

February 2018

# The Flame



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

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Message from the  
Church President

## Church Services

**Sunday, February 4 at 10:30am**

**“Ziggurat”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

A sermon on the dangers of groupthink.

**Sunday, February 11 at 10:30am**

**“Arnold Schoenberg and his Colors of the Wind”**

**Kabin Thomas, Church Member**

We have to live our truth. We must express what's in our heart, even if it costs us our friends, our job, and our reputation. But we cannot forget to remain grounded while we do so. Otherwise, we will go nuts. This sermon touches upon my days as a professor of music at the University of Arkansas, by combining the music of Arnold Schoenberg's String Quartet No 2, Mvt. IV, Entrückung, sehr langsam (Rapture, very slow) and the theme song "Colors of the Wind," from Disney's animated feature, "Pocahontas."

By the end of this sermon you'll feel the air from different planets.

**Sunday, February 18 at 10:30am**

**“What Is Required but that We Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly?”**

**Rev. Frank Rivas**

The work of justice is integral to the work of religion, but there's a difference. The religious work of justice does not divide, but instead connects.

**Sunday, February 25 at 10:30am**

Lauren Way, who will graduate this spring from the Starr King School for the Ministry, is third in our series “New Voices of Liberal Religion.”

## 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, February 4 at 9:30am**

**How Fabulous is the Abacus? With Bob Hess**

Have you ever wondered about the first calculator? Where it came from? Did you know there is more than one type? Join Bob as he takes us into the past and shows us the abacus.

**Sunday, February 11 at 9:30am**

**Compassionate Communication with Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education**

We know words matter. How do we use words in person and in social media to communicate our thoughts clearly? What are some of the pitfalls that generally block communication and cause the receiver to shut down? With what words can we open others to new thoughts?

**Sunday, February 18 at 9:30am**

**Ask a Teacher with Kate Wiig**

Do you have some questions about teaching like, “Why do you get 3 months of paid vacation on the tax payer's dime?” or “What are we doing to improve test scores?” or “OPS is huge, why do they always complain about not having money?” Well, bring them on. I will answer any burning questions you have about teaching, and bring the tough ones—I'd love to set the record straight! If no one has questions, then I'll just tell my favorite wacky teaching stories to give you a peek behind the curtain.

**Sunday, February 25 at 9:30am**

**Borrowing a Home: Palestinian Women in Jordan with Bethany Cook**

The presentation will briefly touch upon the history of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Then examine Palestinian women's role and agency in preserving and perpetuating Palestinian identity and the issues they face.

## Rev. Elations

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

It's not so much that the present is perfect; it never is. Rather, change is difficult because the future is unknown.

Who will be the interim minister? Will he challenge us sufficiently? Can we trust him to keep our confidences? Who will be the next called minister? Will she inspire? Will she love us? Will she know how to be fully present with us?

I ask similar questions. Where will my life take me? Will I find authentic ministry outside the church? Will it involve writing, or will it be full-contact ministry? Will it present itself to me, or will I have to search for it?

I wish there were a secret blessing adequate to the task, a blessing that would guarantee the future and put our anxieties to rest. However, none of us know what comes next; so our faith has to be in ourselves, in our ability to discern, to adjust, and to act. Yes, we will sometimes make poor choices, but the story doesn't end there. We continue to discern, to adjust, and to act.

I have often thought that if I were the creator, I would have made life simpler. Then I recognize that I would have made it too simple. I would have left out color, for example. I would have left out the painfulness of love, the ambiguity of calling, the recognition that sometimes comes only after death. I would have left out struggle. I would have left out loss. I would have left out faith.

Julian of Norwich, the brilliant fourteenth century mystic, confronting the ambiguities and complexities of life, spoke these words of affirmation: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." Hers is my faith, or at least the faith to which I aspire. May it be yours as well.

Blessings and love,  
Frank

## Notes from Religious Education

*By Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education*

Extreme cold has not dashed the enthusiasm of the young ones.

We are studying Islam in a way that helps us learn about the practices that we might borrow to enrich our own spirits. We have learned that Muslims are required to pray five times a day, once at daybreak, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and at night before bed. What a beautiful tradition. Could we take a moment five times a day to remember the ones that are most important? Could we remember our gratitude five times a day?

It is good for us to learn about others for another reason. Sometimes people are afraid of those who look or speak differently. Familiarity around the visuals and sounds of Islam allows us to approach them as people to be understood, not feared. I feel very fortunate, with our dedicated teaching staff, to be bringing the light of positive awareness to these thoughtful kids.

**Please save the date:** Sunday, Feb. 18 at 2:30pm: We will visit the Tri-Faith Campus and tour the mosque called the American Muslim Institute. Feel free to grab lunch on your own and meet at 13906 Gold Circle, Omaha, on the Tri-Faith Campus. Questions? Email: [dre@firstuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuomaha.org).

## Church Events

### CommUnity Night

*Friday, Feb. 2 at 5:30pm in the Common Room.* If you haven't participated before, this is a fun, laid-back all church event. We gather for a potluck of side items (the main dish will be provided by R.E.) and we don't worry about who is bringing what. Kids are free to play. There is always plenty of food and what we really want is YOUU!

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

*Saturday, Feb. 3, 9am to 11:30am in the Common Room and after the church service on Sunday, Feb. 4.* For details please see page 11.

### Teams Meeting

*Saturday, Feb. 3 at 2pm in the Common Room.* All are invited.

### CUUPS Imbolc Ritual

*Saturday, Feb 3 in the Common Room. Arrive at 6:15; ritual starts at 6:30pm.* Potluck after. Please bring a dish to share. Join us as we celebrate Imbolc, also called Brigid's Day. It is the middle of winter and holds the promise of spring. Childcare provided.

### First UU Young Adults Group

*Sunday, Feb. 4 at 11:30am in the Whitney Young Room.* This group welcomes everyone ages 18-35 from all over the Omaha Metro. Join us as we continue our series in the UUA publication *Becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood*.

### People's Film Festival

*Monday, Feb. 5 at 7pm in the Common Room.* We will watch *The Zookeeper's Wife* which is the real-life story of a working wife and mother who became a hero to hundreds during World War II. In 1939 Poland, Antonina Żabińska and her husband have the Warsaw Zoo flourishing under his stewardship and her care.

### 3F Book Bonanza

*1st Wednesday of each month. First meeting: Feb. 7 at 6:30pm in the Merritt Lounge.* Mystery, Adventure, Fantasy, Love, Life—the JOY of reading. Come join us as we enter the world of fiction and read our way through the year. We will meet the

first Wednesday evening of each month (6:30-8:30) in the Merritt Lounge. The discussion for the first month will be "Y is for Yesterday" by Sue Grafton. Please reach out to Denise ([denise.allain@yahoo.com](mailto:denise.allain@yahoo.com)) if you have any questions.

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

*Thursday, Feb. 8 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 night. If you are coming for dinner, please RSVP [aha@firstuuumaha.org](mailto:aha@firstuuumaha.org) and state whether you prefer meat or vegan soup no later than Feb. 5. If you need childcare, please let us know.

### Memorial Service for Dean Christensen

*Saturday, February 10 at 3pm in the Sanctuary.*

### Women's Alliance

*Monday, Feb. 12 at 6:30pm in the Common Room.* Women, and those who identify as women, are invited to attend with socializing and beverages to start at 6:30pm with dinner following at 7pm. Our program will be presented by Juan Carlos Veloso from the Omaha Area Sanctuary Network. Veloso is a pastor and member of Omaha Area Sanctuary Network who has ministered to immigrants in South Omaha. He will speak about his experience with the sanctuary movement. Our dinner will be a selection of soups, including a vegan option, as well as bread, butter, you RSVP, please include a note if you would crackers, salad and various toppings. When like the VEGAN option. We ask for \$15 which goes to the cost of food and the Merritt Education Fund. First-time attendees, please be our guest. Please let us know if you are a first-time attendee.

Need childcare to join us? No problem!! Women's Alliance now offers childcare. When you RSVP please include your child's name, age and any dietary needs required. Macaroni and cheese will be provided to the children unless you note a dietary restriction when you RSVP. PLEASE RSVP by Feb 8th by EMAILING Jeri Thurber at [jeri.thurber@gmail.com](mailto:jeri.thurber@gmail.com). We look forward to seeing everyone on February 12th!

### Lunch with the Minister

*Thursday, Feb. 15 at noon in the Common Room.* We meet once a month. Pack a lunch and come join us.

### Women's Religious Studies Covenant Group

*Thursday, Feb. 15 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge.* Maureen Connolly will facilitate our discussion of the Ninth Step Concern for Everybody in Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. We welcome all self-identified women, and if you are interested, please contact Harriet Major at [hmajor323@cox.net](mailto:hmajor323@cox.net).

### POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

*Friday, Feb. 16 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 (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 Steps: Get to Know Unitarian Universalism & Church

*Sunday, Feb. 18 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 UU. See page 17 for more details.

## Church Events Continued...

### People's Film Festival

Monday, Feb. 19 at 7pm in the Common Room. We will watch *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: The Case of the Stolen Election*. Greg Palast is an investigative reporter for the BBC and the *Guardian*, who busted Katherine Harris's fake felon purge that stole the election for Bush in 2000. His work has been called courageous reporting that is funny, heartbreaking, and loaded with facts like hand grenades.

### Leadership Talk Back

Sunday, Feb. 25 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.

### CUUPS Class: How to Lead a Ritual

Sunday, Feb 25 at 4pm in the Common Room. Childcare is available. Kate Godfrey will give the basics to running a Ritual. This class is open to all.

### Book Club

Monday, Feb. 26 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. The book for this month is *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* by Peter Wohlleben. Questions? Contact Dave at [drichardson821@gmail.com](mailto:drichardson821@gmail.com).

### Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Join us to discuss anything and everything related to Taoism! As Taoism is best understood through practice rather than theory, the goal of this group is to provide a participatory space to explore how Taoism is applied in daily life, with an emphasis on experience. With our direct experiences as a reference point, we can then delve into the main texts of Taoism. Questions? Contact Geoff Erickson at [gerickson03@gmail.com](mailto:gerickson03@gmail.com).

### 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 [guburr77@outlook.com](mailto:guburr77@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).

#### Choir

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

#### Insight Meditation

Every Thursday, 5pm to 5:50pm in the Whitney Young Classroom. If new to meditation, you may wish to attend the 6pm meeting (see below).

#### Dharma Chautauqua

Every Thursday, 6pm to 7:30pm, in the Whitney Young Classroom. This group reflects a free and open-minded exploration of ideas and practices found within Buddhism, mindfulness, and spiritual, psychological, and recovery literature.

#### Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting (NOW MEETS OFFSITE)

Beginning in February, we will meet at Kitty Brougham's house: 2002 Deer Park Blvd on the odd-numbered Sundays at noon.

#### Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the Conference Room at 11:30am. 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/2017HHAuction](http://www.auctria.com/auction/2017HHAuction), or email [auction@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:auction@firstuuomaha.org), or pay at the door for larger events. Got "cabin fever"? Seats are available for these February auction events. All proceeds to the church.

### Warm-up Winter with UU Friends: February Auction Events:

\*Feb 11: Scrying 101 at 4pm (Cassie Moucka) at church

\*Feb 16: Fondueicious Dinner at 6:30pm (Young Adult Group) at church

Feb 17: Dead of Winter Gathering at 7pm (Jennifer Larsen/Joe Sisson) offsite

Feb 24: Informal Piano/Organ Concert with reception 3pm-5pm (Pat Will/Donna Neff) at church

\*Feb 24: Let's Dance!! at 7pm (Joe & Lori Schaaf +) at church

\*Indicates free babysitting provided with reservation.

### 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:

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

#### Stewardship Campaign

The whole month of March. See page 8.

**Partner Church "Refresh" Weekend**  
 March 10-11, 2018. See page 15 for details.

## Is it Time to Become the Leader You're Waiting For?

*By Alan Vovolka, Church President*

Leadership takes many forms and is critical for organizations in transition. Our church will soon enter one of the most important transitions a church can make, as Reverend Frank retires later this year. A brief overview of my expectations around how that transition will unfold follows, and I hope that you will seriously reflect on what part you should play in it.

The UUA provides guidance and many resources for congregations involved in ministerial searches and I will provide links to (lots) more information at the end of the article.

First, some background for those familiar with how other denominations deal with this situation. If we liken matching churches and ministers to the process of marital match-making (not a bad analogy, in my opinion) there are several ways to go about it. Denominations with strict hierarchical structures can simply assign a new minister. This reminds me of an arranged marriage where neither spouse has any control over the pairing. Unitarians don't do it this way—we are a free church that belongs to an association of other free churches and we make our own decisions. Also, there is no catalog of mail-order brides from which we can simply choose. What we have is a process, with recommended steps, to lead us toward a good match.

These steps involve hiring an interim minister to start next fall, and forming a search committee to lead us through the activities required to:

- Learn about the congregation and represent it accurately to ministerial candidates,
- Identify a good match,

- Attract that one candidate to Omaha to introduce to the congregation during a two-Sunday candidating week before a congregational vote on whether to extend a ministerial call. This process takes at least one year and probably two.

Among the first actions the Board of Trustees will take is to arrange for visits from the staff of the Mid-America Region to help prepare the board and the congregation for the search process. I anticipate meetings with the transitions coordinator, the ministerial settlement representative, and the compensation coordinator. Some of these meetings will be open to all members of the congregation, and I hope for good attendance, as all of us are affected. Other board duties involve appointing a search committee, an interim search committee, and a negotiating team.

The search committee will consist of at least seven church members who are willing to commit to spending 250 to 400 hours of their time over the next year or two, are knowledgeable about different aspects of the church (CUUPS, religious education, AHA, etc.) but are more interested in the church as a whole. There is no ideal profile of a committee member, but the committee as a whole should be balanced with respect to age, tenure with the church, experience and interests within the church and denomination, skill sets to accomplish the various tasks required, and who work well together. The search committee will operate in an atmosphere of confidentiality, not secrecy. The board and congregation will be kept informed of search progress, but will not be aware of candidates' identities.

The interim search committee will be three to five members, involve a smaller investment of hours and months, and start sooner. As less time is available to learn about the congregation, these people should already be very familiar with our congregation.

The negotiating team will be three members who will work with both the search committee and the final candidate that the search committee identifies. These people should be familiar with compensation issues and have some negotiating experience.

In addition to the opportunities listed above, there will be many chances to help with specific search tasks, and to participate in focus groups, and an all-church survey.

*(continued on the next page)*

*(continued from previous page—president's article)*

Of course, the most important thing we need to do is keep the church running and this requires many leaders and volunteers. We have a stewardship campaign approaching and we need people to work on that (the search committee budget should be around \$8,000). We also need people for a Right Relations Committee. Times of change are stressful and a Right Relations Committee can help with some search tasks and remind us that the way we interact with each other becomes more important under stress.

As you consider your own role in this transition and think about whether it's time to stretch into a new position, also talk to and encourage others to figure out which tasks are good fits for them; we are a community that does best when we all do our best.

Links:

Transition Handbook: [https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/settlement\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/settlement_handbook.pdf)

MidAmerica Region Transitions page: <https://www.midamericauua.org/services/transitions/498-transitions>

Pictured to the right:  
Young Adult Game Night in  
January.



Pictured to the left: **The YES Meal Team** preps lunch for YES (Youth Emergency Shelter) in Omaha. Next date is Monday, Feb. 19 at 9am. We'll order pizza, but we still need a couple helpers to prep salad. We're asking for donations of fruits and desserts. We're also collecting diapers of any size, baby wipes and feminine hygiene products to replenish the YES pantry. Can you donate? Can you help with the meal? Please contact Kim at [kjcallaghan@hotmail.com](mailto:kjcallaghan@hotmail.com).

## Stewardship Campaign

By Mary Kay Peters

It's that time again! The Kickoff for the 2018-19 Stewardship Campaign is Sunday, March 4 and will be here before we know it! This year we will attempt something different for our campaign by having a series of Stewardship Feedback Circle groups that will meet at various times for two hours in the Common Room throughout the month of March. Everyone is encouraged to sign up and participate in one of these two-hour sessions with Rev. Frank and a member of the Stewardship Committee (light refreshments provided). We want to hear from everyone about what this church adds to each of our lives!

**The campaign will end on Sunday, April 8 with “Hamilton and Eggs,” a brunch and best of Broadway show *Hamilton* sing-along in the Common Room.**

The excitement and enthusiasm for the church and its outside work and inner activities keep growing! Rev. Frank continues to refer to us as a church with big dreams, and we are all working on making those dreams become reality. In order to maintain or increase its programs as well as the beautiful building, and support outside programs of interest to our congregation, please consider increasing your pledge this year so we can all continue to enjoy what this wonderful church provides as we celebrate 100 years in our building. This past year the Stewardship Team lost its most faithful member, Barb Ross, who always actively contributed to the pledge drive campaign with her wit and wisdom. But as always, we hope to place the emphasis on fun and fellowship for the Stewardship Campaign and have it result in your financial support of the church.

### STEWARDSHIP FEEDBACK CIRCLE GROUP DATES:

Two-hour blocks in the Common Room

Sunday, March 4—12:30pm-2:30pm

Tuesday, March 6—6pm-8pm

Thursday, March 15—6pm-8pm

Sunday, March 18—12:30pm-2:30pm

Thursday, March 22—1pm-3pm

Friday, March 23—6pm-8pm

Saturday, March 24—1pm-3pm

Monday, March 26—6pm-8pm

Saturday, March 31—2pm-4pm

To sign up, please call the church office (402-345-3039 ext. 101) or email [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org). Please use “Feedback Circle Group” or “FCG” as the subject of your email.

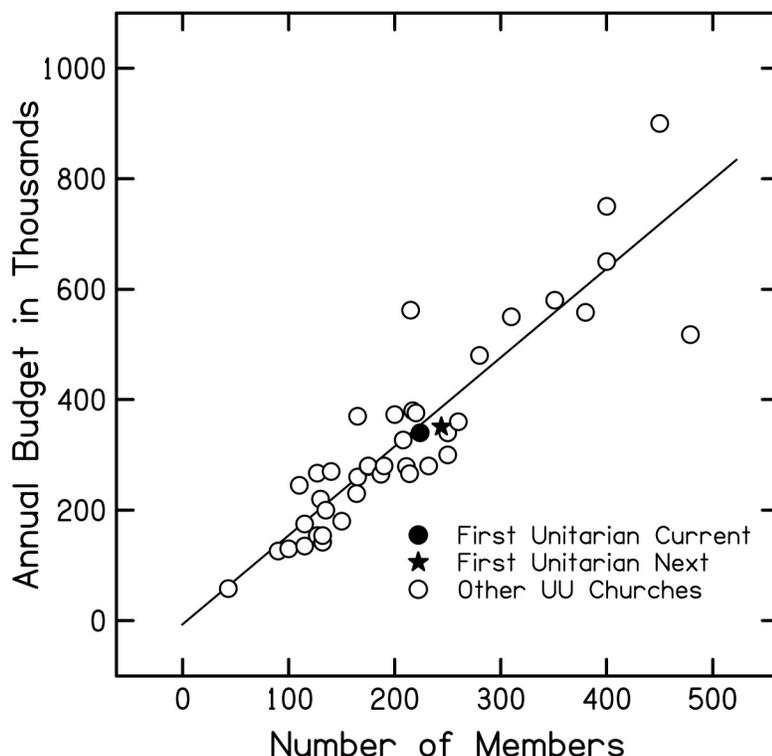
If you need childcare, please give the church office at least two weeks notice so we can be sure that we have a childcare worker at the session you plan to attend.

## Finance Matters

By Walt Jesteadt, Church Treasurer

We will need approximately \$351,000 to run the church during the year that starts May 1, an increase of 3.1 percent over this year's budget. We now have 244 members, compared to 224 last year at this time so our cost is about \$1,400 per member. How do our budgets compare to those of other UU churches? We looked at 50 churches four years ago and found that our budget was typical for a church of our size. I have recently repeated the exercise for 40 churches, with budget information obtained in the last 6 months. I then fitted a line to the data and plotted budgets for our church for the current year and for next year as filled symbols. The figure below shows the results. We have a typical budget this year and our increase of 20 members, with only a small increase in the proposed budget, means that the budget for next year will be below average for a church of our size. Our church is a bargain!

The UUA says that 80 to 90 percent of most church budgets come from contributions by members through annual stewardship campaigns. Last year, we were at 68 percent. For the current year, our initial pledge goal was 69 percent of the budget. We ended up below 65 percent, although actual contributions are running above budget. We made strong assumptions about investment income and used the previous year's surplus to balance the budget given that low percentage. We could avoid those problems this year if our pledges reach 71 percent of the total budget. That would still put us well below the contributions by members in most churches. The increase from 65 percent of our budget to 71 percent seems reasonable, but it will require a 10 percent increase in the pledge goal, from \$250,000 to \$275,000. Please consider increasing your pledge for the coming year and remember that both our budget and the percentage of the budget supported by pledges are less than those of typical UU churches.



## 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 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).

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

*Saturday, Feb 3 in the Common Room. A light breakfast (muffins, bagels, fruit) will be served at 9am, speakers start at 9:30am.*

Let us follow our path to stand up for human rights and justice, and build a culture of sanctuary. We will hear speakers on sanctuary, and how to promote a culture of "Sanctuary Everywhere" through Sanctuary-in-the-Streets action. We will also hear members of our community express why sanctuary is important, and why our congregation should pledge to be a Sanctuary church. After the presentations at the Saturday workshop, please join our First Unitarian Board in the church sanctuary following the Sunday morning service on February 4th to express thoughts and concerns for our congregation.

## 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](mailto:hopeinaction@firstuuomaha.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: **March 24**. 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 February is our own **Partner Church**. See page 15 for more information.

## THANK YOU FROM THE WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Each year, the Women's Alliance members pick a non-profit organization to donate to. In 2017, the ladies voted to donate supplies to the Women's Center for Advancement ([www.wcaomaha.org](http://www.wcaomaha.org)). The WCA focuses on meeting clients with emotional trauma, safety concerns, and financial security by assessing needs and barriers, providing options and resources, and offering on-going emotional support. The donations provided to WCA will go to women with these needs. A big thank you to all of the donors this year. We look forward to hearing about more non-profits in our monthly meetings and can't wait to choose a recipient for 2018. If you are interested in joining us for a meeting, please see the information posted in the order of service, on the First Unitarian website, in *The Flame*, or on Facebook.



## 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).

## Ways You Can Get Involved & Help

### Cards for Ruth

Ruth Nicklin, a long-time member, will be 90 on February 10. Her family would love to shower her with cards. Please send cards to:

Ruth Nicklin  
c/o Claudia Deeb  
770 No. 93rd St, #2C3  
Omaha, NE 68114

### YES Meal Prep

Monday, Feb. 19 in the church kitchen. See page 7 for details.

### Community Meals Volunteers

We need volunteers for Saturday, March 24. See page 12.

### Meal Train for Wingerts

Kerri and Seth welcomed baby Marie Ivy Wingert on Thursday, January 18! Please help them welcome her home by providing a meal or two so they can focus on the baby. Please go to the Meal Train link here:

<https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/ol51m4>

**Sunday Morning Help:** Do you enjoy the Early Morning Risers and the Choir? Do you want to join the EMR or Choir but don't sing or cannot play an instrument? Did you know that YOU could still be a key player? How? Join the Sound Team. If you can use a laptop or a smart phone, you can help with the sound system! Contact the church office today to find out how you can get involved. Help us make Sunday mornings sound even better. We need you! Email: [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org).

## 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>.

## The Church History Project Progress Report

By *Dave Richardson*

As many of you know we are approaching two important church anniversaries—the 100th anniversary of the dedication of our building in 1918 and the 150th anniversary of the founding of The First Unitarian Church of Omaha in 1869. We have formed a Heritage Task Force to plan the celebration of these anniversaries.

To commemorate these important events, we're working on a book that is an informal history of the church. I have completed an initial draft of the book, and Carolyn McNamara is in the proofreading and editing stage now. Once that is completed, Ellen Shurson will begin the layout and design stage. Linda Parker is serving as the administrative assistant on this project, her tasks include the preparation of the index of the book. Numerous other members have contributed time and ideas to the preparation of the book.

We will have more details in the upcoming months. Issues such as funding of the project, publication details and dates will be discussed. If anyone else is interested in helping with the book please contact me at [drichardson821@gmail.com](mailto:drichardson821@gmail.com).

**Let's Green Our Solid Waste Stream**

### OTOC Events:

## Finding Solutions to Substandard Rental Properties in Omaha

Join OTOC leaders on Thursday, February 22 from 6:45pm to 8pm at Urban Abbey (1026 Jackson St) for a presentation and discussion about how Omaha deals with substandard rental properties. How do we assure that all tenants have access to rental properties that meet basic housing standards for

safety and habitability? How do we organize tenants to seek inspection of their substandard apartments when they fear losing their place to live? Gary Fischer, General Counsel to Family Housing Advisory Services and their program, the Fair Housing Center, will be the presenter.

## Let's Green Our Solid Waste Stream

Join OTOC leaders on Thursday, Feb 8 from 5:45 to 7:00 p.m. at Urban Abbey ([1026 Jackson St](#)) for a presentation and discussion about how Omaha deals with our solid waste trash stream. Learn about the serious environmental impacts resulting from how Omaha manages our local landfill, yard waste and composting. Learn about the 10-year solid waste contract that the City of Omaha will soon negotiate and how you can help shape some aspects of the new contract. Michael O'Hara from the Missouri Valley Sierra Club and others will help lead the discussion.

## Partner Church History

Do you know that First Unitarian Church has had a Partner Church in the Unitarian village of Firtosmartanos, Transylvania, Romania since 1992? In that year, Mary Jo and Mike Stoll were the first members of our church to visit the village. This visit took place only two years after the Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceasuescu, had threatened to bulldoze these extremely poor Unitarian agricultural villages. In December 1989, Ceasuescu was assassinated. In January 1990, a delegation of American Unitarian Universalists traveled to Transylvania to meet with Transylvanian Unitarian ministers. Many of the Unitarian villages were then partnered with American Unitarian churches so that the American churches could augment the ministers' salaries and repair and preserve the village churches—many of which date back to before the Reformation.

In 1993, when Rev. Ron Knapp (now the First Unitarian Church Minister

Emeritus) led a group from First Unitarian Church of Omaha to Firtosmartanos, none of village houses had indoor bathrooms or kitchen appliances. There was only one road, unpaved, through the village and one village phone that hung outside the general store. No one in the village owned a car.

First Unitarian Church began providing funds to supplement the village minister's meager salary and to help maintain and preserve the village church and parsonage.

In 2005, 12 members and friends of our church visited the village. They were warmly greeted, just like relatives, by the village residents. The residents shared their traditions of communal bread-making, sheep milking, cheese-making, and producing palinka, the powerful plum-based alcohol. The village blacksmith demonstrated his skills of making horseshoes and other iron products that are needed in an agricultural village. The highlight of the visit was being a part of the village harvest ball. The village young people, dressed in traditional Hungarian costumes, performed Hungarian dances. A local band played so all could dance.

During the village stay, the Omaha visitors met with the village church board and asked how First Unitarian Church could best help the villagers. The answer was to provide scholarship money for the village young people. The Romania government pays for a high school student's educational cost regardless as to whether the student attends a public school or a private/denominational school. At that time, most of the village high schoolers were attending a Unitarian high school in a nearby city. Because of the distance to the city and the lack of transportation, the students had to board at the school. The scholarship money from First Unitarian Church paid a portion of the teens' room and board costs.

*(continued on next page)*

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Since 2005, the Partner Church Team has provided a total of \$1,200 of scholarship money each year that works out to \$120 per student. The Women's Alliance donates \$400 towards scholarships.

Since 2000, the Partner Church Team has also been sending \$1,320 per year to subsidize the minister's salary and to help maintain the village parsonage and church. The village church is 110 years old and badly in need of repair and maintenance. Since the minister's income has increased and the parsonage has gone under major modernization, the Partner Church Team has indicated to Rev. Katalin that all of the \$1,320 should be used to stabilize the church building.

Since 2005, members and friends of First Unitarian Church have visited Firtosmartonos six times. The most recent trip was during the summer of 2016 when Nancy Scott, Kandelyn Scott, and Janet West toured many of the historic Unitarian sites in Transylvania and visited our Unitarian cousins in the village. The Omaha visitors celebrated the 110th anniversary of the village church with the village Unitarians. In February 2017, Rev. Katalin traveled to the United States. The Partner Church hosted a fun potluck at First Unitarian Church and Rev. Katalin enjoyed meeting many church members and reconnecting with friends.

To learn more about the Partner Church, please visit: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/partner-church->

## **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.

### **Special Event: Partner Church ReFresh on Saturday, March 10th**

Please plan to join us on Saturday, March 10 in the Common Room from 9am to noon. The Partner Church Team along with Roger Bertschausen will discuss our Partner Church—its past, present and future. A boxed lunch will be served. Please email the church office at [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org) to reserve your spot. Please notify the office if you have dietary needs and if you need childcare. **Please RSVP by Monday, March 4.**



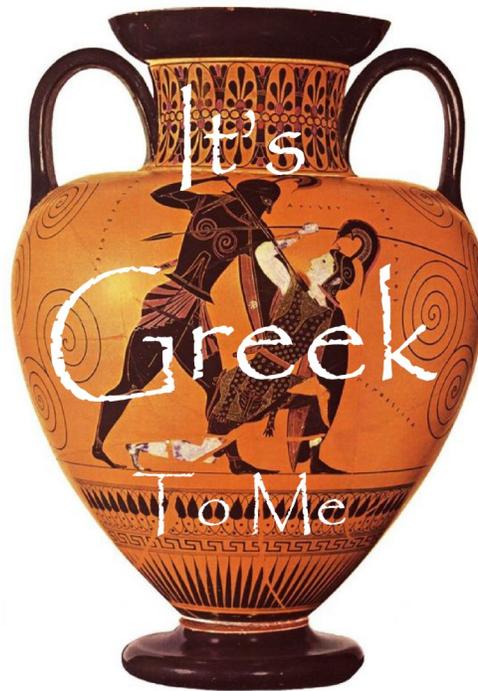
*A field trip every day*

Summer Art Camp, 2018

Art, Theater, Literature  
Philosophy  
Architecture

Government  
Athletics  
Language

So much of  
our thinking comes to us from the  
**Ancient Greeks**



Mon. thru Fri. 9:00-3:30

June 11-15

Contact Jan: [dre@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuuomaha.org)

*For kids who have finished grades K-6*

## 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, February 18 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 18th 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

**EMR Director**

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), 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 McAttee &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—Peg Pidgeon

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

### CommUNITY Night

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

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

Saturday, Feb. 3 at 9am in the Common Room. See pages 10 & 11.

### MTC Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 3 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge.

### Teams Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 3 at 2pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### CUUPS Imbolc Ritual

Saturday, Feb 3 in the Common Room. Arrive at 6:15. See page 4.

### First UU Young Adults

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

### People's Film Festival

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

### AHA Discussion Group

Thursday, Feb. 8 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### Memorial Service for Dean Christensen

Saturday, February 10 at 3pm in the Sanctuary.

### H&H Event: Scrying 101

Sunday, Feb. 11 at 4pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### Women's Alliance

Monday, Feb. 12 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 7pm in the Common Room.

### Flame Deadline

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

### Lunch with the Minister

Thursday, Feb. 15 at noon in the Common Room. See page 4.

### POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

Friday, Feb. 16 at Second Unitarian Church. See page 4.

### H&H Event: Fondueicious Dinner

Friday, Feb. 16 at 6:30 pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### H&H Event: Offsite Event

Saturday, Feb. 17. See page 5.

### First Steps Class

Sunday, Feb. 18 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room. See page 4.

### YES Meal Prep

Monday, Feb. 19 in the church kitchen. See page 7 for details.

### People's Film Festival

Monday, Feb. 19 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 5 for details.

### H&H Event: Informal Piano/Organ Concert with Pat Will

Saturday, Feb. 24 at 3pm in the Sanctuary. See page 5.

### H&H Event: Let's Dance

Saturday, Feb. 24 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

### Leadership Talk Back

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

### CUUPS Class: How to Lead a Ritual

Sunday, Feb 25 at 4pm in the Common room. See page 5.

### Book Club

Monday, Feb. 26 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5

### Taoism Discussion Group

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

### Recurring...

#### Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting (NOW MEETS OFFSITE)

Beginning in February, we will meet at Kitty Brougham's house: 2002 Deer Park Blvd on the odd-numbered Sundays at noon.

#### 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.

#### Women's Religious Studies Group

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

#### Dharma Chautauqua

Thursdays at 6pm in the Whitney Young Room. See page 5.

### Future Events...

#### Partner Church "Refresh" Weekend

March 10-11, 2018. See page 15.

#### Stewardship Feedback Circles

Various dates in March. See page 8.

#### Community Meals

March 24. See page 12.

#### Pathways to Membership Class

Starts Sunday, April 8. See page 17.

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