



MARCH 2012

In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Wichita

Founded 1887



Eclectic Readers Choices

March 16: A Metaphysical Terrier

April 20: A Grown-Up Fantasy

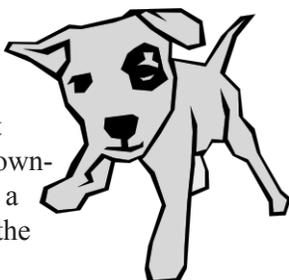
Our March choice answers a question many have asked: "What is my dog thinking?"

Garth Stein's third novel, "The Art of Racing in the Rain" offers an answer. Enzo is a lab terrier mix plucked from a farm outside Seattle to ride shotgun with race car driver Denny Swift as he pursues success on the track and off.

Denny meets and marries Eve, has a daughter, Zoë, and risks his savings and his life to make it on the professional racing circuit. Enzo, frustrated by his inability to speak and his lack of opposable thumbs, watches Denny's old racing videos, coins koan-like aphorisms that apply to both driving and life, and hopes for the day when his life as a dog will be over and he can be reborn a man. When Denny hits an extended rough patch, Enzo remains his most steadfast if silent supporter.

In April we'll discuss Deborah Harkness' "A Discovery of Witches," published in 1992. A young scholar discovers in Oxford's Bodleian Library a bewitched alchemical manuscript, which sets a fantastical underworld stirring.

The group meets on the third Friday at 11:30 for a brown-bag lunch and a discussion of the current book.



A Warm Welcome to the Hearth Church!

As President of the Congregation of First UU of Wichita, I am happy to welcome The Hearth Church into our building to conduct their services and other meetings. They will be using the facility from 4:30 to 7:30 each Sunday beginning February 26. Any other use by The Hearth Church will be in conjunction with the schedule of First UU.

The Hearth Church is a new start-up church under the ministerial leadership of Dr. Gary Blaine. Dr. Blaine is known to many at First UU as he has not only spoken from our pulpit but has also officiated at several services including that of Betty Welsbacher. Dr. Blaine is an ordained UU Minister and has most recently been the Minister at University Congregational Church here in Wichita.

Without the support and graceful acceptance of many at First UU this alliance would not have been possible. I would like to thank Rev. David Carter for bringing this opportunity to our attention. Every member of the Board of Trustees has been sensitive and responsive in their duty to our congregation with thoughtful comments, quick responses and gentle rescheduling of events. Special thanks go to Carol Clark and Mike Felton, our Presidents-Elect, who have researched and facilitated this negotiation and Will Jordan who assisted by drafting the rental agreement. The CUUP's Group and the Music Committee have been most gracious in their willingness to make room in the schedule for The Hearth Church. Please give The Hearth Church, their members and guests a warm welcome as you encounter them.

On the Financial Side...

As we welcome The Hearth Church to our facility, please know that there will be a monthly rental payment to First UU for the use of the space. However, we must bear in mind that The Hearth Church is a start-up church. With this knowledge your board has negotiated an agreement that includes 30-day termination by either party. What this means to our budget is that this income must not be depended upon as it could cease at any time.

David Brewer, President

**To all UU kids and youth, we loved seeing
so many of you here at**

Way Cool Sunday School on First Sunday!

**Keep coming because, as you know,
it's much more fun when you are here!**



In Touch

The newsletter of
The First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Wichita
is published monthly

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The deadline for In Touch
and for the monthly
calendar is the third
Wednesday of each month.

Please submit items to
Newsletter@FirstUU.net
or bring to the church office.

LATE SUBMISSIONS MAY BE OMITTED.



MINISTER'S MUSINGS

Agape Love on Valentine's Day

On the day before St. Valentine's Day last month, in a Wichita Federal Courtroom, our church showed the power of caring deeply for the well being of others. By concerted social action on the part of those of us who know and care about our church member Rob Williams, we as a church

were able to make a very meaningful difference in his life. Let me explain.

Rob was a gang member as a teenager. The day before Valentine's, he faced a long jail term for a crime he had confessed to -- the non-violent crime of petty forgery -- a crime he committed years ago and that ordinarily fetches a sentence of two years or less on probation. But the judge, having reviewed Rob's criminal history, was intending to hand down the maximum sentence of ten years in Federal prison. Why? Because over the years on different occasions Rob had been "busted" for similar crimes -- never violent or life threatening crimes, but illegal activities nonetheless -- and the judge had no counter evidence to suggest a sincere desire on Rob's part to reform his anti-social lifestyle.

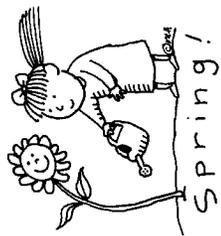
That was changed by the score of letters written by First UU congregation members -- young and old, black and white -- who could honestly testify to Rob's struggles to constructively reshape his life. In the last few years many of us have experienced Rob's favorable association, in some cases as a hard working and competent employee, or else as a likeable, constructive, and giving member of our church. So we expressed that side of Rob's character to the judge by a series of well written, heartfelt letters, and it allowed the judge to see the potential for a turn around in Rob's behavior, from a pattern of petty crimes to a lifestyle of constructive community participation towards the common good.

Last month, on the day of Rob's sentencing, Peter Ninemire and I spoke in the courtroom on Rob's behalf. Peter recounted the amazing story of his own personal turn around in life, and he spoke with the depth of compassion, eloquence, and brilliance that we all know he has at his command. By Peter's testimony, the judge was compelled to reconsider his intention of handing out a stiff sentence. In my case, although I spoke many fewer words, and I do not have an amazing life story such as Peter's, perhaps my testament was equally compelling. That is because I was so visibly sick with the stomach flu that morning that the judge, who had met and spoken with me previously when I was feeling well, would have had to be blind to not realize how deeply I cared to see that Rob's sentence be one that contributed to his reform and not his despair. Moved by the words spoken on behalf of Rob by Rob's two young children, a community member I do not know, and by Peter and me, the judge changed his mind and handed out a sentence of one year and one day!

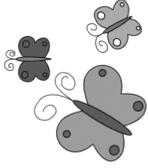
Let me reflect for a moment, and draw you into my reflections. Who can say why, as a teenager, I did so many of the crazy things I did? Was it my disturbed home life, thrice broken by the upheaval and heartbreak of divorce? Was it an immature response to the blatant hypocrisy I saw around me in the many racist, sexist, and classist institutions that disfigured the high ideals and lofty aims of the great American dream? Or was it just my "wild oats?" No doubt some of all of the above contributed to my juvenile waywardness. But my fortune, as was the case with so many other members the counter-cultural "hippie" rebellion of the sixties, was never to have been "busted." It was my good luck, instead, that by watching and learning, I purposefully rejected the negative elements of the otherwise progressive lifestyle that I had experimented with in my youth.

Of course, Peter Ninemire's life story is an amazing instance of the triumph of the human spirit over the host of nightmarish adversities that ensue when one

[Continued on next page 4]



March 2012



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 9:30 Adult RE 9:30 Meditation Class 11a Sunday Service 12p 1st. Sunday Lunch 4:30 The Hearth Church	5	6 6p Meditation & Book Discussion 7p Worship Committee	7 7p Tai Chi 7p Full Moon Dance	8	9	10
11 9:30 Adult RE 9:30 Meditation Class 11a Sunday Service 12:15 Leadership Council 4:30 The Hearth Church	12 6:30p Meatless Monday	13 6p Meditation & Book Discussion	14 7p Tai Chi 7p Book Discussion @ Church	15 7p FCC Meeting 7p NOW Meeting	16 11:30 Eclectic Readers Group	17
18 9:30 Adult RE 9:30 Meditation Class 9:30 Seeking Circle 11a Sunday Service 4:30 The Hearth Church	19	20 6p Meditation & Book Discussion Ostara New Moon Circle Field Trip—No RSVP	21 7p Tai Chi 7p Board Meeting Newsletter & Calendar Deadline	22	23	24 10a Caring Committee
25 9:30 Adult RE 9:30 Meditation Class 10a Membership Comm 10:15a Personnel Comm 11a Sunday Service 12:15p Music Comm 4:30 The Hearth Church 5:30 CUUPS Meeting	26	27 6p Meditation & Book Discussion	28 9:30 Newsletter Mailing 7p Tai Chi	29 7p FCC Meeting	30	31

Return Service Requested

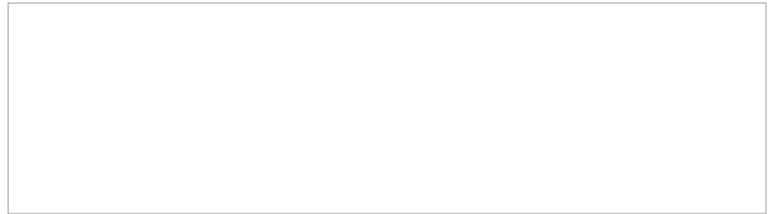


First Unitarian Universalist Church
7202 E 21st St N
Wichita, KS 67206

www.FirstUU.net

As you simplify your life,
the laws of the universe
will be simpler;
solitude will not be solitude,
poverty will not be poverty,
nor weakness weakness.

—Henry David Thoreau



**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:
Radiating Like a Stone:
Wichita Women and the
1970s Feminist Movement**

The evening book discussion group will be reading *Radiating Like a Stone, Wichita Women and the 1970s Feminist Movement*, compiled and edited by Myrne Roe, and which includes articles from many Unitarian women.

“This compilation is an embarrassment of riches, private, political, funny, heart wrenching” -- Antonya Nelson.

Join us at 7 p.m. at the Church on Wednesday, March 14.

You are welcome to join us whether you have read the book or not. Please call Anne Bailey, 943-3861 for further information.

Our book for April will be *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern.

Sunday Programs

9:30 a.m. Adult Religious Exploration

11:00 a.m. Children’s RE and Nursery

11:00 a.m. Worship Service

CD Version of Sunday Service Available

Audio copies of the Sunday Service (main message only) are now available on CD for \$5 each. Please see Staci Steddum for details.



WWW.FIRSTUU.NET



VISION STATEMENT

IT IS OUR VISION:

To be a growing, inclusive, vital congregation that encourages shared values amidst differing beliefs and nurtures

creative exploration of intellectual and spiritual paths.

To be a visible community leader that promotes human equity and compassion, and celebrates life through the arts.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission, consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles, is to provide a joyful, safe, healing environment where diversity is embraced.

We will inspire and uplift the whole person through enriching programs and services for all ages, and serve the larger community through social action and active promotion of the arts.

Front Flowerbeds

The Gardening Group is excited to “green up” the front entrance flowerbeds and think that you will be too! The plans approved by the church board are displayed in the gathering space. Take a look.

In designing the beds, the Gardening Group started with goals. We wanted an informal look with curves to soften and contrast with the straight lines of the building. We sought an “open” feeling at the front entrance doors and a feeling of being guided to the entrance. When you view the beds from the parking lot, we wanted an interesting vertical line and rhythm against the building. We wanted you to see an interesting pattern and rhythm along the sidewalks. These lines and rhythms will be created using groupings of different plant heights. Very tall plants will provide focal points. Clusters of medium-height plants will stand out along the building. And short-plant groupings will provide visual variety along the sidewalks.

To select the plants for the beds, we started with the premise to use only perennial grasses and flowers that live from year to year. Although perhaps less bold to the eye than annuals, perennial plants will allow low maintenance and be less costly once the plants are established. Our desire is for only drought tolerant plants that can live on normal rainfall. This includes native and locally adapted species. Finally, the plants will be easy care ones that do not need staking or frequent pruning. Weeding will keep us busy enough!

Since there is no budget, all plant materials will be from donations. We already have donations of pampas grass and lily turf. Congregants can donate plants from their yards or donate plants that they purchase from nurseries. A list of sun-tolerant desirable plants which you can use to guide your donations is given elsewhere in this newsletter. Besides plants, mulch will be welcome later in the season. In April we will accept plant donations and install them.

The Gardening Group is excited to put a new “face” on our building and hope that you will be excited too! To donate plants from your yard or if you want more information about donating or the flowerbed plan, please talk to any of the Gardening Group: Anita Culp, Billie Knighton, or Kelly Zens.

Anita Culp

No Excuses: Existentialism and the Meaning of Life

The message of existentialism, unlike that of many more obscure and academic philosophical movements, is about as simple as can be. It is that every one of us, as an individual, is responsible - responsible for what we do, responsible for who we are, responsible for the way we face and deal with the world, responsible, ultimately, for the way the world is.

It is, in a very short phrase, the philosophy of “no excuses!”

Life may be difficult; circumstances may be impossible. There may be obstacles, not least of which are our own personalities, characters, emotions, and limited means or intelligence.

But, nevertheless, we are responsible. We cannot shift that burden onto God, or nature, or the ways of the world. If there is a God, we choose to believe.

Join the Sunday Adult RE group at 9:30 a.m. starting March 18 for the 24-lecture series, “No Excuses: Existentialism and the Meaning of Life.” The series examines writings of Camus, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and others. The ultimate intent of the course is not only to inform us about a very exciting philosophy, but also to enrich our lives and make all of us think about who we are in a very new and bold way. Contact Corey Swertfager, 201-6921.

PERENNIAL FLOWERS

agastache (a.k.a. hummingbird mint)
beebalm
black-eyed susan
blanket flower (Goblin)
butterfly milkweed
coreopsis
dianthus
echinacea
goldenrod
hens & chicks
ice plant (hardy)
iris
lambsear
liatrobe (a.k.a. lily turf)
meadow sage (May night)
Missouri evening primrose
purple aster
purple poppy mallow
rose moss
sedum
shasta daisy
wooly thyme
yarrow

GRASSES

little bluestem
prairie dropseed
various drought-tolerant ones
(under 24” in height)

OTHER FLOWERS or GRASSES

Any perennial that has ALL of these characteristics:

- native or locally adapted
- full sun tolerant
- drought tolerant
- does not need staking or frequent pruning

NO SHRUBS
(including Russian sage)

NO BULBS at this time



EVERY MONTH AT FIRST UU

Full Moon Dances are open to both women and men. Join in the dance to connect with the earth's power, celebrate the elements, and discover your personal power. Information: C.U.U.P.S. of Wichita, (708) GO-CUUPS or (708) 402-8877. E-mail is cuupsk@gmail.com, or on Facebook.

New Moon Circle meets at the church. Intended to complement the Full Moon Dances, we offer this time to gather on the New Moon for study, meditation, and ritual exploration of earth-centered spiritual growth.

C.U.U.P.S. of Wichita, has New Moon Circle and Full Moon Dances, where the New Moon Circle is a time to gather, for study, meditation and ritual exploration of earth-centered spiritual growth and Full Moon. For more information: C.U.U.P.S. of Wichita, phone (708) GO-CUUPS or (708) 402-8877, cuupsk@gmail.com, or on Facebook.

Eclectic Readers group meet the 3rd Friday of the month at 11:30 a.m. at the church. Contact: Del Smith, 612-0826

Book Discussion Group meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the church. You are welcome to attend whether or not you have read the book. Information: 943-3861

Ethical Eating group meets the second Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. Meal followed/accompanied by round table discussion. Bring a vegan dish to share! Contact Dianne Waltner, 946-1115, or dwaltner@sbcglobal.net, for additional information.

Membership Committee meets the 4th Sunday at 10 a.m.

Personnel Committee meets the 4th Sunday at 10:15 a.m. in the library.

Dinners for Eight. Date varies. Contact Maxine Wells, 681-0442 or Marcia Ellsworth, 688-5352.

Music Committee meets the fourth Sunday following service.

EVERY WEEK AT FIRST UU

Tai Chi classes on Wednesdays, 7 p.m., \$5 per class. Dress comfortably. Please first contact David Larsen, 612-4726 or davidlarsen@sbcglobal.net

Adult RE meets Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in the southwest corner R.E. room. Current topic: Confucius, Buddha, Jesus & Muhammed. Contact: Corey Swertfager, 201-6921

Meditation: Establishing a Practice taught by Rev. Carter. This class is an introduction to Sitting Meditation, helping students learn to bring about a state of inner peacefulness and happiness, learn to reduce stress and to integrate the personality. The class also discusses the philosophy, goals, and techniques of the Science of Yoga. For further information, feel free to contact Rev. Carter by email at Minister@FirstUU.net.

Meditation and Book Discussion on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Contact: Bob Feleppa, 304-9170

[Continued from page 2]

is caught up in the harsh web of repercussions for having made poor lifestyle choices. Anyone familiar with the details of Peter's story rejoices to see how by his own inner realization and unshakeable determination, and by the timely intervention of many, many dedicated defenders of human dignity and justice, his life was turned around for the good of all. I am honored and inspired to be able to serve First UU of Wichita because individually and collectively we carry forward into the world the conviction of our principles and the legacy of loving concern for justice, truth, and beauty.

Getting the Word Out at First UU

LET US COUNT THE WAYS...

If you're reading this edition of **In Touch**, whether online or the copy delivered to your mail box, you know a most obvious way of letting others know what's happening at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita. But that's just one way of keeping "in touch" with our vibrant community.

Every Friday Krista Schnee, our Office Manager, emails an online Update, letting us know what's ahead at First UU. And of course, if you're at church on Sundays, you know the order of service includes announcements. Wednesday is the deadline for both of those tools of communication.

Did you know that are two List-Servs at First UU? One, administered by Charles Merrifield, is for church members and friends exclusively. It is used for church related business and events only. The other, 1st-UU@yahoogroups.com, is open to anyone. Christine and David Heinsohn administer it. Charles and the Heinsohns are listed in the current church directory.

Facebook? Yes, First UU is there and that's a good place to share the news and promote events. Website? Certainly: www.firstuu.net, Jack Regehr, webmaster.

Bulletins Boards are another way to get the word out. The board just outside the church office is for church business and requests. The board in the hallway by the nursery is the spot to put notices of community events, personal news, newspaper clippings, and such.

Let the following sentence be banished from use around First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita: "I didn't know it was happening!" Ash Roberts is the Board Member who is liaison for the various aspects of Communications at the church.

Peace, joy and equanimity,

Del Smith