously



*Special thanks to Sheri Conner and Linda Parker for preparing the Annual Meeting lunch.
Thanks to everyone who helped set up and clean up.*

A Note from Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education

Some wonderful events are unfolding in the Religious Education world at First Unitarian. The children are looking forward to our connection with the homeless families at Micah house. Our plant sale on May 21st was a fundraiser for purchasing stuffed animals for this cause. Sunday school kids made seed bombs to sell. They have also repotted giant sunflower sprouts. Plants from my garden and contributions from Jody Petrow and Nancy Scott were on sale as well.

The seeds planted this winter will grow in the children's vegetable garden. Will there be another bumper crop of salsa veggies this year? We would all look forward to another Salsa Sunday.

Hogwarts letters will come via Owl Post to mailboxes soon. Many of us have been working on our Harry Potter Camp set for June 19-23. Campers will be wearing black robes and swinging wands. Caution is advised. Summer Sunday school will be Harry Potter themed as well. We will be exploring personality attributes of JK Rowling's characters.

Our loyal game enthusiasts, Ryan and Bethany Cook, will be celebrating the arrival of their new baby soon. We are so thrilled for their new addition and wish them much happiness.

Bebe McCammond is our new Forum Coordinator. She is a new member with lots of energy and insights. Welcome, Bebe. Many thanks to Denise Alain, who passes the baton to Bebe and will continue to be involved in many church responsibilities.

The children and I planted flowers in front of the wayside pulpit on Mother's Day. These flowers are to remember Kop Ramsey, a long-time, beloved church member. See the picture below.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Wilson, DRE. First Unitarian Church



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.

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).

Next opportunity to serve:

Saturday, June 3, First Unitarian Church will sponsor an extra Community Meals day. We'll make Mexican casseroles, a salad or vegetable of some type, and single serving desserts. Please join us in serving our neighbors in the community at the First Baptist church. Volunteers are needed to help make desserts and to work.

Please contact Diane Withem at dianewithem@gmail.com or call 402.679.8916 if you would like to set up and cook, serve, and clean up or bake. Thanks in advance for your help!

Share the Plate This Month

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a local cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. In the month of June we share the plate for **NAMI** (National Alliance on Mental Illness).

From the NAMI website: NAMI Nebraska is a nonprofit, grassroots organization dedicated to education, support and advocacy with anyone whose life has been touched by mental illness. We believe in recovery and the hope for a better future. NAMI Nebraska helps unite parents, spouses, siblings, friends and people who have a mental illness together with mental health professionals to fight for improved treatment, a better quality of life and recovery. Individuals identify recovery as being an ongoing journey and an end result as well as an overall paradigm for achieving wellness and optimal mental health. NAMI Nebraska is available to support persons on their road to recovery by providing respect and peer support. Consumers have a personal responsibility for their own self-care and journeys of recovery. NAMI Nebraska provides the support for individuals and families on their journey. For more information, please visit: <https://naminebraska.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!

Finance Matters

By Walt Jesteadt, Treasurer

The Capital Trust was established in 1987 as an endowment fund for the church, governed by three trustees serving overlapping three-year terms. The current trustees are Evelyn Whitehill, Dean Christensen, and Daniel Byrd. The trustees also manage some smaller designated funds as part of the Trust, one for the Women's Alliance used as an endowment for the annual Merritt Scholarship, and one created by an anonymous \$10,000 contribution to support more music in the church. The trust document, written 30 years ago, states that income from investments will go to the church general fund every year, and we have always interpreted that to mean interest and dividends rather than any change in the market value of the investments. As indicated in the recent annual report, the market value of all investments, including the designated funds, increased from \$484,435 to \$527,004 during the last church year, but total income was only \$14,323 and income to the church general fund was only \$13,516.

In addition to the Capital Trust endowment, the church has a large cash reserve that has increased dramatically in the past few years as a result of a few large bequests. The Board has been reluctant to transfer the money directly to the general fund of the Capital Trust because of restrictions on later access to the money or to create a new designated fund within the Capital Trust because the rules governing designated funds are not described in the trust document.

I believe it is time to update the document to specify that income to the church be defined in terms of a percentage of the current market value of the investments held by the Capital Trust rather than the current more restrictive definition and to clarify the rules governing designated funds. We can then move some of our cash reserves into the Capital Trust and increase the annual amount provided to the church, allowing the trustees to focus on the best return while maintaining the value of the investments. An all-church meeting would be required to approve a new (or amended) trust document, but this plan would remove uncertainty regarding interpretation of the trust document while greatly improving the handling of the church investments. The trust document can be found in the finance section of the members' web page. If you have an interest in contributing to revisions of the document, please contact Walt Jesteadt at treasurer@firstuomaha.org.

Do You Shop on Amazon?

Follow this link to www.smile.amazon.com and when you make a purchase, Amazon will donate a percentage to First Unitarian Church of Omaha through the AmazonSmile program.

Steps:

1. Visit www.smile.amazon.com
2. Search for First Unitarian Church of Omaha then select the organization's name. Be sure to confirm you are electing the correct organization, as many charitable organizations have similar names. Or just use this direct link: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0388142>
3. Add items to your cart and pay. It's That Easy! When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping as Amazon.com with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to First Unitarian Church of Omaha. You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

Questions? Contact Donna at neffd@cox.net

New Member Celebration

By Carrie Helmberger,
Membership Coordinator

On Sunday, May 7, those who have joined the church in the last year were honored at a celebration of their membership. A wine and desserts reception was hosted by the Membership Team in the Common Room. New members attending included Bebe Barreras-McCammond, Lee Clausen, Darelynn Egger, Geoff Erickson, Mary Fieber, Mike McAtee, Greg Petrow, Jody Petrow, Sharon Piehler, Peter Piehler, Caitlin Seguin, Tom Seguin, and Katie Zimmer. Each new member received an ivy plant which represents the twists and turns our friendships take and the connections and bonds we form as members of our church. New members were joined in their celebration by board members and team leaders of the church. Congratulations and welcome to First Unitarian Church!

Welcoming New Members

By Ellen Shurson

Bebe Barreras-McCammond describes herself as a forceful, independent, liberal, result-oriented, practical, atheist, woman who is married, and a mother of two. She was born and raised the 10th child out of 11 by her immigrant parents in Oregon. Kate Rouch and Deb Duggan invited her to visit First Unitarian, where she met a group of people who encourage free-thinking, open dialogue, and welcomed everyone. Her interests are hair, books, making/finishing lists, schedules, organizing, and labeling.



the things they do. He was first drawn to the church by the search for a liberal group to commune with and continues to be inspired by the music and poetry of the services and the friendly, engaging people.



Lee Clausen grew up in Columbus, Nebraska. He originally moved to Omaha to attend UNO, where he earned a Masters in Urban Studies. Lee is a freelance writer and group facilitator. He has a passion for helping those in the mental health community and became a member of First Unitarian Church because of our shared sense of social service and community connection.

Dan Boster is originally from Texas but has been in the Midwest for the last 20 years, including the last 15 in Omaha. Dan and his wife, Marni, have been married for 19 years, and they have two children, Libby and Noble. Dan was an English major and has a B.A. from the University of Texas, an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin, and a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska. Dan teaches English and serves as instructional coach at Ralston High School and teaches education courses at UNO. Dan works with local groups to promote mindfulness, meditation, and writing. He enjoys traveling with his family and supporting them in



Jody Petrow was raised UU in Florida, but came back as an adult for the community and also for the religious education for her children. She is originally from Florida, by way of Texas and North Carolina: her husband's job, and his stepson in Iowa, brought them to Nebraska. They have three kids (Jackie, Eddie, and Clara) in elementary school and a high-school aged stepson, Tristan. Jody teaches 10th grade English at Bellevue West and her husband is a professor at UNO. Jody is involved in RE. Not only does she help teach, but she helps with the children's garden. Additionally she is very interested in social justice issues and enjoys gardening and hiking. **Greg Petrow** was born and raised in California, graduating from high school in Sacramento and then college at UC Berkeley. He is a political science professor at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. In graduate school he was a founding member of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, in North Carolina, and he continues to be drawn to political activism and social justice causes. In his spare time he likes to exercise and watch *Doctor Who*.



*Pictured Above: Carrie, Jody & Greg Petrow and Rev. Frank Rivas at the New Member Celebration
Photos by Bob Hess*

Mary Fieber was born in Wisconsin to depression babies who became an Academic Anesthesiologist and a Special Educator. She grew up in Omaha, and attended college at St. Olaf in Minnesota, returning to Omaha for medical school. She went to Milwaukee for a surgery internship and pathology residency. She then completed a fellowship at LA County Hospital in Los Angeles. She had a short-lived marriage to a fellow pathologist and then got a horse, with whom she had a wonderful relationship for 14 years. Mary practiced medicine at St. Joseph for six years and finished her career in Oklahoma City and Enid, OK. She then retired to Omaha in July 2016 and is having a ball while recovering from the culture of Oklahoma.



Kathy Scribner joined the church in April, as did **Chris Krull** and **Jeri Thurber**, and their new member articles will be in next month's issue.

First UU Young Adults News

By Collin Hatcher

The time has come to bid a fond farewell to Anne Wilder, our former Young Adult Team Leader. Anne has been instrumental in bringing the Young Adults of First Unitarian together, hosting discussion groups and game nights. She has also blessed us with her musical talent and her personality. As it happens, life has called her to bigger and better things. We wish her luck in all of her endeavors and we know she will bless the community she joins as much as she has blessed ours. The baton of leadership is being passed along to Collin and Becca Hatcher. Collin is a member of the US Air Force, Becca is a student at UNO, and they have been members of First Unitarian since 2015. They are thrilled to begin this chapter of growth and to expand the UU ministry in the realm of Young Adults!

The First Unitarian Church of Omaha invites everyone ages 18-35 to join the Young Adults in intentional community. Join us as we try to live authentically, create connections, and seek personal and social transformation. First UU Young Adults meets on the first Sunday of each month in the Merritt Lounge after service. Our first meeting is June 4.

Want to contact the YA Group? Email youngadults@firstuomaha.org.

What Does the Board Do?

The board of our church is a group of eight people nominated by our Nominating Team and elected by our congregation, whose function is to keep the church on track with the mission and form the vision for the future. It also includes our minister and our church administrator as non-voting members. It is the board's function to insure that we stay true to what the congregation identifies as their values and their reasons for belonging to the church. In most churches that is called a mission statement. The mission statement also serves as a reminder of why we exist and how we identify ourselves to visitors and the larger community.

It is also the board's function to protect and allocate the financial resources of our church and to make

major decisions that are consistent with the well-being of our community, our values and our physical space. The board also receives regular reports on the major activity and staffing of our church and initiates major projects that are consistent with our mission. We also solve policy or by-law problems that arise over specific situations that are problematic or need attention or are a by-product of expanding our membership or our vision. We evaluate the role of the minister and the well-being of the congregation and assess what areas need change or attention.

All members and friends are welcome at all of our board meetings. The fourth Sunday of every month our Board members wear blue ribbons and are available for discussion or questions at our Board Talk Back in the Common Room.

Email the board: board@firstuomaha.org

What Does the Ministry Team Council (MTC) Do?

These are three members elected by the group of volunteer teams and the board and the congregation. It also includes our church administrator, our minister and our director of religious education as non-voting members. The responsibilities involve support and help to all the volunteer teams in our church and the allocation of staff, volunteer and financial resources for our activities. The MTC is also the group that serves to problem solve most of the issues that come up in the church. This group is the nuts and bolts of how the church functions and the decisions that need to be made routinely as well as special events. This is a time-consuming, large job with authority to make difficult decisions about allocation of resources at the same time remaining true to the mission of the church as we define it.

The MTC also sets the agenda for the larger Teams Meeting which is held every two months and is a meeting of all the volunteers and team leaders that can attend.

Catharine Dixon, our church administrator, is the person who discerns whether an issue belongs to the MTC or the board and she consults with the minister or the board president if it is unclear.

Email the MTC: MTC@firstuomaha.org



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, June 25 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 25th and we'll get you to the right room.

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



Minister

Frank Rivas

minister@firstuuomaha.org**Director of Religious Education**

Jan Wilson

dre@firstuuomaha.org**Membership Coordinator**

Carrie Helmberger

coordinator@firstuuomaha.org**Church Administrator**

Catharine Dixon

admin@firstuuomaha.org**Organist**

Pat Will

Early Service Pianist

Stan Harper

Choir Director

William Miller

choirdirector@firstuuomaha.org**Minister Emeritus**

Ronald Knapp

Nursery Coordinator

Jenny Hastings

childcare@firstuuomaha.org**Custodian**

Bobby Medrano

Nominating CommitteeMolly Dewell, Dave Olson,
Kathy Oliver, Carol Ramsey,
Marie Sedlacek, Ben Wallace**THE FLAME**

Deadlines are the 15th of each month.

Word limit: 200. Send submissions to

admin@firstuuomaha.org.Editor/Designer: Cat DixonProofers: Lana Hammel,

Scott Kemper, Lois Norris,

Debbie Hunsberger

Flame Mailing Team:

Debbie Hunsberger, Lois Norris,

Linda Hruska, Kim Callaghan,

Meet Our Leaders

Board MembersAlan Vovolka (President), Wendy Hessler (President-Elect), Joe Schaaf (Secretary),
Linda Parker, Catherine Plumlee, Floyd Prine, Donna Tubach-Davis,
Maria Wallaceboard@firstuuomaha.org**Trustees of the Capital Trust**

Evelyn Whitehill (2018), Dean Christensen (2019), Daniel Byrd (2020)

Committee on Ministry

Skip Ciulla, Jack Round, Donna Tubach-Davis

Ministry Team Council

Rev. Frank Rivas, Nellie Chenoweth, Alan Vovolka, Diane Withem

mtc@firstuuomaha.org**Ministry Teams and Team Leaders**

Archives/Heritage Task Force—Dave Richardson and Carol Cronin

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 and Katrina Schmidt

Hope in Action—Kim Dunovan

Hospitality Teams—Carolyn McNamara

House and Grounds—Pierce Carpenter

Listening Circles—Katrina Schmidt

Membership—Caitlin & Tom Seguin

Neighborhood Ministry—open

Office—Carolyn McNamara

Omaha Together One Community—Janet West

Partner Church—Janet West

Religious Education—Sheri Conner

Social Justice—Lori Schaaf

Women's Alliance—Catherine Plumlee

Worship Arts Team—Megan Gustafson

Young Adult Group—Collin & Becca Hatcher

YRUU—Adam Sagert and Carolyn Miller

First Unitarian Churchwww.firstuuomaha.org

402-345-3039

Church Events

CommUnity Night

Friday, June 2 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Teams Meeting

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

First UU Young Adults

Sunday, June 4 at 11:45am in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

Ryan & Bethany Baby Shower

Sunday, June 4 at 1pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

Book Club

Monday, June 5 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

People's Film Festival

Monday, June 5 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

Examined Life Group

Tuesday, June 6 and 20 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

AHA Meeting (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists)

Thursday, June 8 at 7pm. See page 4.

POPs (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, June 10 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Flame Deadline

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

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, June 15 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Pride Parade 2017

Saturday, June 17, offsite. See page 4 for details.

People's Film Festival

Monday, June 19 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

First Steps: A Class for Visitors

Sunday, June 25 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. See page 4.

CUUPS Book Study Group

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

Arts & Crafts Night

Sunday, June 18 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, June 27 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 5 for details.

Board Talk Back

Sunday, June 25 at 11:30am in the Common Room. See page 5 for information.

Recurring...

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.

Lunch with the Minister

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

Future Events...

Brush Up Nebraska:

Paint-A-Thon

Saturday, August 19, offsite
See page 5.

Listening Circle Workshop

Saturday, August 19 at 9am in the Common Room. See page 11.

Sign-Up Fair for Small Groups

Sunday, Sept. 10 during coffee hour.
See page 5.

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

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

Mission: Fostering the Whole Person, Compassion, and Justice

Vision: An inclusive Community that Listens, Engages, Inspires, and Acts

We covenant to:

- Listen to understand and grow
 - Seek and value all voices
 - Model respect and kindness
 - Assume good intentions
- Resolve conflicts directly and compassionately
- Contribute time, talent, treasure
 - Respect people's time
- Celebrate, support, appreciate

Adopted May 14, 2017

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

www.firstuomaha.org