



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA
FOUNDED 1887

President's Report

Vivien Minshull-Ford

Several new groups are becoming active in the congregation. The Music Group is off to a good start with Jana Rambo chairing. People have gathered round the piano for practice sessions of service hymns. The next stage will be hymn leaders, round singing, and instrumental additions. Two new writing groups have begun meeting, one at Nancy Milner's house and one at the church. The new film group recently met to watch "Selma." And the first meeting of the Humanist group, Free Thinkers, took place at the home of Charles Merrifield and Marcia Ellsworth.

Social justice has dominated February/March in many ways. The Bags of Blessings collection of toiletries was delivered to Partners for Wichita. The International Rescue Committee received nightwear from our collection. Margi Ault-Duell convened two UUA Webinar sessions at the church on the topic of "Getting to the Root of White Supremacy in our Communities and Ourselves." The discussion was thought-provoking. Margi was also service speaker in March in an interactive sermon which addressed issues of standing up and speaking out for marginalized groups in the community. The month's sermon speakers also included Topeka UU minister Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan, and Sheri Copridge, director of the YWCA Women's Crisis Center, who gave a moving and rousing talk on behalf of one of the three candidates for the Share the Plate offering for next fiscal year.

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RE Corner

Denise Jackson-Simon, DRE

I can't believe it's spring already. I hope you've been able to spend time outdoors and connect with our beautiful earth in some ways. Seems more important than ever to do so in order to maintain some balance amongst all the "craziness" in the world around us.

I'm sending a check to the Ronald McDonald House with funds we collected while "fighting the sickness" Horcrux. I'll also be sending one to the Kansas Humane Society from dollars donated when you voted for your favorite pet as part of our "fighting the animal cruelty" Horcrux. By the way, only two dollars separated the cats from the dogs as you voted for your favorite pet. Cats rule!!! Thank you to all who have donated to our causes.

We visited the Humane Society on March 13 and will now fill Easter eggs with doggie and kitty treats to be collected and donated. Don't worry, kids, there will be some candy to find during our annual Easter egg hunt, as well.

We are pleased that Rolando Gomez and Holly Terrill have both stepped forward to meet with our teens. The kids are excited that adults want to hang out with them. Exploration with *The Twilight Zone* lesson themes continues, as well as occasional community service opportunities. Thank you, Rolando and Holly!

Hope to see you at church. It's much more fun when you are there!

Minister's Musings

Rev. David Carter

My poem is a tribute to the 16th century Rajastani princess, Mirabai. Its verses closely follow one of Mira's songs. In all her lyrics, she praises Krishna as the transcendent other, the *summum bonum* personified.

It is said about Mira that once, scandalized by her flagrant transgressions of the host of strictures that subjugated women in medieval India, her incensed family members gave her deadly poison to drink. Knowing full well their evil intention, she drained the cup without hesitation. Instantly, her would-be assassins were thrown to the ground by severe abdominal cramps. Screaming and writhing in pain, with tears flooding their eyes, they begged Mira's forgiveness. Gazing at them, she smiled. It is related that her oceanic love pulled them back from death.

And, in case you are wondering, Hladini Shakti Das is the spiritual name I was given in 1985 by my guru in the Vedic *diksha* ceremony that formally inducted me into the ancient culture of bhakti yoga. Here is a link to Mira's poetry: <http://allpoetry.com/Mirabai>.

Strange, The Decrees of Fate!

the cuckoo
his songs delight the ears
yet his feathers are drab; for them no one cares

the deer
her grace dispraises praise
yet she shies from human gaze

the rich, overfull and gorging still,
anticipate no end
yet brood to unseat the Friend

while the bhakta cares for no one else!
common folk spurn him
yet he hosts the whole of heaven, happy within!

Hladini Shakti Das
having tasted the flavor of this world,
stumbles along the way the Krishna bhaktas take

Thanks, Anita

Thanks to Anita Culp, Office Manager, for stepping up to format *In Touch* this month. Rolando Gomez's work involves travel and long hours, and he was unable to do the formatting for this issue.

International Women's Day

Masud Chand

March 8 was International Women's Day—a day dedicated to celebrating the contribution of women in the economic, political, and social fields worldwide. It is a day that signifies the achievements that we as a society have made in ensuring the equality of genders, on the one hand, and the work that still needs to be done to reach this goal, on the other. 2016 promises to be another watershed year in women's rights—starting this year, women are allowed to serve in any job in the armed services, provided they meet gender neutral performance standards.

Of course, many challenges remain in ensuring the lofty goal of equality, under law and in society, irrespective of gender. Pay equity needs to be strengthened, access to reproductive health care ensured, domestic violence cracked down on, and discrimination in the name of religion abolished. Perhaps even more of a challenge will be dealing with women's rights in an increasingly multicultural society, where, whether we like to admit it or not, there are people whose background is in societies where the status of women is akin to that of chattel property. One of the worst mistakes we as a society can make is to sacrifice the progress made in women's rights on the altar of political correctness or “cultural sensitivity.”

Women in society have historically played essential but unsung roles. Too often, we hear the call that women must be given the utmost respect because they are our wives, mothers, and daughters—with the unsaid follow-up that that is the only reason they should be respected. Rarely do we hear or read about the other roles that women play: as our supervisors, judges, administrators, rulers, and protectors.

Despite the challenges ahead, I am hopeful of what the future holds. I end with the words that Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, used after his victory in the 2015 general election. When asked why his new cabinet had equal numbers of men and women, the answer was short, sweet, and simple: “It is 2015.”

Full Moon and Beltane Celebrations

April celebrations include our usual Full Moon gathering on Friday, April 22. Join us at 7:00 for drumming, chanting and dancing.

We will be celebrating Beltane a little early on Saturday, April 30. Our potluck feast begins at 6:00. Please bring a generous dish to share. Drinks and table service will be provided. All are welcome.

Call Anne Bailey (650-4905) or Kathy Hull (204-9956) if you have questions.

MacArthur Park Potluck Dinner

The Holiday Party Group cordially requests the pleasure of your company to pay tribute to the great rock ‘n’ roll ballad, “MacArthur Park.” The MacArthur Park Potluck Dinner gathering will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, at First UU Church, and we will dine at 6.

Please join us for the potluck dinner and games. We’ll supply a few recordings of “MacArthur Park,” as well as a “cake with sweet green icing flowing down.” Please feel free to bring your favorite recording. If you bring a yellow dress, you win the prize!

April 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 11:00a Bhakti Society
3 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	4	5 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	6 7:00p Committee on Ministry	7	8 2:00p Membership Committee	9 10:00a Caring Committee 11:00a Bhakti Society 1:30p Occasional Book Club
10 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 12:15p Leadership Council	11	12 6:30p Zen Friends	13 2:00p Seeking Circle 7:00p Worship Committee	14	15 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	16 11:00a Bhakti Society
17 9:00a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE 3:00p Chamber Music Concert	18	19 6:30p Zen Friends	20 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	21	22 7:00p Full Moon Celebration	23 11:00a Bhakti Society 5:30p MacArthur Park Potluck
24 9:45a Adult Relig. Explor. 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Childrens RE	25 6:00p Intro to Landmark Forum 6:30p Witter's Group	26 6:30p Zen Friends	27 1:30p Newsletter Meeting 7:00p Social Action Team	28 2:00p Movie Group	29	30 11:00a Bhakti Society

Chamber Music Concert April 17

Carol Neighbor

All are welcome to enjoy a marvelous afternoon of music at our First UU Church at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 17. Trumpeter David Hunsicker, Wichita Symphony principal trumpet player and professor of trumpet at WSU, headlines this concert. He promises a beautiful solo trumpet presentation. Cellist Laura Clark Martinez, who grew up at First UU, is joining Wichita Symphony's other "Laura," Laura Hammes Black, in a performance of Maurice Ravel's "Sonata for Violin and Cello." This 1920's work was composed in memory of Debussy. NOVA DECO, Wichita's fantastic violin duo, Nancy Johnson and Dominique Corbeil, return to our series with Astor Piazzolla's "Tango-Etudes" arranged for two violins. Additional tangos complete this rhythmic segment. Nancy, principal second violinist with the Wichita Symphony and instructor of violin at Bethel College in Newton, shares her symphony stand with Dominique. Our program is complete with alto recorder player Carol Neighbor and guitarist Greg Golding playing "Kleine Suite for Flute and Guitar" by the neo-classic Austrian composer Ferdinand Weiss. An intermission reception is planned. A \$10 donation is suggested for this concert. Plan now to enjoy this splendid afternoon of music.

Social Action Opportunities

Margi Ault-Duell

Calling all writers for social justice! If you enjoy writing and would be willing to write once or often for First UU's blog, let me know! I have a schedule of topics to keep our blog active with frequent social action posts, and I'm looking for a variety of voices to illuminate these social justice themes. You can write once, or you can write regularly, depending on your interest and availability. I'll provide you with writing guidelines and deadlines, and connect you to information sources as needed. For more information, come to our Social Action meetings from 7-8:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month (upcoming April 27). You can also contact me directly at socialaction@firstuu.net or at (520) 396-0633.

Stay tuned for our upcoming Social Action Study Series! We will be exploring the themes of mass incarceration and criminalization of people of color. This study series will take place over several months and include multiple ways to participate, including a book study, workshops and speakers, and action items. We will weave together wisdom from local and national sources, prioritizing the voices and experiences of people directly targeted by these issues. If you want to participate in planning or facilitating any activities in this series, please let me know! You can contact me directly.

President's Report, continued from page 1

I attended a Climate Justice Wichita.350 illustrated talk, entitled Holy Solar, by Rev. Bill Wentz. The talk demonstrated the current encouraging news on the potential of wind and solar energy in Kansas, and also debunked the theories of nay-sayers. In the same spirit, Corey Swertfager and Kent Rowe have purchased LED lights for the sanctuary and are planning their installation.

Finally, I have attended my first meeting as a member of the Worship Committee and am looking forward to the work ahead.

Our Covenant: A Living Document

Del Smith

“Honesty” is defined in the final section of our Covenant of Healthy Relations as “honorable and fair in speech, intentions, and actions.” We covenant to interact with others in a fair manner, to take responsibility for our own actions and feelings by not blaming others, and when consensus cannot be reached, simply agree to respectfully disagree.

Recent conversations with church leaders brought memories of the congregational meetings and workshops in 2013 which led to the creation and adoption of the Covenant. A consistent theme was “every member’s voice is important.” It was a time of intentional listening, hearing what others were saying without jumping into the middle of the conversation. Admittedly, for some of us that takes practice—and the occasional refresher course.

We often speak of the church as family. True enough, with one difference. In our nuclear families, whether birth or chosen, we probably don’t have people we’ve never met before coming into the house and staying for a while. The phrase “using good manners” comes to mind, but not just when we have company.

Many who are reading this article were not here for the 2013 workshops led by Thea Nietfeld of the Salina UU congregation and Michael Durall’s meetings with the congregation. His book, *The Almost Church Revitalized*, makes a pertinent point—diversity can serve as a “platform by which people of dissimilar beliefs unite in common cause for a greater purpose.” (Durall is a consultant who helps churches find their strengths and recommends ways to build on those strengths.)

Whether you participated in developing our Covenant or whether you started attending First UU after the Covenant was adopted in June 2014, we’d like to hear your story about how the Covenant is “A Living Document.” Your story can be told anonymously, if you wish. Just see me at church or send an email to wichitadel@aol.com. Want a copy of the Covenant? Just ask. I’ll send you one.

Remembering Jed Closson

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. In caring for one another, we are cared for.

Jed Closson, who had been in ill health for a number of years, passed away on Tuesday, March 8. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Heritage Funeral Home in Andover is taking care of the arrangements. Jed was an active member of the First UU Church and attended services regularly. He served on the Caring Committee and designed birthday cards to be sent to members and friends. He was a great maker of soups for the Caring Committee to take to those in need.

We are happy to share that **Susan Hund-Milne** is well enough for visitors now. Please call in advance.

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UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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Eclectic Readers

11:30 a.m., Friday, April 15: Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton* describes the nation's first treasury secretary as “[probably] the foremost political figure in American history who never attained the presidency, yet he probably had a much deeper and lasting impact than many who did.” He held enlightened views on slavery, Native Americans, and Jews for most of his life. Reviewers rate it highly. In May we turn to a novel by Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Achebe, a Nigerian African trained in missionary schools, tells the story of the dissolution of an African tribe, its traditions and values, and the tragic consequences. Join us for a brown bag lunch and interesting discussions. All are welcome. Del Smith, [316-612-0826](tel:316-612-0826).

Let Your Inner Writer Out

WRITERS WANTED: Don't be shy! Come and let your inner writer out. Join us on the 4th Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the church library. We will share our poems, stories, other musings, some fun techniques, and lots of encouragement and fellowship. Our first meeting is Monday, March 28. All are welcome. Contact Amy Geyer at [316-440-3097](tel:316-440-3097) or amy@inannasjourney.com.