



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

President's Report

November 19, 2014

- Charles Merrifield

Group Read discussions on Michael Durall's latest book, "Making the Annual Pledge Drive Obsolete," were held Sunday, Oct. 19 and 26, and Nov. 2. About 12-15 people attended each session. Several ideas from Durall's book were discussed, along with ideas developed at the sessions. The Stewardship Committee and the Board of Trustees will attempt to incorporate these ideas in the next pledge drive.

Nov. 7 several of our members attended the Kansas African American Museum dinner in which our member Fern Van Gieson was recognized for helping to organize the local Urban League 60 years ago. You can watch her part of the ceremony via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOt8CMfVgak>.

Progress is continuing with the LED sign. The church name should be installed soon, as well as other final touches.

At the board meeting November 19, the board began the process of reviewing a draft of the proposed bylaw changes submitted by the Bylaw

Continued on page 4

Ministers Musings

-Rev. David Carter

My wary feet habitually find a way between naïveté and cynicism. So, it was when I met with Janet Yellen at the Federal Reserve Bank in Washington, DC, on November 14th. Poised between the two, refusing both cynicism and naïveté, I spoke to her and I listened. I had her ear for five minutes, as did each of the ten speakers in our activist group of thirty. Here is what I saw.

Federal Reserve Bank Chair, Janet Yellen, is a cultured woman. I say so because of how she greeted us. Accompanied by her small entourage consisting of three Reserve Bank Governors and a half dozen security, she stepped into the meeting room with dignity and grace. For all of the enormous power she wields, she is small in stature. She circled the large table round which our chairs were arranged and walked up to and greeted every member of our group, face to face. She stood before each of us for a long moment, her eyes calmly meeting ours, steady and present. She took a moment to exchange a few words with each of us, taking each person's hand in hers as she did and pausing as our eyes engaged with hers in the human process of being present with another.

Continued on page 7

Report from the Finance Committee

- Anne Bailey

We are 1/3 of the way through our fiscal year and have already received 40% of our budgeted income. At this point we are showing a loss due to the fact that \$16,000 was expended as a down payment on our electronic sign. Pledges to cover the entire cost of the sign are in hand.

	ACTUAL	BUDGETED
Income	\$ 64,585.81	\$ 52,630.12
Expenses	\$ 65,499.96	\$ 52,041.91
Net income (Loss)	(\$ 914.15)	\$ 588.21

If you have any concerns about the Pledge Statement you should have received by now, please call the Church office and leave a message for the Treasurer.

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.

Covenant of the Month: Honesty

Following a year-long process of meetings facilitated by Rev. Thea Nietfeld, the congregation adopted a Covenant of Healthy Relations at the annual meeting on June 15, 2014. Each time we enter the church we can revisit the covenant, which hangs above the credenza at the entry.

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."

The first three of the four covenants were published in previous newsletters (Respect, Safety, Transparency). The covenant recognizes that our different experiences and ideologies may lead to misunderstanding or disagreement and that we are promising "to strive to support each other in our personal and community growth."

My Name Is Vivien And I Am A Cyberphobe.

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

Cyberphobia is defined as "irrational fear of computers, or especially a fear of/and or unwillingness to learn new technologies." That's me to a T, except that I see it as rational fear. It's not just that if I blink I lose data, such as the first draft of this piece; when it comes to Facebook, I just don't want to go there. Barack Obama, movie stars, Middle Eastern radicals and most people I know twitter, tweet, and blog with the greatest of ease. Even though I have an avatar (a picture of my fish pond), a password, and a long list of people (including old friends) sending messages, pokes, likes, sharing, comments and other overtures, I always feel as though I am teetering on the edge of a cyberspace black hole, an "abandon-all-hope all ye who enter here" zipper line across the internet. I don't understand the menus, the jargon, what's private and what's not. As I said before, I don't want to go there; and perhaps there are those of you who feel the same way I do.

I'm sure you're all wondering what I'm getting at. Well, First UU's Facebook page often has visits from people expressing interest in our church. Photographs and publicity for music and other church events are posted and being able to access them without fear of being sucked into some cyber netherworld would be rewarding for more church members than at present.

If you would like Facebook demystified and to feel comfortable and unthreatened while doing what Facebook does best, contact Del Smith, at wichitadel@aol.com and let her know you would be interested joining me at a seminar led by knowledgeable members of our congregation.

Meet Laura Roberson

- By Vivien Minshull-Ford

"We may not all have the same journey or experiences but we all have the same primary emotions – and that's how we can all relate to each other."

Laura Roberson, who has only recently joined First UU, would like to make documentary films, to take a more creative approach to social problems: "You need to go outside yourself to be compassionate towards others." She sees documentary films as a way to reach and interest people in issues outside their sphere of experience, and "We are such a media culture," she explains. Surprisingly, she does not see herself as a technological person: she has no television and watches documentary films on her laptop. Other things you might not guess about Laura from meeting her are that she played tennis competitively for five from the age of 13. In her Derby high school, she spent four years in R.O.T.C., which included an intense week of boot camp with 250 other students. She graduated as Wing Commander! Tennis and R.O.T.C. may have contributed to the stamina, single-mindedness, and self-discipline which led to Laura accomplishing more before the age of 21 than many people of twice her age. These qualities likely account for her retail abilities: she managed the opening of Von Maur stores in Chicago and St Louis.

The main focus of Laura's life from the time since graduating high school has been mental health, in particular that of children and teenagers. She began working for the Counseling Center of South Central Mental Health, working for children with severe emotional problems. While studying for an associate degree at Butler County Community College, she was a community support worker for the Mental Health Association, catering to adults with severe persistent mental illness. By the age of 21, Laura was managing a group home, one of the best facilities in the area.

Laura returned to her chosen career of mental health at Com Care as an early childhood specialist; later at Via Christi she was a client care counselor at a group home for pregnant teenagers. More recently she has been working with teenage girls and children with behavioral issues through Behavioral Link. She will graduate from Newman University next year with a degree in counseling and is looking into masters and PhD programs.

Laura was raised Southern Baptist which she sees as "politically and money driven" which made her feel disconnected. When she was ten years old, she had an Asian friend, Tina, whom she believed would be headed for hell as a non-Christian. She felt there was no heaven or hell, and that God presents himself in many different ways. From an early age Laura had always want to help people: at the age of eleven, she tried enrolling as a Candy Stripper at the local hospital, although the minimum age is thirteen. As an adult she has continued to volunteer for Big Brothers Big Sisters and other groups. Laura first was aware of First UU when she watched a documentary on vegetarianism at the church and has since given up eating meat. The services she has been attending for about a year feel "more like learning something and thinking for yourself." She has also begun going to Social Action group meetings and seeing how involved in the community the congregation has become. At First Unitarian Universalist, she "wants to give because of what I see the church doing." She is really feeling connected with an organization that wants to give and would like to see more events and youth outreach. She would also like First UU to have a place in the community like Mead's Corner Coffee House (owned by 1st United Methodist Church of Wichita) "where like-minded people can come together to build connections."

Food Bank Anniversary

Thanks to everyone who has donated to our Food Bank collection. Our November 17th delivery weighed in at 127 pounds! We decided to start the year-round collection of food stuffs on November 9, 2013, at a meeting held as a follow-up to Michael Durall's visit. This is only one way we participate in our commitment to social action.

We have been a little concerned that, over the summer, our donations decreased. Mary Erickson's CornUUCopia painting brightens our foyer and reminds everyone who is able to please bring an item or 2 each Sunday to keep ourselves mindful of this increasing need in our community.

Editors' Note: Marcia Ellsworth, Vivien Minshull-Ford and Jana Rambo have been faithful in boxing up and delivering the donations to the Food Bank. If you'd like to help, see one of them.

Did You Wonder About? (but haven't asked....)

What does the Wind Generator do for First UU?

The installed wind generator (600 watts, 12/24 volts) produces approximately 10% of the church's annual electricity. When the proposed solar panels are installed, 100% of our supply will come from the panels and the wind generator, instead of the current coal-produced source. - Kent Rowe

The new electronic sign has inspiring and clever messages. Who writes them?

The sayings come from the Unitarian Universalist Association's Wayside Pulpits collection. Currently the sayings are changed about once a week, but it's an evolving practice. - Anita Culp, Office Manager.

Will First UU have a holiday tree this year?

"The spirit of generosity binds the community together." - Sam Trumbore, UU minister

This holiday season 1st UU will continue the tradition of decorating our tree with new or like new hats, scarves, coats, gloves and mittens for adults and children in need. - Judy Naillon

Where can I find the minutes of the Board meetings?

You'll find them in a notebook on the computer desk in the Library. - Anita Culp, Office Manager

President's Report, continued

Committee. Church members can contact me for a digital copy of the proposed changes. The Bylaw Committee will host listening sessions with the congregation to discuss the proposed bylaw changes. At some point, either through a special meeting of the congregation or a regular congregational meeting, whatever bylaw changes are approved will be a result of a vote of the congregation.

The board set the date for the Midyear Meeting to be January 25. All committees will need to submit a report for the meeting. The preliminary budget for the fiscal year will be discussed at the meeting.

The Holiday Dinner was set for after Sunday service on December 21. Everyone will be invited to bring something to share. The turkey, ham, and faux turkey will be arranged specifically.

The board wants to encourage congregants to attend GA this June 24-28 in Portland, OR. We would like to have a good attendance so that we can bring useful ideas home to help us in our growth process. Also, the MidAmerica Region annual meeting will be April 17-19 in Naperville, IL. It would be good to have some of our people attend that meeting, as well.

Have you received unwanted calendars?

- Anita Culp

A calendar exchange basket has been set up in the library. If you have a 2015 calendar that you don't want (any size from wallet to wall size), place it in the basket. If you need a calendar, take one from the basket. The Calendar Exchange will run through mid-January. Here's a chance to recycle those extra calendars.

From the Caring Committee: We thought you'd like to know that....

Jean Vaughn is enjoying being home again after successful knee surgery in Oct.

Nona Ponder is regaining her strength at Larksfeld Health Center. She hopes to return home soon.

A note of thanks to everyone who has given rides to others, so they can attend Church on Sunday or attend other events

Caring Committee is the arm of the church that reaches out to those experiencing illness bereavement or other crises. Would you like to join us? We welcome new members!

- LaRilla Combs

December 2014



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 6:00p Zen Friends	2 7:00p UU Craft Night	3 7:00p Committee on Ministry	4	5	6 12:00p Heart & Soul Memoir Writing Workshop 7:00p Full Moon Dance
7 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	8 6:00p Zen Friends 6:30p Ethical Eating Vegan Potluck	9	10 7:00p Worship Committee	11	12	13 12:00p Heart & Soul Memoir Writing Workshop 6:00p Ethical Eating Vegan Annual Potluck
14 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p Leadership Council	15 6:00p Zen Friends	16	17 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	18	19 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group 7:00p Candles & Carols	20 12:00p Heart & Soul Memoir Writing Workshop 6:00p Yule Celebration
21 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p Holiday Dinner 12:15p Call to Action Group	22 6:00p Zen Friends	23 6:30p Dismantling Injustice Action Group	24 1:00p Newsletter Mailing 7:00p Christmas Eve Program	25 Christmas - Office Closed	26	27 10:00a Caring Committee
28 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p Music Committee	29 6:00p Zen Friends	30	31 7:00p New Year Eve's Party			

Who's Who @ First UU

OFFICERS & BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President - Charles Merrifield
 President-Elect - Vivien Minshull-Ford
 Board of Trustees
 Mike Diggs
 Elaine Edens
 Jamey Findling
 Magda Garrett
 DeeDee Jordan
 Nancy Milner
 Cristan Vitkus

Co-Treasurers - Anne Bailey & Marsha Diggs

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Adult RE - Corey Swertfager
 Buildings/Grounds - Tom Moore
 Caring - Jana Rambo and LaRilla Combs
 Children's RE - Wendy Haynie-Coxby
 Communications - Del Smith
 Denominational Affairs - Mike Diggs

Finance:

Financial Commitment- Charles Merrifield
 (Stewardship - Elaine Edens)
 Kitchen Mavens - Magda Garrett
 Membership - Anne Bailey
 Music - David Brewer
 Partner Church - Betty Hensley and
 Debbie Wadman
 Personnel - Janet Roberts and
 Magda Garrett
 Social Action - Louis Goseland
 Worship - Marsha Diggs

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

David Brewer, Chair
 Marcia Ellsworth
 Kathy Hull
 Bonnie Till
 Doug Wilson

Every Week at First UU

Adult Religious Exploration, Sunday, 9:45 am - Corey Swertfager, 201-6921
 Chalice Bookstore - VACANT
 Zen Friends of Wichita, Monday, 6:00 pm - Bob Feleppa, 683-9295

Every Month at First UU

Board Meeting - third Wednesday, 7 pm - Charles Merrifield, 688-5352
 Caring Committee - fourth Saturday, 10 am - LaRilla Combs, 733-2089
 Craft Night - first Tuesday, 7 pm - Anita Culp, 744-2840
 Dinners for Eight - dates vary, Marcia Ellsworth, 688-5352, Sigrid Trombley, 683-7075
 Dismantling Injustice Action Group - 6:30 pm, fourth Tuesdays, Rev. Carter 684-3481
 Eclectic Readers - third Friday, 11:30 AM, Del Smith, 612-0826
 First Sunday Lunch - Magda Garrett, 765-3352
 Leadership Council - second Sunday, 12:15, Vivien Minshull-Ford, 683-9295
 Meatless Monday (Ethical Eating) - second Monday, 6:30 PM, Dianne Waltner, 946-1115
 Music Committee, fourth Sunday after church
 Newsletter Deadline - third Wednesday, evening - Del Smith, 612-0826
 Newsletter Folding - fourth Wednesday, 2:00 PM - Del Smith, 612-0826
 Pagan Group - Seasonal ritual and potluck feasting - Kathy Hull, 204-9956, Anne Bailey 943-3861
 Social Justice - third Sunday after church - Louis Goseland, 204-9972

As announced

Garden Group - Anita Culp, 744-2840

First UU's Inclement Weather Policy

- Anita Culp, Office Manager.

Snow season arrived early in Kansas but it wasn't bad enough to cancel church services. When the weather is bad, the President makes the decision on canceling services based on whether it is safe for congregants to be out driving and on the weather forecast for Saturday night. One-quarter inch of ice may be worse than 6 inches of snow. The President tries to make the decision no later than mid-Saturday afternoon so there is time to get the word out to congregants. This sometimes means the weather improves Saturday night but the decision was already made. Closings are posted on Facebook and ListServe; and the 3 local TV stations are notified: KWCH (broadcast channel 12), KAKE (broadcast channel 10), and KSN (broadcast channel 3). Of those three, KWCH is the most reliable as they use an automated system and the message goes on their crawl line within a few minutes of notification. Look for "First Unitarian Universalist-Wichita" on the crawl line. If you don't have a TV, feel free to contact Anita Culp at her home telephone number, 744-2840.

As for when we do have church services after a snow storm, the church has a snow-plowing contract for the parking lot for snowfall amounts over 2 inches. The company is good about getting the job done before the Sunday service. As always, the decision is yours about venturing out in bad weather. We want you to be safe.

Minister's Musings, continued

I was impressed. She treated each of her guests as if she believes in the worth and dignity of all.

Some are alarmed by her unapologetically humanist values. As Fed Chair, Yellen has been branded by many conservative economists, for example, as scandalously "political" for daring to state in a carefully worded, fact-laden speech what the whole world is thinking about the unprecedented and rapidly widening economic disparity, namely, that it is "appropriate to ask whether this trend [of rising economic inequality] is compatible with values rooted in our nation's history, among them the high value Americans have traditionally placed on equality of opportunity." I say, bravo! Here is an important leader with the courage to point to the elephant in the room and allude to the very real dangers inherent in ignoring its presence. The meeting proceeded in earnest dialogue.

Yellen was impressively dialogical. I found her attentive interaction encouraging. We brought our issues to her attention in a succinctly delineated list of six points meant to create a strong and fair economy:

1. Good Jobs for All
2. Investment in the Real Economy
3. Research for the Public Good

And create a more transparent and democratic Federal Reserve:

4. Ensure That Working Families' Voices Are Heard
5. Fed Officials Should Actually Represent the Public
6. Create a Legitimate Process for Selecting Fed Presidents

We presented poignant narratives that illustrated how each of these points is dramatically affecting the lives of millions of men, women, and children in America today. I think it is fair to say that Janet Yellen is a leader who is listening to the voices of those often excluded from participation in the economic discourse. I was present to participate in and witness her attentive interaction with activists for economic justice from around the nation. Will her willingness to listen and her compassionate concern translate into an improved economic landscape? I do not know. She faces heavy opposition. Time will tell. Meanwhile, on our long journey, we may be certain of this. Beyond the valley there rises another steep, and before each dawn, another night. But certainly, the arc of the universe bends towards the values we celebrate and advance – truth, beauty, justice, democracy and Love.

The Journey

My light is small
And flickers,
But I have, like you,
Lighted candles in my day,
And see them up ahead.

Looking back,
Few lights are left.
Still, I remember those
That lit the path.

We, companions on this road,
May have stumbled
But we have not fallen.
We have stepped over quicksand,
Avoided the precipice,
Held the hands of those who faltered,
Planted fruit trees,
Scattered flowers,
Given seeds to those ahead.

Despite its rocks,
This is an awesome path,
Often dimly seen,
But overhead,
The stars
Point us toward our dream.

Jean Vaughn, 2003

RE Corner

- Denise Jackson-Simon DRE

It's been great to see some new faces in the RE classes recently. Please keep coming. It makes it much more interesting and fun when you are ALL here!

We continue with our lessons from the Toolbox of Faith. We've also celebrated the Day of the Dead. We will have a community service project on November 30 which involves creating a video, so you won't want to miss that.

As the holidays near, our focus will continue to be on our UU principles with some emphasis on gratitude and joy. Please plan to attend our RE winter solstice celebration on December 21.

We have two very capable and enthusiastic college students who are excited about working with our middle and high school students. Look for more info on that in an upcoming newsletter and plan to add attendance at UU to your new year's resolutions.

See you at church!

First UU New Year's Eve Party

Have some cheese, drink some cheer and die by chocolate!

Please bring your favorite cheese or cheese dish, wine, champagne or sparkling juice, or your deadliest chocolate treat!

Wednesday December 31st.

Time: 7:00PM - ?

Games welcome!

Presented
by the
Holiday
Party
Group.



First Sunday Lunch

Heat predicted for Sunday, December 7th! Magda and Friends will serve up Chili at First Sunday Lunch, plus a Baked Potato Bar. Let Magda Garret know if you can help by preparing food, helping with serving and the particularly important task of clean-up! This time for fellowship also generates funds to support the ministry of First UU, not only at 7202 East 21st Street, but also in the larger community

December Worship Schedule

- 11/30 Cristan Vitkus – Cristan, recent First UU Youth Religious Exploration “graduate” and UUA Region Leadership School participant, is a member of the Board of Trustees. We’ve been inspired by her previous pulpit presentations.
- 12/ 7 Marsha Diggs – **A Pagan Perspective on Christmas.** The purity and spirituality of Christmas touches all faiths. Marsha, First UU member, will talk about reconciling the Christmas season with her pagan spirituality.
- 12/14 Rev. Carter – **December’s Door and Beyond.** The impact of the turning of the wheel of the year and the celebrations of December.
- 12/21 Corey Swertfager – **How Jesus Became God.** The question of how Jesus became God is one of the most significant historical questions of Western civilization.
- 12/24 Rev. Carter – **Christmas Eve: A Traditional Service.** Carols & Candles, and the re-telling of an age-old story will highlight our traditional Christmas Eve Service at 7 pm.
- 12/28 Rev. Carter – **Famous UUs: Samuel Coleridge.** Coleridge was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets.

Advent: On the Sundays of Advent (11/30 through 12/28) the Worship Committee will add a brief element to the services, “A Season of Joy.” Given the pluralistic nature of our congregation, we will have seasonal displays from religions that celebrate in December: Pagan, Christian, Jewish, Diwali, Kwanza and Buddhist.

How Jesus Became God

The early Christian claim that Jesus of Nazareth was God completely changed the course of Western civilization. In fact, without the Christian declaration of Jesus as God, Western history as we know it would have never happened.

If Jesus had not been declared God, his followers would have remained a sect within Judaism, and the massive conversion of Gentiles, the Roman adoption of Christianity, and the subsequent unfolding of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and modernity would never have taken place. For that reason, the question of how Jesus became God is one of the most significant historical questions of Western civilization.

Join Adult RE Sunday mornings at 9:45 for Bart D. Ehrman's 24-lecture series *How Jesus Became God* to hear more about this transformation.

Contact Corey Swertfager, 201-6921, bikercorey@gmail.com.

Don't miss Corey's presentation about this topic at the Sunday service on December 21!

Our Holiday Dinner Tradition Continues

Vivien Minshull-Ford, President-Elect, is coordinating our traditional holiday dinner on Sunday, December 21, after the morning service. The Board is arranging contributions of turkey, ham, and tofurky. The rest of the meal is up to the congregation. Sign up with Vivien to bring your holiday specialty side dish or dessert.

FIRST UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

7202 E. 21st St. N.

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www.firstuu.net



From The Eclectic Readers Group

11:30 am, Friday, December 19. What is your favorite children's book? It could be one from your childhood or one you discovered as an adult. Bring it to our December meeting and tell us why it's special to you. Perhaps you may choose read a selection from the book.

January's book is the 1998 winner of the National Book Award for Fiction, *Charming Billy*, by Alice McDermott. The young narrator focuses her story on two men -- on her father, Dennis, and his cousin and best friend, Billy. Her tale opens out to disclose an entire community of Irish-Catholics in Queens -- family, neighbors and friends. - Del Smith, 612-0826.

**Vegan Holiday Potluck
December 13, 6:00 PM**

Mark your calendars for Saturday, Dec 13, for our 6th annual vegan holiday potluck dinner! (Doors open at 5:30.) These are very informal and lots of fun. This is a community event, and everyone is welcome. The only stipulation (of course) is that any dish brought be vegan - no meat (or meat broth), eggs, dairy, or honey. This will be in addition to our regular monthly potluck on Dec 8. And please bring a copy of the recipe or a list of ingredients to help those with food allergies and sensitivities.

This is a great opportunity to enjoy some fantastic food, meet some wonderful people, and have a truly celebratory holiday experience. Please feel free to contact Dianne Waltner with any questions. Phone -946-1115 or email - dwaltner@mac.com Hope to see you there!