



# In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

## President's Report

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

January/February has been a time for revivals. Charles Merrifield is having an organizational meeting of humanist/free thinkers group on March 12. Ned Lakin, whom we are so happy to have back at First UU, would like to be involved in a Small Group Ministry, and Del Smith has been putting out the word about a UU film program, showing films which have been critically acclaimed but not shown in Wichita – or only run for a short time. The music committee has been forming, finding voices to sing and lead, and proposing ideas for instrumental music to augment the service; after listening to some of the children playing with the microphone after the service, I think we may have the makings of a children's choir, too. Jana Rambo, who is on the worship committee and is a musician, has agreed to chair the committee.

At the Midyear Meeting on January 23, Trust Women, Wichita Circles, and the YMCA Women's Crisis Center were chosen by the congregation as finalists for Share the Plate. Each organization presents a sermon, the first being the Women's Crisis Center on February 21. The winning organization will be decided by congregational vote in June. Bonnie Till, who had attended GA last June, explained several UUA Congregational Study/Action Issues before the congregation voted to recommend the "Corruption of Our Democracy" issue for 2016-17. The 2017-16 budget, presented by Charles Merrifield, was approved.

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## Building the Beloved Community

- Margi Ault-Duell

What happens when you get a room full of Unitarian Universalists together in one place? It's a good story! We met, we listened, we ate, we discussed, we dreamed, and we strategized! On Saturday, February 6, ten members of our Wichita First UU community traveled to Topeka to gather with other Unitarians from around Kansas, as well as with partner organizations in Topeka, Kansas City, and Lawrence. The event was led by representatives from the Topeka, Lawrence, Manhattan, and Wichita UU congregations, hosted at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Topeka, and attended by nearly 80 people throughout the day.

We learned about organizing efforts happening in Northeast Kansas, including the formation of a new organization called Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA). KIFA's mission is to mobilize faith communities together to address political and social justice issues in our state. The Executive Director, Rabbi Moti Rieber, invoked Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "triple threat" of issues facing us in the U.S. – poverty, racism, and war – and added environmental degradation as a fourth major threat. Rabbi Rieber then asked us to consider his prescription for social action: outrage + non-violence + love. He reminded us that we will not achieve all the changes we want to see in our world, but that doesn't mean we are free to stop trying.

We heard also from KU Professor Charles Epp,

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# In Touch

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

[www.firstuu.net](http://www.firstuu.net)

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

## *Building the Beloved Community - continued*

who presented his research on the racial profiling that occurs during police stops, arguing that our current policing system as a whole enforces racial hierarchy and dehumanizes people of color. He offered some practical solutions that could reduce the frequency of racial profiling and emphasized the need for a systemic overhaul (as opposed to the argument of “rooting out bad apples”).

As a group, we’ve identified several areas for shared efforts: racial justice, environmental issues, economic disparity, Medicaid expansion, and gun violence. Some of our work will fall under the coordination of KIFA, or in conjunction with other partner organizations in Kansas. However, we also want to build our capacity as a statewide UU community to speak truth to power with our uniquely Unitarian voices.

If you want to hear more about the event and ways to get involved with local or statewide social justice work, I encourage you to get in touch with me! You can reach me on Facebook, via email at [socialaction@firstuu.net](mailto:socialaction@firstuu.net), or by phone at (520) 396-0633. You can also attend our monthly Social Action meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. here at the church.

## Treasurer's Report

- Anne Bailey

As of February 17, 2016, year to date income totals are \$129,289.85. Year to date expenses are 133,447.28 which adds up to a net loss of 4,157.43. This is quite an improvement from the end of the year figures, but we have a ways to go to get into the black. Please don't forget to make your pledge payments. Any amount is needed and appreciated.

## Wanted: Communications Team Leader

Del Smith has brought the workings and professionalism of the First UU Communications Team up to the gold standard. She has put community back into communications, successfully merging the talents of several communicators to expand our reach into the larger community. Del has let go of the reins as chair of that team. We've got some big shoes to fill. As we search for a replacement, Corey Swertfager is the interim chair of the Communications Team. Please let him know if you'd like to be the team's chair or would like to help: 316-209-5177.

## March Worship Schedule

3/6	Naquela Pack	<i>Big Brothers, Big Sisters P<sup>3</sup></i>
3/13	Margi Ault-Duell	Social Action
3/20	Rev. Carter	
3/27	Rev. Carter	

For details and updates, see print Orders of Service, emailed Weekly Updates, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita on Facebook, or @uuict on Twitter.

## Hungarian Fundraiser Dinner

- Debbie Wadman and Betty Hensley, Partner Church Committee

Save the date! March 19 will be the date for our traditional Hungarian dinner to support our Unitarian partner church in Transylvania, Romania, in the village of Homorod-Szentpal. This has been a very nice dinner in the past few years and our partner church minister and his family always write grateful emails about the work they have been able to do with the funds we have sent them. Their next big project is to make repairs to the ancient church organ, which has several broken keys. It costs thousands to bring in a technician from three-hours-away Bucharest.

If you would be able to help make a dish of Hungarian goulash, chicken paprikash, a cabbage dish or a vegan dish, please let Debbie Wadman know at 651-3359. Sound too complicated? We will need a number of people to bake Apfelkuchen, a simple apple cake dessert, or help with publicity, serving, set-up, tickets, clean up, etc. We would also like to hold an auction after the dinner and request your donations of artwork, craft projects, service, or nice gift items that might bring in a bit more to our cause. Plan on attending this fun event, and invite six friends to join you!

## RE Corner

- Denise Jackson-Simon

As we continue with our chosen curriculums for this year, those involved in the *Harry and UU* lessons have recently created and sold dry soup mixes, with the money going to St. Jude. They will finish fighting the Sickness Horcrux and move on to the Animal Cruelty Horcrux next. A trip to the Humane Society will be included this month and extended to all ages.

Our teens have viewed and discussed more *Twilight Zone* episodes which focused on the themes of bigotry and speciesism. They also participated in community service by sorting and bagging up items for our "Bags of Blessings." We have begun exploring the possibility of a lock-in for the near future.

We celebrated Valentine's Day and spread a little love by giving Valentine cards to our congregation members in attendance that day. We look forward to celebrating Easter at the end of the month which will include hiding and collecting goodies for our animal friends.

Our youngest group in grades K-2 has joined our older children at times for certain activities. Other days, they've participated in lessons from *Love Surrounds Us*.

It's great to see you all on Sunday mornings, and we enjoy visitors anytime. Remember, it's much more fun when you are here!

*President's Report, continued*

Jack Regehr and Del Smith are doing amazing things with our web site, adding leadership photos and profiles. Jack has been logging people's visits to the sites, with impressive results. Sadly, Del is stepping down as Director of Communications after years of hard work which has helped put the church firmly on the map. There is no one to equal her ability for putting out a press release or a Yahoo Groups announcement with just the right kind of attention-getting turn of phrase. No one does it like Del, but I hope we can learn from her methods. In particular, she honed her skills and built contact lists on EcoFest from 2014, bringing hundreds of people to our doorstep to savor green living and to learn how to make steps towards preserving the environment. With Marcia Ellsworth and Corey Swertfager, Del started poster making and flyer distribution parties, which have been thoroughly enjoyable team-building events. Del, Andrew, and Jack have been keeping things going on social media. However, we do need someone to take over the EcoFest publicity machine for 2016, beginning in the spring.

The long awaited meeting of the five Unitarian Universalist churches was on Saturday, 6 February. Ten UU's, including Margi Ault-Duell, drove up to the UU church in Topeka, where the Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan and her congregation welcomed 80 people from the five churches. The main program was social action activism, ideas, and consolidation of resources (see Margi's article in this issue).

## Caring for One Another

- Kathleen McGee

The caring committee is the arm of the church that acknowledges events in our members' and friends' lives such as illnesses, surgeries, and bereavements. We also recognize events such as birthdays, weddings, and graduations.

Susan Hund-Milne has completed her chemotherapy and is now recovering at home. She would like all contacts to be by emails or cards as she is not up to visitors yet.

A heartfelt thanks to all who helped with the service and reception for David Brewer. His great contribution to our church will not be forgotten.

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


## Full Moon Celebration

Join us at 7:00 on Wednesday, March 23, for an evening of chanting along with a few "sitting" dances, simple gestural movements accompanying chanting for a full-body meditation. All are welcome to our gatherings, and we invite you to bring your drums and other rhythm instruments. Call Kathy Hull (204-9956) or Anne Bailey (650-4905) for further information.

## St. Patrick's Day Potluck

The UU Holiday Party Group invites you to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a delicious potluck dinner on Saturday, March 12, at First UU Church. Bring your favorite dish to share. Gathering is at 5:30 and dining at 6, followed by games.

# March 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> 6:00p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	<b>2</b> 7:00p Committee on Ministry	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 10:00a Flowerbed Cleanup 11:00a Bhakti Society 2:00p Wichita Food Not Lawns Swap Meet
<b>6</b> 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch 5:00p Grapevine Dancers	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 6:00p Zen Friends	<b>9</b> 2:00p Seeking Circle 7:00p Worship Committee	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 2:00p Membership Committee	<b>12</b> 10:00a Caring Committee 11:00a Bhakti Society 5:30p St. Patrick's Day Potluck 6:00p Humanist/Free Thinker Meeting (off site)
<b>13</b> DST starts 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Leadership Council 5:00p Grapevine Dancers	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 6:00p Zen Friends	<b>16</b> 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar deadline	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	<b>19</b> 11:00a Bhakti Society 6:00p Partner Church Dinner
<b>20</b> 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 5:00p Grapevine Dancers	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 6:00p Zen Friends	<b>23</b> 1:30p Newsletter Mailing 7:00p Social Action Group 7:00p Full Moon Celebration	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 8:00a Zen Friends Retreat 11:00a Bhakti Society
<b>27</b> 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 5:00p Grapevine Dancers	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 6:00p Zen Friends	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

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## Our Covenant: A Living Document

- Del Smith

The most recent article in this series about our Covenant of Healthy Relations resonated with members. They identified with Corey Swertfager's comment that the Transparency section (open and candid decision making with free access to all) is really about inclusivity – inviting others into activities, but also allowing ourselves to be included.

Two who responded mentioned inviting people to stay for First Sunday Lunch. They also contribute dishes for the lunch. One is a long time member, and the other has been a member for only a few years. The longtime member makes a point of telling new people that all activities on the calendar are open to everyone and makes sure visitors get a Visitor's Packet. (Sometimes visitors get past the greeters without stopping for a packet or name tag.) Introducing themselves and encouraging people to come back is routine. What a nice reminder that everyone is part of our "welcoming committee," essential to building a caring community. The newer member specifically mentioned financial support of the church.

Other ways that First UU implements the Transparency section of the Covenant:

- Board meetings are open, but if attendance at the third Wednesday meeting is not feasible, people can read the minutes which are kept in a notebook on the computer desk in the library. Everyone can also read Vivien Minshull-Ford's monthly president's report in the newsletter.
- Any member with a concern about the ministry of the church can take it to the Committee on Ministry (Charles Merrifield, chair) which meets on the first Monday of each month. Members can also communicate with COM through a suggestion box which is located on the information table outside the office.
- Members may attend Leadership Council – Corey Swertfager routinely issues open invitations to Leadership Council, which meets at 12:30 on the second Sunday.
- Members may use our Facebook group give suggestions and opinions about matters which concern the congregation.
- Everyone may view our Website, which introduces the minister as well as board and COM members by way of photographs and profiles.

It's worth the time it takes to Stop, Look, Read our Covenant of Healthy Relations just inside the front door. It is testimony to the value we place on our liberal diverse community and our striving to support each other in our personal and community growth.

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### UU Summer Camp, July 3-9, 2016

Consider joining fellow UUs this summer in the Missouri Ozarks at the annual Midwest Unitarian Universalist Summer Assembly (MUUSA). The weeklong camp offers many workshops and activities for families, couples and singles of all ages. This year Rev. Krista Taves will lead the daily Morning Celebration service on this year's theme: "The UU House of Soul." Connect with old friends, make new ones, and participate in a wide variety of activities in the beautiful forests and rolling hills of the Missouri Ozarks at YMCA Trout Lodge. To see more details and to register, go to [www.muusa.org](http://www.muusa.org).



## Bhakti Society at First UU

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

Every Saturday morning at 11:00, the Bhakti Society of Wichita meets in the sanctuary for a special service which has four stages: the first is Kirtan, a recital of holy names of God with music and singing; the second is bringing a message for mankind, invoking Krishna or Vishnu (or whatever form a person's god may take); the third stage is Gita, a study or discussion; the final step is a meal, before which a plate of food is blessed and offered to God. The food is always vegetarian and is often Indian, and the meal is sometimes followed by more Kirtan.

Bhakti is a Sanskrit word meaning devotion, and Bhakti Yoga means a path to devotion; most Hindus practice Bhakti. It is non-sectarian, non-dogmatic, and can be practiced in any faith tradition. As a spiritual path, Bhakti is a compass showing the way out of suffering, a way to "build your own pathway to God." Bhakti has many texts, the best known being the Bhagavad Gita; however, the practice is related to the Upanishads and Buddhism.

The core belief of Bhakti is devotion to God, who is in everything. God, all beautiful and all attractive, may be seen in the forms of Krishna, Shiva, Durga – or Jesus or Buddha. Andrew Beers, who is studying for ordination in the Vaishna branch of the Hindu faith, says he sees God as "a family man or a householder" – very like himself.

The Reverend David Carter is Pandit (leader) for this group until Andrew completes his ordination. The Bhakti group includes participants who range in age from five to eighty years. Several members of the First UU congregation attend, including Mary Erickson; more than half the group are from the Indian sub-continent, mainly India and Nepal. If you would like to visit or join, call Dr. Andrew Beers at 640-0702.

## Valentines for First UU

- Bonnie Till

Leading up to Valentine's Day, a big Valentine card was put on an easel in the gathering space. Members and friends were encouraged to post love notes on the poster expressing "Why I love First UU." Many notes were posted. The following is a summary of the messages:

I love the sense of being accepted and my beliefs being accepted.

May our love and light shine on!

Reverend Carter rocks!

1<sup>st</sup> UU is like my second home, and it's taken me 50 years to find it – it's family.

I love our Religious Exploration teachers and RE Director, Denise!

I feel welcome at First UU.

I love the diversity and the people!

Friendship, camaraderie, outreach, our message, and...the food!

I love the philosophy of openness – we are all one.

And the icing on the Valentine cookie was when the doors opened after service on Sunday, February 14, the children passed among us and presented us with Valentines they had made.

## Minister's Musings

- Rev. David Carter



### The Torii

spring's daffodils,  
a conspiracy of crocuses,  
and rising, blood red  
in the middle of the blue black lake,  
broad and high, the torii.

its beauty  
breaks prayer.  
for love hides  
cloistered here,  
close at hand...  
but where?

my longing's not enough  
the energy  
to make visible what the torii hides  
eludes me

and still  
my heart  
yearns  
to see

heartache rebukes love's jest:

my loves hear,  
but will not speak;  
reveling within,  
beyond the blood red gate

without me!

## Revitalized Music Committee

- Vivien Minshull-Ford

The Sunday service on February 28 introduced a new element. Before the piano prelude to the service, lead singers gathered around the piano to practice the service hymns. This practice will be a regular feature of services, and congregation members are welcome to join in and familiarize themselves with the tunes.

Music Committee chair Jana Rambo would like to invite interested congregants to join the Music Committee. We are also hoping to have more guest performers, vocal or instrumental. If you know someone who would be a good addition to a service, please contact Jana Rambo at 686-4215 or [jayrobo@aol.com](mailto:jayrobo@aol.com)



## Eclectic Readers

**11:30 am, Friday, March 18:** Laura Moriarty's *The Chaperone* is a novel about the woman who accompanies the teenage Louise Brooks from Wichita, Kansas, to New York City in the 1920s. Young Louise, who is studying with the Denishawn School of Dancing, is stunningly beautiful, arrogant, and has little respect for convention. Cora Carlisle (the fictionalized Alice Mills) does her best to watch over the girl who becomes a famous and iconic silent film star. Cora is more complicated than one might expect of a 36-year-old woman with traditional values. The five weeks the two spend together change both Cora and Louise.

Our **April 15** selection is the landmark biography, *Alexander Hamilton*, by Ron Chernow. The *New York Times Book Review* noted that "Nobody has captured Hamilton better than Chernow." The biography is not just a portrait of Hamilton, but the story of America's birth seen through a most central figure. The book was the inspiration for the hit Broadway musical, *Hamilton!*

We meet at 11:30 for a brown bag lunch, and lively discussion follows. All are welcome. Del Smith, [316-612-0826](tel:316-612-0826).

## Digerati Buchgemeinschaft

For March we are going international and are reading Hugi Award recipient *The Three Body Problem* by Liu Cixin. This was written in Chinese and was released in English.

Come join the Digerati! We are an online book club. Discussions will take place at Goodreads. You can join us at <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/177877-digerati-buchgemeinschaft>

## The Occasional Book Club

Join us on April 9 at 1:30 in the church for a lively discussion of Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Did you know *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was initially released in serial format in *The National Era*, a weekly anti-slavery newspaper, from June 5, 1851, to April 1, 1852? In 1852 it was published as a two-volume book with sales in the United States hitting 10,000 copies in its first week, and 300,000 in its first year, and in Great Britain, sales reached 1.5 million copies in a few years. It was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and, following the Bible, it was the second best-selling book of that century. Contact Amy Geyer at [amy@inannasjourney.com](mailto:amy@inannasjourney.com) or [316-440-3097](tel:316-440-3097) with any questions.

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# FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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## March Madness: Murder, Mystery, Mayhem

No better way to weather those lingering last weeks of winter than reading a good mystery. No better place to buy than at the Chalice Bookstore's Fundraiser: March Madness: Murder, Mystery, Mayhem! Stock up on your supply of mystery books at this special fundraiser, Sunday, March 6, through Sunday, March 13, in the Gathering Space. The table will be staffed before and after church on those Sundays, but these books may be purchased (on your own) any time the church is open. Books will be priced above typical garage sale prices, but below what is charged at stores such as Book-o-Holic, Eighth Day Books, and Al's Bookstore. All proceeds from the fundraiser will support programs of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita.

This sale is made possible by a generous donation of books from Bonnie Lloyd of the Zen Friends Group. We welcome other's donations of audiobooks and mystery books, if in pristine, nearly new condition, to add to Ms. Lloyd's donation. Bring your donations by Saturday noon, March 5. Leave them on the table by the Chalice Bookstore shelves, marked to the attention of Del Smith.