



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA
FOUNDED 1887

News From Your Board Of Trustees

- Bonnie Till, President

Reminder: The Annual Meeting is Sunday, June 15, immediately following service. Last week, a letter was sent to each member of the Congregation announcing the Annual Meeting and presenting the agenda. If you are a member and have not received this letter, contact Anita Culp at 684-3481.

The Treasurer and Stewardship Committee presented the proposed FY 2014-15 budget for approval. The target budget approved at the Mid-year meeting in January was \$128,281.00. The FY 2014-15 budget approved by the Board is \$114,440.00. We fell short of the target budget, but the Stewardship Committee is pleased by the results of the recent pledge drive. For the first time in my memory, a substantial Social Action line item has been added to our budget. Congratulations to everyone who helped make this goal a reality.

The By-law Task Force has recommended that the by-law revisions not be voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Task Force will present the proposed changes at the Annual Meeting. Then, the Congregation will have time to review the changes, and have some opportunities to meet to discuss the changes. The Board and the Task Force recognize that changes to our by-laws are important and significant events in the life of our church. Everyone needs to be fully informed prior to voting on the updates and changes. As soon as meeting times are set, the Congregation will be informed.

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Update on Bylaws Task Force Activities

-Bylaws Task Force

The Bylaws Task Force, consisting of Jamey Findling, Kathleen McGee, and Sigrid Trombley, has been working since January to thoroughly revise the church's bylaws. Throughout this process, we have extensively consulted the UUA's bylaws manual, and we have also drawn ideas and inspiration from our consultant Michael Durall's book *The Almost Church Revitalized*. This has proven to be a sizable task, but we are making steady progress toward completion of a first draft of proposed revisions.

Once the draft is completed, we look forward to seeking congregational input. Details of this process are still being worked out, but we expect to make the proposed revisions available to all church members in both print and electronic formats and to invite written responses during a public comment period so that we can better know what questions and concerns members of the congregation may have. We also plan to hold at least two listening sessions during that time (similar to those conducted recently by the Covenant Task Force). This will provide an opportunity for in-person feedback and constructive dialogue about the revisions we are proposing.

We hoped to have the first draft completed in time for distribution at the annual meeting, but our top priority is to take the time that is needed to produce a document that we feel is ready for wider consideration and discussion. Please stay tuned for more information on this important project!

Treasurer's Report

-Anne Bailey

Income exceeds expenses, we have money in the bank and bills are being paid in a timely manner. Pledges for next year will allow us to keep the doors open and even have some funds to help those in need in the wider community. Pledge statements will be prepared next week and available for you to pick up at Church on Sunday morning to cut down on mailing costs. Keep up the good work - we have received 93% of what has been pledged up to this time.

In Touch

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

www.firstuu.net

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

Biographies for Candidates - 2014

Editor's Note: All nominees are listed. Biographies which were received by newsletter deadline follow.)

President-Elect:
Vivien Minshull-Ford

Board of Trustees
(Two to be elected)

Deborah Burnham: Deborah has been a member of First UU since early last fall, having found an accepting community in which to continue her spiritual journey. She grew up in a highly conservative evangelical atmosphere, but found that the "I'm right and everyone else is wrong" mentality didn't sit well with her. Since graduating Friends University with a Bachelor's in Psychology, she has been involved with greeting for Sunday mornings at UU and is interested in taking a more active part in the congregation, which is why running as a board candidate was appealing. Deborah thinks being a board member will be a great opportunity to have more influence in a community she already enjoys being a part of, and feels that--although she may have less experience--the variety she brings as a new face will help the board continue to broaden its perspectives and serve the community of First UU with ever-increasing insight.

Mike Diggs: I've been a member of First UU for 16 years, serving as Webmaster, on the Board of Trustees, Stewardship Committee, Capital Campaign, Chair of the Membership Committee, President-Elect, President of the Congregation, and currently acting as Denominational Liaison. First UU is the only church I have ever been a member of, or even attended regularly. My parents allowed me to find my own religious path, arriving at the Humanist position I now hold. I work as a Quality Inspector at Center Industries, teaching automatic inspection machines how to check parts, and training others to do so. This job requires problem solving skills I try to apply to the running of First UU. I'm is a bass-baritone, accompanying myself on the guitar in Science Fiction music (filk) and folk music, or singing in a local early music group, *Principal Voices*, or with the First UU choir (when we have one.) I have a degree in Physics, and maintain an interest in Astronomy and Cosmology. I'm also writing Fantasy and Science Fiction stories and novels.

Nancy Milner: Nancy Ross Milner has been a member of the First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Wichita since 1978. It has been her spiritual and social lifeline for 35 years. Nancy most recently worked at Psychologist Wichita Guidance Center and Psychologist in private practice, Wichita, KS. She is now retired. Church Service: Member - Board of Directors three times; Member - Board of Directors Prairie Star District six years; Member - Ministerial Search Committee (Pat Herdklotz); Chair - Personnel Committee, three years; Member - Dinners for Eight, 30 years; Organizer - Dinners for Eight, twelve years; Member - Covenant of Healthy Relations Committee, ongoing. Community Service: Member-Board of Directors Child Care Association, three years; Volunteer and President of Board of Directors, Healthy Options for Planeview (HOP) six years. Passions: reading mystery novels, comparative religion, spiritual growth, history of Western world, English literature, French and Spanish language study, travel to other countries, sewing, and learning. "I am currently serving out a one year term on the First UU Board of Directors and am just getting my feet wet. I eagerly wish to continue service to my church in this capacity."

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Biographies for Candidates - 2014 - Continued

Nominations for Board of Trustees -Continued

Cristan Vitkus: Hi all! My name is Cristan Vitkus. I've been coming to this church since I was fourteen. I've spoken in front of the congregation several times, helped out with the youth group, have reached out to my community through regular volunteer work, have attended events such the Global Challenge hosted by the Heifer Organization for awareness of global hunger, and to the UUA's Midwest Leadership School in Beloit, Wisconsin. I will also be attending the UUA's Summer Seminary in July. The UU life has completely changed my outlook and trajectory. Next year I will be going to Friends University to study Zoo Science and Religion & Philosophy. I hope to get a career in the science community involving the care and rehabilitation of captive animals, but my ultimate goal is to one day be a UU minister. Whenever I can, I attend other churches in tandem with UU. I find that there's a lot to learn from the services and the people, and I hope to bring new insights and tools to First UU, and to contribute back to this community that has supported me so much. Wishing to see many back roads on the journey to truth, Cristan.

Nominating Committee (Three to be elected)

Amanda Diggs: I started coming to the church in 1996, and I have been a member for 8 years since I turned 18. I was a member of YRUU, and I have assisted both of my parents in their service to the church. In 2006, I helped to represent the church at the St. Louis General Assembly, being the only youth member from our congregation. I recently joined the worship committee as a scriptwriter. From my time in JROTC, I developed my ability to evaluate people's different strengths, which would help me in my duties as a member of the nominating committee. I feel that as a UU, I have a unique and wonderful opportunity to experience many different spiritual viewpoints, which have helped me to begin to piece together my own spiritual self-identity. The freedom to choose my beliefs for myself is extremely important to me. I know that my journey is ongoing, and my friends at the First UU Church will continue to be a large part of it because of their support, encouragement, and inspiration.

Rich Parry:

Jana Rambo: I began attending First UU in 1999. I currently co-chair the Caring Committee, am on the Worship Committee, and am about to complete membership on the Committee on Ministry. I have also assisted in the nursery. I have valued each of these as opportunities to serve the church as well as to get to know fellow members. I was originally attracted to Unitarian Universalism after reading the Seven Principles. Having come from a background in conservative religions, I was especially struck by the emphasis on respect for each person, as well as for our environment. If elected to the Nominating Committee, I would strive to see these principles utilized in our work.

Janet Roberts: I have been a member of the First Unitarian Universalist Church off and on for many years. Once I resigned because I was upset about what was then (to me) the new Wiccan "thing." Ok. I have learned and rejoined a few years ago. I never really "quit" the church. It has always been too important to me. Yes, I have "checked" out a few other supposedly "liberal" churches. And, quite truthfully, some seemed OK, by and large. Yet, they never seemed like home. I have to confess that I haven't been as active on church committees as I feel I should be. My excuse is that we've had a lot of "family issues" with which to contend. Since I've been a member or friend of the church for over 30 years, I am fairly familiar with the other members and I think I can use good judgment in helping decide who might be good in serving on the board.

Bonnie Till: I discovered the Unitarian church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1974. The first Unitarian group I attended regularly was the fellowship in Plattsburgh, New York, (starting in 1975). From the day I walked into the fellowship in Plattsburgh, I felt I had found my spiritual home. I have been a member of First Unitarian Universalist of Wichita for 34 years. I have served on many church committees over the years. Currently, I am President of the Congregation. When asked to run for the Nominating Committee, I decided it would be a good way to transition from being President of the Congregation to a lower key position that would allow me to keep my hand in. Echoing Del Smith, "No matter what, I'll keep showing up for church every Sunday."

memories are like cut-up apples

tumbling together in stream of consciousness modes
 memories are like apples cut into slices
 never again to be whole nor to stand stately
 and magnificent like models in shiny red dresses

pieces of wallpaper parties bike rides book discussions
 move in rotation like colorful merry-go-rounds
 sometimes orderly often colliding and churning
 into disjointed dreams better left untold

But on sunshine days, times of long-ago laughter
 spring to the surface in lucid procession,
 the brush-strokes in your painting become more perceptible,
 reflecting your voice, re-gifting your offering.

and sometimes on still days I reflect on whether
 friendships forgotten except for fragments
 will finally ferment like uneaten apples
 and be no more. . . .

by Mary Erickson, 2012

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: ...

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; ...

Meet Tom Hogland

- Del Smith

Tom Hoglund's most regular participation in First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita activities, other than attending Sunday services, is Dinners for Eight. Why? Well, Tom says it's because he likes to eat. But those who attend the dinners with him know that his cooking plus his wry sense of humor makes him a gracious and kind host as well as guest.

He joined the church in October of 2010, after finding UU on the internet. He had been going to another kind of church, but was not interested in learning "how to get to heaven" by listening to dogmatic sermons. He wanted a church with a liberal approach to living, one open to questions. He grew up in a family which was more religious than other families in the neighborhood, but he always questioned the teaching. At the age of 16 he got a job which had Sunday work hours so he wouldn't have to go to church. And when he turned 18 he moved out.

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We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: ... Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

RE Corner:

- Denise Jackson-Simon (DRE)

Congratulations to our graduating seniors: Cristan Vitkus, Gabby Garrett, and Zora Jenney. We wish you all the best!

Also, thank you to Wendy Haynie-Cosby, Magda Garrett, and Sheri Barnes for their wonderful guidance as volunteers in our Religious Exploration program. We couldn't do it without you!

Thanks to all who have signed up for our summer RE program. There are still a few slots open, so take advantage of the unique opportunity to share a bit of yourself with our young people. It will do your heart good. Sign up sheet is on the office window.

Dillon's Gift Cards Available

The church now has Dillon's Gift Cards available for purchase at \$5.00. After purchasing the card, load it at the store for whatever amount you choose and use it at Dillon's for groceries, gift cards for other stores and gasoline. The church benefits by 4% on every purchase made using the Gift Card. Painless giving! HINT: If you don't get to church to buy a gift card, just send a \$5.00 check to Anita Culp, Office Manager, and she'll mail the card. Write "Dillon's" on the memo line.

June 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:45a Adult RE 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	2 6:00p Music & Meditation	3 7:00p UU Craft Night	4 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p Committee on Ministry	5	6	7 1:00p Cello Choir Rehearsal
8 9:45a Adult RE 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Leadership Council 2:00p Cello Choir	9 6:00p Music & Meditation 6:30p Ethical Eating Vegan Potluck	10	11 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p Book Discussion 7:00p Worship Committee	12	13	14
15 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult RE 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Annual Meeting	16 6:00p Music & Meditation	17	18 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p Board Meeting Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	19	20 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	21 6:00p Litha Ritual and Potluck
22 9:45a Adult RE 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Music Committee	23 6:00p Music & Meditation	24 6:30p Dismantling Injustice Action Group	25 2:00p Newsletter Mailing 6:00p Zen Friends	26	27	28 10:00a Caring Committee
29 9:45a Adult RE 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE	30 6:00p Music & Meditation					

EcoFest October 11, 2014: It's easy being green!

Winners of the logo design for EcoFest: 1st Place: The logo letters with the charming little frog peeking out on the official EcoFest poster are the design of Kailey K. Gibbs, Wichita artist. Kailey works in wood, paint, wax, ink and paper, the varying mediums giving depth to her artwork. She is presently working on a series entitled "Progression," and another study of trees with their connection to biblical verses. A native of Loma Linda, CA, Kailey was raised in southern Kansas. Her AA (Arts) is from Crafton Hills Community College (2010) and until 2012 she studied at Wichita State. Her work is currently shown at Urban Oasis Yoga Studio in Riverside where she and her husband, Joshua, live. She was part of a group show at R Coffeehouse with The Zion Art Squad last year.

Kailey Gibbs' goal is to "produce artwork that speaks to the soul and is available to the masses."

2nd Place: The design at the bottom of the poster is the work of Jess Bechtelhelmer, a graphic designer, painter and crafter. Her artist statement informs that her "work can be seen at the Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure museum, on Split Lip Rayfield fans, and "donning the legs and walls of retro lovers." Her latest project is a children's book she designed and illustrated which is due to launch this summer. Her website is <http://spunkidoodle.com>. See the poster on First UU's website, www.firstuu.net. Just click the tab EcoFest and find the link to the poster.

EcoFest is a family-friendly celebration which will showcase eco-stewardship and eco-innovation through demos, vendors, food, music, art, and fun for all ages. All members and friends of First UU can be involved in making this first annual major fund raiser a MAJOR success. Contact co-chairs, Vivien Minshull-Ford and Marcia Ellsworth to help make it happen!

USE AMAZON TO SUPPORT FIRST UU

-Del Smith

Jack Regehr, Webmaster, reports that \$829.23 was added to our Operating Fund in 2013. It could be much more in 2014, if more people took advantage of this easy way to be an Amazon shopper using our website, www.firstuu.net.

While this writer does not consider herself a Luddite, she needed some reassurance before going that route.

DS: Is it a safe and easy way to shop?

JR: Absolutely! On the church's website, scroll down the right hand side to the box labeled "Search Amazon." Just type in the item you are looking for and it will search Amazon for you. The search box is small, but that is not a problem. It gives enough room to type in anything you want. Then it takes you to Amazon and you can search for other things. If you are a new customer, the "start here" tab takes you through the steps -- no fuss, no muss.

DS: I am not an "impulse buyer." Will I have time to do some comparison shopping and think over the purchase?

JR: We get paid as long as the items are purchased within 24 hours of your initial click on our website link. You can even surf away from Amazon for comparison shopping, and then come back to Amazon to put the items in the shopping cart. Caveat: if the item was already in the shopping cart it will not count as a credit for First UU.

DS: How much does the church get?

JR: On average our payout is 6% of the purchase price.

DS: Anything else I should know about?

JR: There is an additional site for the fashionistas among us. It's called MYHABIT and is a fashion sale site, with up to 60% off handpicked styles from designers and boutique businesses. First come, first serve (limited inventory). You can use your Amazon.com credentials to sign in. Better yet, go to <http://www.firstuu.net/involvement/shop-online> for more information. After clicking on that link, any purchase made within 30 days will result in a payment to First UU.

As members of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita, we value our liberal diverse community and endeavor to work together for the good of the whole. Realizing that our different experiences and ideologies may lead to misunderstanding or disagreement, we promise to strive to support each other in our personal and community growth by entering into the following covenant of healthy relations.

COVENANT OF HEALTHY RELATIONS

This covenant is a solemn agreement supporting an environment of respect, safety, transparency and honesty in communication allowing our community to relate in harmony.

RESPECT (Showing regard and appreciation for others)

I covenant to:

- Treat others with respect by listening with patience even when not in agreement.
- Refuse to denigrate others or to support the denigration of others by my silence.
- Support and encourage the personal and spiritual growth of others.
- Acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes. I will seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness.
- Keep my opinions open to change while not insisting that others change their opinions.
- Listen to others' points of view in a non-judgmental way.
- Expect positive intent in the actions of others.

SAFETY (Courteous, sincere, and thoughtful consideration for others)

I covenant to:

- Request and give confidentiality.
- Share diverse ideas in a physically and emotionally safe manner.
- Help provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for myself and others.
- Take time to process information before responding.

TRANSPARENCY (Open and candid decision making with free access to all)

I covenant to:

- Make official decisions through the democratic process according to church by-laws.
- Maximize sharing of congregational information.
- Frame information for accuracy and understanding rather than distort it for persuasive advantage.
- Speak directly to the person or committee when issues arise or ask for mediation.

HONESTY (Honorable and fair in speech, intentions, and actions)

I covenant to:

- Interact with others in a fair manner.
- Take responsibility for my own actions and feelings by not blaming others.
- Agree to respectfully disagree when consensus cannot be reached.

News From Your Board Of Trustees, - continued

The Board is currently reviewing its rental agreement guidelines and concealed carry signage. If you are interested in helping with either or both of these items, please contact Bonnie Till at 722-8208 or bect@cox.net.

First UU needs a sign on 21st Street! Recently, while talking with a friend about the exciting programs at First UU, I was asked where the church is located. When I told her, she responded by saying she thought our building was vacant. Egad! At the Board meeting we reviewed two types of signs being proposed for installation. The types are non-electronic and electronic (LED). The non-electronic sign is approximately \$7,000. The LED sign is approximately \$25,000. The LED Sign Company is willing to work with us on financing. Financing means they would expect 1/2 down when we sign the contract and the rest could be financed at 0%. Currently, \$4,500 is in the sign budget (monies already donated or pledged by members). When Mike Durall visited us last fall and gave his seminar on how to get First UU headed in the correct direction, one of his three top musts was GET A SIGN ON 21st STREET. How can we make this happen? We can all contribute what we are able. I am confident we can raise the money necessary for either sign.

There is a lot going on at First UU these days. I encourage all members and friends to come to the Board meetings and get the full details of what is discussed. We all must remain engaged in the life of our church.

Reminder: Camarata Cellista (cello choir from south Texas) will be performing at First UU on Sunday, June 8, from 2 PM to 4 PM. Please plan to attend and give this exceptional group a warm welcome.

Together we can make First UU the church we want it to be!

Spotlight On: Worship Committee

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

The Worship Committee comes together once a month for what Chair Marsha Diggs calls "a shared job," looking at upcoming services, deciding what or whom to schedule, what elements of services went well – and what did not. Marsha sees her own role as chair a matter of "steering the canoe while others paddle it." Occasionally, some speakers like to pull together elements of their sermons themselves; the committee provides support and help. The committee fulfills two main tasks: to fill the pulpit when the minister is not preaching and to organize and write cohesive scripts for the service presenters. For every service there is a concerted effort to select hymns, music, and readings to support the theme. Services must also support the diversity of the church: "Every service is not going to be everyone's favorite, but must speak to all types of people in the congregation," says Marsha Diggs, who gleans general ideas for service content from the General Assembly and Leadership School, finding out what other congregations do or have done.

While a UU sermon can address a myriad of different issues, ideally it should "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." In October, a WSU professor will talk about PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Also in October, the music duo February Sky, whose songs focus on social justice, will present a concert. In fact, Marsha would like to have more musical presentations, to have more members of the congregation present their own stories – and have a greater variety of people as service leaders. The worship committee meets at 7 pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the church. Visitors and ideas are welcome.

Don't Heat Up The Kitchen!

Make June 1st Super Salad Sunday. Our monthly potluck will feature all kinds of salad to suit your appetite. And dessert is guaranteed. It's not only a fundraiser but a great time to get acquainted. Bring a guest to church that day; the meal is on us. Let Kitchen Maven Magda, magdagarrett@gmail.com, know what dish you'll be bringing.

A Covenant and Done ? Well ...

-Rolando Gomez

While it took about a year long process to get to the covenant you see on page 7, I suspect it will be new to many. To make matters worse, it's a lot to take in before the June meeting where its adoption will be voted on. I want to let everyone know that we are not done. If adopted, the covenant will be a living document. Something that we will have to be updated as we see what does and does not work for our community.

In drafting this many of us saw that there will be a lot of things that will be easier to say than to practice. That is where we will need everyone to help. We may be plowing fresh earth as we move forward and we will need many different views on how to resolve our conflicts.

June Worship Schedule

June 1 Committee on Ministry **Think Universally, Act Locally**
 The Committee on Ministry appreciates your willingness to lend your time and talent by signing up for a committee or two! Active committees are the foundation of our vibrant community. Join us as we celebrate the process of transformation into a public church. Stay for First Sunday Lunch, and visit the Committee Sign-Up Fair. First UU Needs You!

June 8 Rev. David Carter **The Walking Dead**
 Currently popular culture is preoccupied with everything zombie. Why? Are there meta-narratives that have excited this fascination in the public imagination? What about the narratives that surround plutocracy and religion at odds with prophetic witness? Lately both fabulously wealthy plutocrats and fundamentalist religionists have been focal points of passionate public discourse. Worldwide, from many quarters, both groups have been indicted for bringing about calamitous effects on a number of different levels – societal, environmental, and ecological. Are plutocracy and “*bad religion*” monsters in our midst?

June 15 Rev. David Carter **Famous UU Series: Rev. John Holmes**

June 22 TBA
 (awaiting confirmation from the presenter. Presenter and topic will be announced on Facebook, WichitaUUExclusive ListServ, Website, and Weekly Updates.)

June 29 **Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly**
 Live broadcast from Providence, R.I.

Meet Tom Høglund - continued

Tom’s past includes a stretch of long-haired Rock & Roll fandom. A highlight of his 30th birthday was shaking hands with B.B. King at a dinner club concert in Seattle. He went to more than 100 concerts including Rolling Stones, four times, ZZ Top, seven times, and Jimi Hendrix, but didn’t name a current favorite. At the time of our interview he happened to have a Dave Clark 5 CD in his car stereo, and he played one of their softer hits "Because" to give me a sample.

Whether related to his Rock & Roll days or not Tom didn’t say, but he volunteered the following quote: “I have successfully completed two marriages.” Lately Tom has been getting into classic literature, reading novels by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Dickens. One of his favorite Tolstoy quotes is "We can know only that we know nothing. And that is the highest degree of human wisdom".

Tom’s a graduate of the University of Minnesota and like so many others moved to Wichita as a mechanical engineer working in the aircraft industry. Judy, his significant other, is an electrical engineer who teaches at Wichita State University. His sister lives in Minneapolis. His only brother died at the age of 47 of a heart attack. Tom joined the “zipper club” after open heart surgery two years ago after a very mild "technical" heart attack that fortunately did not cause any damage.

We’re delighted that Tom is a member of First UU. His kindness is attested to by Nona Ponder and others, as he is a reliable provider of transportation to Dinners for Eight.

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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From Our Book Reading Groups

Wednesday Evening Book Club:

Continuing with suggested reading from Michael Durall, we will meet on Wednesday, June 11, 7:00 at the Church to talk about Gilead by Marilynne Robinson. From the first page, the voice of Rev. John Ames mesmerizes with his account of his life – and that of his father and grandfather. Ames is 77 years old in 1956, in failing health, with a much younger wife and six-year-old son; as a preacher in the small town of Gilead, Iowa, where he spent his entire life, he has produced volumes and volumes of sermons and prayers, "trying to say what was true." But it is in this mesmerizing account – in the form of a letter to his young son, who he imagines reading it when he is grown – that his meditations on creation and existence are fully illumined. Robinson's prose is beautiful, shimmering and precise; the revelations are subtle but never muted when they come, and the careful telling carries the breath of suspense.

We will not meet in July but will gather in August to talk about What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam by John L. Esposito. Please call Anne Bailey, 650-4905, for further information.

Eclectic Readers Group:

Bram Stoker's Dracula is a classic vampire tale. First published in 1897, the novel was influenced by a history of vampire myths and stories, but Stoker shaped all those fragmented tales to create a literary legend (that was just the start of what we know, and understand about vampires in current literature. Even though stories like Polidori's "The Vampire" and Le Fanu's Carmilla already existed at the time when Dracula was first published, Stoker's novel (his literary imagination) helped to spawn a new dimension in horror literature. June 20, 11:30 am.

The Man Booker Prize for Fiction is awarded each year for the best original novel, written in the English language, by a citizen of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Republic of Ireland, or Zimbabwe. Margaret Atwood's The Blind Assassin received the Booker in 2000. Is it "gothic drama, romantic suspense, and/or science fiction fantasy"? Read it, come discuss it on July 18. Del Smith, 612-0826.

Brown bag lunch, discussion often begins before noon. All are welcome. Del Smith, 612-0826.