



# In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

## President's Report

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

Building on work begun by Louis Goseland, Margi Ault-Duell, our social action coordinator, and committee worked out a schedule and procedure for members of the congregation to submit candidates for receiving the plate from July 2016, and we're already receiving applications which will reference one of the UUA Congregational Study/ Action Issues: racial justice, climate justice, corruption of our democracy, gun violence, escalating inequality, and reproductive freedom.

In November, the Board of Trustees, at the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, church leadership, and some of the congregation, voted to remove the open microphone Joys and Sorrows portion of the service. Following the last service in November, Corey Swertfager held a question and answer session with the congregation, explaining that those members who value the option of speaking to the congregation would now be able to use the private Facebook site and/or submit a card with their joy or concern to the service leader.

The last Sunday plate collection designated for the minister's discretionary fund amounted to a generous \$340. On Monday, 14 December, David Carter was able to request \$200 to help a member of the congregation.

Amanda Diggs found that she could not manage the custodian job with her part-time job and WSU degree work. David Carter recommended congregant Durell Gilmore, who began work Thursday,

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## Leadership Retreat

– Saturday, 5 December

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

The Board of Trustees focused attention on the recommendations of Michael Durall, the UUA consultant, which were adopted by the church administration; some recommendations have yet to be applied.

The Board members are devising a survey to find who our congregants are, why they come to church, and what the church can do for them. At the same time, we are defining whom we want to attract to the church: diverse people, millennials, and the "unchurched." We also need young congregants for participation and leadership.

First UU is involved in many outreach activities, especially social action, which are putting the church out in the community, but members of the congregation need to do more. David Carter explained how his call to ministry is based on moving "outside the box." In sermons, he deals with fundamental existential issues: congregants should expect to find themselves outside their comfort zone and, he hopes, will strive to meet him spiritually at least half way in their understanding. His core aim is to work towards tolerance, to maximize the appeal of a spiritual message while addressing issues of diversity.

In his April 2015 report, Michael Durall suggested that members of the First UU congregation visit other churches and experience other practices of worship for fresh

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# 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.

## Leadership Retreat - continued

perspectives on spirituality. In this spirit, the Board of Trustees plans to invite an Islamic group to 1st UU for a question and answer session on the Muslim faith and an opportunity to find out what we can do to help ameliorate the current climate of Islamophobia.

Much of the retreat discussion centered on the church mission and vision (on the front of the Order of Service). The aim is to have a much shorter statement that articulates what our church is about. Michael Durall stressed that this should not be “just an exercise of words but a mindful examination and inclusive statement of our identity and goals.” The Board of Trustees and church leadership challenge members of the congregation to write the statement in one or two sentences. Please email me if you can try your hand at this: [vminshull@yahoo.com](mailto:vminshull@yahoo.com).

## Full Moon Celebrations

We will be gathering on Saturday, January 23, the first full moon of 2016, at 7 p.m. to celebrate our connection with nature. In November, we did some beading. In December, we sang pagan versions of Christmas carols. A variety of activities are being planned for 2016. All are welcome – bring drums, your singing voice, and dancing shoes. We may surprise you. Call the church office, 684-3481, for further details.

## Corporal Punishment of Children

- Masud Chand

Not too long ago, it was considered okay to whip soldiers and sailors. After all, how else would officers keep discipline? Not too long ago, it was okay for masters to whip their slaves. After all, how else could masters keep discipline and order in society? Not too long ago, it was considered okay for husbands to lovingly beat their wives. After all, how else could order be maintained at home? Wasn't disobedience a crime and sin that needed physical chastisement? Today, we use these same arguments when we talk about the need to “spank,” “smack,” “box,” “belt,” or “paddle” children. After all, if done lovingly, to correct or guide, how could it be wrong?

The evidence is stark. Spanking has been linked to a range of physical and mental health problems among children. It is also highly correlated with lower levels of intellectual performance, higher levels of aggression, violence, drug use, spousal abuse, and engaging in criminal activity in the future. Almost every medical body has come out strongly against it. Even in ensuring instant compliance, it is a practice that fails – studies show that once physical

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## Condolences and Update

- LaRilla Combs, Caring Committee

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.

We extend our condolences to these families:

Lara and Danny Pollock and children Miranda, Brett and Tiger on the passing of Lara's father, **Bob Crosby**. Bob passed away Friday, November 20, from pneumonia due to chronic aspiration. There will be a memorial service on Saturday, January 9, at 10:00 a.m. at the First UU Church. Bob Crosby was deeply concerned about the effects of global warming and the need for utilizing renewable energy resources. For this reason, in lieu of flowers please send memorials to the First UU Solar Energy Project.

Corey Swertfager and Annie Welsbacher on the passing of Corey's dad, **Richard Swertfager**, who, after a long illness died Wednesday, December 9. Richard's family and hospice caregivers were at his side. Corey and Annie held a memorial open house Saturday, December 19.

Maggi Joseph and Lucy Norton on the passing of Maggi's brother **David Brewer** who died Saturday, December 12, after a short but valiant struggle with cancer. David crossed over surrounded by family and friends who loved him deeply – husband TJ, sister Maggi, and a few very close friends. Maggie writes, "What is remembered lives." The memorial service for David will be in February. Maggi Joseph and Lucy Norton would appreciate cards of sympathy and healing thoughts and prayers as they grieve. Their address is 104 Sunnyland Drive, San Antonio, TX 78228.

We also thought you'd like to know that Ermalee Skillman has returned to Long Term Care at Presbyterian Manor.

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

### *Corporal Punishment, continued*

threat is gone, compliance is actually *lower* than with nonviolent methods. All of this does not include the thousands of children spanked who end up in ERs, the tens if not hundreds who are beaten close to death, and the millions who will suffer lasting mental and emotional damage. In 2008, 1700 children died of physical abuse: for those who want to distinguish spanking from abuse, consider the fact that 85% of all parents who spank acknowledge that they have spanked in anger sometimes. Yet we as a nation continue to spank as if it were a god given right!

Physical punishment is so vile that we have done away with it even for criminals. Convicted murderers cannot be physically "disciplined." Even police with rights to use necessary physical force are required to stop physical violence once suspects stop resisting. Yet with our most vulnerable and defenseless citizens, we let them be spanked as if their rights and dignities are non-existent!

It is time that we mobilize to convince ourselves and our fellow citizens to end this barbaric practice. This will be challenging. Studies reveal that about 70 % of U.S. adults support spanking. However, there are silver linings. First, the prevalence of spanking, and its social acceptance in the U.S., has seen a gradual decline over the last five decades. Second,

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*President's Report, continued*

10 December. Both Tom Moore and Amanda Diggs helped out until Durell took over.

Since the November request for help with coffee clean up and the Food Bank, we have received lots of volunteers. The Children's Religious Education Harry Potter team have been making scarves and packing food bank boxes with Lynn and Thong Dy Youthilak, along with Landen and Emma Schmidt. Julie Burkhart, her daughter Olivia, and Masud Chand have volunteered. With the Operation Holiday Tree collecting a large amount of warm winter wear and with other holiday activities, there will be plenty of tasks to go round, and we are really grateful to all who volunteered. We are also beefing up our Sunday greeters, and would like to acknowledge the great job the Alex and Spencer Beers are doing handing out the service programs.

November/December brought some notable service speakers: in a pulpit exchange, the Rev. Jill Jarvis from the Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence talked on "What We Cannot Do Alone" on 6 December. Thomas Viktus addressed the congregation on "The ABC's of LGBT (Qip2sAA)" on 13 December, and on the 20<sup>th</sup> David Carter was back in the pulpit with "The Work of Christmas."

The church and the community are profoundly saddened by the death of David Brewer, on 7 December, beloved life-long member of 1<sup>st</sup> UU; our deepest sympathy goes to David's husband T.J. and to members of David's family. Our thoughts are also with Greta Crosby and Lara Pollock and family, following the death of Bob Crosby; Corey Swertfager's father Richard died on 9 December; Corey and Annie held an informal memorial open house on Saturday, 19 December.

## Our Covenant: A Living Document

- Del Smith

Transparency – the Covenant highlighted this month – is defined as "open and candid decision making with free access to all." There is evidence that members of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita endeavor to apply this covenant as a routine practice.

Corey Swertfager, president-elect, expands upon the definition of transparency: "I believe that inclusivity is what the transparency section of our Covenant of Healthy Relations is ultimately striving for. Inclusivity invites people in. It goes beyond merely being visible; it encompasses the larger community. However, transparency could be deemed as being reactionary, doing something we 'ought to do' to avoid trouble, a bit of 'cloak and dagger' even."

Corey adds, "How can we strive for

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## Coming in January!!

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

The L.E.D. lights will be installed in the sanctuary, and the UU Writers group will be launched. Watch for further details!

## Folk Dancers Return

- Anita Culp

The Grapevine International Folk Dancers are returning to First Unitarian Universalist Church from 5 to 7 p.m. on Sunday, January 10. The group began in 1975; UU was their home base for many years, and they are considering making it so again. They enjoy dances from around the world – Israel, Greece, Bolivia, Mexico, and many other countries.

All are welcome to dance with the group. There is no need to bring a partner, but the more the merrier. This is a family event, so children are also welcome with parents. For more information, call Joyce Gedraitis, 683-1122.

*Truly wonderful, the mind of a child is.*

# January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Office Closed	2
3 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	4	5 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	6 7:00p Committee on Ministry	7	8 2:00p Membership Committee	9 10:00a Bob Crosby Memorial 3:00p Bhakti Society
10 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Leadership Council 5:00p Grapevine Dancers	11	12 6:00p Zen Friends	13 7:00p Worship Committee	14	15 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	16 3:00p Bhakti Society
17 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE	18	19 6:00p Zen Friends	20 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	21	22	23 10:00a Caring Committee 3:00p Bhakti Society 7:00p Full Moon Celebration
24 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Midyear Cong Mtg 3:00p Chamber Music Con.	25	26 6:00p Zen Friends	27 3:00p Newsletter Mailing	28	29	30 3:00p Bhakti Society
31 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE						

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## Book Review: *Who Pays?*

- Suzanne Miller

Saneta deVuono-powell, Chris Schweidler, Alicia Walters, and Azadeh Zohrabi. *Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families*. Oakland, CA: Ella Baker Center, Forward Together, Research Action Design, 2015. 61 pages.

Community researchers from twenty research partner organizations, including First UU member Durell Gilmore, for Sunflower Community Action, gathered information from focus groups, surveys, and interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of formerly incarcerated individuals, and employers across the country. The writers of the report analyzed this research and integrated it with a broad assessment of published research – the 113 endnotes are interesting reading. Statistics, charts, graphics, and personal quotes and stories enhance the message. While the overall approach is scientific and scholarly, the writing is clear, accessible, and persuasive.

*Who Pays?* values restorative rather than punitive justice, which is consistent with its “transformative research agenda” which honors the experiences, perspectives, and recommendations “of those who are directly impacted by the criminal justice system and its many consequences” (51).

I learned that many families go into debt to pay fees related to imprisonment of a family member. I learned that formerly incarcerated people and their families face barriers to public benefits, health care, housing, education, employment, and fair political representation. I learned that incarceration of a family member can impact family relationships for generations. I learned that families and communities most impacted are those with the least power and fewest protections in our society. I learned that some policies work to keep it that way and that some policies are beginning to work to help these families and communities succeed.

Thanks to Durell Gilmore, *Who Pays?* is available in our church library. You can also read it online at <http://ellabakercenter.org/sites/default/files/download/who-pays.pdf>. A related site lists suggested follow-up actions and discussion questions--<http://ellabakercenter.org/who-pays-the-true-cost-of-incarceration-on-families>--as well as an impressive list of media hits including this *New York Times* article: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/16/us/report-details-economic-hardships-for-inmate-families.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/16/us/report-details-economic-hardships-for-inmate-families.html?_r=2).

To learn more about our involvement with this issue, review the social justice report on our website: <http://www.firstuu.net/social-justice/mass-incarceration/>. *Who Pays?* is an important encouragement and resource for this ongoing work.

## Minister's Musings

- Rev. David Carter

### Why Do We Misname Them?

Why do we misname them? We say "terrorists." But isn't there a better word?

Cowards. People who shoot down unarmed, defenseless, noncombatants – concert goers, shoppers in the mall, children in school – in surprise attack mode, are cowards.

Failing to name cowards properly wastes a great opportunity because, while to a perverse few it may seem glamorous to be known as a "terrorist," no one wants to be known as a coward. Must we, by our silence, buy into an absurd theater produced by players pathologically driven to destroy the world?

I think not. The truth is self-evident. The killings are stark, unmitigated failures to come to the standard of human being. And, proverbially, precise language possesses great power: "Name it to tame it."

But, everywhere, there is confusion about what it means to be powerful. The firefighters and police who sacrificed their lives – for the wounded strangers of all colors and creeds who lay maimed and dying at ground zero – were powerful. But, the coward's "show of strength" – the flying of death planes to incinerate the towers – was radical weakness.

Language with integrity can "hold up the mirror." By portraying acts of cowardice as cowardice, wordsmiths "name it to tame it." In the hideous reflection the mirror brings to light, the deluded "emperors" will be startled and might be fortunate enough to see themselves – naked of love, naked of beauty, naked of human being – and waken from the nightmare they dream upon the world.

It's worth a try. Let's. Of course there are a host of restorative practices needed for the transformation all people of conscience stand for, against hatred and for love. But calling a coward a coward, is one of them. Let's.

### Jaw-Dropping, Sock-Knocking Chamber Music Concert

- Carol Neighbor

Some of Wichita's foremost classical musicians will head the "knock the socks off" musical program at 3 p.m. on Sunday, January 24, at First Unitarian Universalist Church.

Evgeny Zvonnikov, assistant concert master of the Wichita Symphony and WSU violin instructor, will join Wichita Symphony cellist Quinn Lake to perform Zoltan Kodaly's "Duo for Violin and Cello." When Zvonnikov and Lake played this piece at the 2014 KNOB Festival, the *F5* newspaper reported that "by the middle of the performance many jaws were dropped and stayed there until the piece was over. They knocked the socks off audience members."

Also, Zvonnikov along with Leonid Shukaev and Julie Bees will play Beethoven's "Trio in B-flat Major, Opus 11." Shukaev is the cello professor at WSU and serves as principal cellist in the Wichita Symphony. Bees, a piano professor at WSU, is a respected recitalist.

Plan to attend this afternoon of beautiful chamber music. There will be an intermission reception. A donation of \$10 is suggested.

## New to First UU

- Margi Ault-Duell

I've been enjoying my first month on staff as the Social Action Coordinator at First UU! I want to share a bit more about myself since I'm new to the First UU community.

I grew up in northwestern Kansas (Goodland, Hays, and Stockton) as the daughter of two United Methodist pastors. I found my way to seminary, where my nerdy heart thrived on studying things that matter to my lived experiences, like post-colonial theory, womanist/feminist/mujerista histories, queer theory, and process theology. Be warned – I can talk for days about the deeply transformative power of naming our shared experiences in both story and theory.

I then moved to the borderlands of southern Arizona, where I witnessed people committing incredible acts of courage in an environment of fear and hostility. In Tucson, I worked as the education director for a small non-profit organization called BorderLinks, using experiential learning methods to engage people from across the U.S. about the border and immigration issues.

I moved to Wichita in 2014 to be closer to my family after 13 years of living and growing in other places. I quickly found other folks here who are working to transform our community, and I keep meeting more passionate people in Wichita who are committed to justice. I am actively involved with the ICT-Army of Artists and The Seed House ~ Casa de la Semilla, and I serve as a board member of SoCe Life.

I'm looking forward to getting to know you better and I appreciate the many warm welcomes I've received from the First UU congregation!

*Our Covenant, continued*

inclusivity? Invitation, communication, dedication. All members and friends of First UU are invited to attend board and leadership council meetings, as well as various committee and congregational meetings. We continue to develop more skillful ways of communicating processes, decisions, and actions."

What are some of the ways we work toward effectively communicating processes, decisions, and actions? For starters, this newsletter carries a monthly report from the president about actions taken by the board. Our financial state is also reported here. Minutes of board meetings are kept in a notebook in the library, available to all.

Open mic forums regarding changes in selecting Share the Plate recipients and in sharing Joys and Sorrows are prime examples of openly sharing information and gathering feedback. More individuals are making use of the members-only Facebook Group to state opinions, provide information, and share personal Joys and Sorrows.

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## Dillons Community Rewards Program

### Update

- Anne Bailey

The Dillons stores will again be offering the Community Rewards Program in 2016. The catch is that we must re-register our Dillons Plus Shoppers cards every year. So, after January 1, you will need to go to Dillons.com and tell them that you want a percentage of your grocery purchases to be given to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita. Our organization number is 10162.

Debra Clements and Corey Swertfager will be available at the church January 3 before and after the first Sunday service and lunch to newly register or to re-register people's Dillons cards. Watch for further details in the Weekly Update and Orders of Service.

## Adult RE

The Adult Religious Exploration class will study Israel-Palestine issues based on Unitarian Universalists' Justice in the Middle East. The class will view the videos, "Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for a Just Peace," "Zionism Unsettled: A Congregational Study Guide," and "Our Seven UU Principles and Palestine-Israel." The series will start at 9:45 a.m., Sunday, January 3.

*Corporal Punishment, continued*

internationally, spanking is being legislated out. Starting with Sweden which banned all corporal punishment of children in 1979, in 2015 we have 47 countries where it is illegal, with Benin, Brazil, Ireland, and South Korea among the latest.

If there is a critical movement for UUs to lead, this must be it. UUs played a leading role in abolishing slavery, ensuring equal rights for women, supporting the civil rights movement, and ensuring justice for the LGBT community. Will UUs also take the lead in ensuring the physical safety and bodily integrity of every child?

## RE Corner

- Denise Jackson-Simon  
Religious Exploration Director

Happy New Year! It has been a great "Sunday school year" – so far, as we began new curriculums in September. Attendance has been good, especially in the 3rd-8th grade age group. Other ages have joined us with the *Harry and UU* curriculum from time to time. It just so happened that the lessons coincided with community service opportunities available to the church. The children have collected books during the EcoFest book drive and food for the ongoing drive, and most recently, they created fleece scarves for our holiday tree, all of which will be donated to people in Wichita.

The youth, when not hanging out with the younger children or attending service, have been viewing episodes of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*. This curriculum helps them consider social issues and the ways in which our faith can help us understand our values; understand ways in which the right of conscience calls us to do what's right even if there are possible negative consequences; examine how our choices affect others around us, as well as ourselves; and explore how taking a stand is related to perspective and point of view. They have been consistent with attendance in gathering every other week. We would still like an adult sponsor to step up and volunteer to hang out with the teens. It would be helpful in facilitating discussion.

The first Sunday in January, we will participate in our annual Burning Bowl ceremony – releasing the old and setting new intentions for 2016. We will then continue implementing the lessons from our curriculums. We hope to see you. Remember, it is much more fun when you are there.

*Our Covenant, continued*

Certainly not everyone will be totally satisfied with leadership decisions, even when based upon wide feedback from the congregation. But that is human nature, and looking ahead to the "Honesty" Covenant, we have wisely "agreed to respectfully disagree when consensus cannot be reached."

When issues arise, the Transparency Covenant suggests speaking directly to the person or committee or asking for mediation. The Committee on Ministry is the arm of the church designated to resolve differences which cannot be worked out by individuals working within the Covenant of Healthy Relations.

Corey concludes, "We dedicate ourselves to encourage more involvement, to build enthusiasm, to include, and to allow ourselves to be included."

An open question for all: How have you included others in congregational activities? How have you allowed yourself to be included?

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# FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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## Eclectic Readers

January 15, 11:30 am: *Ragtime*, by E. L. Doctorow (1975) is one of the 100 best novels of all time, according to Modern Library publishing house. It is a sprawling, tapestry-like work, which captures the spirit of America between the turn of the century and the First World War. The story opens in 1906 at the New Rochelle, New York, home of an affluent couple. When famous escape artist Harry Houdini has an automobile wreck outside their house, the novel takes a path between fantasy and historical fact, between real and imaginary characters. Henry Ford, Emma Goldman, J. P. Morgan, Evelyn Nesbit, Sigmund Freud, and Emiliano Zapata appear and disappear, crossing paths with Doctorow's imagined family and other fictional characters, including an immigrant peddler and a ragtime musician from Harlem. Doctorow's numerous awards and honors include the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction, given to an author whose "scale of achievement over a sustained career places him in the highest rank of American literature."

We gather for a brown bag lunch and lively discussion begins. All are welcome to join us.

## Digerati Buchgemeinschaft

We are starting a new online book club. Discussions will take place at Goodreads. Please join us at <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/177877-digerati-buchgemeinschaft>

This will primarily be a fictional book club. For January we are reading Margaret Atwood's "The Heart Goes last." We are taking suggestions for February's book. Come join the Digerati!