

January 2016

The Flame



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

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Preserve Our
Building Campaign

The First U Choir at the Durham Museum. Photographer: Bob Hess



Sunday Services — You are welcome here!

January 3 — When Words Fail — one service at 10:30am

Megan Gustafson

Sometimes, we talk too much, while saying far too little. Come to this experiential worship service and explore the power of no words.

January 10 — “Sin Reconsidered — two services at 9:30am and 11:15am

Rev. Frank Rivas

Does the word “sin” belong in our Unitarian vocabulary?

January 17 — “Repentance Reconsidered” — two services at 9:30am and 11:15am

Rev. Frank Rivas

There’s an ongoing debate about the etymology of “repent.” If the word can be traced back to Greek, as I suspect it can, to repent is to rethink one’s life. On the weekend of Martin Luther King, Jr, we rethink our lives.

January 24 — two services at 9:30am and 11:15am

Imam Muhammad Abutalib, of the Islamic Center of Omaha, will speak on Islam.

January 31 — “One and Only” — two services at 9:30am and 11:15am

Rev. Royal Carleton

Flowers, grass, and trees. There is not just one. Burgers, pizza, and tacos. There is not just one. Dogs, cats, and horses. There is not just one. Chaplain Royal will explore other "One and Onlys" that we experience and live through.

Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

We tend to use the word “liturgy” to refer to how ministers and lay leaders organize Sunday worship. The Greek root identifies liturgy far more broadly, as the work of the people, the work we do together.

The work of our church is done by each of us, by those who welcome visitors on Sunday mornings and by those who check each pew for hymnals, pamphlets, clipboards, and pencils; by those who make repairs small and great and by those who volunteer in the classrooms; by those who help to create justice in our name and by those who prepare and proofread the newsletter and order of worship; by those who balance the books and by those who share their odysseys on Sunday morning; by those who prepare grand social events and by those who week after week prepare coffee, by those who visit shut-ins and by those who organize a pledge campaign each year. The work of the church, whether it is done in solitude or in communion with one another, creates our shared community.

A church is the people who make it possible, the people who put in the time, and from these people develops a practical theology, a theology of care, a theology of respect, a profoundly human theology.

The next “Confronting Racism” conversation with Clair Memorial United Methodist Church will be at Clair on Saturday, January 30. We will gather for informal conversation, coffee, and snacks at 10:30. The program will begin at 11. At noon we will break for lunch, and at 1 o’clock Rev. Portia and I will lead a brief worship service (we’re estimating this to be 20 minutes). Direct talk about racism is rare even though it is essential to creating a just community. This series, coordinated by members of Clair and First, is part of the work of our church. Please join us.

It is an honor to be part of this congregation.

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

UU&YOU Class

Sunday, Jan. 3 at 11:30am in the Whitney Young Room. 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@firstuomaha.org or call Jaime at (402-657-9386).

Mystic Sojourn CUUPS

Sunday, Jan. 3 at 6pm in the Common Room. At this meeting we will be examining the 12 months of the new year through a ritual based on a Czech fairy tale. Potluck will follow. Come celebrate the new year with us! All are welcome.

CommUUnity Night

We do not meet in January. Mark your calendars for Friday, Feb. 5 for our next event.

Free Concert with Kyle Knapp

Friday, Jan. 8 at 7pm in the sanctuary. Come enjoy an evening of live music by talented acoustic guitarist, songwriter, and story teller, Kyle Knapp! Many of you are already familiar with Kyle's music, but if not, check out his website: www.kyleknapp.com. Join us for this informal evening of music and fun with delicious desserts and non-alcoholic beverages. Childcare provided by reservation. Please RSVP to caylamc@cox.net by January 4th. We do need RSVPs if you plan to attend.

Sunday Social Gathering (Second Sunday of every month)

Jan. 10 at 7pm in the Common Room. MOVIE: "Broke Back Mountain," a powerful story of two young men, a Wyoming ranch hand and a rodeo cowboy, who meet in the summer of 1963. Everyone is welcome! If you have any questions, please call Royal at 402-999-1379.

A Course in Miracles

Thursdays at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Dates: January 7, January 21, February 4, February 11, February 18, February 25. A Course in Miracles is a complete self-study spiritual thought system. As a three-volume curriculum consisting of a Text, Workbook for Students, and Manual for Teachers, it teaches that the way to universal love and peace—or remembering God—is by undoing guilt through forgiving others. The Course thus focuses on the healing of relationships and making them holy. A Course in Miracles also emphasizes that it is but one version of the universal curriculum, of which there are "many thousands." Consequently, even though the language of the Course is that of traditional Christianity, it expresses a non-sectarian, non-denominational spirituality. A Course in Miracles therefore is a universal spiritual teaching, not a religion. Email the office to sign-up admin@firstuomaha.org.

Omaha Table Talk: The Heartland Interfaith Dialogue — offsite

Tuesday, Jan. 12. See page 12 for details.

Tolerant Atheist Group

Thursday, Jan. 14 at 7pm in the Common Room. TAG's series of second Thursday monthly meetings continues with the presentation of the third of a four-part DVD video series on the History of Free Thought in America. The videos are somewhat sequential, but it is not necessary to have seen the previous parts. Great discussions follow the showing. All are cordially invited to come for the 7pm video and discussion in the Common Room. As usual, the doors will open at 6pm for those interested in "Bring Your Own Dinner" and conversation. Questions? Contact tag@firstuomaha.org.

Friday Fun Night

Friday, Jan. 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!

UU Speed Meet

Sunday, Jan. 17 during coffee hour. The CUUPS group will be hosting this social event resembling speed meeting. A long table will separate first service from second service and people will go down the line spending 3-5 minutes with each person on the other side of the table. A topic will be suggested but anything goes. No scoring or ranking allowed, just an open mind and heart!!

People's Film Festival

Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 7pm in the Common Room. All are welcome to this showing of "[Empire Files](#)." The documentary features interviews

Church Events Continued...

with School Of the Americas Watch founder Father Roy Bourgeois and other SOA Watch leaders. This easily ties in with previously shown immigration film "Harvest of Empire." It is short enough to allow good discussion time, etc.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, Jan. 21 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. The topic is "Blessings" led by Elaine Wells. If there are questions, contact Evelyn Whitehill at 712-366-2748 or ewwhitehill@cox.net.

Archives Party

Thursday, Jan. 21, 9am to 4pm (with a break for lunch with the minister) in the Common Room. The church has important anniversaries coming up: September 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the church building and August 2019 marks the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Articles of Incorporation. The Archives Team has immediate tasks to do and YOU can help! Our job includes: getting the archives organized, putting together an archives-themed display in the display case in the south foyer of the Common Room as well as determining ideas for celebrating our heritage. We meet on the third Thursdays of January (the 21st), February (the 18th) and March (the 17th) from 9am to 4pm with a mid-day break wherein we can join Rev. Frank and others in his weekly lunch. The time to help is very flexible. If you can make it for an hour or two that would be fine. We will be sorting, organizing and chatting during the times indicated. This church has a fascinating history in

addition to having fascinating people. Join us to become better acquainted with both. If you have questions please email Dave at richardson.david@westside66.net

Chili Cook off

Saturday, Jan. 23 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 7 for details.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Jan. 24 at 11am in the Common Room. Calling all people aged 18-35! We are starting 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. Newcomers always welcome!

Women's Religious Studies

This group is discussing Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter "Laudato Si; on Care for Our Common Home." We meet in the Merritt Lounge from 1 to 2:30pm most Thursdays. Questions? Contact Marcia Leise at mkleise@cox.net.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 25 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. This month we will discuss *The Wages of Rebellion* by Chris Hedges. Questions? Email Dave at richardson.david@westside66.net.

Exploring Humanistic Perspectives in Literature: The Golden Heresy of Truth With Ron Knapp

Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 7pm in the Common Room. The program will include readings from Gwendolyn Brooks, Stephen Crane, Emily Dick-

inson, Blaise Pascal, John Tyndal, and William March, among others. Come and enjoy literature, conversation and refreshments in a coffee house atmosphere. We meet the fourth Tuesday of every month.

Bible Study with the Parson

Thursday, Jan. 28 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. We will explore the second creation story, then will briefly introduce the Book of Amos

Confronting Racism Discussion

January 30 at 11am at Clair Memorial United Methodist Church. We will gather for informal conversation, coffee, and snacks at 10:30. The program will begin at 11. At noon we will break for lunch, and at 1pm Rev. Portia and Rev. Frank will lead a brief worship service (we're estimating this to be 20 minutes). Direct talk about racism is rare even though it is essential to creating a just community. This series, coordinated by members of Clair and First, is part of the work of our church. Please join us.

RE Council

Sunday, Jan. 31 at 11:30am in Jan's office. All parents are invited to this meeting to discuss religious education. Questions? Email Jan at dre@firstuomaha.org.

Community Meals

Thank you to everyone who helped with our October meal. The next time we help serve lunch will be on Feb. 6, 2016. Mark your calendars for that date. Want to help? Contact Diane at dianewithem@gmail.com.

Church Events and Activities Continued...

Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month in the upstairs classroom after the second service. All D&D role players are invited. If you have questions, contact Roman at rmnoriega1@cox.net, 402-769-4260.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the upstairs classroom after the second service. If you're a complete novice, join us to learn how to play. If you've played before, come for some entertainment and time at the game table. Contact Scott at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

Exploring Our Values

Mondays, Feb. 8, Feb. 15, Feb. 22, March 7, March 14 and March 21 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Classroom. Facilitator: Cy Leise

In this discussion series, we will be exploring values by selecting ethical questions and concerns for which multiple, competing values typically come into play in real contexts. Jonathan Haidt's research on six "foundation values," as presented in his 2012 book *The Righteous Mind*, will be the point of reference for all the sessions. Topics include values considered in terms of ethics, ideals, science, beliefs, change, and mindfulness. Each session will feature brief reading resources to expand ideas for discussion of three small group questions. The aim of the series is increased mindfulness about how values shape attitudes, perspectives, and choices. Contact Cy Leise at cyleise@cox.net for further information or to RSVP.

St. Patrick's Day Concert: Ayreheart. *Thursday, March 17 at 7pm in the Common Room.* Suggested donation: \$10/person. Free childcare will be provided. A special drink "Go Luck Yourself" along with Irish Coffee will be served. Spend your St. Patrick's listening to Ayreheart's eclectic mix with elements of Folk, Celtic, and Bluegrass. This band was formed to feature the lute (the most popular instrument of the Renaissance) in a completely new context—mixing with vocals, electric bass, drums and hand percussion, guitar, violin, mandolin and komuz.

OTOC EVENTS IN JANUARY

OTOC: 2016 Sacred Conversations for Racial Justice

3-Day Event: January 21- January 23rd at Countryside Community Church, 8787 Pacific Street.

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) is a proud sponsor of Sacred Conversations for Racial Justice, hosted by Countryside Community Church. Join us to explore structural racism, mass incarceration, and policy change. Come with open ears and willingness to dialogue with others to build a better Omaha for all. Thursday, Jan. 21: 5-8:30pm features keynote speaker: Michele Norris. Friday, Jan. 22,: 8 am-4pm and Saturday, Jan. 23: 8am-2pm will feature *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, Actor and playwright Anna Deavere Smith, and the Dean of Vanderbilt Divinity.

OTOC Environmental Meeting

Thursday, Jan. 7th at 7pm at Countryside Community Church, 8787 Pacific Street. Enter thru the front doors to the coffeehouse area. To find out

more about this team and to receive the meeting's agenda please contact Laurie at 2thegifts@cox.net. These meetings will be held at Countryside Community Church thru March 2016.

Volunteer Opportunity: Wayside Pulpit at First Unitarian

Interested in changing the sign outside our church? We tend to change the quote on the wayside pulpit outside about twice a month. We are looking for someone who can commit to this job. Is that you? Contact the office for details: admin@firsttuomaha.org.

MidAmerica Regional Assembly:

The WHO in the New Era of UU
April 29 to May 1 in St. Paul, MN.

Assembly workshop applications are being accepted now. Interested in attending? Please visit:

<https://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly>.

Cowperson Chili Cook-Off

Saturday, January 23 at 6pm

Eat Chili With All the Fixins

- Free cornbread & soft drinks
- Cash bar
- Tickets: \$6/person
- Children under 10 FREE
- \$12 family maximum
- Bringing chili for the contest? Your admission is free!

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

Be the Judge!

Help choose the best chili in the congregation:
veggie & meat categories

Enter Your Chili

"Lasso" your recipe & start cookin'!

Please bring your chili in a heated dish/crockpot along with a ladle to serve. (Please keep additional condiments to a minimum.)

Enter the NAME of the chili at check-in. Do NOT include the name of the chef!

Western Wear encouraged but not required.

Awards for the BEST DRESSED Cowgirl and Cowboy.

Reservations are required for childcare for children ages 5 and under. Please email dre@firstuuomaha.org to reserve childcare.



Youth Group (YRUU) Update

*By Shawne Coonfare and
Ben Wallace, YRUU leaders*

YRUU youth and advisors wish to express a heart-felt thank you to all who have offered support to the group and the efforts of the group this year. Supportive efforts include donut and bake sales at both churches, the large rummage/book sale, a cash raffle, and an upcoming Super Bowl Pizza sale.

YRUU is scheduled to send 15 youth to the IncluCity four-day residential program in January. IncluCity is one of the three programs we are participating in this year through our partnership with Inclusive Communities. From their program description, "At Inclusive Communities, our youth programming provides a safe and respectful environment where students examine their own biases and prejudices; discover ways to dismantle stereotypes; build lasting cross-cultural relationships; learn ways to peacefully resolve conflict; and become allies for one another."

As a part of our partnership with Inclusive Communities, we were also able to have a full-day workshop with youth, parents, and leaders from 1st and 2nd UU in December as well as have

two youth (one from 1st UU, one from 2nd UU) serve as interns in their Incluship program which lasts the school year and has provided additional resource materials and activities to enhance the YRUU's growth and community involvement.

Through generous contributions from both Church Boards, and the support of both congregations, we have reached the fundraising goal to cover the program cost of the Inclusive Communities partnership and to begin sustainability planning for activities in which the youth can practically apply what they've gained through the program.

This fall our youth participated in programming curriculum provided through the Teaching Tolerance Program offered through the Southern Law Poverty Center (www.tolerance.org) as well as robust discussions around privilege, inclusion, and belonging.

Youth attended the Dale Ho presentation (Holland Lecture Series), and completed projects to honor and support transgender youth through the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

YRUU is grateful for the countless forms of support provided by the two congregations that empower spiritual, emotional and intellectual growth.



New Nursery Manager

Hi! I'm Jenny Hastings and I'm happy to be the new lead nursery teacher. I've been taking care of other people's children for over 20 years and have three teenagers of my own. I look forward to meeting you all and providing comfort and happiness to all of your little ones!

Save the date! YRUU Pizza Fundraiser

Just in time for the Super Bowl: order a pizza from the YRUU and have it delivered to you! See the enews and order of service announcements for more info in January. Pizzas will be delivered Saturday, Feb. 6.

To find out more about our Youth Group or the Pizza Fundraiser, please email Ben & Shawne at omahayruu@gmail.com.

A Note from Jan, Director of Religious Education

The Religious Education content for the winter months of December, January and February is how we experience the sacred. This is one of our UU fundamentals which express our value of being open and aware to the many ways we know peace and wonder in our lives.

In December, our students have been exploring the practice of mindfulness. This has been about being patient with ourselves, others, and situations. We have discussed how to act carefully in situations where doing the right thing is more than right vs. wrong. Most difficult dilemmas are some form of right vs. right. Using Star Wars imagery, we have explored the complexity of these issues. Another parallel exploration in December has been the introduction of the idea of meditation. This coincides with the value of appreciating the past and planning for the future while being awake and aware in the present.

January will find the kids exploring the ways that music and rhythm enhances our experience of the sacred in our lives.

Members of the congregation will have an opportunity to share the ways they experience profound joy and peace. I am constructing a wooden framework with openings for small notes. Beginning Sunday, January 3 we will invite adults to write the ways they experience these profound feelings and place their notes into our Wall of Hope & Inspiration. These will be shared with our kids. Thank you!

Contact Jan at dre@firstuuomaha.org or 402-345-3039, ext. 103

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

What is the MTC (Ministry Team Council)?

The Ministry Team Council (MTC) was created in the spring of 2013. The Board of Trustees has delegated a significant portion of its authority and accountability to the MTC. The specific terms of this delegation are documented in the Board Policies which are found here:

http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_dbf99ed2158c497db0c13c5696c267e4.pdf

The Ministry Team Charter, which outlines what ministry teams are and what the MTC's responsibilities are, can be found online here:

http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_84159a8fae0e4ee1b42e63e7d4479e7f.pdf

How does this apply to you? If you want to host a new event at church, create a new group or class or get involved more in the church, the Ministry Team Council (MTC) is the place to start.

Form to book the church building: http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_e7114adfc02d41b28b521b51da3bbd35.pdf

Form to propose a new team/class: http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_0afa4ec34a404f1d8f222543d12dca93.pdf

Form to make a budget proposal: http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_d5eaf628644c4dbdbcff7cb87765e345.pdf

Questions? Contact mtc@firstuuomaha.org.

Forum with Lori Emison Clair

Save the Date for Saturday, March 26 for an-all church forum with Lori Emison Clair, who is the Congregational Director of First Unitarian Church in Des Moines. She is the inspiration for our Hospitality Team, for our Listening Circle format and for our hiring a Membership Coordinator to help us expand membership. Her forum last year was well attended and sparked a lot of discussion about our programs, our membership expansion and deepening our engagement in our community. This will be a Bring Your Own Lunch with a lecture and discussion format that will start around 10am until 4:30 or 5pm. Stay tuned for more details and contact Jackie Anderegg at jan-deregg@cox.net for suggestions about her topics.

—Jackie Anderegg, President-Elect

Streaming Services

Can't make it to church? Missed a Sunday and really wanted to hear the sermon? We're excited to announce the sermon videos are now online for you to view. Just go to www.firstuuomaha.org. Hover your mouse over the word "worship" and go down to "streaming video." There you will find last Sunday's service. The direct link is: <http://www.firstuuomaha.org/#!streaming-video/g0sp7>. Special thanks to Troy Jensen and others who have been involved with this project to make this feature a reality for our church.

Parking Garage Info for First Unitarian

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.

Here's the drill: Use any entrance to get in. Punch the button and take the ticket. Use only one exit to get out—on Farnam St. (north-side, middle-level.) Insert your ticket into the machine before you exit the garage. 3 hours are free. If you're at church more than 3 hours, run your ticket through the machine that is downstairs in the Common Room for free parking or pay \$1/hour. Thank you for your help!

Note: Please do NOT move the machine. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the church office at admin@firstuuomaha.org.

Why Do We Have Pink Attendance Sheets?

You have probably seen the note in the order of worship announcements that says:

Please sign in on the pink sheets in each pew. The information gathered will not only help us count attendance at each service but will let us

know that someone has not been seen lately and may need assistance.

These pink sheets were first introduced as a way to track the attendance at each of the services. First Unitarian changed from one Sunday service to two in 2009. We take attendance so we know how many friends, members and visitors are here on Sundays. Attendance helps us determine how many orders of worships to print. Plus, if we notice that someone is missing for a few weeks, we can reach out and make sure that person is okay. The office and its volunteers appreciate that folks have been signing in on the pink sheets. Thank you!

Mitten Tree

Thank you to all who brought in mittens, gloves, hats, scarves and other winter apparel to decorate our holiday tree in the sanctuary during the month of December.

Special thanks to Kay Lynn Goldner for dropping off these donations to the Stephen Center.



Inclement Weather Cancellations

In the event of bad weather and services are cancelled, the church will alert the media. So, please check with your local news stations to make sure the church service is still scheduled. We will update the church webpage, the church Facebook page and group and the church office voicemail at extension 101.

A Note to Our Visitors:

You are invited downstairs after the Sunday service for coffee and, if comfortable, asked to take a blue cup which indicates you would enjoy conversation with members. Please also visit the Welcome Table where you can find information on Unitarian Universalism and our church. All visitors, their friends and relatives, and friends and relatives of members are welcome to attend all church functions and social events.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES



Omaha Table Talk: The Heartland Interfaith Dialogue



Tuesday, January 12th from 6:00pm- 7:30pm

Arrival time and Refreshments 5:30-5:45PM; Program promptly starts at 6:00 PM

Hosted at: UNOs Community Engagement Center
6001 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68182

Please register at: <http://goo.gl/forms/ddxiZWtthC> Space is Limited!

Join us on January 12th for an opportunity to **explore how the faith, religion, and beliefs of the people living in Omaha drive and bridge our community.**

This Month's Community Partners:



Temple Israel 



AA/EEO Institution. For special needs or assistance please call/contact Gabriela Martinez at gabriela@inclusive-communities.org. For more information regarding Inclusive Communities or our Omaha Table Talk programming, please visit www.inclusive-communities.org

Preserve Our Building

By Jaime Alexander

The 2016 Preserve Our Building annual fund drive is underway during January. For our newcomers and others who may not be familiar with the POB campaign, a short review of POB history may be appropriate. Our sanctuary refurbishing in October 2004 was made possible by gift of the “Erickson Bond.” The sanctuary was refurbished to perhaps better than its original resplendent beauty. Thinking that our ability to fulfill our future building preservation needs should not be completely dependent on hoping for a major gift, I wondered if we could build a fund to lead the way towards funding a needed refurbishment in the future. Thoughts of “Wells we did not dig” and leaving something for those yet to come led to the creation the Preserve Our Building fund drive in 2005.

The POB fund has grown with contributions and interest to just over \$51,000. Your generosity is wonderful! The concept of many of us giving what we can from year to year is proving to be successful. Approval from the congregation is necessary to spend from this account. Please join in this year’s effort.

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



Hope in Action

Our church believes in community, and that is what Hope in Action, a sub-team of the Caring Team, is all about. Any one of us might need assistance, and we want to make it easier for you to ask for support and easier for you to offer support when others are in need.

WHO IS SERVED?

Church members, friends, regular attendees and their spouses are eligible for assistance from Hope in Action.

WHO CAN HELP?

Everyone! Hope in Action is an opportunity for everyone in our church community to support each other by sharing knowledge, skills and resources.

Hope in Action will use church communications, including the enews, to let our church community know when help is needed to respond to a request for support. And we will report back to the church community about how we were able to respond. All communication will be done in a manner that maintains the degree of confidentiality requested by the person seeking assistance.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN BE EXPECTED?

Hope in Action is there when people are dealing with a medical problem, need transportation or help around the house, can use assistance with referrals to social service agencies or just need someone to talk to about the ups and downs of life. Our response will vary depending on the

type of support that is needed in our church community and what resources we have available.

Although Hope in Action is not able to respond to emergencies, short-term financial assistance may be available for lodging, food, clothing, medication, transportation and utilities. Financial disbursements are not made directly to the person making the request for assistance.

HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

Requests for assistance must be made directly by the person needing help. Hope in Action does not respond to any anonymous or third-party requests for assistance.

Here are the ways you can ask for support from Hope in Action. You may send an email to hopeinaction@firstuomaha.org or use the Hope in Action link on the church website. 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

Community Meals is an outreach to people in need in our church's neighborhood.

Every Saturday members of various "First" churches and others take turns providing a hot meal and groceries to those in need at First Baptist Church (our neighbor just one block east of our church). First Unitarian Church has been part of this effort for several years. Four times a year our church "caters" and serves the meal and distributes the groceries provided by Trader Joe's. There are First Unitarian Church members who work at the site on a weekly basis and additional help is always needed. The next time we serve is February 6, 2016. Want to help? Email dianewithem@gmail.com to sign up. 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 donating this change to the Neighborhood Ministry Team which purchases bus tickets, gives out blessings bags, and food cards to people who come to the church door from our area.

Share the Plate Recap

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. Here are the recipients of the program for 2015 (excluding December because the newsletter must be sent before the end of the month). The amount collected for Partner Church in December will be shared in next month's newsletter.

2015 Share the Plate Recipients

January — Project Everlast — \$681.50
 February — Community Meals — \$520.50
 March — OTOC — \$650.50
 April — Community Meals — \$741
 May — PFLAG — \$760
 June — NAMI — \$591
 July — OTOC — \$639.50
 August — Siena/Francis House — \$442
 September — Hope in Action — \$858.50
 October — Community Meals — \$715
 November — OTOC — \$438.50

The Ministry Team Council (MTC) has chosen the recipients for the 2016 year. They are:

January: Habitat for Humanity
 February: Community Meals
 March: OTOC
 April: Community Meals
 May: PFLAG
 June: NAMI
 July: OTOC
 August: Siena/Francis House
 September: Project Everlast
 October: Community Meals
 November: OTOC
 December: Partner Church

Hospitality Teams and YOU

Have you started to consider your New Year's resolutions? If so, have you included signing up for a Hospitality Team on that list? It's easy to stick to and fun to do! You can choose who you want to serve with, what month you want to serve, SERIOUSLY? What could be better? Email Kim at kjcallaghan@hotmail.com or see our Hospitality Team webpage here:

<http://www.firstuomaha.org/#!/hospitality-teams/c1uuz>.

Do you shop at Baker's?

Baker's is committed to helping local organizations grow and prosper. Baker's Community Rewards makes fund-raising easy! First U will get credit for every purchase you make using your registered Plus card. Follow these easy steps to get started in 2016... and help our church earn rewards!




As a Baker's customer, you must have 3 things to register and begin supporting First Unitarian: A Baker's Plus card (which is available at any store by asking an associate), a valid email address, and an account at the Baker's website.

To enroll in the Community Rewards' Program:

1. Visit www.baker's.com/communityrewards
2. Sign in OR create an account
3. Click on "Enroll Now"
4. Enter the 5-digit code: 31030
5. Select FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF OMAHA and click on "Enroll"

It's That Easy!!

The Love Song of Ms. Alice Blackstone

By Dave Richardson

For a number of years our church held a “Homecoming Sunday” every October. Former members and those who had moved away were invited to visit their former church. For the October 9, 1988 Homecoming, Rev. Ron Knapp asked long-time member, Alice Blackstone, to present a reading of a piece she had written several years earlier for *Kryiokos*, the Women’s Quarterly of the *UU World*. The piece was her reminiscence of the role of the Women’s Alliance in our church’s history. This reminiscence was titled “Lovesong; In Honor of The Women’s Day Alliance.” Last year, at a service honoring The Women’s Alliance, Diane Withem gave a reflection on Alice’s “Lovesong” and how the mission and activities of the Women’s Alliance are still a key presence in the life of this church. Alice’s “Lovesong” serves as a reminder of the importance of “The Alliance” then and now.

Alice begins by recounting the founding of the church in 1869, noting that ten of the 26 persons who signed the Articles of Incorporation were women. She points out that our church was part of the westward movement of Unitarianism in the latter part of the 19th century. This movement featured a number of women ministers and lay leaders including the famous “Iowa Sisterhood” about which much has been written.

Alice joined the church in 1933. At that time many of the courageous women who had saved First Unitarian from extinction in the lean years just prior to World War I

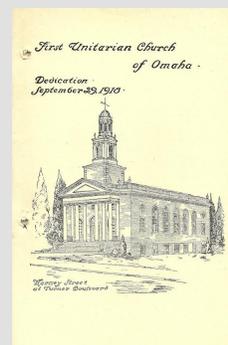
were still very active. She further notes that their leadership had not stopped there. Much of the interior design and furnishing of the “new church.” which was dedicated in 1918 was done by the Women’s Alliance. These projects were still a part of their activities when Alice joined. She next shares some colorful portraits of some of those women. She continues with a brief sketch of some of the activities of “The Alliance” both in the church and in the community. She concludes with observations on the legacy of this group.

Alice vividly describes several of the women who were prominent leaders when she joined in 1933. She begins with Mary Holyoke who initially intimidated Alice with her “regal bearing.” Alice soon learned she was actually a very warm and engaging person who possessed remarkable talents including culinary, financial and intellectual skills. Along with her mother, Mary had canvassed for members and locations for a temporary meeting place while First Unitarian was “homeless” for a period in 1910s. Her recollections of Sarah Joslyn, perhaps Omaha’s most prominent citizen of the time, include her willingness to work in the kitchen and prepare baked goods. The more daring women ventured to call her “Sally” but rarely to her face.

For the next six decades Alice and many of her companions continued to be very active in The Alliance as well as in church governance. She mentions in particular Helen Scobie McDonald the wife of Alan McDonald, the architect of our building, as well as Joslyn Memorial and many other significant structures in Omaha. Alan was also a prominent leader in the church and in the Omaha arts community. Their wed-

ding in 1918 was the first to take place in the “new church” designed by her husband. After Alan’s passing in 1949, Helen continued to be very active in the Alliance and in lay leader roles in the church as a whole. Alice notes that Helen often walked to church from her Cathedral area home to save money for her “silver box” — a project by which Alliance members were encouraged to save coins for holiday activities. As she became older, she was driven to church by a teenaged member of the church, Barb Kucera (now Ross). Barb recalls that Mrs. McDonald was a proper lady who said, “I never use profanity.”

The activities of the Alliance in the ‘50s and ‘60s were many and varied. They transformed the kitchen from a “dungeon” into a “Betty Crocker Palace.” Like today, they were very active in community and Social Justice activities including volunteering at the local Headstart Program and the Omaha Public Library.



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

The Alliance was blessed with many members with artistic and histrionic talents. They put on skits, fashion shows and art shows. They once wrote a satirical and somewhat racy (at least for the 1950s) version of the Broadway hit *Gypsy* based on the life of stripper Gypsy Rose Lee. They performed this show for a wide variety of audiences including residents of the Jewish Retirement Home (now the Rose Blumkin Home) and the young ladies at The Salvation Army's Booth Memorial Hospital which was, at the time, Omaha's "home for unwed mothers."

Alice concludes by noting that almost all churches have women's groups that do wonderful things and serve important roles. But, ours is different because it allows women "the freedom to explore" and to have fun as well as serving the church. She praises her fellow Alliance members past and present for having "zest in living" and the desire to "help people discover not only who they are, but what they could become."



For Church Leaders: Budget

January is budget preparation month for the church year starting May 1st. We start in January because we need a preliminary budget before setting a goal for the stewardship campaign. Staff members and team chairs who have budgets should have received information on your budget for the current year and expenditures for the first half of the year. Our treasurer would like to have budget input by Friday, Jan. 8, if possible. Questions? Contact treasurer@firstuomaha.org.

Automatic Contributions — Electronic Funds Transfer and YoUU

Did you know that you can have your contributions to church made automatically? We have arrangements for those of you who wish to make your contributions effortlessly on a regular basis.

Electronic fund transfer will allow you to designate an amount of money to be transferred weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly from your bank account to ours. Your bank statement will provide an itemized list of the transactions. The contribution statements that we send out periodically will show each contribution as well.

It is easy to initiate electronic funds transfer. You need only complete and sign the form and then return it to the church office along with a sample voided check. Just email or call the church office today to request the form:

admin@firstuomaha.org, 402-345-3039 ext. 101.

For those reading this online, just [click here](#) to see the form.

You can start the process at any time. After that, your contributions will be automatic. They will continue until you notify us to stop. It is an easy way to contribute! Thank you!

Minister

Frank Rivas

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

Jan Wilson

dre@firstuomaha.org**Church Administrator**

Catharine Dixon

admin@firstuomaha.org**Membership Coordinator**

Carrie Helmberger

coordinator@firstuomaha.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@firstuomaha.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@firstuomaha.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@firstuomaha.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

Church Events

UU & You

Sunday, Jan. 3 at 12:30pm in the Whitney Young Classroom
See page 4 for more information.

Mystic Sojourn CUUPS

Sunday, Jan. 3 at 6pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for more information.

OTOC Environmental Action Team Meeting

Thursday, Jan. 7 at 7pm, offsite
See page 6 for details.

A Course in Miracles

Thursday, Jan. 7 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. 6-week course.
See page 4 for information.

Sunday Social Gathering

Sunday, Jan. 10 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for details.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 12 at 7pm in the Common Room

Omaha Table Talk

Tuesday, Jan. 12, offsite
See page 12 for info.

Tolerant Atheist Group (TAG)

Thursday, Jan. 14 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for information.

Flame Deadline

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

Friday FunDay

Friday, Jan. 15 at 7pm
See page 5 for details.

UU Speed Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 17 at 10:30am in the Common Room
See page 4 for details.

People's Film Festival

Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 4 for information.

Annual Chili Cook-off

Saturday, Jan. 23
See page 7 for details.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Jan. 24 at 11am in the Common Room
See page 5 for details.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 25 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.
See page 5 for details.

Exploring Humanist Perspectives

Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 7pm in the Common Room.
See page 5 for details.

Bible Study with the Parson

Thursday, Jan. 28 at 6:30pm
See page 5 for details.

RE Council Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 31 at 11:30am in Jan's Office
See page 5 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.

Women's Religious Studies Group

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

Looking ahead...

CommUUnity Night

Friday, Feb. 5 at 5:30pm
More info in next month's newsletter.

Community Meals

Saturday, Feb. 6, offsite
See page 14 for information.

Exploring Our Values

Monday, Feb. 8 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room
See page 6 for more info about this 6-week course.

Lori Emison Clair Forum

Saturday, March 26 at 10am
See page 10

St. Patrick's Day Concert

Thursday, March 17 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 6 for information.

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