



# In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

## Presidents' Report, August 20, 2015 - Vivien Minshull-Ford

One of the memorable events at the end of July was the General Assembly sermon on 26<sup>th</sup> July, which presented in a lively format a summary of the inspirational speakers and workshops experienced by several congregation members in Portland. Rev. David Carter, Marcia Ellsworth, Charles Merrifield, Mike and Marsha Diggs, Bonnie Till, and Kathy Hull used photographs and PowerPoint to highlight their talks on different sessions they had attended. A great deal of the wisdom gathered in Portland will influence the future direction of our church.

I met with President Elect Corey Swertfager on 6<sup>th</sup> August to discuss the future for our respective committees. Plans included defining the Social Action program, a climate change committee and a peace group, both facilitated through the Unitarian Universalist Church Center at the United Nations. We also discussed attending this year's Southern Cluster.

On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August a Social Action subcommittee -- Corey Swertfager, Magda Garrett, Reverend Carter, George Rivera, Louis Goseland, and I -- met to produce a job description for the Social Action Directorship, and plan activities for the rest of the year. The Board of Trustees had already voted to extend Louis Goseland's contract for two months, pending his departure from Kansas at the end of the year.

Another goal was accomplished at a 16<sup>th</sup> August meeting to establish a firmer footing for the Partner Church committee so that more funds can be raised for Unitarian church of Homorod Szentpál in Transylvania. As a start, Anne Bailey, Debbie Wadman, Marcia Ellsworth, Magda Garrett, and I planned a coffee and cake fundraiser on 7<sup>th</sup> November, in addition to the long-standing tradition of the March Transylvanian/Hungarian dinner and auction. The committee also intends to meet more often during the year, and maintain more exchange of correspondence, newsletters, and photographs.

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## Our Covenant: A Living Document

- Del Smith

Many members of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita participated in the development of Our Covenant of Healthy Relations from the very beginning, in the fall of 2013 through the series of meetings with the congregation through the vote to adopt the document in May, 2015 to the present day. I am proud to be one of them and consider the Covenant to be a living document, not just words. I am definitely not alone in that opinion.

Last month's article suggested that everybody "stop, look, and read" the Covenant displayed at the front entrance. This month the Covenant related to Respect, the ways in which we show regard and appreciation for others, is in the spotlight. - continued on page 3

## 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.

## Introducing the *In Touch* Editorial Team

Dear Members and Friends of First UU:

My service as content editor of this newsletter is coming to an end. Working with Rolando Gomez, layout editor, made it pleasurable and rewarding. Please welcome a new member of the team, Suzanne Miller, who will work with Rolando beginning with the October issue.

Suzanne, a new member of First UU, is not new to reporting the news. She was a freelance journalist for several newspapers and magazines (*Goessel Gazette* in the *Hillsboro Star Journal*, denominational magazine editor and writer). A published poet, *Storage Issues*, Cascadia Publishing, 2010, she is currently a college English instructor.

Rolando is an engineer in the aerospace sector in real life. He does the layout editing, which means he changes the font and appearance matters of each article and overall appearance for the newsletter. He also does occasional article writing. Rolando notes, "A lot of the visual arts is new to me. So doing a newsletter has been a learning experience."

Anita Culp, Office Manager, prints the newsletter monthly and this issue is doing layout. Rolando's job required some traveling.

Thanks for allowing me a couple of years of quite enjoyable service to my beloved community. It's easy to leave knowing that your newsletter is in very good hands!

– Del Smith

## Ethical Eating Schedule

The Ethical Eating committee is making some changes to the group's activities. We will **not** have our vegan potluck in September. Instead, we will meet at Garden Grill, 300 N Main (in the Occidental Building), from 6-8 on our regular meeting night, Monday, September 14. Chef Miguel has graciously agreed to open the restaurant for us (and the Veg Meetup Group) and will be providing a buffet for \$10.95. (They are not normally open on Monday evenings, so we will have the restaurant to ourselves.) Please RSVP to Dianne Waltner (946-1115 or [dwaltner@mac.com](mailto:dwaltner@mac.com)) by no later than Sunday, September 13 at 1 pm so we can give him an approximate number to expect.

We will have our regular vegan potluck on Monday, October 12 at the church. November event TBD and we will have our 7th annual vegan holiday potluck in December.

-Dianne Waltner

## Minister's Musings

-Rev. David Carter

### Black Lives Matter: Our UU Joys and Sorrows

Albeit disorganized now, members of First UU of Wichita are already emotionally involved in the world-wide discourse and activism aimed at dismantling structural racism. Could it be otherwise? Our long UU tradition is historically aligned with the values and strategies of the Black Lives Matter campaign. It is no wonder that many UU churches are already on the front lines pressing to end America's "invisible" apartheid system, the New Jim Crow.

I recount below three powerful and poignant displays of our church's concern, each of which is an expression of the readiness of our congregation to contribute more to the frontline activist involvement that is transforming America:

1. During a recent joys and sorrows, Peter Ninemire feelingly held forth about engaging in conversation with his young, "bi-racial" family member about the indignation, grief, and alarm they both feel about this issue of unarmed and innocent Black women, men, and children being routinely murdered, incarcerated, or harassed unjustly in America.
2. And, again during that service, Charlie King feelingly cited the profound significance of an article he read written by Pulitzer prize winning journalist Leonard Pitts and urged that we as a congregation read and respond appropriately: <http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/leonard-pitts-jr/article29223976.html>
3. Lastly, several weeks ago now, our member, social activist Durell Gilmore recounted the anger, fear, and humiliation he felt right here in Derby, Kansas when armed Derby police, responding to a racial profiling "tip," surrounded and interrogated him in a demeaning and unnecessary show of militaristic force. What prompted their intimidating and unnecessary response? Simply this: Durell was seen exercising his civil right to approach voters in Derby about an upcoming election issue!

When Durell spoke during joys and sorrows, I looked around and saw no fewer than half of our congregation who had been visibly affected. Almost a dozen openly shed tears. Others, a dozen or more, evinced compassion, alarm, and concern for the safety of Durell and, by extension, for all Black citizens of America. In our church that Sunday morning there was a palpable show of solidarity with the aims of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Clearly, to me the responsible thing for our church to do is to align with UU churches and other organizations here in Kansas and around the nation in non-violent actions that will continue until these human rights violations are halted.

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### Our Covenant: A Living Document, Continued from page 1

Some questions for your private consideration: Which of the following ways to demonstrate respect speaks to you? Causes you to reflect before acting or speaking?

"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."

## New Hearing Assistance System

First UU now has a new hearing assistance system! It allows multiple people to use remote headphones or earpieces to better tune into our services. Whether you need hearing assistance or you wish to listen to the service from anywhere in the church, the sound is clear and the volume adjustable to your liking.

The first week three people utilized the new system, the next week four! We currently have five receiver/headset units and could purchase more as needed. Interested in helping us make the system available to more people? It costs around \$120 per receiver with headphones.

Del Smith first discovered this system when she went to a UU church in Colorado Springs a few months ago. She was impressed by the sound quality and delighted that several people could simultaneously utilize the system. When she told me about the system, we both fantasized how wonderful it would be to have such a system at First UU.

We researched the system and discovered that a mini capital campaign could make the dream a reality. Del and her son Scott provided the seed money to cover half the cost of the system; our former minister, Carolyn Brown, and I chipped in to cover the rest.

Our building was built to be accessible. By helping to address the invisible handicap of hearing loss, the new system is another step toward First UU becoming fully accessible.

- Corey Swertfager

## Dinners for Eight

Group Dinner Saturday, September 12, 2015 6:30 P.M.  
Home of Nancy Milner, 348 S. Brookside Dr. 67218  
RSVP: [nmilner142@aol.com](mailto:nmilner142@aol.com)

Dinners for Eight was organized for the purpose of bringing church members, new and old, together in an intimate home setting so people can become better acquainted. A small group meets at the home of a HOST for a potluck dinner - main dish, salad, vegetable, and dessert are assigned, about once a month. The next month, different HOST, different people. We will form the small monthly groups if we have enough participants - 24 people or more. It is fun!

- Nancy Milner

## Calling UU Writers

Poets, short fiction, non-fiction writers—I know you're out there, and I am one too. How does a monthly get-together sound to you to share what you are writing and talk about writing issues? Please let Vivien Minshull-Ford know if such a gathering appeals to you. Call her at 683-9295 or email at: [vminshull@yahoo.com](mailto:vminshull@yahoo.com).

-Vivien Minshull-Ford

## Labor Day Party

The UU Holiday Party Group cordially invites you to dine with us on Labor Day for great conversation and a rollicking game of Apples to Apples. Please bring a covered dish to share for dinner. Doors open at 5:30. Dinner at 6:00.

## Full Moon Celebration September 26

The Full Moon Celebration for September has been rescheduled to Saturday, September 26. Join us at 7:00 for **Mabon**, the mid-harvest festival of the autumn equinox. We are not having a full meal this time, but feel free to bring your favorite snack food to share.

- Anne Bailey

# September 2015

September 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 4:00p Private Event	2	3	4	5
6 No Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service <b>11:00a Children's RE</b>	7 Office Closed	8	9	10	11	12
13 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service <b>11:00a Children's RE</b>	14	15 4:00p Private Event	16	17	18 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	19
20 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service <b>11:00a Children's RE</b>	21	22 6:00p Zen Friends	23 1:00p Newsletter Mailing	24	25	26 10:00a Caring Committee
27 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service <b>11:00a Children's RE</b>	28	29 4:00p Private Event 6:00p Zen Friends	30			

## COUNTDOWN TO SUCCESS:



Our second annual family-friendly celebration Saturday, October 3, 10 am to 4 pm, is coming together in grand fashion and everyone who is working on it is bursting with excitement. Why? Too many reasons to enumerate in just one article, but we'll give a sampling.

First, our stellar line-up of sponsors: KPTS, KMUW, Koskra Center for Ayurveda, Bicycle X-Change Shops, DC Tree, and The Fresh Market.

Second, an amazing variety of exhibitors and vendors: Kind Kravings, a vegan food truck, will be onsite. We just got word that they turned down another event (which shall be nameless) to be with us. The popular "Bug Lady" will be with us from 10-11:30. There will be captivating booths, such as Eclectibles, Airy Fairy Creations and The Back Porch, which prove that crafts, decorative items, useful items, clothing, jewelry, upcycled and recycled items have charm as well as support the idea of environmental sustainability. Repurposed and recycled materials which inspired beautiful and intriguing art work will be featured.

Third, every festival features food and music. Ours will too. In addition to the vegan food truck and a bake sale, we will sell lunch, featuring a potato bar with all the trimmings. But wait, there's more! A raffle! Children's activities! Rickshaw rides! Books! Little River Trading Company! And the list could go on!

Success does not come by magic. Here's what LaRilla Combs wants you to know: You've heard the saying, "It takes a Village...." Well, it takes the First UU Church "Village of Volunteers" to have a successful EcoFest 2015! You're invited to join our "VILLAGE" OF VOLUNTEERS by signing the volunteer sheet at the EcoFest table in the gathering space at Church. Or contact LaRilla , [LaRillaCombs@aol.com](mailto:LaRillaCombs@aol.com) or phone at 733-2089.

Last year we estimated 500 attended. Here's a way each and every First UU member and friend can help increase that number. On September 6 Del Smith will have pre-printed postcard invitations to EcoFest 2015. Get some cards and stamps from Del and send to family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. There's the possibility of a reward for you and your invitee too. Postcards bought to the Festival will be entered into a drawing.

Yes, we're counting down the days to another successful celebration of living green and spreading the word among the community about First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita and our values and principles. Marcia Ellsworth and Vivien Minshull-Ford are co-chairs of the event. Admission is only \$1 and kids under 12 are admitted free.

## Caring Committee

The Caring Committee thought you'd like to know that Ermalee Skillman has returned to Presbyterian Manor after being hospitalized in early August. Ermalee is temporarily in PATH room #5 and her phone # is 670-5084. Or just call the main number 942-7456. Ermalee enjoys calls and visits but please call before going to visit.

Many members/friends completed the Caring Committee survey to indicate how they might help as needs arise. It's been VERY HELPFUL! If you are a new member/friend of the Church, we invite you to complete a survey. Please contact LaRilla at [LaRillaCombs@aol.com](mailto:LaRillaCombs@aol.com) or Jana at [jayrobo@aol.com](mailto:jayrobo@aol.com).

– LaRilla Combs

## Communications Team Update New Faces, Some Changes

Some changes are in the works at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita. Two new members of the Communications Team are taking on significant roles: Suzanne Miller and Andrew Beers. Continuing Team members will work to keep you informed: Rolando Gomez, coeditor with Suzanne for *In Touch*, Webmaster Jack Regehr and Del Smith. Others who contribute are Anita Culp, Office Manager, Jenny Findling (more about her role later), and Louis Goseland (Social Justice information posts on Facebook). Del Smith will continue as chair and contribute as noted in this article.

Change 1: ***In Touch***: This is Del Smith's last issue as content editor. Suzanne Miller will work with Rolando Gomez, beginning in October. (See "Introducing the *In Touch* Editorial Team.") The deadline will remain the same (third Wednesday of each month) and articles are to be sent to Suzanne at [millerbuchhorn@gmail.com](mailto:millerbuchhorn@gmail.com). Rolando will continue as lay-out editor. Of course, content is dependent upon timely contributions from many others, including Rev. Carter, committee chairs, staff, and event and activity planners.

Change 2: **Facebook**: The church now has two official Facebook addresses. The public page, First Unitarian Universalist of Wichita, can be read by the public at large and has been in existence for some time. The second address, First UU Wichita, is for church members only. It is a closed group and a place for members to share thoughts, joys and sorrows, ask questions, and generally experience loving community. It is private/closed, which means that only group members can post or see what others have posted. Del Smith and Jenny Findling are administrators of the group, which currently has more than 70 members. All members of First UU for whom we have current email addresses have been invited to join. If you are a member and would like to join, contact Del, [wichitadel@aol.com](mailto:wichitadel@aol.com).

Change 3: **Twitter**: Andrew Beers will be activating our somewhat dormant account. Watch for more information on this small step into contemporary cyberland.

Change 4: **Website**: This change is in the future. Jack Regehr is designing the new site to get people into the door of the church. It will have an improved blog and better event handling, with bio pics of church leadership. He is looking for ways to make taking payments easier.

Vivien Minshull-Ford and Corey Swertfager, President and President-Elect, as well as Membership Committee Co-chairs, Bonnie Till and Anne Bailey, met Saturday, August 15, with the Membership Team. The group evaluated current communication tools and discussed and approved the addition of the private/closed Facebook page.

Our ways of staying connected are varied, including this monthly newsletter; two Yahoo lists, WichitaExclusive (members only) and 1<sup>st</sup> UUWichita (open); Facebook (see Change 2 above); Twitter (watch for it!); Website, [www.firstuu.net](http://www.firstuu.net); Weekly Update from the office; announcements in the Sunday Orders of Service. Other ways may be added in the future, and you, dear readers, will be among the first to know!

- Del Smith

## Religious Exploration Corner

Denise Jackson-Simon, Director RE

As our summer RE program is winding down, I would like to give a big shout out to all the congregation members who gave of their time and talents with fun and interesting lessons and activities for our children and youth: Wendy Haynie-Cosby, Elaine Edens, Laura Roberson, Anne Bailey, Millie Wherritt, Vivien Minshull-Ford, David Brewer, Marcia Ellsworth, Judy Naillon, Charley and Melanie Jenney, and Mary Moore. Thank you so much for sharing yourself with our young people. The Sundays were enjoyed by all who attended!

We begin our new Sunday school year on September 13. Our enthusiastic, dedicated RE team has planned an exciting lineup of lessons and celebrations--which work much better when we have good attendance. Please try to join us as much as possible.

Our primary aged children will participate in a UU Tapestry of Faith curriculum, *Love Surrounds Us*. This program explores our seven Principles in the context of children's Beloved Community of family/home, school and neighborhood.

We are implementing a brand new curriculum for intermediate aged children called *Harry and UU* which is based on the *Harry Potter* series of books that immerse children in the idea that one can work to make the world better. Its main purpose is social action.

I am excited to offer our high school students an opportunity to meet and explore a new curriculum, *The Fifth Dimension*, which uses episodes of the *Twilight Zone* as the basis for in-depth discussions of a wide variety of topics focusing on social issues and political statements.

Parents, please continue to check your e-mail for notes from me, including a note at the beginning of each month, starting in September, with more details about our RE Sundays.

I am looking forward to another exciting, fun-filled, educational year with our RE program. Remember, it's much more fun when U are there!

## Southern Cluster in October

The Kansas and Kansas City area Unitarian Universalists will have a get-together over the weekend of October 16-18 at White Memorial Camp at Council Grove Lake. Information and reservations for the gathering can be found at [www.southernclusteruu.org](http://www.southernclusteruu.org). For many years the area UUs have gotten together once a year to work on common issues and to get to know one another. Workshops will be held on working together on social justice, restorative justice, and spiritual deepening.

Most people arrive Saturday morning and stay for the Sunday morning service, but there are many ways to schedule participation. Friday afternoon, October 16, the camp will be open for informal conversations and the appreciation of nature. Saturday morning, October 17, the organized gathering will begin with storytelling at 10:00 before the workshops begin at 11:00. Our minister, Rev. Carter, will lead the Saturday evening vespers and the Sunday morning worship service.

- Charles Merrifield

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## What do U know about UU?

We become involved in the Unitarian Universalist Church through various paths. Maybe you first came with a friend or were part of a UU community elsewhere. Perhaps you participated in an activity co-sponsored by UU of Wichita. You may be a long-time member or a newcomer.

This new column is intended to give you a bigger picture of the church – both internationally and locally, that you may find interesting. Many long-time members may know some of this information already, but just to be sure, we will begin at the beginning.

We will learn some of the church history (did you know why UU is a merger of the Unitarian Church and the Universalist Church?) and look at some influential and famous UUs (what U.S. presidents were UU members?) How has the church affected our local community and provided support for members?

The Unitarian Church was founded in Transylvania in eastern Europe when the first edict of religious toleration in history was declared in 1568 by the first and only Unitarian king, John Sigismund. He believed that people should be allowed to choose their religion, saying “We need not think alike to love alike.”

The term “Unitarian” meant that God was one being, not the three decreed by the Christian Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Unitarian congregations believed in following the teachings of Jesus, not worshipping him. For centuries afterward, many Unitarians were persecuted and harassed for this radical belief.

When Europeans came to North America, some Christians who doubted beliefs such as the Trinity and humanity’s eternal bondage to sin became Unitarians. In 1819 Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing delivered a sermon called Unitarian Christianity. Six years later the American Unitarian Association was organized in Boston, Mass.

Next time, we will look at the origins of the Universalist Church. -- Sherry L. Buettgenbach

Primary source: Unitarian Universalist Association

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President’s Report, continued from page 1

Anne Bailey, Del Smith, David Brewer, Connie Pace, and UU Friends Thom Scott and Liz Carson participated in a vigil at Hillside and 21st Street on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August, sponsored by the Wichita Coalition against Gun Violence, commemorating the lives of four people who had been shot in Wichita the previous week.

Chair David Brewer visited the Board of Trustees Meeting on August 19 to bring the names of UU members willing to serve as members of the Committee on Ministry. Lynda Jordan and Charles Merrifield were elected: Charles will chair the committee.

The Board of Trustees voted to donate \$250 to the October 11th Stop Violence against Women march/rally, sponsored by Trust Woman and Wichita Now.

Charles Merrifield updated and circulated the UU Southern Cluster Campout/Retreat (October 16 – 18) Website to 1<sup>st</sup> UU congregation members, as well as Unitarian Universalist churches and congregations in the South Cluster area.

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## From the Eclectic Readers Group

Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize winner (2013), *The Goldfinch*, is a sprawling novel. Major themes include friendship and art's black market related to a lad's unlikely possession of a Dutch masterwork called "The Goldfinch." Meet at 11:30 am, Friday, September 18. Bring a brown bag lunch.

We will be part of Wichita's Big Read in October. *Into the Beautiful North* by Luis Alberto Umea is a quest novel that tells the story of a young woman who sees things happening in her community that disappoint her. She takes the initiative to solve those problems. The kick-off of the Big Read is Saturday, September 19, 2:30-3:30 pm, at the Wichita art Museum. Books will be distributed there. Our discussion will be on Friday, October 16.

– Del Smith, 316-612-0826