

February 2016

The Flame



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

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Sunday Services
this Month

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Broadway Style
Concert

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Community Meals

The First Unitarian Church decorated for a wedding. Photo by Jan Wilson.



Sunday Services — 9:30am and 11:15am

February 7 — “God the Problem”

Rev. Frank Rivas

The three Abrahamic faiths that inform the West share a key problem: How do we make sense of God?

February 14 — “He Ain’t Heavy, Father; He’s My Brother”

Rev. Frank Rivas

On Valentine’s Day, we reach beyond romantic Hollywood images to encounter the love that transforms.

Special music at late service: Jill Anderson

February 21 — “A Still Small Voice”

Rev. Frank Rivas

A personal encounter with Buddhism, Bible, and Empiricism.

February 28 — “A Light in the Darkness”

The Worship Arts Team will lead the congregation in sharing our Joys and Sorrows.

Weddings at First Unitarian Church of Omaha

Did you know that our church is considered the wedding church in Omaha?

If you have a friend or coworker who is planning a wedding, why not suggest our church for the special day? Just have them call Catharine in the church office at

402-345-3039 ext. 101 or email

admin@firstuomaha.org.

Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

I'm not a fan of winter, but I gratefully acknowledge the extraordinary beauty of snow, both as it falls and as it covers the earth, and I acknowledge the beauty of its warm-hewed morning light, and I acknowledge the preternatural silence when I take the dog out just before going to bed.

This year in particular I acknowledge an inner change that happens in winter. Walter Wink, as I shared with you in a sermon, sees the devil not as a personification of evil, but rather as a personification of the sifter, that which helps us to sift through our lives. That's how winter works for me. Some things make the cut and stay with us while some things are rejected: clothes we no longer wear; books that we have carried through several moves, but have never opened; self-concepts that no longer fit.

I meet regularly with three other clergy. One day someone brought up the name of someone who was seeking a call, and we discussed whether we would recommend this person. We each had reservations, but then I said that I had some of the same issues, but that my time in the ministry has changed me. Yes, each said, we have changed too.

It's not just the ministry, but life that changes each of us. If we're lucky, life makes us stronger, kinder, humbler, more forgiving. As we sit alone on a quiet winter day, we can gently let go of who we once were and accept ourselves as we are today. A peace falls over us. Life is doing its work. We give thanks.

Blessings and love,
Frank

Lunch With the Minister

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

Meditation

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

Church Events

The Palestine and Israel Conflict Study Group

Tuesdays: Feb 2, 9, 16, 23 in the Whitney Young Room from 7-9 pm.
Facilitators: Sharon Conlon, Nadine Keith, Elaine Wells.
The UU for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME) has a study guide titled *The 7 UU Principles and Palestine-Israel Adult RE Study*. We will use this template to learn about and discuss the Israel and Palestine conflict from a uniquely UU perspective and the role of our faith tradition in bringing about peace with justice. We will have readings and videos that address the human rights issues for Palestinians and Israelis. Although we may have differing opinions on political tactics and solutions, we share UU values, to educate ourselves and our fellow UUs and citizens about the conflict and its legal, moral and ethical issues. "There is no more important issue to peace in the Middle East than resolving this nagging conundrum..." We have a lot to discuss with a hope to plan some action. You can read more about the UU groundwork and Study Guide at <http://uujme.org/home/Take-Action/Learn-and-Reflect>. Contact Sharon Conlon at sharonconlon@msn.com for further information or to RSVP.

A Course in Miracles

Thursdays at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Remaining dates: February 4, February 11, February 18, February 25. Facilitator: Ethel Merriman.
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.

CommUUnity Night

Friday, Feb. 5 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. If you haven't participated before, CommUUnity Nights are a fun, laid-back all-church event. We gather together for a potluck of side items (the main dish will be provided by RE) and we don't worry about who is bringing what; we may get KFC chicken nuggets, sushi, guacamole, but we'll have fun. We eat together as a group and then just chill. We will give the teens the Merritt Lounge as a fortress of solitude against the chaos of family life. If you can't bring anything or you are feeling too rushed to grab or make something last minute COME ANYWAY! There is always plenty of food and what we really want is YOUU!

Community Meals — Outreach

The next time we help serve lunch at First Baptist Church will be on Feb. 6. Each week a lunch is served at First Baptist. See page 14 for

details. Want to help? Need more info? Contact Diane at dianewithem@gmail.com.

Ministry Team Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 6 at 2pm in the Common Room. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting of church teams.

"Broadway Bound!" a Musical Extravaganza

Saturday, Feb. 6 at 7pm in the Sanctuary. See page 7.

Mystic Sojourn CUUPS

We do not meet in February. Stay tuned for information about our March event.

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 at cyleise@cox.net for details and to RSVP.

Church Events Continued...

Women's Alliance

Monday, February 8 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. The program will be presented by Amy Campagna about a wildlife rescue program. We ask for \$15, which goes to the cost of dinner, the Merritt Education Fund, the Partner Church scholarship, and various activities at First Unitarian. If this will be your first time attending a WA get-together, please be our guest. Our dinner selection will be pork loin, vegetarian burger (contains brown rice, beets & walnuts), elegant potatoes, French-style green beans, green salad with mandarin oranges, and dinner rolls. Please RSVP by February 3 and please indicate if you would like MEAT or VEGGIE. RSVP by emailing: kathryn.oliver@outlook.com or calling: 402-214-2718 (leave a message)

UU&YOU Class

Wednesday, Feb. 10 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Visitors, newcomers, and the just curious are invited to this introduction to Unitarian Universalism and First Unitarian Church of Omaha, along with an opportunity to share our religious journeys in a theologically diverse "safe" place. Conversation will also include some of our history and things going on here at our church. RSVPs go to uuclass@firstuomaha.org or call Jaime at (402-657-9386). If you need childcare, please let us know by the Friday before the meeting.

Sunday Social Gathering (Second Sunday of every month)

Feb. 14 at 7pm in the Common Room. MOVIE: "Philadelphia," a 1993 American drama film and one of

the first mainstream Hollywood films to acknowledge HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, and homophobia. Everyone is welcome! Light snacks provided. Bring some to share if you like. If you have any questions, please call Royal at 402-999-1379.

People's Film Festival

Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 7pm in the Common Room. All are welcome to this showing of "The Lemon Tree." For more info about the movie, see here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1172963>. The story of a Palestinian widow who must defend her lemon tree field when a new Israeli Defense Minister moves next to her and threatens to have her grove torn down.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, Feb. 18 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. The group will begin a new book of readings, *Listening Hearts*. If you would like to join the Covenant Group, please contact Linda Parker at 402-319-0642 or lparkerlib@gmail.com.

Archives Party

Thursday, Feb. 18, 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 in 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. 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.

Friday Fun Night

Friday, Feb. 19 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!

Exploring Humanistic Perspectives in Literature: Black Voices

Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 7pm in the Common Room. Sources include, among others, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Frederick Douglas, W. E. B. Dubois, Maya Angelou, Eldridge Cleaver, and Lucile Clifton. Dave Rosser is also going to sing what is often called "The Negro National Anthem." More than 25+ people have been gathering each month to have fun exploring literature in a coffee house atmosphere. We would love to have you join us!

Church Events and Activities Continued...

Investment Group Meeting

Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room. Anyone interested in learning about stocks and all things investments is invited to attend.

Bible Study with the Parson

Thursday, Feb. 25 at 6:30pm in the Merritt Lounge. All are welcome to join us.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Feb. 28 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!

Book Club

Monday, Feb. 29 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Email Dave at richardson.david@westside66.net to find out the book we will read. The information was not in time for this newsletter.

Women's Religious Studies Group

This group meets every Thursday, except not the 3rd week of the month, at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. We discuss a wide variety of books that deepen our understanding of religious beliefs. Now is a good time to join if you are interested, as we are beginning a new book: *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief* by Lawrence Wright. New members welcome. For more information, contact Donna at neffd@cox.net.

Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting

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

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the upstairs classroom after the second service. If you've played before, come for some entertainment and time at the game table. Novices welcome. Contact Scott at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

The Tolerant Atheist Group

Thursday, March 10 at 7pm in the Common Room. Note: we are skipping February. Doug Wagner, Ph.D., historian and psychotherapist, will address a variety of topics with the intent of facilitating discussion. Perhaps Doug will share why he is not a Unitarian or why he thinks Atheism is stuck in the 1960s. Mark your calendar! Doors will open at 6pm for those interested in "Bring Your Own Dinner" socializing and conversation.

St. Patrick's Day Concert: Ayre-heart. *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 Day listening to Ayre-heart'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. See page 13 for flyer.

Lori Emison Clair Forum Event

Saturday, March 26, 10am-4:30pm in the Common Room. This will be a bring-your-own-lunch event with discussion and lecture. Lori is the Director of Congregational Life at First Unitarian Church in Des Moines and a national expert on fostering growth in UU churches. Her church-wide forum last year was instrumental in some positive changes in our church and in fostering growth and new ideas about both expanding our community and deepening our involvement with each other. Please contact Jackie at janderegg@cox.net if you would like her to cover specific topics for our church. Please join us! Everyone is invited!

OTOC EVENT:

OTOC Issues Conference

Saturday, Feb. 27, 8:30am to noon at First United Methodist Church, 7020 Cass Street. Please join Omaha Together One Community as we explore issues that affect our community. Two breakout sessions will be offered on a half a dozen issues ranging from the death penalty, community violence, environmental sustainability, health insurance, mental health and other critical topics. Come and give your ideas about possible solutions and watch for further details as the date approaches. For more information about OTOC, please see page 15.



“BROADWAY BOUND!”

A MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH SANCTUARY

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2016

7:00 P.M.

PERFORMED BY KATRINA SCHMIDT, KATE WIIG, DAVE ROSSER, AND OTHERS

COME ENJOY AN EVENING OF BROADWAY SHOW TUNES PERFORMED BY SOME OF
FIRST UNITARIAN’S TALENTED VOCALISTS.

INSPIRED BY THE SUCCESS OF THE POPULAR “GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY” SHOW OF 2013,
THIS EVENT PROMISES TO BE ANOTHER SMASH HIT!

A COFFEE AND DESSERT RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW IN THE COMMON ROOM.

CHILDCARE WILL BE PROVIDED. RSVP FOR CHILDCARE TO ADMIN@FIRSTUOMAHA.ORG

FIRST OFFERED AT THE HEART AND HAND AUCTION, THIS EVENT IS NOW OPEN TO ALL.

TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH
THE CHURCH OFFICE OR AT THE DOOR
THE EVENING OF THE SHOW.

COST: \$25.00/PERSON.



Note from the Nominating Committee

We will have openings for a President-Elect, two Board Members, two Nominating Committee Members, and one Trustee of the Capital Trust next year. Before we make final decisions about nominations, the Nominating Committee (Kim Callaghan, Molly Dewell, Nadine Keith, Dave Olson, Joe Schaff, and Mary Thomas; convened by Past Board President Louise Jeffrey) would like to know if you are interested in possibly serving in one of these positions. Prior leadership experience is valuable for the President-Elect position. Some prior finance experience is helpful for the Trustee of the Capital Trust position. Group decision-making and effective communication skills, and a willingness to work with others, are desirable for all positions.

If you're interested and a member of the church, please send the following information to nominations@firstuuomaha.org: 1) your name, 2) the position you would like to be considered for, and 3) a brief explanation as to why you would be a good fit for the position.

We need to hear from you by Friday, April 1. Thank you!

Midwest Leadership School July 10-16, 2016 In Beloit, WI

What is Midwest Leadership School?

Answer:

Part of the Unitarian Universalist Association's nationwide network of leadership schools, Midwest Leadership School is a week-long intensive program in leadership and group dynamics. Led by lay and ordained staff with a deep understanding of UU congregations, MWLS develops both youth and adults into congregational leaders provides leadership tools and skills and deepens Unitarian Universalist identity.

Here is what Tony Host said about Midwest Leadership School a couple of years ago:

"It is a major commitment on both the individual and the church, but I can think of no better investment we as a church community can make than seeking out and supporting future leaders. Along with pledging, our program also needs volunteers willing to work in support of our church life. This is part of being a member of this community and in service to each other and the wider whole."

If this sounds like something you are interested in, please contact Jack Round at round314@gmail.com.

The church has leadership development funds and we are looking for members of the church who want to be our future leaders!

See this webpage for more information:

<https://www.mwls.org/mwls/information>.



It's Time to Register For Art Camp



Camp Art-a-Lot

Our camp this summer will focus on Medieval times. Learning activities will engage our campers in juggling, music, weaving, falconry, games, dancing, and quill pen calligraphy. Students will meet at the church in the morning, have lunch, and go offsite every afternoon for a field trip related to our theme.

New this year: We are offering two camps, one for younger children (K-grade - 5th grade), and another for grades 6th-8th.

Dates:

June 6-10 9:00-3:30—grades K-5

June 13-17 9:00-3:30—grades 6-8

Camp is free for children whose parents/guardians are members of First Unitarian. Contact Jan dre@firsttuomaha.org to save a place.

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

A NEW, UNITARIAN-INITIATED, LIBERAL CHURCH IN OMAHA

by Jack Round, President

The Project:

Based on the values of diversity and inclusion, we hope to partner with Second Unitarian and start a new, liberal church in Omaha in a geographic area not currently served.

For this column, I want to share some of the preliminary conversations and plans regarding the project. I feel this project is a responsible thing to do because it aligns with our five-year goals and directly benefits our church, our congregation, and the community.

The Vision:

Imagine a church in Omaha organized along liberal principles, but has the level of diversity we say we value and that is our ideal. And suppose we were capable of being part of its creation...now.

Conversations:

We have had a number of conversations with various church members, the executive team at Second Unitarian, and at our Board level. These conversations have generally been positive, enlightening, and surfaced three common concerns:

- (1) How do we know another Unitarian/liberal church is needed in Omaha?
- (2) Rather than attempt to create a different diverse church in Omaha, why not attempt to make our own churches more diverse?
- (3) Who are we to know what a diverse community wants? That is, we are not capable of (or perhaps more specifically, it is not our place to think about) starting a diverse church.

Responses to Concerns:

- (1) I personally know many, many people who seem Unitarian, but they do not attend a Unitarian church. I believe the population of potential members of the Unitarian churches in Omaha to be much greater than our current memberships; those who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” This project is a low-risk experiment because we do not plan on spending a large amount of money or resources on it, so there is very little reason not to try it. The best way to determine if another Unitarian/liberal church is needed in Omaha is to try to start one.
- (2) I have heard diversity is a goal of our church for quite some time. I believe we can learn how to become more diverse by enabling the initiation, design, creation, and sustainability of a diverse, new church; that is, we will move toward our goal of First Unitarian diversity by helping create another church that is diverse.
- (3) We would likely overcome the third articulated concern by avoiding direct involvement with the process of creating the new church. I like the “Future Search Conference” model where you get the “whole system in the room” and use a proven, facilitator-led process to design a diverse church and come away with action plans for its creation. The challenge/opportunity that has surfaced is our ability to “get the whole system”; that is, diversity, into the room. But I feel we have sufficient contacts, networks, and organizations to reach out to, so we have a diverse group of participants in the room. I believe we will need to avoid or minimize our direct participation in the creation of the church to assure there aren’t any assumed “privilege” issues.

(Article continued on page 17)

Stewardship

By Diane Withem

It's that time again! The Kickoff for the 2016-17 Stewardship Campaign will be here before we know it! Our start date is March 6 and we will cap off the drive with an all-church fiesta, Saturday, April 2, in the Common Room, which will feature a taco bar and margaritas.

This year the Stewardship Committee is excited to welcome four new members, who will shadow current members to learn the ropes and who have some fresh new ideas and lots of enthusiasm to offer. Welcome to co-chairs Peg Pidgeon and Mary Kay Peters and to Carol Prine and Christopher Schmidt.

Over the past two campaigns, we were delighted to raise the targeted amount proposed for our budget. Both years, the team was fearful that the increase would be far too difficult to meet. Both years, YOU came through! The excitement and enthusiasm seems to be growing still! Rev. Frank refers to us as a church with big dreams—we dream of a bigger congregation, increased education opportunities, a bigger commitment to working on the problems our community and our world face, more involvement on all levels,

and even more activities than we currently enjoy. All of these things cost money and time/commitment.

Once again, we hope to place emphasis on fun and fellowship and have it result in your financial support of our church.

Our budget committee has told us our expenses for the year beginning May 1, 2016 will increase by 1.3%. In order to maintain or increase our programs as well as our 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 adds to each of our lives.

We need to dream a future we want for this church. Pledging, like volunteering and involvement, is part of what it means to be a member. With your help, this will be another record pledge year and a banner year for our church. We hope everyone will participate in celebrating AND pledging.

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 Facebook group and the church office voicemail at extension 101. Also, an alert will be emailed to everyone on our enews list.

Rescheduled People's Film Festival

The January viewing and discussion of "[Empire Files](#)" was postponed due to a snow storm. This viewing will now happen on Monday, Feb. 1 at 7pm in the Common Room. All are invited to attend.

To see information about the regularly scheduled February meeting happening on Feb. 16, please see page 5.

Ministry Team Council

By Jackie Anderegg, President Elect, Ministry Team Council

Our Ministry Team Council (Diane Withem, Nellie Chenoweth, Frank Rivas, and Jackie Anderegg) meets once a month on the first Saturday of each month. So, if you want to propose a new idea, a team event, a church event or some activity that you would like to involve church facilities or financial or staff resources, please submit your proposal in writing or in person or both at least two months in advance of when you need the help, and we will do our best to accommodate your desires! We can tell you if we would like you to appear to discuss your proposal.

If something comes up that needs immediate attention, we will also try to accommodate that the best we can. We would prefer advance notice to deliberate, decide, and arrange! Email us at mtc@firstuomaha.org.

Forms can be picked up at the church or found online here:

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

Thank you!

A special thank you to everyone who donated items for our January warm-up collection started by church member Lori Schaaf. She collected blankets, coats, hats and gloves and other items desperately needed by local shelters. The photo below shows just a few of the items that YOU donated. Thank you to Lori for all her work with this project.



ST. PATRICK'S DAY CONCERT: AYREHEART

Thursday, March 17 at 7:00pm
First Unitarian Church, Common Room
3114 Harney St., Omaha 68131



Spend your St. Patrick's Day 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. A special drink "Go Luck Yourself" along with Irish Coffee will be served. Suggested donation: \$10/person. Free childcare will be provided.

Band website: <http://www.ayreheart.com>



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 e-news, 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. 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 this month:

Community Meals

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. This month we share the plate for Community Meals. See opposite page for information about the program that feeds people in our neighborhood and find out how you can get involved this month!

Thank You from the Partner Church Team

By Janet West

Thank you to all of the members and friends of First Unitarian Church who donated to the Partner Church Fund in December, 2015. A total of \$1,109 was received from individuals who made direct donations to the fund or contributed to the fund through share-the-plate. These donations will be used by the Partner Church Team to help maintain the 110-year-old church in Firtosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania, and to provide scholarships to the village young people who are enrolled in either high school or college. Any additional donations to the fund will be appreciated. No money donated to the Partner Church Fund is used to pay for the travels of First Unitarian Church members or friends to Transylvania.

Did You Know That Our Church is a Member of OTOC (Omaha Together One Community)?

By Laurie Gift, Mark Loscutoff, and Janet West

What is OTOC? It is a local Omaha organization which “teaches people to become effective leaders [while] exploring their legitimate interests, doing solid research, engaging in tough, but always respectful public discourse, holding elected officials accountable and creating positive change through collective action.”

What local concerns are the members/volunteers working on? Housing and revitalization, immigration reform, mental health, environmental sustainability, Medicaid expansion and state tax policy, public education, refugee support, and workforce development. The members of the OTOC action committees are concerned Omahans, just regular people. Laurie Gift, member of our church, is the chair of the environmental sustainability committee.

The members of OTOC are nineteen Omaha congregations and ten community and religious organizations, including First and Second Unitarian Churches.

How is OTOC funded? Most of the financial support is provided by the member organizations. First Unitarian Church’s financial support is \$1,509. This money is paid out of the church’s General Fund.

OTOC also holds an annual fundraiser. This year’s CELEBRATING COMMUNITY event will be at the Hot Shops on Saturday, April 16, 6-9:30pm. Tickets are \$20 each. There will be a silent auction, cash bar, appetizers, and live music. For more information, contact Janet West at jmasonwest77@yahoo.com.

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

Pieces of this article are taken from OTOC literature. To find out more, please visit OTOC’s website: <http://otoc.org/>.

Taft's Two Visits — Part I of II

By Dave Richardson

The visit to Omaha of former President William Howard Taft on October 19, 1917 for the laying of the cornerstone of our church is a key event in our church history. He was then President of the American Unitarian Association (AUA), the precursor of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA.) Actually, Taft made a second visit to First Unitarian on May 31, 1919. He spoke to the congregation in fervent support of President Wilson's League of Nations. This time he spoke from the pulpit of the newly completed sanctuary. His remarks at both ceremonies are interesting as landmark events. But, they are also very interesting when seen in the context of two related events in 1917 that had significance for the history of our denomination, our country and the entire world. This two-part series will examine the events that helped give perspective and hopefully additional meaning to both of Taft's speeches at our church.

The first event took place in April 1917 when America entered WW I or "The Great War" as it was then called. The second event happened on September 25 of the same year at the annual convention of the AUA held in Montreal just three weeks prior to Taft's first appearance in Omaha. At the AUA convention there was a

very contentious debate over the war. Mr. Taft presided over the convention and was a strong participant in the heated debate over the church's position on the war. The resolution they passed had repercussions for the denomination for a number of years afterward.

A recent book by noted historian, Lewis Gould, titled *From Chief Executive to Chief Justice*, covers Taft's life in the years from 1912, the year of his defeat for a second presidential term, to 1921, the year he was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The book gives interesting insights into his role as a "private" figure.

Taft was a lifelong Unitarian. His parents had joined the church just prior to the Civil War after hearing Frederick Douglass speak against slavery and early feminist, Lucy Stone, speak for Women's Rights. During the presidential campaign of 1908, Taft's Unitarian faith prompted some bigoted slurs from some supporters of his opponent, the Nebraska fundamentalist, William Jennings Bryan. Epithets such as "infidel" and "unbeliever" were hurled at Taft. Bryan himself did not use these pejoratives; however, he did not condemn or denounce their use by his supporters. Taft was easily elected. Such was not his fate in the election of 1912. The entrance of his former ally, Teddy Roosevelt, as the Progressive or "Bull Moose Party" candidate, created a

three-way race that resulted in the election of the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson.

After leaving the White House in 1912, Taft was elected to numerous boards of prestigious and often progressive organizations including The American Red Cross, whose founder, Universalist Clara Barton, had died in 1912. He also taught in the Yale Law School.

He was elected President of the AUA in 1915. At that time Taft hoped America could remain neutral in the European conflict. He was an active leader in "The League to Preserve Peace." World events caused Taft and many other Americans to make a gradual shift toward support for participation in the conflict to "make the world safe for democracy." Despite party differences, Taft and Woodrow Wilson agreed that America must come to the aid of the allies in the "The Great War." The League to Preserve Peace became an association that would work to ensure this was the "war to end all wars" and that America should be the leader in the post-war pursuit of peace.



President William Howard Taft

(continued from opposite page)

Taft's decision to support the war effort had repercussions on the denomination of which he was president and ultimately on the nature of his speeches at First Unitarian of Omaha. This will be the subject of next month's installment.

A NEW, UNITARIAN-INITIATED, LIBERAL CHURCH IN OMAHA *(continued from page 10)*

Alignment with Five-Year Goals:

The project's alignment with our five-year goals is profound. It helps with the diversity goal. It helps with the goal of getting our name and message out to the larger community. It helps with membership increase (both at the new church and our own). It helps us become a teaching church that helps train ministers (assuming, under one scenario, the ministers of First and Second Unitarian are willing to help mentor a new minister). It potentially helps increase our social justice impact. It facilitates and broadens church leadership. It increases community involvement and leadership, potentially expanding the Unitarian presence in Omaha. The project is very aligned with our five-year goals.

The Responsibility of our Board:

The responsibility of our Board, the way I think about it, is something like the following:

(1) Unqualified appreciation for the work done by church members, friends, staff, and anyone else.

(2) Be visionary: Board members, in theory, are selected partially based on their having sufficient vision to have a strong point-of-view to where the church should go in the future and encourage the church to reach/stretch/move toward achieving (what should be) ambitious goals.

(3) Based on what the congregation says it wants and ensuring alignment with our Vision and Mission, create ambitious multi-year goals and current-year goals which put ourselves in a position to achieve our longer term goals.

(4) DYNAMISM: Ensure sufficient dynamism/energy/action to achieve the five-year goals. Constantly nudge, strategize, and brainstorm new ideas to get there while honoring and appreciating the comments of all members who have a strong opinion, positive or negative.

Regarding the new church, I feel its progression is the proper responsibility of our Board.

The Preliminary Process:

Here are some thoughts regarding the preliminary process:

(1) Continued meetings with Second Unitarian.

(2) Continued meetings with members of First Unitarian.

(3) Honor the ministers' opinions—ensure the ministers of our two churches support the project.

(4) Apply for a "Chalice Lighter Grant" from the Mid America Region of the UUA with Second Unitarian. The grant is specifically

for projects like this, and the application is due February 15th.

(5) There are some members in our church communities that have specific skills which can help move this project forward. Reach out to them to see if they are interested in being leaders and members of an initiating group.

(6) Meetings/Networking with potential partners whose specialties are inclusivity and diversity. (It has been suggested we partner with certain local organization like Inclusive Communities, though we have not approached them on this project yet.)

(7) Identify and recruit participants to participate in the "Future Search Conference"; that is, those who will represent the "whole system."

(8) Get the "whole system in the room" and use the "Future Search Conference" process (or a similar process) and have the representatives in the room to:

- Verify the need for a new liberal church,
- Design the concept for the new church,
- Create an action plan to bring the new church into reality,
- Discuss sustainability.

Conclusion:

Starting a new, liberal church in Omaha based on the values of diversity and inclusion, I believe we can help create something that is very special. And there is only an upside in trying.

Minister

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Jan Wilson

dre@firstuomaha.org**Church Administrator**

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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

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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

Rescheduled January People's Film Festival

Monday, Feb. 1 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 11.

The Palestine and Israel Conflict Study Group

Tuesdays: Feb 2, 9, 16, 23, in the Merritt Lounge from 7-9 pm
See page 4 for details.

A Course in Miracles

Thursdays, Feb. 4, Feb. 11, Feb. 18, Feb. 25 at 6:30pm in the Common Room.
See page 4 for information.

CommUUnity Night

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

Community Meals

Saturday, Feb. 6, offsite
See pages 4 and 14 for information.

Ministry Team Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 6 at 2pm in the Common Room

Broadway Extravaganza Event

Saturday, Feb. 6 at 7pm
See page 7 for information.

Women's Alliance

Monday, Feb. 8 at 6:30pm
See page 5 for details.

Exploring Our Values

Monday, Feb. 8 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room
See page 4 for more info about this 6-week course.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 9 at 7pm in the Common Room

UU & You

Wednesday, Feb. 10 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.
See page 5 for more information.

Sunday Social Gathering

Sunday, Feb. 14 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for details.

Flame Deadline

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

People's Film Festival

Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for information.

Archives Party

Thursday, Feb. 18, 9am-4pm in the Common Room
See page 5 for information.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, Feb. 18 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge
See page 5.

Friday Fun Night

Friday, Feb. 19 at 7pm
See page 5 for details.

Private Recital

Sunday, Feb. 21 at 2pm in the Common Room

Exploring Humanist Perspectives

Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 7pm in the Common Room.
See page 5 for details.

Investment Group

Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 7pm in the Whitney Young Room
See page 6 for information.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Feb. 28 at 11am in the Common Room
See page 6 for details.

Book Club

Monday, Feb. 29 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge.
See page 6 for details.

Recurring...

Meditation

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

Choir

Rehearses every Wednesday at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

YRUU

Meets every Wednesday at 7pm in the Common Room.

Lunch with the Minister

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

Women's Religious Studies Group

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

Dungeons & Dragons Group

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

Bridge Group

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

Looking ahead...

St. Patrick's Day Concert

Thursday, March 17 at 7pm in the Common Room
See page 13

Lori Emison Clair Forum

Saturday, March 26 at 10am
See page 6

All-Church Stewardship Party

Saturday, April 2

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