

# THE FLAME

April 2014



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

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April

# Meet Our Leaders

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## Nominating Committee

Mary Bort, Abby Cape, Nadine

Keith, Lois Norris, Jack

Round, Joe Schaaf

Board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month and are open to all members.

## THE FLAME

Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Word limit: 200.

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Partner Church - Janet West

Religious Education - Sheri Conner/Donna Neff

Religious Services - Megan Gustafson

Women's Alliance - Mary Bort

Young Adult Group - Maria Wallace

Youth Group - Ben Wallace/Shawne Coonfare

Many of the performers on March 23 at the all-church brunch



**Join us at 9:30am and 11:15am on Sundays**

**April 6**

**The Sacred in the Ordinary**

Rev. Frank Rivas

**April 13**

**Lemon Sermon with  
Harmon Maher**

The 2014 Lemon Memorial Sermon celebrates the late Dr. Lemon's notion that there is one good sermon in each of us.

**April 20**

**Passover**

Rev. Frank Rivas

**April 27**

**Our Dreams for the Future  
Church**

Rev. Frank Rivas

**First Unitarian Church of Omaha  
Bond of Union**

We whose names are here subscribed, associate ourselves together as a Religious Society for mutual helpfulness in right living and for the advancement of sound morals and pure religion in the community; and we hereby pledge ourselves to bear our part in the common cause and to care for the welfare and influence of the Society of which by this act we become members.

Basing our union upon this expressed moral and religious purpose rather than upon any dogmatic statement of belief, and emphasizing the religion of character and daily life above all creedal confessions, we invite to our membership all who are seriously drawn to us in our spirit and aims and who desire to have with us their Church Home under the Articles of Incorporation.

—Rev. Newton Mann (1899)  
Minister of First Unitarian Church

## UNENDING LOVE

We are loved  
by an unending love.  
We are embraced  
by arms that find us  
even when  
we are hidden from ourselves.  
We are touched  
by fingers that soothe us  
even when  
we are too proud for soothing.  
We are counseled  
by voices that guide us  
even when  
we are too embittered to hear.  
We are loved  
by an unending love.  
We are supported  
by hands that uplift us  
even in  
the midst of a fall.  
We are urged on  
by eyes that meet us  
even when  
we are too weak for meeting.  
We are loved  
by an unending love.  
Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled...  
ours are the arms,  
the fingers, the voices;  
ours are the hands,  
the eyes, the smiles;  
we are loved  
by an unending love.

—Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro

## Caring Note

Our thoughts are with Rev. Frank and Anne on the loss of his mother in March. The funeral was held Saturday, March 22 in Chicago.

## Hospitality Team Update

So you've probably seen people walking around church on the first Sunday of the last couple of months wearing green ribbons that say "Hospitality". They are not just promoting a positive social value, they are part of a new concept the Ministry Team of our church is developing—namely Hospitality Teams.

The concept is simple. 10-12 people come together to act as ambassadors, greeters, and to do coffee hour for both services, one Sunday every other month. They divide up the various tasks, but with an emphasis on helping each other to extend all of these aspects of hospitality to our members, friends, and visitors.

We have had two trial runs with a recruited volunteer team, and we will have one more on the first Sunday in April, and the Ministry Team will discuss going "church-wide" during our April meeting. So far we have learned:

- 1.) It takes about an hour to receive "basic training" in all the hospitality tasks put together.
- 2.) Most of the time members of the team do not have to stay for both services in order to participate.
- 3.) We have excellent manuals and written instructions (with pictures of where things go) to supplement the basic training.

4.) People seem to like helping others on their team and varying their jobs.

5.) It's convenient to know in advance which Sunday "belongs" to your team.

Questions? Comments? Want to get involved? Ask a member of the Ministry Team Council:  
Amy Barlow, Carolyn McNamara, or Louise Jeffrey

## UU & You

**Wednesday, April 23**

Visitors, newcomers, and the just curious are cordially invited to this introduction to Unitarian Universalism class meeting on Wednesday, April 23 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. UU&You classes provide an introduction to Unitarian Universalism and our church along with an opportunity to share our religious journeys in a theologically diverse "safe" place. Conversation will include some history of Unitarian Universalism and our church, what the church does, how it functions, and opportunities and paths. RSVP or questions can be addressed to [uuclass@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:uuclass@firstuuomaha.org) or call class facilitator Jaime Alexander 402-657-9386.

## Spirit Circle

**Sunday, April 6 at 6pm —  
gathering in the Common Room**

The ritual begins at 7pm. Our potluck happens before at 6pm. We will be focusing on ceremonial pagan paths.

## Share the Plate

One of the proudest traditions in our church is Share the Plate, which is a manifestation of our congregational commitment to social justice. Every week, loose change in the collection plate goes to support the social justice work of our youth, and half the loose paper money is shared with a community organization. Would you like to nominate such organization? Qualifying organizations should be non-profit, have a mission and values consistent with Unitarian Universalism, and have a presence in our local community. Please direct questions and suggestions to Amy Barlow.

For the month of April we will be collecting money for our own program Community Meals. Every Saturday a meal is served at First Baptist Church—up the street from First Unitarian. Many churches are involved in this effort. Our own church hosts the lunch four times a year. For more information contact Diane Withem and Dana Meister.

# Why I Come to Church

*by Tony Host, Board President*

Long-term future growth of our church lies with future generations. I come from the Baby Boomer generation. Millennials are those born after 1980, which includes the children and youth in our religious education program and many of our young adults. Our future lies with the Millennial Generation.

Studies show that people in this age group are considerably less religious than older age groups. Fewer young adults belong to any particular faith than older people do. We have been examining our church website and church program to be more relevant to younger adults.

Yet these same studies show that young adults are more accepting in their social and political views than older people in areas such as homosexuality. They are definitely in the middle of privacy issues in this era of social media and internet access. Millennials are definitely more racially diverse and better educated. This is a generation more engaged with volunteer work and community service and more conscious of the large-scale problems our society faces over the next decades.

They also come from fragmented households from soaring divorce and blended family rates. They have been described as being “hungry for wholeness.” We have seen these young adults come to our church community. We have welcomed them and they have joined with us. They have also been inviting their friends.

So, why do I come to church? For you. My church friends. I can be myself here. I see the same values and concerns in you that I share, even across several generations. Yes, as a church we must always strive to be relevant. But I am not ashamed of the core values we espouse. And I believe we provide the same “safe place/home” I found when I first stepped onto the church grounds of First Unitarian-Universalist Church of San Diego in 1980. This is a fun place to be. It is also a safe place to be when you are hurting or troubled. It is a community you can raise your children or grandchildren.

So in answer to the concern that First Unitarian Church of Omaha could become irrelevant, that the demographics say we will be facing decline, I say the core of this community is intact and appeals to those hungering for something that they are not receiving in their lives. This community makes a difference. You make a difference. Your support makes a difference. Welcome home.

In Faith,  
Tony

## **2014 Preserve Our Building Fund Drive Report**

*By Jaime Alexander*

Results from the 2014 Preserve Our Building Fund Drive again reflect our congregation’s significant commitment to this cause. By the middle of the March, contributions have totaled nearly \$5,000. The POB account balance is now nearly \$44,000! This is our 9th fund drive. Your continued support is heartwarming. It brings to the mind the Little Engine That Could. “I think I can, I think I can...” A sincere thank you from the POB Drive co-chairs Louise Jeffrey and Jaime Alexander goes to all who contributed to the 2014 Preserve Our Building Fund Drive.

## YRUU Wants Your Stuff — Book Sale and Garage Sale

Are you gearing up spring cleaning? Please save your donation items and books for the YRUU! The youth are planning a garage sale and book sale on May 3, and would appreciate any and all donated items. Proceeds will assist greatly in funding a YRUU trip to Colorado where they will commune with nature and participate in a social action project. You can drop off your items to church starting Monday, April 28. Please contact [omahayruu@gmail.com](mailto:omahayruu@gmail.com) if you have questions or you need to dropoff items before April 28. We greatly appreciate your holding onto items until that date, but we know a few folks need to part with items and books sooner.



## Bake Sale on Easter

The YRUU will be hosting a Bake Sale at First Unitarian Church on Sunday, April 20 at coffee hours after both services. Be sure come out and enjoy the goodies just in time for Easter. This fundraising event will assist the teens in raising funds for their trip to Colorado. See above for more information.

## Special Invitation from Amy and Nathan

Members and friends of First Unitarian Church are invited to a concert by the Dundee String Quartet on Saturday, April 5 at 7pm at the church to celebrate the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of Amy Barlow and Nathan Kramer. Coffee and Kringle reception to follow in the Common Room.



# Religious Education

by Jan Wilson, Director of R.E.

You would think that teaching children for 34 years would make creating a story for the worship service easy. I enjoy it; I even revel in it, but it is a responsibility that I take very seriously.

Anxiety often creeps into my thoughts. I know that children take words to heart. What if they misinterpret what I am saying? What if they miss my meaning? Worse yet, what if they find a way to be self critical, or critical of others, from words that were meant to bring kindness and acceptance?

I am reminded of all the words I heard in church as a child which got stuck in childish misinterpretation and became a really weird mass of negative self-talk. I heard about the fact that we all fall short. In addition, I heard that we need to come with meekness and humility to be forgiven for our sins. I heard and internalized the fact that our sins are the cause of the death of a kind and holy teacher on a cross. These words, for me, were seeds of confusing guilt.

Maturity, and my association with all of you in our faith, has opened the door to new insights. None of us is perfect. We are just fine in all of our various big and nasty imperfections, and we are worthy anyway. All of our anger, frustration, shame, inadequacies, are normal and messy, but and that love wins. Kindness trumps all that stuff. Spring comes after winter. Light comes after darkness. Wisdom and gladness come after grief.

My wish for my stories is to let the light in.



*To the right: Art work the kids did in the summer*

## RE — Looking Forward:

Sunday, March 30: In class, we will be continuing our discussion about the practices that come from Buddhism.

Sunday, April 6: The children's garden is a primary source of joy for our teachers and children. We will be planting seeds in cups and cleaning dead material in the garden. Our world religion studies continue with the philosophy of Tao, and the Asian influences on our values and thinking. The children will be singing with Anne Wilder.

Sunday, April 13: The subject of study this week will be the Symbols and Signs of Rebirth in world religions. We will attempt to answer that eternal question: Why do rabbits deliver eggs? We will do a trash pickup service project in the empty lot to the east of the church. This will be led by Cassi Moucka.

Sunday, April 20: Easter Sunday will focus on our traditional Easter egg hunt. Songs will be lead by Anne Wilder.

Sunday, April 27: Earth Day is April 22. We will be celebrating Native American approaches to the Earth, and relate that back to our Buddhist learning.

# Adult Religious Education

## Thursday nights in April

We will continue discussions on the book, *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith and the accompanying workbook, *Exploring the World's Religions* by Irving Alan Sparks. The schedule will be as follows:

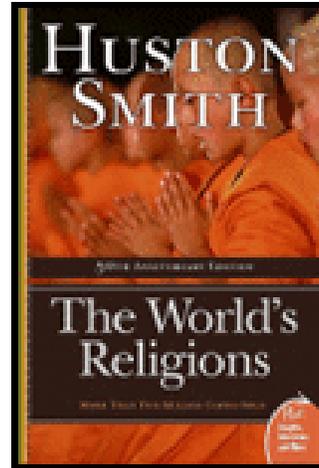
April 3 - Christianity Chapter from book

April 10 -- Christianity Extension: A showing of A&E's video *Jesus: A Biography*. Video is open to everyone. It's 100 minutes long with discussion following.

April 17 - Primitive Religions Chapter from book

April 24 - A Final Examination Chapter from book

A.R.E will start at 6pm with a brown bag lunch and fellowship. Discussion about the book and workbook will be from 7pm to 9pm. Please RSVP to Crystal at [adultre@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:adultre@firstuuomaha.org) if you have any questions.



## The Women's Religious Studies Group

We are discussing *Zealot: The Life & Times of Jesus of Nazareth*. This book is written in historical context. We meet every Thursday in the Merritt Lounge from 1pm to 2:30pm.

Our Covenant Group meets in the Merritt Lounge from 1pm to 2:30pm every third Thursday of the month. This group is open to everyone. Anyone wishing to join, please contact Harriet Major at [hmajor323@cox.net](mailto:hmajor323@cox.net) for information.

## Fire at First Unitarian *by the MTC*

Memphis, Tennessee — “Firefighters believe a space heater likely sparked a fire inside a Memphis church late Saturday morning. Investigators said flames quickly spread through the church.”

Lawrence, Massachusetts — “A small church in Lawrence was destroyed on Christmas morning by a fire that was caused by a small space heater. The church did not have the heater turned on when the fire started, but the heater was left plugged in to the outlet. The three-alarm fire caused about \$200,000 of damage.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters accounted for one-third of the home heating fires and three-fourths of home heating fire deaths.

No, there was no fire at First Unitarian, but there could have been. The recent discovery of a space heater left running in the Merritt Lounge for over five hours is cause for concern. When found, the heater was very close to furniture fabric and its extension cord was hot to the touch. Because of this incident, the heater has been removed. Please remember when leaving the building to make sure that the lights are off, the doors are closed and locked, and no appliances are left running. Don't assume someone else will do it. We are all responsible for keeping our beautiful building safe.

## Women's Alliance — April 14

Women from First and Second Unitarian churches are invited to attend the Women's Alliance (WA) monthly get-together on Monday, April 14.

The evening will begin with socializing and beverages at 6:30pm, dinner at 7pm and a “Show and Tell” program at 8pm.

Our April program will feature five WA members who will share their interests or hobbies or something interesting that they have made or done. Come and learn something new about some of our WA members and learn about various activities that might be something you would like to do in the future.

We ask for \$12 which goes to the cost of dinner and our education fund. If this will be your first time attending a WA get-together, please let us know and be our guest. Our meal will be catered by Mangia Italiana restaurant, and will include a vegetarian option.

Please RSVP to Janet West no later than Friday, April 11 at [jmasonwest77@yahoo.com](mailto:jmasonwest77@yahoo.com) or 402-553-3162. Please indicate if you want a vegetarian entrée. RSVPs are necessary so that we can order the correct number of entrées from the caterer.

We look forward to seeing you on April 14!

## Church Events in April

### CommUUnity Night

Friday, April 4 at 5:30pm in the  
Common Room

This family-friendly event is a pot-luck with the main dish provided by RE. Enjoy a relaxed atmosphere.

### Ministry Team Meeting

Saturday, April 5 at 2pm in the  
Common Room

All are invited. This team leader meeting is run by the Ministry Team Council and the focus is on church calendaring, planning and management of all things church.

### Barlow & Kramer Anniversary Party and Concert

Saturday, April 5 at 7pm in the  
Sanctuary and Common Room

See page 7 for details.

### Spirit Circle

Sunday, April 6 at 6pm in the Com-  
mon Room

See page 5 for details.

### Adult Religious Education

Thursday evenings in the Common  
Room at 7pm.

Optional brown bag dinner at 6pm.  
Go to page 9 for details.

### Women's Alliance

Monday, April 14 at 6:30pm in the  
Common Room

All women invited to this event. See  
page 10 for more information.

### Holland Lecture

Wednesday, April 16 at the Holland  
Performing Arts Center

See page 13 for more information.

### Young Adult Game Night

Friday, April 18 — offsite

If you identify yourself as a young  
adult, then you can attend.

Questions? Contact

[youngadults@firstuomaha.org](mailto:youngadults@firstuomaha.org).

### YRUU Bake Sale

Sunday, April 20 during both coffee  
hours

See page 7 for details.

### UU & You Class

Wednesday, April 23 at 7pm in the  
Merritt Lounge

Visitors and the just curious are  
invited to attend. See page 5 for  
more information.

### RE Council Meeting

Sunday, April 27 at 12:30pm in  
Jan's office

Everyone interested in church  
religious education is invited to  
attend. A light lunch will be served.

### New Member Dinner

Sunday April 27 at 6pm in the  
Common Room

A special dinner for our new  
friends.

### Book Club

Monday, April 28 at 7pm in the  
Merritt Lounge

Our book selection will be  
announced in the enews.

### Garage and Book YRUU Sale

Saturday, May 3 — all day in the  
Common Room

See page 7 for details.



The pledge planting box at the all-church  
brunch on March 23

## Recurring

### Women's Religious Studies Group

Meets every Thursday at 1pm in the  
Merritt Lounge

We are discussing Zealot: The Life  
and Times of Jesus of Nazareth by  
Reza Aslan. Come join us!

### YRUU

Meets every Wednesday in the  
Common Room at 7pm.

UU teens are welcome to join us.  
Contact [omahayruu@gmail.com](mailto:omahayruu@gmail.com) for  
more information.

### OWL (Our Whole Lives) Class

Every Monday at 6:30pm

For more information, contact Jan  
Wilson at [dre@firstuomaha.org](mailto:dre@firstuomaha.org).

### Choir Rehearsal

Meets every Wednesday in the  
sanctuary at 7pm.

## Like Father, Like Son (Part 2 of 3) *By Dave Richardson*

In last month's installment we began the story of the Father-Son architectural team of John and Alan McDonald with the inscription on the plaque in the foyer of the main entrance of the church.

“Alan McDonald  
Architect and loyal member  
of this church  
1891-1947”

Alan was indeed a remarkable man who left his indelible mark on our church, our city, and our history. At the time of his birth the city was growing so rapidly it had become the 21<sup>st</sup>-largest city in the U.S. Many of the most prominent local structures built at the time were the work of his father John McDonald. Like many newly wealthy American families, the elder McDonalds saw to it that their only child, Alan, got the best of opportunities. Alan proved worthy of those opportunities. In 1908 he graduated at the top of his class at Omaha Central High School. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1912. After a brief hiatus in Omaha he returned to Cambridge to earn an M.A. in Architecture. In 1916 he joined his father's firm.

Initially, the elder McDonald assigned Alan several projects in smaller Nebraska towns. Joan Fogarty, author of *Building Omaha; The Architectural Legacy of John and Alan McDonald*, notes that John's plan was to test his son's skills “out of town” before he took on Omaha projects. Once again Alan proved himself worthy.

It was around this time that Alan became engaged to Helen Scobie, the daughter of a prominent Omaha family. Initially, Alan's name had been linked on the local society pages to Violet Joslyn, the adopted daughter of George and Sarah Joslyn. He was frequently mentioned as Violet's “escort” at numerous society events. Helen and Violet were close friends and made their society debut together at the Joslyn Castle. Violet eventually married David Magowan who joined the Joslyn firm.

Interestingly, Helen and Alan were not permitted to marry in her church as it was opposed to her marrying a Unitarian. Joan Fogarty notes: “She married instead in the church her husband had built and was forever after devoted to The First Unitarian Church and its congregation.” Alan and Helen's wedding was the first to be held in the new church. They were married on September 11, 1918 two weeks before the official dedication of the church. Church records from the era bear witness to the active role Helen Scobie McDonald played in the church, particularly in the activities and projects of The Women's Alliance. Her name often appears alongside her mother-in-law, Martha McDonald and Martha's closest friend Sarah Joslyn.

Next month we will examine Alan's work in Omaha with special emphasis on the design and construction of this church as well as his very active role in church leadership and in the community as a whole.

*Alan McDonald*



presents

**Dr. Richard D. Wolff**  
*Capitalism in Crisis: How  
Lopsided Wealth Distribution  
Threatens Our Democracy*



**SAVE THE DATE: Wednesday, April 16th / 7:30pm**

For hundreds of years, capitalism has encouraged innovation, achievement, and the building of a rich country by allowing each individual enormous freedom. But in the last 40 years, its inexorable push for higher corporate profits has resulted in economic volatility, higher unemployment and an increasingly lopsided distribution of wealth and power. Is capitalism still meeting the needs of the majority of the population or the minority? Has it outlived its usefulness? Is it necessary to choose between capitalism and democracy? Join Dr. Wolff for a stimulating and provocative discussion about whether capitalism can be saved and, if so, how.

**Dr. Richard Wolff**, Emeritus Professor at the University of Massachusetts, is an outspoken expert on the subject of the American economic classes. He is currently a Visiting Professor in the Graduate Program in International Affairs of the New School University, New York City. His books include *Capitalism Hits the Fan: The Global Economic Meltdown and What to Do About It* and *Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism*.

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**FREE tickets for this reserved seating event will be available March 16** at Ticket Omaha. Please put this lecture on your calendar and on the calendar of your friends! The highly regarded Holland Lecture Series is now in its 10th year of presenting internationally recognized, thought-provoking speakers. To help you introduce friends and neighbors to the series, each caller may request up to six free tickets for the lecture and free reception that follows.

## **MidAmerica Regional Assembly—April 11-13**

The MidAmerica Regional Assembly is a weekend of coming together for enriching fellowship, inspiring lectures and workshops, and deepening worship. Choose one of four locations in various parts of the region. There will be live workshops, worship, and entertainment at each location. The conferences open with our traditional banner parade and welcome. In some locations there are pre-conference activities on Friday. Saturday, Paul Rasor presents the [Arthur M. Judy Memorial Lecture](#) live in Topeka (live streamed to other locations), followed by the business meeting live in Bloomington (live streamed to the other locations), and workshops.

For more information, go to: <http://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly>

# Groundbreaking in Geneva

By Shawna Foster

As I look at the statue of Michael Servetus here in Geneva, the first person called a heretic for Unitarianism and now an international symbol of religious freedom, I think about First Unitarian Church of Omaha, the first place I heard about Unitarian Universalism, and where the people who most support me in this international ministry are from.

People like kids in the social justice hour, for starters.

When I agreed to teach Sunday school on social justice, never did I think the programming the kids and I created, with help from Jan Wilson, would become a key part of an international leadership program for youth—yet it has! Many of you know of my work with International Bridges to Justice (IBJ [www.ibj.org](http://www.ibj.org)), a Geneva-based organization that organizes a grassroots network around the world to stop torture by implementing due process. They have a program called IBJ Youth Scholars, where high school youth form chapters to learn how to be international leaders. It's a complex issue: how can we change the world? What special role do youth have to play?

Part of that role is guiding youth's sense of social justice in the international sphere, which is what I have been doing in Omaha with our own youth on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 11:15am. The lessons I've developed are part of the IBJ Youth Scholars program and will be done around the world. And that would not have happened without First Unitarian Church of Omaha's support—of me, of International Bridges to Justice, and its dedication to social justice. When I was called to Geneva to launch a world-wide vigil against torture on June 26th, I should

have realized that, of course, the religious education work in Omaha would play a part, too.

The Geneva IBJ office lets out a big clap when it's announced we have over \$400 in donations from the kids' Change for Change in Omaha to help Justine (the Justicemaker in the DRC mentioned in earlier Flame articles). The Omaha kids have worked hard to help prevent child soldiers in the Congo, and now, it is going to happen!

There is a lot of opportunity to develop First Unitarian Church's role in international social justice, and I hope that my time here in Geneva will help make those connections as I return to Omaha continue this program, which turns out to be a groundbreaking international program we're all a part of.



*Geneva as seen from the Brunswick monument*

Of course, I tell Rev. Karen Tse, the founder and CEO of International Bridges to Justice, why our church in Omaha is a fantastic and natural place for global innovation. Her TED talk experience ([http://www.ted.com/talks/karen\\_tse\\_how\\_to\\_stop\\_torture](http://www.ted.com/talks/karen_tse_how_to_stop_torture)) and the Omaha kids learning how to do social justice internationally led us to think—maybe someday, the first ever IBJ Youth Scholar Symposium could be



*Shawna building and consecrating a labyrinth in Geneva*

held in Omaha, with leaders from TED, Omaha leaders, and many more training the next generation of international leaders.

I deeply appreciate all the support this congregation gives to this ministry and hope that we can continue the groundbreaking international movement—right here in Omaha!

*Monument Michael Servetus*



## Award Winners *by the Nominating Committee*

Annually the Nominating Committee proudly announces nominees for awards that are given on the regional level. This year MidAmerican Region is not giving out awards, but that did not stop our committee from selecting our list of winners here! Please congratulate these folks. They were honored at our Stewardship Brunch on Sunday, March 23.

**Unsung UU Award** affirms those UUs whose actions inspire, support, and express Unitarian Universalism, but have not been previously recognized.

**Winner: Kathi Oliver**

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

**Winner: Maria Wallace**

**Social Justice Award** pays tribute to those who witness to the ideals of social justice and responsibility so important to our UU heritage. **Adult Winner: Kim Dunovan;**

**Youth Winner: Johanna Callaghan**

**Religious Education Award** honors an individual who makes a significant contribution to religious education.

**Winner: Donna Neff**

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

**Winner: Yvonne Price**

**Nominating Committee:**

**Mary Bort, Abby Cape, Nadine Keith,  
Lois Norris, Jack Round, Joe Schaaf**



*At the March 23 service the children paraded with flowers to symbolize the dreams of the church being planted*

## Pledge Campaign Update

As of Monday, March 24 we had pledges totaling \$199,581. The total number of “pledge units” who have pledged is 88. A pledge unit represents a person, couple or family that pledges together.

A very special thank you to all who have pledged. With your help, all things are possible.

Thinking about pledging? Your pledge allows us to plan for the year ahead—to tend to our dreams and watch them bloom. Please consider making this commitment to the church for the first time or increasing your pledge from past years. Pledge forms are available in the pews or by contacting the church office ([admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org)).

We hope everyone enjoyed the brunch and entertainment on Sunday, March 23. I know the Stewardship Team did. It’s wonderful to see how our talented church members and friends shine and create fun memories!

## A Visit to Firtosmartonos, Transylvania in 1993

by Anne and Ron Knapp

The oldest Unitarian churches in the world are in Transylvania, Romania. Formerly, Transylvania was a part of Hungary. The area was transferred to Romania as the spoils of World War I. The people in our village are all Unitarians, consider themselves Hungarian, and speak Hungarian. After World War II, Romania came under Communist control. The Hungarians in Transylvania were discriminated against in terms of employment, property rights, and religious freedom. The ownership of all Unitarian property was transferred to the Romanian government. This included church owned property in the villages as well as in Kolosvar, the city that is the center of Transylvanian Unitarianism.

In 1993, eight members of First Unitarian Church visited Transylvania and our Partner Church in Firtosmartonos. The Omaha delegation included Mary Jo and Mike Stoll, Sandi and Bill Bruns, Jack Perry, Bob Hess, and Anne and Ron Knapp. The minister at that time was Mihaly Biro. Ron was instrumental in the First Unitarian Church being an early member of the Partner Church movement which began after the Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, was assassinated in December 1989.

Anne and Ron's remembrances:

It was like going back in time 100 years. Everyone in the village, including the Unitarian minister, was a subsistence farmer without a

tractor. There were two cars, one telephone, and no indoor toilets in the village of 300 Unitarians and villagers lacked the most basic items. Omaha visitors brought toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, etc. to the villagers. Ron smuggled in \$5000. To be admitted to a public high school, the village teens had to pass an entrance exam in Romanian. Most of the students did not attend high school.

We are happy to report that there have been many changes since then. Members and friends of First Unitarian Church have provided money to repair and maintain the village church and to update the parsonage—including an indoor bathroom. Most of the village teens now attend a residential Unitarian high school in a nearby city. Our church members help with the cost of room and board at the high school. (The Romanian government pays for educational expenses for all students attending both public and church-related schools.)

If you're interested in going to visit our Partner Church, contact Janet West: [jmasonwest77@yahoo.com](mailto:jmasonwest77@yahoo.com).



Photos from top to bottom:  
The minister, Mihaly Biro at the gate; Mihaly with his two sons; Mihaly and his wife with Mary Jo and Mike Stoll.

## Scrip Cards

What is scrip?

It is a simple way for First Unitarian to earn money without taking extra money out of your pocket.

What ways can YOU support First UU?

1. Purchase gift cards for your regular shopping habits or gift-giving needs. Over 100 to choose from available for immediate purchase or special order. We receive 2%-14% from every gift card purchased.
2. Purchase Baker's and Kwik Shop scrip cards. We receive 5% back from every purchase. Cards are available in \$10 and \$50 denominations.
3. Purchase an Amazon gift card, in \$25 increments, and use the Amazon link on our website to purchase items you normally purchase from Amazon. Use the gift card instead of your debit or credit card and help out twice!!



Where can I purchase Scrip cards?

The FUNdraising team currently sells scrip cards at both coffee hours. Look for the trifold board!

Volunteers wanted!

We are in need of a few volunteers to help sell scrip when Kathi Oliver and Donna Neff are not available. If interested, please see the scrip table during coffee hours.

Thank you to all that have already purchased and have made this new endeavor a success!!

## ANNUAL MEETING — May 18

The 145th annual congregational meeting of First Unitarian Church of Omaha will take place at the Church on Sunday, May 18 at 12pm. Eligible voting members\* of the church will adopt an operating budget for the 2014-15 church year and elect a President-elect, members of the Board of Trustees, a Trustee of the Trust Fund, and Nominating Committee members; hear select reports from church leaders; and reveal our Unitarian of the Year!

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

We encourage all members to attend this important church event.

\*Individuals are eligible to vote who have been members of the church for at least three months and have made a financial contribution in their name to the church between April 18, 2013 and April 18, 2014.

—Board of Trustees

# New Members: Adam and Liz Sagert

*by Carolyn McNamara*

Adam and Liz Sagert became members on January 12 after attending services for six months. They were attracted to the value system they saw at First Unitarian and they were looking for a connection to the community. They decided to join because they felt it was time to become stakeholders in membership and not just consumers.

Liz grew up in Ithaca, New York, and Adam is from Council Bluffs. They met while attending the University of Iowa, but after college and some time spent living in Chicago, they returned to the area to be near Adam's relatives. Their family consists of their beautiful 13-month-old daughter Elsa and Lancelot, a slobbery Great Dane mix.

Liz works as a therapist at Catholic Charities and volunteers as a dance/ballet instructor at the Omaha Academy of Ballet. She enjoys gardening, do-it-yourself projects, desserts, and dance. Her passions? Motherhood, human attachments and animals. She looks forward to assisting with the youth group garage-and-book sale in May.

Adam is the sole proprietor of weCompost, a food-waste-recycling startup here in Omaha. He handles the recycling and composting for our church and is always looking for ways to reduce the material impact we have on the waste stream. Adam also serves on the Land Use and Composting Committees at the Metro Omaha Food Policy Council. His interests include basketball, volleyball, comic books, gardening and "errata" and he aspires to improving the human condition here and now.

Please say "Hello" and welcome them.



### *Special Thank You*

The church wants to thank the Sagerts for handling our recycling needs the last several months. Thank you for helping the church! Your commitment has been much appreciated!

# Meet Catharine Dixon, Our Church Office

## Administrator

by Carolyn McNamara

I think our church office is a bit like Grand Central Station. If you want to get anywhere, this is the place to start. People are coming and going and things are getting done. But no one gets more things done more efficiently than our Office Administrator Catharine Dixon.

Whether you are looking for an open date on the church calendar, seeking reimbursement for your expenses or just have a simple question, Cat is the person to see. She produces *The Flame* newsletter and the weekly e-broadcast, oversees production of the Order of Service, creates and updates the photo directory and prepares our many forms and brochures. She is the database director, web administrator, tour guide and source of tranquility for nervous brides. She attends board meetings, ministry team meetings and staff meetings, and handles deposits, contributions and pledges. Cat is the voice and face of our church and, in my opinion, the source of all knowledge. She has worked at First U for five years this August.



But there is another side to Cat that most of us never see. She is an accomplished poet!

Cat was born in Hawaii, raised in Omaha, and educated at the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts and a master's degree in creative writing with an emphasis on poetry. She has taught introduction to creative writing and the fundamentals of poetry at UNO for the past five years and is teaching English composition at Metropolitan Community College. Her love of writing poetry began around the age of six. She studied creative writing in elementary school and poetry in high school and her idea of a perfect weekend was one spent reading, allowing her to escape into a world of books and poetry.

Ever since she was a little girl, Cat imagined holding in her hands a published book with her name on it. And now she has done just that. Her book "Too Heavy to Carry" is a collection of poems that names the evils that people live through (loneliness, betrayal, inadequacy, and loss) and the agony they endure. The book, published in February, is available on Amazon. Since April is National Poetry Month, it is appropriate that she will be doing a reading and book signing at the Bookworm on April 6 from 1 to 3pm. Cat is a "confessional" poet, meaning that she writes as a catharsis. She handwrites all of her work as if in a journal, then revises, edits and tweaks it before it is typewritten. Once in final form, she calls upon her fellow poets and writers for their critique.

Cat feels she just **has** to write and wants to go further, writing more books and sharing her poetry with more people. She loves to teach people to appreciate poetry and hopes to teach creative writing for as long as she lives. To read a sample of Cat's writing and to learn more, visit her website: [www.catdix.com](http://www.catdix.com).

**The Holland Lecture will be held on Wednesday, April 16 at  
the Holland Performing Arts Center. Please save the date!  
See page 13 for more information  
about this informative and important event.**

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