



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

President's Report

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

October/November was all about outreach. Margi Ault-Duell was hired as our new Social Justice Coordinator and is now getting into her new role and getting to know the congregation. Charles Merrifield and I met with Director Danilo Balladares, Djuan Wash, and Dorlan Bales at the Sunflower Community Action offices to discuss the future of our relationship, especially with reference to establishing qualifying criteria for organizations receiving monthly collection plate money from 1st UU. It was planned that SCA would present a sermon at our church defining its activist role.

In a pulpit exchange, Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Topeka delivered her "Build the Beloved Community" sermon on Sunday 15, while Rev. David Carter gave his "Black Lives Matter" to the Topeka congregation. The plan, set in motion by Rev. Oglesby-Dunegan at the Sunflower Cluster Camp in October, to meet for a state-wide UU social action planning meeting in Topeka on February 6 is gathering momentum, especially now that Margi Ault-Duell has joined us.

The Board has unanimously voted to reinstate the Minister's discretionary fund. As the FY 2015-16 budget does not have a line item for this purpose, the money collected during the December 13 service will be the used to re-establish the fund. In the past, First UU ministers have had a budgeted amount of money at their disposal for the purpose of giving sums of money to members or friends who may in times of need require financial assistance. If you are unable to attend church on December 13, please send

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HELP WANTED

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

We need a **music committee to work with** Carol Denning to present new, diverse musical departures for our services and other events. If you are interested, please contact Vivien Minshull-Ford at 683-9295, vminshull@yahoo.com, or Rev. David Carter at 259-0842, minister@firstuu.net. In addition, new musical "departures" means having a **choir, so if you like to sing** and have singing and/or choir experience, please contact Vivien or David as above. Your church needs you!

Moreover, we need **assistance with the Food Bank** (you can join our committee). Since it is quite a job packing up and loading donations into a car and often older committee members or people with bad backs are left with the task, frankly, **we could use some younger help**. We do not have to make a delivery every week, and often there is not a huge load, nor does it take a long time to do. It just requires taping together Food Bank boxes, filling, and some lifting. Please call me (as above), Jana Rambo at 992-5528, or Marcia Ellsworth at 688-5352, or look for us at church if you would like to help.

And finally, Sunday's coffee does not start itself or clean up after itself. Often the same person or people take care of having the morning brew ready by 10:30, and there may be other good people who arrive early who wouldn't mind helping out. Actually it is the clean-up part most in need of assistance. This involves collecting cups and plates, and loading the dishwasher. **There will be a sign up clipboard for Sunday coffee duty** laid out on the table at the church entrance from the first of the month (Lessons in using the scary dishwasher or the coffee maker, useful skills, will be given free of charge!)

From the Treasurer

- Anne Bailey

We are in somewhat better shape financially this month. There is still time to make a tax deductible gift to the Church before the end of 2015. It would be much appreciated.

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.

Joys and Sorrows

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

From Sunday, 6 December, during the services there will be no more open microphone sessions. Any member of the congregation who has an extraordinary concern or event to share may ask a greeter for a card before the service, write it on the card, and hand it to the minister or service leader who will use his or her discretion in sharing it with the congregation. At this time, any member of the congregation may come up to place a stone silently in the water-filled chalice. This decision comes from the leadership of the church and input from the congregation.

Fire in UU Church in West Virginia

An urgent plea from former First UU member Heidi Paugh, who is now a Vice President of the Unitarian Fellowship of Huntington, West Virginia: "The church experienced a fire on September 5, 2015, and we are working very hard to get our small church back up and running. We have worked with the UUA to get a Faithify account going to assist us. Below is our account; I would like to ask that you all read about our situation and if it resonates with you, please assist if you can." This project will only be funded if at least \$8,000 is pledged by December 2, 2015.

<http://www.faithify.org/projects/rebuilding-and-outreach-in-appalachia/>

New Social Action Coordinator

- Margi Ault-Duell

Hi! My name is Margi (that's pronounced with a hard "g" like in Margaret). I'm the new Social Action Coordinator for First UU! I'm really looking forward to getting to know you all better and engaging with you in social action for the transformation of our world. I'd love to hear your ideas for how the congregation can practice acts of compassion and acts of justice in our world.

Here are some ways you can contact me:

Call/text me: [520-396-0633](tel:520-396-0633)

Email: socialaction@firstuu.net

Find me on FaceBook (Margi Ault-Duell) and Instagram (@lalunaestuya)

Visit me at the church on Wednesdays from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Thanks for Service and Welcome to New Staff

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

Tom Moore and Amanda Diggs

Amanda Diggs is taking over as custodian from Tom Moore, who is retiring because of health issues. Amanda, daughter of Mike and Marsha Diggs, has not only been a member of the congregation for years, but has done the job before and is looking forward to making the transition with Tom Moore's assistance.

Custodian duties, which we tend to take for granted as they take place when we're not present, include not just cleaning, but also vital maintenance of all kinds of equipment and knowing when outside assistance is needed. Tom Moore, who has developed an expert cleaning routine using environmentally friendly and money-saving cleaners, knows exactly what to do when a holiday turkey being lifted out of the oven in a flimsy aluminum pan wobbles and hot fat spills between the two glass panels of the kitchen oven. Tom hopes that members of the congregation will do what they can to help on occasion: he was once driving to Hays on vacation when he received a phone call from someone at church saying one of the toilets was blocked and could he come and fix it immediately! Everyone needs to know where the plunger is and how to work the dishwasher. In other words, we should never underestimate the value of our custodian.

Welcome, Amanda—and Tom, warm thanks for all the much appreciated work you have been doing for us behind the scenes to keep 1st UU clean and tidy. I hope we'll be seeing you as a sitting-on-a-seat member of the congregation, keeping us all on our toes over environmental issues.

Jenny Bowen and Carol Denning

Jenny Bowen, our multi-talented pianist, is having to give up her Sunday service accompanist job to devote her time to family and other music commitments. Jenny and Doug Clayton will still be bringing Liana to church on Sunday, and we hope Jenny will occasionally play for us, if not during the service, as violinist in the amazingly talented IC Trio. Thank you, Jenny, for all your wonderful playing, which we all have appreciated.

Carol Denning, who has often played fill-in, has joined us as service accompanist for three Sundays a month. Carol has had a long and rich career as accompanist, teacher, and all-round performer. As she finished her music degree at Wichita State University, she studied with Betty Welsbacher, Frances Wallingford, and Eunice Boardman. After graduation she took a teaching position at Inman, where she taught elementary music for two years, followed by a spell as choir director and organist at a church in Hutchinson.

Her most rewarding and most demanding teaching job was at Dodge-Edison Elementary in 1995 where a new experimental company, the Edison Project, was collaborating with school districts to bring a fresh approach to educating children. Since 2003, Carol has had a private piano teaching practice. Over the years she has performed solo piano in dinner clubs and worked with various bands, including her own group, the Toltecs, now disbanded but close friends still. Their music included blues, ballads, and "some rock and roll." As an all-round musician who can play in many idioms, Carol has a lot of ideas that she thinks will bring "a spirited musical atmosphere into the service."

Welcome aboard, Carol. We are really looking forward to working with you.

President's Report, continued

your check to the church (note that the money is for the Minister's Discretionary

Fund). The need is great and your generosity will warm your soul.

The fundraiser European tea for the partner church in Transylvania, organized by Debbie Wadman, Nancy Milner, Marcia Ellsworth, Bonnie Till, Anne Bailey, and other members of the congregation raised almost \$400 for the Homorod Szentpal congregation.

Charles Merrifield, Kent Rowe, and I joined a Climate Justice Wichita: 350.org meeting on November 7, at Great Plains Nature Center, to plan the Rally for Solar, timed with Climate Summit Talks in Paris on November 28.

Welcome, New Members!

Eric Ford and Kimberly Ford: We are Eric and Kimberly Ford; we have five kids between us – Eric has three from his first marriage, and Kim has two from her first marriage; we have been married just over a year as of October. We are from the Wichita area, and we came to First UU because we needed a place that would accept us both – Kim was raised Christian and is converting to Christo-Paganism, and Eric is Pagan. First UU is a place we can go together and grow and learn together. We love it!

Connie Pace: I am a lifelong spiritual seeker and student of the human community. I earnestly desire that all inhabitants of Mother Earth live in better relationships. My spirituality is an integrated part of my study and service. As a dedicated professional, I strive to bring the very best to each task I encounter. At this point in my service, I am serving the two extremes of the life cycle: youngers and elders, as Grandma and Personal Assistant.

As are the others living with me on Turtle Island, we are all walking miracles. My days begin with my prayerful gratitude to Divine Creator, and my Intention to experience health, abundant provision, and joy.

My spiritual path has included several turns, for all of which I am grateful. I am so much the richer for each. Recently, I heard a great message about the power of "Yes," and my intention is that my perspective carries that Best and Highest truth forward to others. And so it is.

Caring Committee Meeting

- Jana Rambo

The Caring Committee will not meet the fourth Saturday of November or December due to the holidays. Instead, we will meet Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m. at the church, to discuss whatever business needs to be addressed.

About Those Bulletin Boards

- Del Smith

Some changes are happening with the church's bulletin boards.

The one outside the office is undergoing a total revamping, with four separate sections, two of which are new features. In the first section, photos of current activities will remain, in a smaller version. In the second section, photos of our leaders will be posted, as available. The third section, a new feature, will highlight a church committee, with the Committee on Ministry being the first. The fourth section, also new, is called "Of Personal Note." This can be considered our own "classified ad" space where First UU members can post business cards to promote a business or activity (such as an art show) or seek employment. Members only, please. And space considerations only allow small size announcements (no 8 1/2 x 11 posters). Larger posters can go on the information table. A time limit on posting may be required. This board is maintained by the Communications Team.

The bulletin board that was in the hallway has been moved to the Gathering Space to give it greater visibility. This board is maintained by Anita Culp, office manager. See it for announcements of community events which will be of interest to our members and friends.

December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	2 7:00p Committee on Ministry	3	4	5 3:00p Bhakti Society
6 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	7	8 6:00p Zen Friends	9 7:00p Worship Committee	10	11	12 10:00a Caring Committee 3:00p Bhakti Society 5:30p Ethical Eating Vegan Holiday Potluck
13 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Leadership Council	14	15 6:00p Zen Friends	16 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	17	18 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	19 3:00p Bhakti Society
20 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Holiday Dinner	21	22 6:00p Zen Friends	23 12:00p Membership Committee 3:00p Newsletter Mailing	24 7:00p Christmas Eve Service	25 Office Closed 12:00p Christmas Meal	26 7:00p Full Moon Celebration
27 11:00a Worship Service	28	29 6:00p Zen Friends	30	31 7:00p New Year's Eve Party		

Our Covenant: A Living Document

- Del Smith

Last month this column focused on the Safety Covenant (courteous, sincere, and thoughtful consideration for others). The Covenant includes: “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.” More than one person responded to note that an emotionally safe environment is critical.

We are heading into the holidays, which can be emotionally fraught for some. Family dinners and worship services with family in another denomination—custom and tradition can be comforting or can be challenging. Or maybe the stressor is having no family nearby or estrangement from family. The list goes on: Friends’ traditional egg nog parties! Office gift exchanges! Athletic events! Politics! New Year’s resolutions! Expectations unmet! Travel plans going awry! Oh my!

Suzanne Miller, noting that she has been happy at First UU since joining this year, wrote, “The idea of an emotionally safe church shifts my paradigm. So the goal is not to enforce rules but to protect emotions? Fifty years of my former church life was a pacifist minefield of moral and cultural rules: crippling emotional injuries from criticism, gossip, disapproval, and shunning (emotional weapons) followed transgressions. In that dangerous atmosphere, cultivation of emotional safety happened underground—whispers of encouragement, supportive notes, and secret confessions of understanding. Accepting imperfection was as dangerous as being imperfect. I have internalized some of these censorious attitudes, but when I have energy, I fight to keep myself open to seeing past my first emotional reactions to both myself and others. Sometimes the whirlpool still pulls me down; sometimes I am saved as the waters calm. In general, the less I want to hurt myself, the less I want to hurt others. It feels helpful to know others with similar goals.”

Life-long member David Brewer sees our Covenant of Healthy Relations as imperative: “Being open and honest and gentle with our comments to other people is essential for having right relations. Sometimes it is difficult to do this, but caring for one another is our highest calling.” David’s acknowledgement that doing the right thing is not always easy reminds us that the preface to our Covenant of Healthy Relations states that we are promising to “*strive* to support each other....”

Oliver Wendell Holmes put it this way: “I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.” When we take time to “Stop, Look, Read” the Covenant at the front entry, we are reminded that First UU congregants are committed to continue moving in the direction of healthy relations.

Minister's Musings

- Rev. David Carter

Hopeful Response to Abuse of Power

Predicated on spiritual knowledge, I recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person. And, based on spiritual experience, I am hopeful of seeing an increase of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations *even when I see evidence of wickedness in high and low places.*

On the evening of November 4, a blatant injustice was committed in Austin, Texas. Details of the outrage were captured on video by one courageous bystander (see link below). In flagrant violation of international human rights standards, Austin police brutalized and then arrested three student-aged Americans – two for “jaywalking,” and a third, a young woman, for pleading with the attackers to stop beating the two young men they’d already savagely battered who lay on the ground traumatized and handcuffed. That night, democracy and the right to due process were under siege.

When laws are broken, restorative practices are needed to reform the lawbreakers and to restore health and safety for all in the interdependent web of all existences. *And that is especially so when the lawbreakers are supposed agents of law enforcement!*

The police brutality that night was excessive! Still, in addition to indignation, I feel something else. I feel hope. That hope is the result of decades of disciplined spiritual practices. The fruit of my spiritual work is that I have acquired some small insight into cosmos vs. chaos, some small appreciation of the operation of the subtle laws of karma. And, a little, I have been equipped to fathom great mysteries: death is not the end; justice cannot be mocked without harm enveloping the very ones who trample its grace; love conquers hatred.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his famous essay “Compensation,” according to subtle but discernible laws of nature, there is inexorable redress awaiting those who abuse power. Karmic redress awaits any and all miscreants, including, to wit, those who violently attack unarmed youngsters for “jaywalking,” the shameless apologists and defenders of the “new centurions,” and the highly placed “leaders of society” who hide behind the spurious rhetoric of “the war against drugs” and equally spurious claims of securing “law and order.”

So, while I engage in vigorous spiritual welfare work to counter injustice, I am hopeful. Why? It is because spiritual witness has led me to become “confident in the victory of good over evil.” Mine is the spiritual conviction popularized by Bob Marley (Berhane Selassie) in his brilliant anthem, “War,” quoting H.I.M. Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari Makonnen Woldemikael). And, confident that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but... bends towards justice,” I remain hopeful, faithful, and grateful, knowing full well that the genuine protectors of Truth and Beauty, who are invincible, are wide awake and ever active.

<https://photographyisnotacrime.com/2015/11/austin-police-beat-up-men-for-jaywalking-in-texas/>

New Year's Eve Party

The UU Holiday Party Group invites you to celebrate “New Year's Eve with Cheese, Chocolate and Cheer!” on Thursday, December 31, 2015, from 7-10 p.m. at the First UU Church. Bring your favorite cheese, chocolate or cheer, and we will play games and ring out the old year in style!

Snow Days

- Anita Culp

December weather in Kansas means the possibility of snow and ice. When the weather is bad, the board president makes the decision on canceling Sunday services based on the safety of congregants to be out driving and on the weather forecast for Saturday night. 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, ListServe, and Twitter, and three 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. The church telephone message will also announce the closing. If you do not 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 two 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.

Homorod Szentpal Thank You Notes

Debbie Wadman would like to thank everyone who helped with the International Tea fundraiser for the Partner Church on November 7. Thanks also to all participants who said they had a great time visiting and tasting many delicious desserts. We were able to take in \$390 for the village church of Homorod Szentpal, Transylvania, which has already been transferred to the minister, Rev. Csaba Todor. He sends greetings from his congregation and a big thank you for our efforts!

First UU T-Shirt

The First UU T-shirt has been restocked and is once again available for purchase. This is the same beautiful green shirt that was available during EcoFest. On the front upper left side are the words "First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita" and on the back is Gandhi's quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." The shirt costs \$12 and comes in sizes from small to 3X. Interested? You can purchase the shirt at First UU or contact Bonnie Till at 644-4043 or bect@cox.net.

7th Annual Vegan Holiday Potluck

Join us for the Ethical Eating Committee's 7th annual vegan holiday potluck dinner (in conjunction with the Veg and AR Meetup groups) on Saturday, December 12. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and we'll plan to eat at 6.

This potluck is very informal and always lots of fun. It is a community event, and everyone is welcome. The only stipulation (of course) is that all dishes brought be vegan—no meat (or meat broth), eggs, dairy or honey. The holiday potluck is a little more special than our regular potlucks—there may even be some door prizes. This is a great opportunity to enjoy some delicious food and visit with some wonderful people. Hope to see you there!

Contact Dianne Waltner with any questions—946-1115 or dwaltner@mac.com

Bhakti Society Meetings

The Bhakti Society (formerly First UUs for Vedic Awareness) are now meeting each Saturday at 3 p.m. at the church.

RE Corner

- Denise Jackson-Simon
Religious Exploration Director

Happy Holiday time. We will continue this month with our scheduled lessons for the most part. On Sunday, December 20, we will take a break from the curriculums and bring all the kids together for a community service project and holiday celebration.

It's been great to see so many with regular attendance, and it's always a joy to have visitors. Remember, it's much more fun when you are there.

Card Shower: Skillman's 90th Birthday

- LaRilla Combs

The Caring Committee is the arm of the church that acknowledges events in our members' and friends lives such as illness, surgeries, and bereavements. We also acknowledge celebratory events such as birthdays, weddings, births and graduations.

Thought you'd like to know: **Ermalee Skillman will celebrate her 90th birthday on Monday, November 30.** Let's help make her birthday special with a card shower. Her address is Long Term Care #63, Presbyterian Manor, 4700 W. 13th Street, Wichita, KS 67212. Ermalee also enjoys calls and visits, but call ahead to schedule your visit.

What touches one of us affects us all. In caring for one another we are cared for.

When the Covenant Is Not Enough

- Committee on Ministry

Conflict is a part of life, it just happens. If we are part of any group, whether it is homogenous or diverse, we can expect conflict to occur. As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace diversity and support the individual spiritual journey, but often struggle with how to manage diverse opinions. Over a year ago, a church committee put together the Covenant of Healthy Relations to help us deal with our disagreements and conflicts. What happens, however, when our conflicts get out of hand and threaten our relationships with others?

Recently, after reviewing policies from other UU churches, the Committee on Ministry (COM) created a Conflict Resolution Policy for those times when the covenant is not enough. The Conflict Resolution Policy assumes that most conflicts can and will be resolved by individuals and groups following the 1st Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita Covenant of Healthy Relations and our Unitarian Universalist Principles.

When this doesn't happen, however, this policy is a tool for members in conflict to refer to for support and guidance in working out differences. The purpose of the policy is to foster and maintain healthy relationships within the congregation. It is a safety net and process for resolving conflict that uses education, facilitation and training. It is facilitated by the Committee on Right Relations, a subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry. This committee has been formed to help members unable to resolve issues with other members find a safe and satisfying resolution that meets the needs of both parties using mediation and/or appropriate outside resources.

If you are interested in reading the guide in full, it can be found on our website under Church Governance, or you can get a copy from the church secretary or any member of the COM. When the need arises to get support for a conflict, please notify someone from the COM in person or in writing to start the process. Members of the COM will respect your privacy and consider your concerns confidential.

Members of the Committee on Ministry include Rev. David Carter, Charles Merrifield (chair), LaRilla Combs, Marcia Ellsworth, Linda Jordan, Lara Pollack, and Doug Wilson.

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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From Eclectic Readers Group

December 18, 11:30 am: *The Rosie Project*, by Graeme Simsion (2013) will "restore our optimism in the power of human connection" according to some reviewers. Don Tillman, the central character is a professor of genetics who has decided it's time he found a wife, and so designs a Wife Project to find his perfect partner – a sixteen-page, scientifically valid survey to filter out the drinkers, the smokers, the late arrivers. Rosie Jarman is all of those things and is ruled out as a wife candidate. Tillman, a DNA expert, helps her find her biological father. Moral of the story? You don't find love, it finds you.

The book promises to be lively and entertaining. All are welcome to join us for a brown bag lunch and conversation about Simsion's debut novel.

Full Moon Celebration

After all the Christmas festivities are over, please join us to celebrate the Full Moon on Saturday, December 26, beginning at 7 p.m. You are encouraged to bring drums or other rhythm instruments and your best singing voice. Please call the church office, 684-3481, if you have questions.