

April 2016

The Flame



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

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Sunday Services
this Month

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Stewardship Party

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The Holland
Lecture Events

Cooking for the March Y.E.S. Meal. See page 15 for more information.

Photo by Linda Hruska



Sunday Services — 9:30am and 11:15am

April 3 — Moments in History: "A Natural Piety"

Rev. Frank Rivas

German Pietism, a religious perspective that later became known as Universalism, articulated what our polarized world needs.

April 10 — Moments in History: "The Transient and the Permanent in Religion"

Rev. Frank Rivas

Unitarian minister Theodore Parker teased out the core of religion from all the dogma that obfuscates it.

April 17 — Moments in History: "Converting Christianity"

Rev. Frank Rivas

Unitarian Universalist minister Rebecca Parker turned Christianity upside-down with a deeply personal understanding of the Gospel.

April 24 — "Don't Let Me Get In Your Way!"

Rev. Royal Carleton

My baggage. Your baggage. My journey. Your journey. How do they fit together?

Looking Ahead: Summer Schedule to Begin in May

Starting Sunday, May 8, we begin our summer schedule with only one service at 10:30am followed by a coffee hour down in the Common Room.

Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

The congregational meeting about the Black Lives Matter movement was an extraordinary event. People spoke from different perspectives and listened—really listened—to one another. It reminded me of words often attributed to Francis David: “We need not think alike to love alike.”

But the process needs to be examined. I went away from a remarkable evening asking myself whether it makes sense to vote on whether we should vote. I also wondered whether those who vote without having participated in the discussion would bring the same level of consideration. Kim Dunovan suggested other procedural issues: Should we vet issues before they are brought to the congregation? Should there be a deliberate process of education before any vote is taken?

Public witness is new for this congregation. Our history includes profound divisiveness about military intervention in Vietnam; afterwards, we went decades without taking a public stand. Because of this history, we’re inexperienced, and it will take a little time to get things right. Fortunately, Kim, the board, and several others are examining our options. One of our resources is a guide from the Unitarian Universalist Association, “Taking Action As a Congregation: A Guide for Congregational Resolutions and Social Justice Statements.”

With the kind of energy we bring to the work of justice, we need to follow an appropriate process—even as we can’t let our focus on process get in the way of the work.

Blessing and love,
Frank

Lunch With the Minister

Thursdays at noon in the Common Room. All are invited to join Rev. Frank for a “bring your own brown bag lunch.”

Meditation

Tuesdays at 8am in the sanctuary. Join Rev. Frank to practice mindfulness and meditation at this gathering. All are welcome.

Church Events

CommUUnity Night

Friday, April 1 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. We gather for a potluck of side items (the main dish will be provided by RE) and eat together as a group and then just chill. If you can't bring anything or you are feeling too rushed to grab or make something last minute COME ANYWAY! There is always plenty of food and what we really want is YOUU!

Ministry Team Meeting

Saturday, April 2 at 2pm in the Nursery. Everyone is invited to this meeting of church teams.

Stewardship Fiesta: All Church Event

Saturday, April 2 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 7 for the flyer. Please join us!

Mystic Sojourn CUUPS

April is our closed month. The next open meeting is in May and we'll have a drum circle for Beltane at the Narrows River Park on the Missouri River on the north side of Council Bluffs. We'll carpool from church. More details next month.

People's Film Festival

Monday, April 4 at 7pm in the Common Room. We will watch [Feeding Frenzy: The Food Industry, Marketing & the Creation of a Health Crisis](#). *Feeding Frenzy* trains its focus squarely on the responsibility of the processed food industry and the outmoded government policies it benefits from for the obesity epidemic. Please note: Beginning this month we will meet twice a month on the first and third Mondays.

POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

Friday, April 8 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. Join us for fun and potluck plus pizza. We will have childcare available while we discuss the many ways we can provide happy fellowship for parents and grandparents. We'll share ideas for activities to create a loving, supportive community where families can flourish in an extended UU family.

Pretty Pretty Princess Concert

Sunday, April 10 at 4pm in the sanctuary. All ages welcome! We still have seats available for this magical, musical afternoon! You will be transported to a magical land of glitter, chiffon, tiaras, and beautiful singing princesses. We will serenade you with Disney Princess songs and other Princess-related numbers. Feel free to dress for the occasion in your own royal finery! Children welcome. Free childcare by reservation for infants and littles too young to enjoy the music due one week before concert. Fixed price: \$10/seat. Please contact Maria Wallace for seats and childcare reservations: kb9oib@yahoo.com.

Sunday Social Gathering (Second Sunday of every month)

Sunday, April 10 at 7pm in the Common Room. This month we will watch *The Paul Lynde Halloween Special*. Go here for info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Paul_Lynde_Halloween_Special. Everyone is welcome! Light snacks provided. Bring some to share if you like. If you have any questions, please call Royal at 402-999-1379.

Women's Alliance

Monday, April 11 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. In February, the Women's Alliance group welcomed Amy Campagna as the guest speaker. Amy works for NE Wildlife Rehab, Inc., an organization whose mission is to rehabilitate native Nebraska wildlife and migratory birds for return to the wild. She educated the group about the importance of wildlife rehabilitation and suggested ways we could help make a difference. The ladies of alliance were also given a chance to hold and touch a small bat, pictured below. Thank you to Amy for such an important topic to learn about. If you are interested in joining us for our April event, please email kathryn.oliver@outlook.com for details.



Church Events Continued...

UU&YOU Class

Wednesday, April 13 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Visitors, newcomers, and the just curious are invited to this introduction to Unitarian Universalism and First Unitarian Church of Omaha, along with an opportunity to share our religious journeys in a theologically diverse "safe" place. Conversation will also include some of our history and things going on here at our church. RSVPs go to uuclass@firstuuomaha.org or call Jaime at 402-657-9386. If you need childcare, please let us know by the Friday before the meeting.

Y.E.S. Meal

Thursday, April 14 at 9am in the kitchen. Volunteer to help cook or bring supplies. See page 15 for details.

The Tolerant Atheist Group

Thursday, April 14 at 7pm in the Common Room; Doors open at 6pm for bring-your-own dinner. Ron Knapp, Unitarian Universalist minister, will address the group and facilitate conversation. He is by definition a religious humanist who sees himself as a humanistic theologian. Through his studies he has come to the conclusion that there is an essential oneness to the cosmos that has led him to the concept that he calls "Naturalistic Humanism." Some central elements of this concept will be discussed during the evening's event which will include: biological evolution, earth, cosmic evolution, humanism, the human condition, and ethics and morality. Don't miss out on this interesting evening! Mark your calendar!

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, April 21 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. This group meets on the third Thursday of each month. We are reading *Listening Hearts* by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins. If you would like to join the Covenant Group, please contact Linda Parker at 402-319-0642 or lparkerlib@gmail.com.

Friday Fun Night

Friday, April 15 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room. Join the young adults for some fun and games. No need to RSVP. Just show up for some festive Friday fun!

People's Film Festival

Monday, April 18 at 7pm in the Common Room. We will watch [Call of Life](#). This is the first feature-length documentary to fully investigate the growing threat posed by the rapid and massive loss of biodiversity on the planet. *Call of Life* examines the collective and individual choices we have before us and how the decisions we make -- or fail to make -- in the next decade will affect the habitability of Earth possibly for millions of years to come.

Second Annual Line Dancing Event

Friday, April 22 at 7pm in the Common Room. Various types of music will be played for dancing enjoyment, including swing, Latin, and more. Mainly line dancing will be offered with a few partner dances. All line dances will be taught at the event before we dance them so no experience is needed. A tribute to Michael Jackson will start the

evening. A tango/paso doble line dance to Thriller will be taught. Please bring your choice of beverage to enjoy during the evening, as well as a snack to share. To arrange for childcare at the event for children through 12 years old, contact Jenny Hastings, our childcare coordinator at childcare@firstuuomaha.org. Contact Marcia at mkleise@cox.net if you have questions. See you at the dance!

Rowdy Sunday : A Celebration of Our Church Volunteers

Sunday, April 24 at 10:30am coffee hour. Celebrate our valuable and talented volunteers with cake and fun! This event is hosted by our Ministry Team Council.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, April 24 at 11am in the Whitney Young Room. Calling all people aged 18-35! We have a once-a-month young adult discussion group aimed for people within this age range. We'll be covering pretty much any topic that we think is relevant to who we are and where we're going in life.

Confronting Racism Discussion

Saturday, April 30 at 10:30am at Clair Memorial Church (5544 Ames Ave.) Program will begin at 10:30am. Direct talk about racism is rare even though it is essential to creating a just community. Please join us. Lunch will be provided. We will ask for participants to bring dessert.

More events on the next page...

Church Events and Activities Continued...

Omaha Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, April 25 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room. We will meet every fourth Monday from 7pm-9pm. We invite any in the Omaha and surrounding areas who embrace and support ethical non-monogamy-based loving relationships. We strive to offer a safe place to meet and discuss: topics, issues and hardships we face as polyamorous individuals and families. Our first meeting will discuss ground rules and desires of the group's intention as we grow. If you have any questions, please contact Susan at iamdosh@msn.com.

Exploring Humanistic Perspectives in Literature: Loren Eiseley: The Unexpected Universe

Tuesday, April 26 at 7pm in the Common Room. The poet W. H. Auden wrote "Dr. Eiseley, happens to be an archaeologist, an anthropologist, and a naturalist, but, if I understand him rightly, the first point he wishes to make is that in order to be a scientist, an artist, a doctor, a lawyer, or what-have-you, one has first to be a human being." We will explore several of Eiseley's literary gems about the human place in an "unexpected universe."

Set in an atmosphere that attempts to combine elements of a coffee house, a French literary salon (this is a bit pretentious,) and something like a readers theater, our programs seek to bring together Unitarian humanists, secular humanists, and others who are interested in literature. We would love to have you join us!

Book Club

Monday, May 2 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. We will discuss *Merchants of Doubt, How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco to Global Warming* by Naomi Oreskes, the next Holland Lecture speaker. For information, email Dave at richardson.david@westside66.net.

Recurring Events

Course in Miracles

Thursdays in April at 6:30pm in the Whitney Young Room. Everyone is welcome to attend this ongoing group. Visit: www.firstuomaha.org/#!adult-education/-ck2q

Women's Religious Studies Group

This group meets every Thursday, except for the 3rd week of the month, at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. We discuss a wide variety of books that deepen our understanding of religious beliefs. We are reading *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief* by Lawrence Wright. For more information, contact Donna at neffd@cox.net.

Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month in the Whitney Young Room after the second service. All D&D role players are invited. If you have questions, contact Roman at rmnoriegal@cox.net, 402-769-4260.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the Whitney Young Room after the second service. If you've played before, come for some

entertainment and time at the game table. Novices welcome too. Contact Scott at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

Save the Date

Annual Meeting — The 147th Annual Congregational Meeting of First Unitarian Church of Omaha will take place at the Church on Sunday, May 15 at 12pm.

Eligible voting members* of the church will adopt an operating budget for the 2016-17 church year and elect a President-elect, members of the Board of Trustees, a Trustee of the Trust Fund, and Nominating Committee members; hear select reports from church leaders; and reveal our Unitarian of the Year!

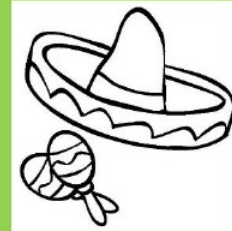
Childcare will be provided and your Board of Trustees will host coffee hour following the 10:30am service and provide snacks and drinks to help tide you over during the meeting.

We encourage all members to attend this important church event.

**Individuals are eligible to vote who have been members of the church for at least three months and have made a financial contribution in their name to the church between April 15, 2015 and April 15, 2016.*

More events in May on page 8...

Fiesta!



Join us for an
All Church Stewardship Celebration

Saturday, April 2nd
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Taco bar with beef, chicken, and vegetarian/vegan selections,
and chips and salsa. Cash bar including beer and Margaritas.

Pizza for the kids!

Childcare will be provided but please
make reservations by contacting Jan at
dre@firstuuomaha.org or 402-345-3039 ext. 103

Hosted by First Unitarian Church
and the 2016–2017 Stewardship Team



Climate Change Denial Topic of May Holland Lecture

— Save the date —

Wednesday, May 11, 7:30pm at Holland Performing Arts Center

Science historian Naomi Oreskes will present “The American Denial of Climate Warming” Wednesday, May 11 at the Holland Performing Arts Center. Oreskes views scientific doubt as a strategy to confuse the public and in turn influence policy. She claims climate change is part of the larger practice of scientific denialism. Climate-change deniers widely criticize her work, which puts her at the middle of the controversy. Her book, *Merchants of Doubt, How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco to Global Warming*, co-authored with Erik Conway, found parallels between the climate change debate and earlier public discourse surrounding tobacco, the ozone hole and acid rain. The book was later made into a documentary film. Her research, essays, opinion pieces and books examine the earth and environmental sciences with a particular interest in understanding scientific consensus and dissent. She earned her Ph.D at Stanford University and is a professor of the History of Science and affiliated professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University.

To see why she thinks we ought to trust science, watch her TED talk at http://www.ted.com/talks/naomi_oreskes_why_we_should_believe_in_science.

FREE tickets for this reserved seating event will be available Monday, April 11 at Ticket Omaha online <https://www.ticketomaha.com> or by calling 402-345-0606. Please put this lecture on your calendar and on the calendar of your friends! The highly regarded Holland Lecture Series is now in its 11th year of presenting internationally recognized thought-provoking speakers. To help you introduce friends and neighbors to the series, each caller may request up to six free tickets for the lecture.

Holland Lecture Follow-Up Event at First Unitarian Church

Climate Change and Religious values: Facing the Future

Tuesday, May 17 from 7:00-8:30pm; Location: Sanctuary, First Unitarian Church

On May 11, 2016, distinguished Holland lecturer Naomi Oreskes will present “Denial: The Easy Answer to Global Warming.” In order to continue the conversation and to encourage action, First Unitarian Church of Omaha will host a follow-up program hosted by Dr. Roger Bergman, director of Creighton University’s Justice and Peace Studies.

First Unitarian wants to open this conversation to increase understanding among people from all faith traditions about the need to address climate change with a change of heart. Pope Francis calls this “ecological conversion” in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*; Unitarian Universalists aspire to live with respect for the interconnected web of life. The follow-up program will be focused on how we should respond ethically to what is known about climate change.

Please join us for this opportunity to share your concerns, questions, and insights about climate change, a global ethical concern critical to everyone’s future. Dr. Bergman will facilitate the conversation that emerges with the aim of discovering insights from diverse belief perspectives about this contemporary moral challenge.

Conflict Perspective...We Got It Right on March 7th!

The meeting designed to vote enough support for the Black Lives Matter movement on March 7th to do an all congregational vote was a great start for a large issue. But the big thing for me to experience was the honesty, the respect, and the very large heart people have for this church.

There was significant anxiety over this gathering, which likely will reoccur because the issues are so very big and the stakes so high and the fact that disagreeing can turn in a phrase to disagreeable. But we got it right that Monday night.

Many people have talked to me about conflict avoidance in this church. Fact of it is, there is no such thing as avoiding conflict. We can ignore it, camouflage it, dance on pinheads around it, get snarky, nasty and indirect, but conflict is built in systemically in every important relationship. It is part of community life, family life, and marital life.

We got it right that night.

Bless this church.

Jackie Anderegg, Board President-Elect

Listening and Growth

Each member of our church community church brings unique, indispensable perspectives and unique, indispensable talents. We experience this whenever we get to know each other better. When the individual perspectives and talents mix, they seem to emerge in ways that leave us as a community richer, more resilient, and more interesting. The “mixing” assumes that a forum or place/time exists where and when perspectives and talents can mix. We have experienced forums in the past, and recently, that seem to have had a positive result.

The following comes to mind as questions to consider:

- When are we proselytizing for our own beliefs?
- Are we listening with the intent to understand?
- Do we have a reciprocal openness to each other’s influence?
- Do we have a deep, non-negotiable respect for each other?
- Do we understand that most every perspective, in context, has some positive intention?
- Do we have an awareness that personal perspectives are usually the rational product of one’s personal environment and experiences?
- Are we aware of the deep chasm between objective, independent thinking and subjective, passionate feelings—and are we willing to bridge it?

If we feel heard, we are more likely to listen and be open to another’s influence.

Jack Round, Board President

OMAHA GIVES!

a 24-hour charitable challenge

AND SO CAN YOU!!!

Omaha Gives is a 24-hour charitable challenge to benefit metro-area nonprofits. For the first time, First Unitarian Church of Omaha will be participating. YOU can participate in this give-together with a minimum gift of only \$10, midnight to midnight on MAY 25TH. Visit www.omahagives24.org.



“WHAT? You shop AMAZON and don’t support First Unitarian?”

Visit www.smile.amazon.com , update **CHARITY** information to
FIRST UNITARIAN OF OMAHA.

Support First Unitarian Church with EVERY purchase you make!!
Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to
First Unitarian Church.



OMAHA GIVES!

powered by the Omaha Community Foundation



WHAT IS IT?

Omaha Gives! is a one-day online fundraising event organized by the Omaha Community Foundation and held on May 25 to raise support for nonprofits in Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie Counties. It is a community-wide event to show off the area's spirit of giving, raise awareness about local nonprofits, and celebrate the collective effort it takes to make this city great.

HOW DOES IT WORK?



NONPROFITS WIN

Nonprofits win bonus dollars for drumming up the most support. Hourly drawings and prizes only sweeten the give.



GIVE TWO WAYS

Schedule your gifts ahead of time or make donations throughout the day. Have more fun - give both ways!



GROW MORE GOOD

Last year, more than 20,000 people raised \$8.8 million for 704 local nonprofits in just one day!

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- Give to your favorite nonprofit – the minimum donation is only \$10.
- Partner with local nonprofits to help them win big on May 25.
- Provide **CHALLENGE FUNDS** for your favorite nonprofit.
- Schedule a donation starting April 1st or donate during the event on May 25.
- Attend area Omaha Gives! events hosted by nonprofits.
- Be loud and proud to show the community's generous spirit — especially on social media with #OmahaGives!



Annual Awards Form

First Unitarian Church would like to take this opportunity to recognize some of our own outstanding volunteers.

The Nominating Committee is seeking input from the congregation for recognition in the same general categories as have been used in the past. They are:

Unsung UU Award affirms those UU's whose actions inspire, support, and express Unitarian Universalism but have not been previously recognized. The award is given to a person or group whose lifetime activities have made a significant contribution to the cause of Unitarian Universalism.

Suggested Recipient(s): _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Keeping the Faith Award was established to recognize people who live by UU principles. It is presented to persons who have worked to keep Unitarian Universalism alive in their community and who touch the lives of congregation and community members in a positive way.

Suggested Recipient(s): _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Social Justice Award pays tribute to those who witness to the ideals of social justice and responsibility so important to our UU heritage. **Two awards are presented: one to an adult and one to a youth** (under age 18).

Suggested Recipient(s): _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Religious Education Award to honor an individual or individuals who have made a significant contribution to religious education.

Suggested Recipient(s): _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

The Heritage Award to recognize an individual or group who have made a significant contribution to preserving, understanding, and celebrating our Unitarian Universalist history.

Suggested Recipient(s): _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Additionally, at the annual meeting each year, a member of our church receives our ***Unitarian of the Year Award*** to recognize an individual or individuals who have made a difference in our Congregation over the past year.

Suggested Recipient: _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Please submit your suggestions by filling in the names and supporting comments in the spaces above and return this form to the church office, drop it in the offering plate on Sunday, or send an email message to nominations@firstuuomaha.org. We would appreciate your response as soon as possible. **Deadline is 4/17.**

Annual Awards and the Nominating Committee

Please suggest names of church members you would like to see recognized for their particular service to the church and to the community. Names will be submitted by filling out the form (on page 12 in this newsletter) or by filling out the forms that will be in the Order of Services the first couple of Sundays in April or by emailing the nominating committee. Email: nominations@firstuuomaha.org. All forms and nominations need to be in by Sunday, April 17.

If you or someone you know is interested in holding a position at the church either on the board, the nominating committee or capital trust please contact the Nominating Committee as soon as possible.

Thank you!

The Nominating Committee

Kim Callaghan, Molly Dewell, Nadine Keith, David Olson, Joe Schaaf; Louise Jeffrey, convener

OTOC EVENT

OTOC (Omaha Together One Community) is Sponsoring an OPPD Candidate Forum on April 26, 7pm at First United Methodist Church on 69th Street and Underwood Street

There are six candidates running to represent the citizens in Subdistrict 5 of the OPPD Board of Directors. The OTOC Environmental Action Team will be asking each of the candidates carefully prepared questions relative to some recent board decisions. Some of the questions will focus on the energy sources used by OPPD to generate electric power in the near future, i.e. renewable, such as wind and solar, or carbon based, such as coal and natural gas. Additional questions will be prepared that look at the impact of recent rate increases on low-income and/or low-consumption residential customers. The candidate will have the opportunity to review the questions prior to the forum. The declared candidates are:

Paul Anderson, Don Kroupa, Collin Cavanaugh, Brad Ashby, Craig Moody, and Tom Mulligan. All OPPD customers are invited to attend.

Subdistrict 5 is roughly: 45th Street west to 132nd Street and I-80 north to Fort Street.

To learn more about OTOC, please see page 15.

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@firstuuomaha.org or use the Hope in Action link on the church website. You may call the church office and press ext. 105 to leave a telephone message for Hope in Action. Or, you may simply complete a Caring Card located in the church pews and place it in the box in the church foyer.

WHO DECIDES WHAT SUPPORT WILL BE OFFERED?

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

Community Meals & Y.E.S.

Every Saturday churches in our area join together to cook a meal, serve their neighbors and bring a sense of community to our neighborhood.

As our neighborhood undergoes changes, the number of people we serve has dwindled and we have been looking for additional ways to serve the neighborhood.

At the suggestion of church member, Kim Callaghan, who has worked with the Youth Emergency Services, located at 2602 Harney, Community Meals leaders Diane Withem and Louise Jeffrey discussed at the last Ministry Team meeting our church helping Y.E.S.

Y.E.S. serves homeless—not runaways. Y.E.S. verifies that there are no reports out for the kids. The youth are aged 12-21. There are approximately 300 homeless kids in Omaha on any given night. Up to 40% of those kids identify somewhere in the LGBT community. Monday-Friday of each week, the Street Outreach Center feeds 50-75 kids. This is done without a kitchen, because all meals are donated. We've decided to support this organization with a monthly meal. Unlike Community Meals where the meal is prepared and served at

one location (First Baptist Church), the Y.E.S. meal is prepared elsewhere and then delivered to the Outreach Center. There is no need for servers. We can prepare this meal in our own church kitchen and then deliver the meal to Y.E.S. In the future, we may have church members cook in their own home kitchens. This setup (of using our own kitchens or the church kitchen) allows for more flexibility. With lower numbers at Community Meals and frequent donations of food to those meals, it is well within our budget to help out. Now what we need is your help! All we need are people willing to prepare food and deliver the monthly meal to Y.E.S. See below for more details.

Our Next Y.E.S. Lunch

Thursday, April 14 at 9am in the kitchen

Thank you to everyone who helped us make our March meal a success! Kim Callaghan is heading up this volunteer effort and she needs two helpers for this next prep. If you are able to donate food, desserts and fruit (like bananas, oranges and apples), they are more than welcome! We also need paper plates, plastic eating utensils, napkins. It's coming up to warmer weather and Kim requests that if you can donate sunblock and bug spray, it would be very helpful! Want to volunteer? Want to donate? Contact Kim: kjcallaghan@hotmail.com. Thank you!

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!

Share the Plate this month:

Community Meals

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. This month we share the plate with Community Meals. See opposite page for more information.

OTOC (Omaha Together One Community) Spring Fundraiser

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

April 9, 6-9:30pm at the Omaha Hot Shops

What is OTOC? It is a local Omaha organization which “teaches people to become effective leaders, [while] exploring their legitimate interests, doing solid research, engaging in tough, but always respectful public discourse, holding elected officials accountable and creating positive change through collective action.” OTOC is currently working on important issues, such as Medicaid expansion in Nebraska, mental health issues, vacant properties in North Omaha, and advocating on climate change.

We invite you to attend the OTOC's Annual Fundraiser for an evening with fellow Omahans who want to make Omaha a better place to live. There will be a silent auction, cash bar, appetizers, and live music. Enjoy the Hot Shops. Learn about OTOC. Renew friendships. Meet like-minded, fun people. Tickets are \$20. For more information, contact Janet West: jmasonwest77@yahoo.com.

OTOC is a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(4) organization. Contributions to OTOC are not tax deductible. OTOC does not endorse candidates.

*Submitted by Laurie Gift, Mark Loscutoff,
Alan Vovolka, and Janet West*

Learning About Our Partner Church

Background on Partner Church Relationship

First Unitarian Church has had a partnership relationship with the church and village of Firtosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania since 1992. We send \$1,320 in quarterly payments to assist in the repairing and maintaining of the village church which will be 110 years old in 2016. We also send annually \$1,200 to assist nine village young people with high school and college expenses.

About Our Partner Church and its Minister

In 1992 and 1993, when members from our Omaha church visited our Partner Church, the homes in Firtosmartonos lacked modern amenities, including indoor plumbing. Now virtually all of the houses have modern plumbing, modern kitchens, televisions, and even computers. Although, there are many horses and carts that are used to go into the forest to bring firewood back to the village residents, most residents now own cars. Most of the residents of the village are, or have been, dairy farmers. Every morning at 7:30am, the cows and goats wander through

the village on their way to the pastures. Every evening, they return to be milked. Being a partially self-sustaining agriculture village, most families have a large garden.

Rev. Katalin is the village minister. The village has a population of 160 people—all of whom are Unitarians. She leads the Sunday services, teaches Sunday school, marries villagers, baptizes babies, leads confirmation classes, and officiates at funerals. She is the church administrator—she keeps the church books and writes the ministerial reports. She has organized summer camps for the Unitarian youth in her county. Recently, she has taken counseling courses and is a regular participant on a religious radio program.

Traveling to Our Partner Church

In the even years, (2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016), Rev. Katalin, Boti, Mate, and everyone in Firtosmartonos have welcomed members of First Unitarian Church of Omaha to Firtosmartonos. Those of us who have traveled to Firtosmartonos have learned how much we, Unitarians in the U.S., have in common with Unitarians in Transylvania. The Transylvanian Unitarians are truly our religious cousins.

Now the Partner Church Team is planning another visit for this summer. If you are interested, please contact Janet West at jmasonwest77@yahoo.com; 402-598-8230.



Update on Our DRE

As some of you know, Jan Wilson, our Director of Religious Education, had a fall and injured her shoulder last month. Many volunteers have stepped up to help our Sunday School and religious education programs continue in her absence. Jan received many cards and well wishes and is grateful for the help and the notes that people have given. Thank you to our amazing volunteers, and we wish Jan a speedy recovery.



Some of the cards that the kids sent Jan.

Overview of Sunday School and Activities

Birth-Kindergarten — 9:15am-12:30pm Nursery open. Adult signs child in/out.

Kindergarten-Grade 5 — 9:15am-10:30am Community Time. Middle classroom RE wing. Optional, adult-supervised play. Sign-in/out sheet, make contact with supervising adult(s) at drop-off.

*10:30-11:15 am. Class Time. Formal curriculum and teachers. K-2nd grade meets north classroom (Jan's office). 3rd-5th meets middle classroom of RE wing.

11:15 am-12:30 pm. Community Time. Middle classroom RE wing. Optional, adult-supervised play. Sign-in/out sheet, make contact with supervising adult(s) at drop-off.

Grades 6-12 — 9:00-10:30 am. Attend Church or Community Time at Spielbound. Adult-supervised board games at Spielbound (1 block from church). Parent responsible for drop-off/pick-up and having contact info on file.

*10:30-11:15 am. Class Time at Spielbound. Game choice and discussion with teachers. Youth at church walk over with Ryan Cook after first service, meeting at west RE door. Otherwise, parent responsible for drop-off.

11:15am-12:30pm. Attend Church or Community Time at Spielbound. Adult-supervised board games at Spielbound. Parent responsible for drop-off/pick-up and having contact info on file.

* denotes class time

The Midlands Memorial Society of Omaha: A Progressive Program Begun by Our Church

By Dave Richardson

Today it is commonplace to discuss end-of-life matters with family members, clergy and friends. Planning for the inevitable often involves issues such as “death with dignity,” euthanasia, disposal of remains and of course how shall we celebrate the life of the deceased. These topics were seldom discussed 50 years ago. The end of life usually involved a display of the remains and a service explaining where the person would be spending eternity, all this coming at a pretty high price. This was especially true in almost all Christian faiths, but the winds of change were starting to blow.

Between September of 1962 and October of 1963 three remarkable books were published that became touchstones for important progressive movements that continue to change our lives. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* signaled the beginning of the environmental movement, Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* awakened Americans into understanding the plight of women in postwar America and Jessica Mitford’s *The American Way of Death* exposed the funeral industry’s exploitative and often corrupt operations. This latter book helped launch The Memorial Society movement.

Not surprisingly, members of First Unitarian were at the vanguard of the local movement. The Midlands Memorial Society (MMS) was incorporated on May 8, 1964. The chief founder was Max Marshall. Other early officers included Jack Frost, Marie Helms, Dan Sullivan and Frank Norris. Its stated purpose was to promote through education, civic activities and other means dignity and simplicity in funeral rites and memorial services and to offer guidance to its members in making preliminary arrangements, through licensed funeral directors, for a type of funeral consistent with the religious beliefs of the individual.

It was now possible to designate in advance what is to be done with the body of the deceased and not leave these matters to grieving and vulnerable survivors at the hands of funeral directors who rarely if ever offered cremation as an option. It provided a simple pre-determined plan for removal and disposal of the remains thus relieving the survivors of painful choices.

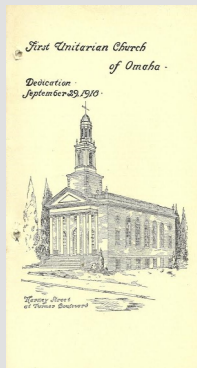
One of the primary functions was to assist with the arrangements as designated by the family. Dan Sullivan and Jack Frost arranged fixed rate agreements with several local mortuaries for disposal of bodies by cremation, organ donation or embalming if desired. The family simply called on one of the board members when the loss occurred and the board member would take it from there and the family could plan the memorial service rather than face the grim tasks of “casket shopping” with funeral directors.

Lawrence Wagner, another early MMS leader, delivered a lay sermon in March of 1965 on the MMS. He noted that “Many religious groups look on death as a transition to a new place of existence ... resulting in an elaborate, barbaric and costly ritual centered around a corpse.” He noted that the MMS was in essence a “funeral reform society” that aimed to make the life of the person the focus of the service, thus returning dignity to the life and memory of the person.

The society experienced modest growth in its first 10 years of existence. When Grace Scudder became the president of MMS in 1976 membership increased significantly. She worked tirelessly in the recruitment of members. At its height the MMS had nearly two hundred members most of whom were members of First Unitarian. The fact that the MMS no longer is in existence is actually testimony to its success. There have been many changes in societal attitudes. This combined with many successful reforms in the funeral services industry often the result of the efforts of the Memorial Society movement in the 1960s and ‘70s have made groups like the MMS unneeded, but the legacy of their efforts should not go unrecognized.



Photo of Grace Scudder



Celebrating Our Heritage

Two important church anniversaries are approaching:

- 150th anniversary of the signing of the Articles of Incorporation of The First Unitarian Church of Omaha - August 22, 1869
- 100th anniversary of the dedication of the church building - September 29, 1918

Ways to Help

Volunteers needed this spring to help spread donated mulch on the church grounds. Work in 1-3 hour increments, shorter time commitment when more people show up. Once the grounds are covered, you're off the hook for the season. Thanks!

Contact Sharon Conlon, Garden Team Leader
sharonconlon@msn.com, 402-332-7086

Ways to Help

Volunteer needed this spring to help the church office with filing and organization. Work at your own pace. Have fun with the office team. Make a difference.

Contact Catharine in the office
admin@firstuomaha.org, 402-345-3039

New Members *by Ellen Shurson*

We were very happy to welcome several new members recently.

Anna Selmecki Joined on November 22, 2015

Anna grew up in Minnesota and loves all things outdoors. She spends at least a week every year canoeing or backpacking through the wilderness. It's no surprise then, that meditation and mindfulness have become a central focus of her spirituality. She's also is an avid biker, runner, and ultimate Frisbee player.

After graduate school, she spent six years in Boston doing her postdoctoral research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School. She moved to Omaha for her new role as Assistant Professor at Creighton University Medical School and to be closer to her family in Minnesota and Iowa.

Her only experience with Unitarianism before moving to Omaha was dancing and playing violin for a weekly Contra Dance held First Church in Boston. She says this is such a welcoming folk dance tradition with lively music that we should start a dance here in Omaha!

When asked what brought her to First Unitarian she said she was searching for a liberal and inclusive community in Omaha and was immediately impressed with the dialogue, music, and active participation she found at our church.



Denise Allain Joined on January 17, 2016

Denise has been attending First Unitarian since she first attended a Christmas Eve service and came back because of the music. Denise is a native of Rhode Island. She has two adult children and two grandsons who all live on the east coast.

When asked what made her decide to join our church, she said she felt like she had found a home and family at our church.

Denise likes to stay busy and involved. She has been attending a Listening Circle, Women's Alliance, Mystic CUUPS group and she has been a worship associate and participated in a hospitality team. Her hobbies include reading, knitting, hiking, travel and visiting her grandchildren.



Catherine Plumlee Joined on February 15, 2016

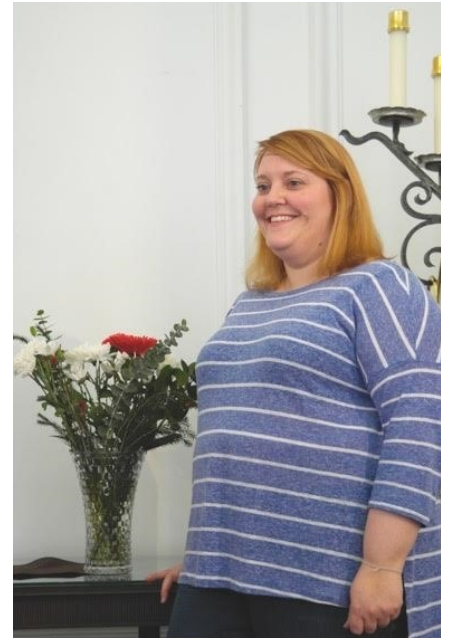
Catherine has been attending First Unitarian for a little over a year. She joined on her one-year anniversary of attending. When asked what attracted her to this church she said that, "It aligns with my beliefs of openness and community and general lack of Christian dogma. I returned because I liked what I heard and the choir sang Lord of the Rings and John Lennon songs!"

Catherine is a native of Tennessee. A job opportunity brought her to Omaha. She is currently a Project Manager at the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, an independent non-profit research center focusing on evaluation of childhood obesity prevention, food insecurity and local food systems.

She participates in the choir and Women's Alliance. Her hobbies are playing the ukulele and being crafty. She is also interested in local food policy and is passionate about justice.

Fun fact: Catherine shared that she is an ordained minister through the Universal Life Church of Modesto, CA, something she did on a whim via the internet in 2003.

Please join me in welcoming these new members into our First UU Omaha family.



*Community Meals
Team on
March 26*

Minister

Frank Rivas

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

Jan Wilson

dre@firstuuomaha.org**Church Administrator**

Catharine Dixon

admin@firstuuomaha.org**Organist**

Pat Will

Choir Director

Bob McMeen

Early Service Pianist

Stan Harper

Choir Accompanist

Keith Hart

Minister Emeritus

Ronald Knapp

Nursery Coordinator

Jenny Hastings

Custodian

Bobby Medrano

Nominating Committee

Mary Thomas, Kim Callaghan,

Molly Dewell, Joe Schaaf,

Nadine Keith, Dave Olson

THE FLAME

Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Word limit: 200. Send your submissions to

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

Scott Kemper, Lois Norris,

Debbie Hunsberger

Flame Mailing Team:

Debbie Hunsberger,

Linda Hruska, Howard Bolton,

Kim Callaghan, Lisa Calhoun

Meet Our Leaders

Board Members

Jack Round (President), Jackie Anderegg (President-Elect), Sheri Conner, Cy Leise (Secretary), Kabin Thomas, Dean Christensen, Jack Heidel, Linda Parker

board@firstuuomaha.org**Trustees of the Capital Trust**

Tim Duggan (2016), Steve Hutchinson (2017), Evelyn Whitehill (2018)

Committee on Ministry

Skip Ciulla, Sandy Host, Katrina Schmidt, Marie Sedlacek

Ministry Team Council

Rev. Frank Rivas, Jackie Anderegg, Diane Withem, Nellie Chenoweth

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

Archives - Dave Richardson

Caring - Katrina Schmidt

Chalice Guild - Kay Lynn Goldner

Community Meals - Diane Withem

Fellowship - Judith Wright, Nadine Keith & Nellie Chenoweth

Finance - Walt Jesteadt

Fundraising - Donna Neff & Kathi Oliver

Hope in Action - Kim Dunovan

Hospitality Teams - Kim Callaghan

House and Grounds - Pierce Carpenter

Membership - Beth Conover

Neighborhood Ministry - Royal Carleton

Office - Carolyn McNamara

Omaha Together One Community - Laurie Gift

Partner Church - Janet West

Religious Education - Sheri Conner

Women's Alliance - Nellie Chenoweth

Worship Arts Team - Megan Gustafson

Young Adult Group - Kathi Oliver

YRUU - Ben Wallace & Shawne Coonfare

Upcoming Church Events Beyond April

Holland Lecture — Wednesday, May 11 (see page 8)

Post Holland Lecture Event — Tuesday, May 17 (see page 8)

Annual Congregational Meeting — Sunday, May 15 (see page 6)

Omaha Gives! Fundraising Event — May 25 (see page 10)

Church Events

CommUUnity Night

Friday, April 1 at 5:30pm
See page 4 for details.

Ministry Team Meeting

Saturday, April 2 at 2pm in the Nursery
See page 4 for information.

Stewardship Fiesta

Saturday, April 2 at 6pm in the Common Room
See flyer on page 7.

People's Film Festival

Monday, April 4 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for information.

POPS: Parents of Preschoolers

Friday, April 8 at 5:30pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for information.

Private Wedding

Saturday, April 9 at 2pm

Pretty Princess Concert

Sunday, April 10 at 4pm in the Sanctuary
See page 4 for details.

Sunday Social Gathering

Sunday, April 10 at 7pm
See page 4 for information.

Women's Alliance

Monday, April 11 at 6:30pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for information.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, April 12 at 7pm in the Common Room

UU & You

Wednesday, April at 13 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.
See page 5 for more information.

Y.E.S. Meal Prep

Tuesday, April 14 at 9am
See page 15 for details.

The Tolerant Atheist Group

Thursday, April 14 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for information.

Flame Deadline

Submit your newsletter articles to admin@firsttuomaha.org by April 15 at noon.

Friday Fun Night

Friday, April 15 at 7pm in the Common Room.
See page 5 for information.

Private Wedding

Saturday, April 16 at 3pm

People's Film Festival

Monday, April 18 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for information.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, April 21 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge
See page 5.

Line Dancing Event

Friday, April 22 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for details.

Rowdy Sunday: A Celebration of Our Church Volunteers

Sunday, April 24 at 10:30am in the Common Room
See page 5 for information.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, April 24 at 11am in the Whitney Young Room
See page 5 for details.

Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, April 25 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room
See page 6 for details.

Exploring Humanist Perspectives

Tuesday, April 26 at 7pm in the Common Room.
See page 6 for details.

Confronting Racism Meeting

Saturday, April 30 at 10:30am, offsite
See page 5 for more information.

Book Club

Monday, May 2 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.
See page 6 for details.

Recurring...

Meditation

Every Tuesday at 8am in the sanctuary. See page 3 for information.

Choir

Rehearses every Wednesday at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

YRUU

Meets every Wednesday at 7pm in the Common Room.

Lunch with the Minister

Thursdays at noon in the Common Room. See page 3.

Women's Religious Studies Group

Meets most Thursdays at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 6 for information.

Dungeons & Dragons Group

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month after the second service.
See page 6.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month after the second service.
See page 6.



New to First Unitarian?
Please join us for a UU & You class on April 13th.
See page 5 more for information.

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