

January 2018

# The Flame



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Chili Cook-Off 2018

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

## Church Services

**Sunday, January 7 at 10:30am**

**“What Lies at the Historic Core of Liberal Religion”**

**Rev. Ronald Knapp, Minister Emeritus**

Perhaps, as we enter a new year, this might be a good time to explore the historic values that resulted in Unitarian Universalism.

**Sunday, January 14 at 10:30am**

**“Celebrating the 450th Anniversary of the Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience”**

**Partner Church Team**

At this service First Unitarian Church will celebrate the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience. On January 1568, in Torda, Transylvania (now Romania), King Janos Zsigmond (John Sigismund, the only Unitarian king in history) proclaimed the Edict of Torda which declares freedom of religion and conscience. We will be joining many other UU churches who are also celebrating this important event. See page 15 for more information.

**Sunday, January 21 at 10:30am**

**“The Only Constant”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

My dog appreciates walking in the same park every day. Human beings aren't wired the same way. A sermon about change.

**Sunday, January 28 at 10:30am**

**“What Springs Spontaneous from the Holy Heart”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

Religion doesn't add anything to our lives. Rather, religion helps us to eliminate beliefs that no longer work and to face the unknown.

## Sunday Forums

*Forums are held at 9:30am in the Common Room. If you have a topic you would like to share, please contact the Forum Coordinator, Bebe at [forum@firstuomaha.org](mailto:forum@firstuomaha.org).*

**Sunday, January 7 at 9:30am**

**Military Spouses with Becca Hatcher & Sarah Copeland**

When you follow your spouse's call to serve the nation, where does that leave you? Why is resilience so important? What about family and friends? Just how involved are spouses really? We will talk about the challenges and rewards that present themselves to military spouses and what role local communities play in our lives.

**Sunday, January 14 at 9:30am**

**Foster Care with Andrea Johnson from Children's Square**

Children all over the Omaha Metro need more than just a safe space to rest their heads. They need love, nourishment, and encouragement. Perhaps more than anything, they need hope. That's what foster parents do; they foster hope. Sometimes birth families need help through a difficult time. Foster parents partner with these families to be agents of change and healing. At Children's Square, we recognize the dedication and determination it takes to be a foster parent. We help to train, support, and guide foster families so that they can continue doing good work for children in the community.

**Sunday, January 21 at 9:30am**

**What is Taoism? with Geoff Erickson**

Taoism is a religion that began in China at least 2,500 years ago and falls under the first, third, and sixth sources of Unitarian Universalism. This forum will cover frequently asked questions and give you an opportunity to ask anything you would like to ask about Taoism.

**Sunday, January 28 at 9:30am**

**Four Directions, Four Elements with Kate Godfrey**

Directional associations can be used in meditation, worship, or as a philosophical construct. Having passed through Europe for millennia, they are deeply embedded in our culture. Using Socratic questioning, we will explore each direction, its associations, and metaphors. Kate Godfrey has been a practicing pagan for 29 years.

## Rev. Elations

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

2017 has been a difficult year. Steps that we had taken to protect the earth, our home, have been reversed. The safety nets established to ensure the welfare of all have been replaced by lowered taxes for the wealthy. The vision of this country as welcoming the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses yearning to be free has been replaced by plans for an impenetrable wall.

Yet there are signs of hope. The hope deeper than Alabama's choice for senator and, before that, in Virginia's choice for governor. The hope that's going to carry us toward greater justice is our ability to stop dividing the world into us and them, into Americans and immigrants, into Black and White, into rich and poor, into Democrat and Republican. It's the hope we witness in Elaine Wells' Liberal-Conservative Dialogues, in naming sexual abuse independent of political position, in books such as J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elogy*, and in articles like "Liberals Need to Take their Fingers Out of their Ears" (by Thomas Edsall in the December 9 issue of the *New York Times*).

It's the position most eloquently expressed by nineteenth-century Unitarian minister Theodore Parker: "Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere; its temple, all space; its shrine, the good heart; its creed, all truth; its ritual, works of love; its profession of faith, divine living."

May such a faith grow within each of us. May such a faith grow within the nation. May 2018 be a year to celebrate.

Blessings in the year ahead,

Frank

## Church Events

### Soto-Sanchez Citizenship Party

*Friday, Jan. 5 at 6pm in the Common Room.* Patricia Soto and Harold Sanchez became citizens of the United States on Dec. 4, 2017. Help us celebrate this momentous occasion. Please wear something red, white and blue.

### Community Meals: Ways to Help

*Saturday, Jan. 6 (offsite)*  
See page 12.

### POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

*Saturday, Jan 6 at 5:45pm at Second Unitarian Church (Address: 3012 S. 119th St., Omaha).* All parents of preschoolers (from littles through primary grades) are invited to attend POPS (Parents of Preschoolers) Potluck Nights to connect with other parents from both First and Second Unitarian communities. Childcare is provided on-site (please RSVP in advance at least one week prior). Grown-ups gather together for food, fun and fellowship while kids eat and play in the nursery. For questions or to RSVP, contact Sarah Eades Hamilton ([seades.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:seades.hamilton@gmail.com)) or call/text: 402-306-6339).

### First UU Young Adults Group

*Sunday, Jan. 7 at 11:30am in the Whitney Young Room.* This group welcomes everyone ages 18-35 from all over the Omaha Metro. We'll begin our new series: "Becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood."

### Atheists, Humanists, Agnostics (AHA) Gathering

*Thursday, Jan. 11 in the Common Room.* Dinner that evening will be a hot soup potluck from 6pm to 7pm. We will serve a variety of hot soups to include a vegan variety; you bring a side dish to accompany it. During dinner we will discuss plans for an AHA spring service. Round table/group discussion 7pm to 8:30pm. We will have round table/group discussion about the atheist, humanist, and agnostic moral compass. Join us for a cozy evening on a cold January night. If you are coming for dinner, please RSVP [aha@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:aha@firstuuomaha.org) and state whether you prefer meat or vegan soup no later than January 8. If you need childcare, please let us know.

### CUUPS Business Meeting

*Sunday, Jan. 14 in the Common Room.* Potluck starts at 6pm. Meeting starts at 6:30pm. We will set our Ritual Schedule for 2018, adding Forums and addressing unfinished business. This is when most of the year gets outlined so make sure and plan on attending! Childcare will be available.

### Women's Alliance

Thank you all for your kind donations to WCA. December Women's Alliance was a hit with our white elephant gift exchange. We do not meet in January so have a happy and safe holiday season and keep a look out for our February meeting details!

### People's Film Festival

*Monday, Jan. 15 at 7pm in the Common Room.* We will watch *King*. Tom Brokaw hosts this in-depth look at the remarkable life and legacy of civil rights icon Martin Luther King. Complete with testimony from King's contemporaries and from those who continue to spread his message of peace, *King* illuminates the lasting influence of his leadership. We only meet once in January.

### Examined Life Group

*Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.* Interested? Need more info? Contact Jack at [jackheidel@yahoo.com](mailto:jackheidel@yahoo.com).

### Lunch with the Minister

*Thursday, Jan. 18 at noon in the Common Room.* We meet once a month. Pack a lunch and come join us!

### Young Adult Game Night

*Friday, Jan. 19 at 6pm in the Common Room.* All are invited to join the Young Adults for this event. We will have childcare! Bring snacks and board games.

### First Steps: Get to Know Unitarian Universalism & Church

*Sunday, Jan. 21 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room.* Join us at the Welcome & Engagement Table in the Common Room. You are invited to join us as we gather together to get acquainted with the basics of Unitarian Universalism and our vibrant community. There are many ways to connect

with the church, and we look forward to discussing the unique opportunities offered by First Unitarian Church of Omaha. Questions? Contact our Membership Coordinator, Carrie, at [coordinator@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:coordinator@firstuuomaha.org).

### Taoism Discussion Group

*Tuesday, Jan. 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. Questions? Contact Geoff Erickson at [gerickson03@gmail.com](mailto:gerickson03@gmail.com).

### Chili Cook-Off

*Saturday, January 27 in the Common Room.* See page 6.

### Baby Shower for Jennifer & Drew Dillon

*Sunday, Jan. 28 (offsite) at Greek Islands Restaurant's Party Room, 3821 Center St, at 12-1:30pm.* Please celebrate the birth of Jennifer and Drew Dillon's upcoming baby after church on Jan. 28th. Everyone is asked to order their own food and drinks if they want to eat. This is their second baby (sex unknown) so we are doing the traditional showering of diapers and wipes. However, your presence or another gift is appreciated too!

### Leadership Talk Back

*Sunday, Jan. 28 at 11:30am in the Common Room.* The church board and Ministry Team Council (MTC) want to hear from you and discuss issues that are important to you.

### Book Club

*Monday, Jan. 29 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.* The book for this month is *We Were Eight Years in Power; An American Tragedy* by Te-Nehisi Coates. Questions? Contact Dave at [dritchardson821@gmail.com](mailto:dritchardson821@gmail.com).

## Church Events Continued...

### Recurring Events

#### **NAMI Connections**

Meets every Wednesday at 1pm in the Whitney Young Room. This is a peer-run group for persons living with mental health challenges. This group will meet every Wednesday at 1pm. If you have questions, please email Terri Lynn at [quburr77@outlook.com](mailto:quburr77@outlook.com).

#### **YRUU—Youth Group**

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Common Room. Our weekly youth group at church meets September - May. Need more information? Contact the advisors at [yruuomaha@gmail.com](mailto:yruuomaha@gmail.com). Note: we do not meet on Jan. 3.

#### **Choir**

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Sanctuary. Would you like to join the choir? Contact our Choir Director William at [choirdirector@firstuomaha.org](mailto:choirdirector@firstuomaha.org).

#### **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 and discussion. New members welcome. We're reading *The Demon-Haunted World* by Carl Sagan. Contact Marcia at [mkleise@cox.net](mailto:mkleise@cox.net).

#### **Refuge Recovery Group**

Every Thursday, 6pm to 7:30pm, in the Whitney Young Classroom. This chapter of Refuge Recovery, "a Buddhist path to recovery from addiction," is organized by Forrest Knapp. Refuge Recovery is a program that "does not ask anyone to believe anything, only to trust the process and do the hard work of recovery." For further information, see [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org) or email Forrest Knapp at: [forrestknapp@yahoo.com](mailto:forrestknapp@yahoo.com).

#### **Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting**

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month in the Common Room at 12:30pm. Questions? Contact Roman at [RobertmNoriega@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:scott.kemper@gmail.com).

### Heart & Hand Auction Events with Open Spots

Buy tickets for Heart and Hand Auction events online at [www.auctria.com/auction/2017HHAAuction](http://www.auctria.com/auction/2017HHAAuction), or email [auction@firstuomaha.org](mailto:auction@firstuomaha.org), or pay at the door for larger events.

#### **Heart and Hand Auction events that still have seats for January are:**

##### **"The Nobel Book Discussion"**

Saturday, Jan 6 from 2-4pm in the Common Room. (Only 3 seats available). Join us for a group discussion on "Never Let Me Go" by Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro.

##### **"Family Movie Night from Studio Ghibli"**

Saturday, Jan. 13 at 5pm in the Common Room. Kids and adults will enjoy a movie together.

##### **"Cocktails & Conversation: The High-Up Life" Offsite**

Monday, Jan 15 from 5pm to 7pm. Enjoy the views of Susan Thomas and Steve Hutchinson's midtown penthouse suite.

##### **"English Country Dance"**

Saturday, Jan. 20 from 7pm to 9pm in the Common Room. Peg Pidgeon will teach us several Jane Austen-era dances and we will then practice them.

### Future Events

#### **POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)**

We will meet at 5:45pm on each of the dates below. We will alternate between First and Second Unitarian Churches. Childcare is provided. Please RSVP to Sarah at [seades.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:seades.hamilton@gmail.com)) or call/text: 402-306-6339). Future dates:

Feb 16—Second Unitarian Church  
 March 24—Second Unitarian Church  
**April 28—First Unitarian Church**  
 June 9—Second Unitarian Church  
**Sept 29—First Unitarian Church**

#### **Sanctuary Workshop: "Exploring the Call for Sanctuary"**

Saturday, Feb. 3 and Sunday, Feb. 4. See pages 10 & 11.

#### **Partner Church "Refresh" Weekend**

March 10-11, 2018. See page 15 for details.

#### **Pathways to Membership Class**

Starts Sunday, April 8. See page 17.

### Ways You Can Get Involved & Help

#### **Community Meals Volunteers**

We need volunteers for Saturday, January 6! See page 12 more info.

#### **Heritage Task Force -- Join us!**

We're still looking for volunteers to help with our church anniversaries that are coming up. Interested? Here are the team chairpersons and contact info: Archives Team Leader - Linda Parker: [lparkerlib@gmail.com](mailto:lparkerlib@gmail.com); Events Planning Team Leader - Janet West: [jmasonwest77@yahoo.com](mailto:jmasonwest77@yahoo.com); Communications Team Leader - Gary Emenitove: [gemenitove@cox.net](mailto:gemenitove@cox.net); Book Advisory Team Leader - Dave Richardson: [drichardson821@gmail.com](mailto:drichardson821@gmail.com)

## Chili Cook-Off 2018

*Saturday, January 27, 2018 at 6pm in the Common Room*

**Eat Chili With All the Fixins! Free cornbread & soft drinks! Cash bar!**

Tickets: \$6/person  
 Children under 10 FREE  
 \$12 family maximum  
 Childcare provided, but please make a reservation  
 so we know how many kiddos we have to wrangle.

Many folks come dressed up as cowboys and cowgirls or as cows and horses—  
 use your imagination!

*Please contact Rev. Frank if you need financial assistance to participate.*

### Enter Your Chili into the Competition

“Lasso” your recipe & start cookin!

Please bring your chili in a heated dish/crockpot along with a ladle to serve. (Please keep additional condiments to a minimum.) Arrive at 5:30pm to register your chili. Enter the name of the chili at check-in. Do NOT include the name of the chef!

Bringing chili for the contest? Your admission is free!

Sign-up online here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/chili-cook-off>



## Notes from Religious Education

*By Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education*

December is a time when the innocence of children waiting for Santa mirrors our own joy of rediscovering the season in all of its diversity. It's gratifying to know that children still thrill to the sights and smells of the celebrations we enjoyed as children.



The Polar Express story is a classic tale of belief and wonder that captures the imagination of this generation just as it did when my kids were small. With the inspiration of Kim Callaghan, our CommUUnity Night potluck featured a screening of the film Polar Express complete with a silver bell for everyone. Steaming cups of hot chocolate were served to the children watching in pajamas and cuddling blankets. There were enough Christmas cookies for everyone. It has the hallmark of a tradition.

Children in Sunday school made nativity scenes from pizza boxes. We also paid homage to Hanukkah. We made menorahs and played dreidel. I was amazed that our high tech little ones would be so enraptured with a very low-tech spinning top.

The New Year will begin our study of Islam. The symbolism of Jerusalem with its centuries of sacred turmoil and tradition is a reminder that the study of the Abrahamic religions connects history and current events all together.

We look forward to the celebration of Christmas Eve with the candlelight service. We will not have a Sunday morning religious education program that day.

## For Church Leaders

January is budget preparation month for the church year starting May 1st. We start in January because we need a preliminary budget before setting a goal for the stewardship campaign. Staff members and team chairs who have budgets should have received information on your budget for the current year and expenditures for the first half of the year. Our treasurer would like to have budget input by Friday, January 5, if possible. Contact [treasurer@firstuomaha.org](mailto:treasurer@firstuomaha.org).

## Mitten Tree

Thank you to all who brought in mittens, gloves, hats, scarves and other winter apparel to decorate our holiday tree in the sanctuary during the month of December. Special thanks to Kay Lynn Goldner for dropping off these donations to the Stephen Center. Some of the donations will stay with First Unitarian for our Midtown Helping Hands Team (formerly known as Neighborhood Ministry).

## Church Directory

Have you moved? Changed your phone number or email address? Please contact the church office today by emailing: [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org) with your new information. Help us make sure our Church Directory is up to date. Thank you!

## Note from the Board

By Catherine Plumlee, Secretary

“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

–Albert Schweitzer

As the winter winds keep blowing across our window sills, we take comfort in knowing the solstice has passed, the days are getting longer, and there are those that continue to kindle our hearts to keep us warm and safe in this sacred space. For that reason, we pause to thank with deep gratitude those who are leading initiatives in our church and community. First, shout out to Dean Christensen and Bob Perrin who have successfully completed Phase 1 of the Window Restoration Project and determined that it can be done. One down, more to go (with the help of Floyd Prine who is working on outside funding sources for the other window replacements). Thanks for keeping those winds at bay, gentlemen. Next on this gratitude train comes Joe Schaaf and Geoff Erickson, two board members who are spearheading a review of policies, procedures, data and communication. Joe is also putting together a Gratitude Team to recognize the unsung heroes of our congregation. Thanks for...thanking people...I guess? Go, Joe! Finally, the board wants to recognize Jeri Thurber and the hard work of the newfound Sanctuary Task Force who, since being called to action, have done an incredible amount of research and education both for the board and the congregation. They are keeping the spark alive in our church and the greater Omaha area.

This fledgling year holds unimaginable promise thanks in large part to the flagstones laid in 2017. As we usher in 2018, let us remember our lights and those of others and may they guide us ever onward. Go now, in peace.

May the spirit of love surround you, everywhere you go.

## Board Creates Gratitude Team

By Nadine Keith

The church has instituted the creation of a Gratitude Team whose purpose will be to insure that members of our church community are appropriately recognized for their time and effort in helping our community reach its stated Mission and Goals. Initial team members are Joe Schaaf, Mike McAtee and Nadine Keith. The team is creating methods for seeking suggestions of individuals to be honored and methods of recognition. Watch for more information in the February *Flame*.

## Preserve Our Building

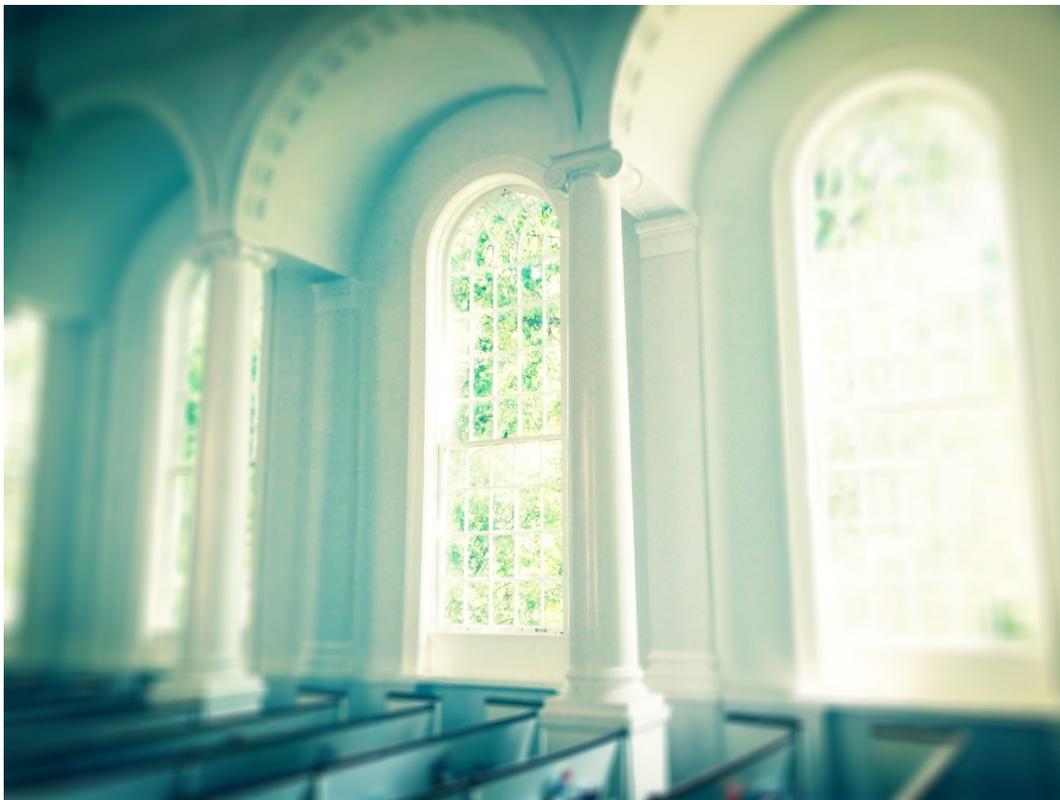
*By Jaime Alexander*

The 2018 Preserve Our Building annual fund drive is again underway during January. For our newcomers and others who may not be familiar with the POB campaign, a short review of POB history may be appropriate. Our sanctuary refurbishing in October 2004 was made possible by the gift of the “Erickson Bond.” The sanctuary was refurbished to perhaps better than its original resplendent beauty. Thinking that our ability to fulfill our future building preservation needs should not be completely dependent on hoping for a major gift, the Board authorized asking for donations to a fund that would be a head start towards funding future refurbishments. Thoughts of “Wells we did not dig” and leaving something for those yet to come led to the creation the Preserve Our Building fund drive in 2005.

The POB fund has grown with contributions and interest to just over \$64,000. Your generosity is wonderful! The concept of many of us giving what we can from year to year is proving to be successful. Approval from the congregation is necessary to spend from this account. Our sanctuary windows project is a likely candidate although costs and possible other funding sources are not yet determined. Please join in this year’s effort.

Your check should be made payable to First Unitarian Church of Omaha with “POB” on the memo line. A solicitation letter will be sent to home addresses including a return addressed envelope for your convenience. The envelopes and blue cards in the pews at church may also be used for your POB donation during Sunday offering. Just annotate the memo line, POB.

Thank you for supporting Preserve Our Building.



## Changing Immigration Practices and Supporting Our Neighbors

*This information was passed out at the Sunday, December 10th forum about the Sanctuary Movement.*

On the campaign trail, candidate Trump promised to deport “millions and millions of undocumented immigrants.” In January, soon after his inauguration, the Department of Homeland Security released two memos which expanded the criteria for immigrants considered a “priority” for deportation.

In the previous administration, people convicted of serious crimes were considered a priority. Under the new guidelines, agents from Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can target people convicted of any criminal offense, no matter how minor. The changes also include those who have “committed an act for which they could face charges.”

According to ICE statistics released Tuesday, December 4, immigration arrests in our region, which includes the Dakotas, Iowa, and Minnesota, increased by more than two-thirds in the past fiscal year while deportations rose by more than 50 percent. 73 percent of those arrested had criminal convictions compared to 87 percent in 2016.

**The memos, like the orders, drastically expand the category of people classified as "priorities for removal."**

Under the Obama administration, immigrants in the U.S. illegally who had been convicted of serious crimes were prioritized for deportations. Under the new rules, federal agents could seek to deport people in the country illegally who were convicted of *any* crime, no matter how minor. In fact, agents could prioritize for deportation people who have just been charged with a crime — or people who have committed an act for which they could be charged. In the 2010 census, 167,405 Nebraskans self-reported as Hispanic with that number expected to rise significantly over the next 40 years.

### **What is sanctuary and how can we be involved?**

Sanctuary is about the community coming together to protect targeted communities from state violence—including immigrants, people of color, targeted religious groups, or LGBTQ folks.

Some examples of solidarity actions:

- Welcoming undocumented people and providing physical shelter, providing assistance to families of people in Sanctuary
- Advocating to stop deportations (petitions, showing up at legislature, meeting with mayor)
- Public witness (vigils, marches, rallies)
- Direct civil disobedience (publicly serving as a sanctuary church)
- Nonviolent disruption (rapid response networks to witness or block immigration enforcement raids)
- Visit detainees, provide personal items and funds for phone calls, snacks, etc.
- Build relationships with community organizers and advocacy groups that represent and are led by members of marginalized groups in our area

Below is a pledge that the UUA has asked churches to sign. First Unitarian Church has not signed this yet, but the Board has asked the Sanctuary Task Force to investigate the Sanctuary Movement and to educate the congregation about it. For more information, please go to: <https://www.uua.org/immigration/witness/partners/newsanctuary>.

### We pledge to resist deportation and discrimination through sanctuary

As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the newly elected administration's policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people.

By signing this pledge, we are dedicating ourselves to educate and activate our congregations, to amplify and respond to the voices of immigrant leaders, and to speak out against the discrimination of any and all marginalized people. We are ready to open the doors to our sacred spaces and accompany those facing deportation and discrimination.

Would you like to learn more? Interested in helping the Sanctuary Task Force Team? Please contact Jeri at [jeri.thurber@gmail.com](mailto:jeri.thurber@gmail.com).

### **Save the date for a workshop about the Sanctuary Movement**

#### **"Exploring the Call for Sanctuary"**

Let us follow our path to stand up for human rights and justice, and build a culture of sanctuary. Hear speakers and express thoughts and concerns during this workshop and the follow-up discussion with the Board on Saturday and Sunday, February 3 & 4. More details to come.

## 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](mailto: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.

Our church has committed to the following Saturday for Community Meals:

### January 6, 2018

Please mark your calendar and contact me if you are interested in helping. We will need people to help with desserts, cooking, serving and cleaning up. Thank you to everyone who has already helped with meals earlier this year. Thanks! Diane Withem, [dianewithem@gmail.com](mailto:dianewithem@gmail.com)

## 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 blessing bags to people who come to the church door from our area. Your change makes a difference! Thank you for your generosity!

## SHARE THE PLATE

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. Our Share the Plate recipient for January is **Habitat for Humanity**.

In 2017, Habitat for Humanity of Omaha completed more than 40 homes. Homes are built with donor contributions, volunteer labor and donated materials. Families who partner with Habitat Omaha are required to attend homeownership workshops and complete up to 350 hours of Sweat Equity by helping on the build site or at Omaha's Habitat ReStore. Their monthly mortgage payments are then used to build more homes. Habitat Omaha builds new houses and renovates existing homes. These houses are modest and affordable.

To learn more, visit: <https://habitatomaha.org/>.

## Inclement Weather Cancellations

In the event of bad weather and service is cancelled, the church office will email everyone on our enews list, update the church webpage, post in the church Facebook group and on the church Facebook page. The church will also alert the local news stations about the cancellation.



## Parking at Church

Parking is directly west of the church in the surface parking lot or on the street. If you are able to park in the Midtown Crossing garage to the west of our parking lot, it would leave our small parking lot for visitors and those who need to park closer to the building. You may park in the Midtown Crossing Parking Garage to the west of the church lot. The entrance to the parking garage is on Farnam Street. Have your ticket validated downstairs in the Common Room. Find the ticket-validating machine on the south side of the Common Room on the bookcase. **You must have your ticket validated for free parking.** Questions? Contact the church office at [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org).

## First Unitarian Church of Omaha Statements

### Mission

Fostering the Whole Person, Compassion, and Justice

### Vision

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

### Covenant

#### 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

## Report from the Events-Planning Team of the Heritage Task Force Meeting on December 2, 2017

By Janet West

If you would like to join this Team to plan events to celebrate the historical events of our church during 2018 and 2019, please email Janet West at [jmasonwest77@yahoo.com](mailto:jmasonwest77@yahoo.com).

Events-Planning Team of the Heritage Task Force

In attendance: Nadine Keith, Lois Norris, Dave Richardson, Janet West

Importance historic dates:

1. August 1869: Signing of the church Articles of Organization
2. October 1917: Laying of the church cornerstone
3. September 1918: Dedication of the church building

Information: A first draft of the book about the history of the book about the church is done as well as the table of contents.

Brainstorming ideas:

1. Starting in September 2018, there will be a “Heritage” minute in each of the Sunday services through August 2019.
2. Identifying labels should be placed under all the church pictures and documents.
3. Explore the possibility of being able to “borrow back” the church’s historic quilt from the Quilt Museum. Yes, it can be borrowed back.

4. The entertainment at the 2018 Holiday Dinner will be related to the heritage of the church, maybe the play written by Barb Ross.

5. There should be an all-church dinner in August 2019 – maybe at the Holland Center. Richard Holland was a long-time member of the church and the location of the first 1st Unitarian Church building was where the Holland Center is located now.

6. It will be explored as to whether some activities could be held at the Joslyn Museum and the Joslyn Castle.

7. Working with those who are organizing the Women’s Alliance Archive.

8. Start a “Story Corps” for the church which would interview current members and discuss events and church members who are no longer with us.

9. Make a new quilt by the church and for the church – themes to be determined. (Proposed by someone who was not at the meeting.)



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## General Assembly 2018

June 20-24

**General Assembly 2018 will take place at the Kansas City Convention Center, 301 W 13th St, Kansas City, MO 64105**

Next year, the MidAmerican Region will hold its Annual Business Meeting in conjunction with General Assembly in Kansas City.

From the MidAmerican Region website (<https://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly>):

*It seemed counterproductive to entice you all to a Regional Assembly just weeks before we'll gather for General Assembly in Kansas City. Keep this in mind—we want to see you there!*

**Early registration for GA begins March 1st.** See this site for all the information and pricing: <https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>.

## **A Weekend to Discuss How First Unitarian Church Can REFRESH its Partner Church Relationship with Our Partner Church in Firtosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania, March 10 and 11, 2018**

Rev. Frank Rivas, the Partner Church Team, and Roger Bertschausen, Executive Director, UU Partner Church Committee (UUPCC), St. Louis, MO are organizing a weekend to REFRESH First Unitarian Church's relationship with our Partner Church in Firtosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania. Goals for the weekend are to engage more members and friends, of all ages, of the First Unitarian Church community in the church's partnership relationship and to create a wide variety of strategies to refresh and re-energize this relationship.

The Partner Church Team

## **First Unitarian Church Celebrates the 450th Anniversary of the Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience on January 14, 2018—Prepared and Presented by the Partner Church Team**

On January 14, 2018, First Unitarian Church will celebrate the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience. On January 1568, in Torda, Transylvania (now Romania), King Janos Zsigmond (John Sigismund, the only Unitarian king in history) proclaimed the Edict of Torda which declares freedom of religion and conscience. We will be joining many other UU churches who are also celebrating this important event.

At the special service, First Unitarian Church congregants will meet special historic guests from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and learn about the history of the eastern European movement promoting religious freedom and tolerance during this era.

Although American Unitarianism did not evolve from Transylvanian Unitarianism, there is historic evidence that the Transylvanian proclamation influenced those who wrote the American Constitution and particularly the first amendment of the document. Religious tolerance and freedom of conscience is, of course, one of the bedrock tenets the American Unitarian movement.

Do you know what anti-Trinitarian means? It was a deadly charge for 16<sup>th</sup> century Unitarians.

The Partner Church Team

## Why I Am a Member of First Unitarian Church of Omaha

### First Note by Lee Clausen

The opportunity to contribute in a small way to our shared sense of social service and community connection is why I am a member of First Unitarian Church of Omaha.

It makes me extremely happy to see how our collective contributions work to form a healthier and happier community; how The Change for Change combines small donations from many to make powerful differences in individual lives.

We are all part of the same web of life, and hearing so many unique and distinct perspectives is encouraging to see. That we can have major differences of opinion yet have productive and meaningful dialogue lends great encouragement for the future, when sometimes we only see division portrayed in our media.

That grounding and sense of reality as it should be rather than how we sometimes believe it to be helps me want to contribute more to NAMI, to OTOC, to all the wonderful new experiences First UU offers to all of us.

Becoming a member helped me to become more involved with the Membership Team, Hospitality Team and learn new things through the Taoism Group, Tai Chi, and Sunday Forums and I can say my life has become richer, healthier and happier as a result.

### Second Note by Lois Norris

My future husband changed my life in many ways, not the least of which included an introduction to Unitarianism and its principles and practices generally and, more specifically, First Unitarian Church. Apparently, I was not very inquisitive and up to that point had not questioned my Lutheran faith or its underpinnings. This was in the early '60s, before the internet, computers and smart phones became indispensable household tools, i.e., before information and knowledge were only a password away. I soon joined First U, and abandoned theism in favor of secular humanism and atheism.

While my level of active involvement in church life has varied over the years because of family commitments, my love and support of First U has been constant. The church has been my primary source of inspiration, fellowship, sanctuary and comfort in troubling times and, perhaps most importantly to me, treasured friendships.

## New Members in December

*By Ellen Shurson*

Nicholas Swingle and Mia Siebrasse joined in December. Nick is a medical student who plays an assortment of musical instruments and Mia likes to draw and do crafts. They have participated in the Book Club, attended the Spring Carnival, the Ice Cream Social and the Chili Cook-Off as well as Women's Alliance.

Spencer Pereira is a marketing specialist who lives in midtown. He is involved with the Young Adult Group and the Sanctuary Task Force. He has participated in the Book Club and helps with hospitality. He says he may be interested in joining the choir in the future if his schedule permits.

Jennifer and Jeff Castello-Scott joined the church in December. Jen is a writer and teaching artist and Jeff is an attorney. They are both involved in the Young Adult Group. Jen has volunteered to deliver the YES meal and joined the Partner Church Team and The Early Morning Risers.

Please welcome our new members!

## Pathways to Membership Class

Sundays, April 8, April 15, April 22 and April 29 at 11:45am  
in the Whitney Young Room (downstairs classroom)

This class explores who we are and what we believe and provides opportunities for members to share with newcomers what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist.



Whether you are new to the church, or have been coming for a while, this is a great opportunity to learn more about this community.

Questions? Want to RSVP? Need childcare? Contact Carrie: [coordinator@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:coordinator@firstuuomaha.org).

Schedule:

Week 1	April 8	Introductory Class & Religious Education
Week 2	April 15	History and UU Roots
Week 3	April 22	Church Governance and Elements of Unitarian Universalism
Week 4	April 29	Membership, Stewardship and Fundraising

## 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, January 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@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:coordinator@firstuuomaha.org) or stop by the Welcoming Table (in the Common Room downstairs) on the 17th and we'll get you to the right room. Grab a cup of coffee and we will see you there!



**Minister**

Frank Rivas

[minister@firstuomaha.org](mailto:minister@firstuomaha.org)**Director of Religious Education**

Jan Wilson

[dre@firstuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuomaha.org)**Membership Coordinator**

Carrie Helmberger

[coordinator@firstuomaha.org](mailto:coordinator@firstuomaha.org)**Church Administrator**

Catharine Dixon

[admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org)**Organist**

Pat Will

**Choir Director**

William Miller

[choirdirector@firstuomaha.org](mailto:choirdirector@firstuomaha.org)**Choir Accompanist**

J. Gawf

**Pianist**

Stan Harper

**Minister Emeritus**

Ronald Knapp

**Nursery Coordinator**

Jenny Hastings

[childcare@firstuomaha.org](mailto:childcare@firstuomaha.org)**Nursery Aide**

Gale Callaghan

**Custodian**

Bobby Medrano

**Nominating Committee**Molly 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@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org).Editor/Designer: Cat DixonProofers: Lana Hammel,  
Scott Kemper, Lois Norris,  
Debbie HunsbergerFlame Mailing Team:Debbie Hunsberger, Lois Norris,  
Linda Hruska, Kim Callaghan**First Unitarian Church**[www.firstuomaha.org](http://www.firstuomaha.org)

402-345-3039

# Meet Our Leaders

**Board Members**Alan Vovolka (President), Maria Wallace (President-Elect), Catherine Plumlee (Secretary), Geoff Erickson, Linda Parker, Floyd Prine, Joe Schaaf,  
Donna Tubach-DavisEmail: [board@firstuomaha.org](mailto:board@firstuomaha.org)**Trustees of the Capital Trust**

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

**Committee on Ministry**

Bruce Godfrey, Collin Hatcher, Carol Ramsey, Donna Tubach-Davis

**Ministry Team Council**

Rev. Frank Rivas, Nellie Chenoweth, Dave Richardson, Maria Wallace

Email: [mtc@firstuomaha.org](mailto:mtc@firstuomaha.org)**Ministry Teams and Team Leaders**

AHA—Sheri Conner

Archives/Heritage Task Force—Dave Richardson &amp; Janet West

Baby Welcoming Team—Becca Hatcher, Katrina Schmidt, &amp; Sara Switzer

Black Lives Matter—Rene Harper

Caring—Louise Jeffrey

Chalice Guild—Kay Lynn Goldner

Community Meals—Diane Withem

CUUPS—Kathy Alexander

Early Morning Risers—Mary Kay Peters &amp; Sarah Copeland

Fellowship Team—Judith Wright, Nadine Keith &amp; Nellie Chenoweth

Finance Team—Walt Jesteadt

Forums—Bebe McCammond

Garden—Sharon Conlon

Fundraising Team—Donna Neff &amp; Katrina Schmidt

Hope in Action—Kim Dunovan

Hospitality Teams—Carolyn McNamara

House and Grounds Team—Pierce Carpenter

Listening Circles—Katrina Schmidt

Membership Team—Mike McAtee &amp; Janet West

Midtown Helping Hands—open

Office Team—Carolyn McNamara

Omaha Together One Community—Janet West

Partner Church Team—Janet West

Recycling Coordinator—Jeri Thurber

Social Justice Coordinator—open

Stewardship Team—Mary Kay Peters &amp; Peg Pidgeon

Wayside Pulpit—Kim Dunovan

Women's Alliance—Catherine Plumlee

Worship Arts Team—Maria Wallace

Young Adult Group—Collin &amp; Becca Hatcher

YRUU—Geoff Erickson &amp; Carolyn Miller

## Church Events

### Soto-Sanchez Citizenship Party

Friday, Jan. 5 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### Community Meals

Saturday, Jan. 6. Offsite. See page 12.

### H&H Auction Event: RSVP required "The Nobel Book Discussion"

Saturday, Jan 6 from 2-4pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, Jan. 6 at Second Unitarian Church. See page 4.

### First UU Young Adults

Sunday, Jan. 7 at 11:30am in the Whitney Young Room. See page 4 for details.

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 9 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room.

### AHA Discussion Group

Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### H&H Auction Event: RSVP required "Family Movie Night from Studio Ghibli"

Saturday, Jan. 13 at 5pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### CUUPS Business Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 14 in the Common Room. Potluck starts at 6pm. Meeting starts at 6:30pm. See page 4.

### Flame Deadline

Submit your newsletter articles to [admin@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuuomaha.org) by January 15th at noon.

### People's Film Festival

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

### Examined Life Group

Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

### Lunch with the Minister

Thursday, Jan. 18 at noon Common Room. See page 4.

### Young Adult Game Night

Friday, Jan. 19 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### H&H Auction Event: RSVP required "English Country Dance"

Saturday, Jan. 20 from 7pm to 9pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### First Steps Class

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

### Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Jan. 23 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

### Chili Cook-Off

Saturday, Jan. 27 at 6pm. See page 6.

### Baby Shower for Jennifer & Drew Dillon

Sunday, Jan. 28 (offsite). See page 4.

### Leadership Talk Back

Sunday, Jan. 28 at 11:30am in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

### Book Club

Monday, Jan. 29 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

### Recurring...

#### Women's Religious Studies Group

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

#### Refuge Recovery Group

Thursdays at 6pm in the Whitney Young Room. 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.

#### NAMI Connections

Meets Wednesdays at 1pm in the Whitney Young Room. See page 5.

#### YRUU (Youth Group) Meeting

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

#### Choir Rehearsals

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Sanctuary. See page 5.

### Future Events...

#### Sanctuary Workshop: "Exploring the Call for Sanctuary"

Saturday, Feb. 3 and Sunday Feb. 4. See pages 10 & 11.

#### Partner Church "Refresh" Weekend

March 10-11, 2018. See page 15.

#### Pathways to Membership Class

Starts Sunday, April 8. See page 17.



International Cowperson  
**Chili Cook-Off**

January 27 - 6pm

Food

Friends

Music

Costumes

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

[www.firstuomaha.org](http://www.firstuomaha.org)