



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

Compassion

- Corey Swertfager

Our Seven Unitarian Universalist Principles took a beating this election cycle. Many things said and promised during the campaign assailed "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and repeatedly bypassed "compassion in human relations."

The evening after the elections, First UU held a community gathering to help people process the election. This was not for political ranting, but rather an opportunity for compassionate people to come together to grieve and express their feelings before moving on to do the healing work that needs to be done. About thirty people attended, half of whom had no affiliation with First UU. Attendees were very grateful for the safe place to share their fears. One guest at the following Sunday service said she came because she had seen the gathering on KSN-TV and heard how we strive for compassionate relations.

A few days later, dozens of people – a majority coming from UU congregations around the state – met in Salina to plan for a rally and a day of action to take place in Topeka during the first week of the Kansas legislative session. The day of action will mark the beginning of collaborative efforts to move forward with compassionate justice work. We will meet again in Salina on December 10 to finish planning. Contact me (316-209-5177) if you'd like to join us.

Though our Principles may have been bruised, they have not fallen. But rather, they stand strong as a beacon to guide our steps toward our goal of "world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." Let us shine that light with grace, determination, and compassion.

Treasurer's Report

- Charles Merrifield

After many years as treasurer, either individually or as a member of a team, Anne Bailey has passed the treasurer's baton on to me for a 12-month term that began July 1. Thus, I will serve as treasurer for the current fiscal year, July 1 through June 30. Corey Swertfager has promised to assume the position when I complete my year.

What can I tell you about the financial position of the church? Each month we spend well over \$8,000 in payroll, benefits, and related taxes. The mortgage on the building is about \$2,300. Utilities, UUA expenses, and other operational expenses are around \$3,000.

Our primary source of income is through the generous contributions of members and friends of the church. The amount of contributions varies from month to month. Some months are better than other months so that in some months we cover our costs with an excess that overflows on to the benefit of the next month. Some months do not provide sufficient donations so that we must dip into savings. In the month of November as I write this report on the 18th, we are behind, so I dipped into savings about \$2,000 to pay current bills. At present, the amount remaining in savings is perilously small.

In addition to donations, we participate in fundraising activities. So far, we have raised over \$7,000 this fiscal year, which is a new record for fundraising. However, we need to raise at least another \$7,000 to reach the

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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.

Nether Consort in December Concert

- Carol Neighbor

The Chamber Music Committee is happy to offer an hour of Early Music to enhance your holidays' interest and entertainment. The Nether Consort, a group of seven musicians who perform music from before 1620 on instruments of that period have performed previously at our First Unitarian Universalist Church. We welcome them back with a program of vocal and instrumental music from the Medieval and Renaissance periods, using viols, lute, recorders, baroque bassoon, hurdy-gurdy, and early percussion instruments. Some historical music pertaining to the season will be included. There is no charge for this concert. Do plan to include this lovely program in your December plans. I hope to see you there at our church at 3 p.m. on Sunday, December 11.

Treasurers Report, continued

amount budgeted for fundraising in the church budget for the year.

The future of the church depends upon remaining financially solvent. We can cut expenses, increase income, or both. Before we start cutting, we will focus on increasing income. Here I will suggest three ways to increase income. First, all of us need to think about projects that we can employ for fundraising. Do you have an idea for a fundraiser? If so, please talk to me, Corey, or Rev. Carter. Second, we are exploring grant requests. If you have any experience with grant writing, please let us know. Apparently, there are many grant opportunities that might be available. Third, gifts from members and friends of the church – for example, each Christmas some of our congregants provide extra end-of-year gifts to the church. Our consultant, Michael Durell, recommends that each of us gives to the church the same amount that we spend on Christmas gifts for others.

Social Action Report

- Margi Ault-Duell, Social Action Coordinator

Building the Beloved Community: Save the date for our second annual *Building the Beloved Community* gathering on **Saturday, February 4**, hosted by the UU Congregation of Lawrence. This all-day event convenes UUs and other allies from around Kansas to discuss social justice issues and identify strategies for action. If you want to be involved in planning this event, please talk to me.

Our Place in the Web of Life: Have you ever heard people debate which is more important: climate change or racism? Clean energy or economic justice? Environmental damage and human injustices are often seen as separate issues and even pitted against each other when, in fact, they are deeply interrelated. How can we live in right relationship with other humans and species? What can we do to restore the planet and create healthy living environments for all our communities? As part of our Green Sanctuary certification process, we will explore questions like these within a framework of EcoJustice. Join us for a two-session workshop series to dig into the details of how our lives in Wichita intersect with communities around the globe. The first workshop will take place at First UU from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on **Saturday, December 3**.

The second workshop, which was previously scheduled for December 10, is postponed until early 2017 to allow First UU members to participate in planning a statewide legislative day of action (see below). Please let me know if you'd like to participate in these workshops.

Forward Together Kansas: Do you want a say in the issues discussed by our state legislature? We have a chance to shape the legislative agenda by uniting with other Kansans at the state capitol in January 2017. A multi-issue coalition is forming around plans to mobilize over 1,000 Kansans to Topeka to demand that our state legislators prioritize legislation that promotes social justice on a variety of issues. The dates for this will be determined ASAP and will include a statewide rally bringing in Rev. William Barber of the North Carolina Moral Mondays movement. You can join in the preparations for this legislative day of action by attending a planning meeting on **Saturday, December 10**, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Trinity UMC in Salina, Kansas. Please let me know if you want to carpool with others from Wichita (socialaction@firstuu.net or 520-396-0633).

Caring Committee

- Jana Rambo

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.

Our recent activities have included continuing to send birthday cards to members and friends. Anne Bailey is in the process of designing the birthday card for next year. Thanks, Anne! As in the past, we also helped provide lunch for the Inquirers' Class. Committee members also work with the Membership Committee to contact members who have not been to church for a while.

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

Board of Trustees Holiday Pot Luck

Sunday, December 18, from 12:30 to 3:00

The holiday season is here with lots of family, food, and festivities. The Board of Trustees is joining in the fun by hosting a holiday Pot Luck after church on Sunday, December 18.

By hosting, the board means it will provide the main course: vegan roasts, turkey, and ham. The sides (vegetables, salads, desserts) will hopefully be provided by all those who wish to participate. Everyone – members, family members of members, friends, and family members of friends – are welcome and encouraged to join in the fun.

Please sign up at church or call the office and sign up (684-3481).

Your Board of Trustees: Corey Swertfager, President; Holly Terrill, President Elect; Mike Diggs, Kathleen McGee, Nancy Milner, Jana Rambo, Bonnie Till, Anne Welsbacher, and Doug Wilson

Breakfast For the Soul

Come nourish your spirit and your body with First UU's Breakfast For the Soul, an informational event and family-friendly gathering meant to recharge and take a bit of time away from the holiday rush. Breakfast for the Soul will take place Saturday morning, December 17. Free child care will be provided; tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3 for kids.

Tables with information and resources on spiritual practices that emphasize meditation and other stress-reducing activities will be available, including information about new meditation classes taught by Rev. David Carter to begin at church January 23, 2017.

The breakfast, served from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., will feature a hearty repast served on eco-friendly tableware. The menu will include healthy, vegan blueberry muffins and pancakes, fruit toppings, and maple syrup; bacon, sausage, and egg casserole; and coffee, tea, and juice. A 50/50 raffle will round out the event. All proceeds will go to support First UU.

Many thanks to Rachel Rutledge for spearheading this event. For more information or to reserve seats, contact the church office at 316-684-3481.

Cheese, Chocolate and Cheer!

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

Full Moon Celebration

Our December celebration will be on Tuesday, December 13, at 7 p.m. at the church. You are invited to join us in drumming, chanting, and an informal ritual to celebrate and prepare for the coming year. You are encouraged to bring your own instruments or share ours.

Curious or dedicated, we invite you to join us. Contacts are Kathy Hull, 204-9956; Anne Bailey, 650-4905; or Linda Jordan, 512-6652.

December 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 10:00a Green Sanctuary Workshop 6:30p UU Humanist Group
4 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	5	6 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	7 7:00p Committee on Ministry	8	9 2:00p Membership Committee	10 10:00a Caring Committee
11 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:30p Leadership Council 3:00p Chamber Music Concert	12 7:00p Music Committee	13 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p Full Moon Celebration	14 7:00p Worship Committee	15 7:00p Green Sanctuary Committee	16 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	17 8:00a Breakfast for the Soul
18 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Holiday Dinner	19	20 6:30p Zen Friends	21 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	22	23	24 7:00p Christmas Eve Service
25 11:00a Worship Service	26 Office Closed 2:00p Movie Group 6:30p Writer's Group	27 6:30p Zen Friends	28 1:30p Newsletter Mailing 7:00p Social Action Group	29	30 6:30p Kwanzaa Concert	31 7:00-10:00p New Year's Eve Party

The Tax I Like Paying

- Sharon Kniss

In 2000, a man came to my high school junior class to speak about his environmental commitments, among them an effort by like-minded people to tax themselves on the gas they used. This idea matched my youthful idealism, I joined the group, and 16 years later, I still tax myself because I know we don't pay the full *cost* of using gasoline – such as environmental destruction and wars fueled by our over-dependence on oil.

People in the group generally calculate a tax of \$0.50/gallon (some do \$0.25/mile), and keep records through receipts or logs. It's a voluntary tax, so participants decide if they will pay more or less. The "taxers" usually gather together about three times a year for a shared meal and discussion. At the discussion, everyone shares their total tax contribution for the period. The group then decides collectively how to spend the pool of money. We have, for example, supported a person on a learning tour to Iraq (to see the impact of an oil-fueled war), bought bicycles for persons without income, and given seed money for solar projects and community multi-use paths. The collective pool increases the available money (and thus the impact), diversifies and increases the ideas for recipients, and helps share the administration of the effort. The group also has a natural advocacy power if they decide to use it, such as arranging meetings with lawmakers or organizing for a local initiative.

Paying a tax was devised as an incentive for us to drive less, but when people drove, we had money to invest in projects. One of our founding members was a carpenter/mechanic whose work depended on his ability to drive sometimes far distances in his gas-guzzling van. Another founding member rode a bicycle nearly everywhere – including eventually setting up his own mobile bike repair business that he operated *on* his bike. The group was just as supportive of my efforts when I was a regular contributing member as when I declared I had been "car-free" for four years (and that number climbed to eight!), was poor, and showed up for the free food. This blame-free, supportive environment was one of the group's unique gifts.

This group helped me stay sane and encouraged, even as my commitments may have made me look "odd" to others. I continue to pay this tax, and my gas bills are the highest they've been in my lifetime, as I now commute 60 miles/day. I'd love others to join me and support me, console me, and to help send this money to good efforts locally and elsewhere. Talk to me at church (the best), email me at sharonkniss@gmail.com, or peruse the website we eventually created: www.voluntarygastax.org.

Minister's Musings

Muses, Furies, and Graces: Bob Dylan's Marriage of Heaven and Hell

- Rev. David Carter

What induced Bob Dylan to wait weeks before acknowledging the Nobel Foundation's choice to award him the prestigious Peace Prize? Turn back the clock: Friday, December 13, 1963, and my mother, now 92, was present at an awards dinner in NYC's Americana Hotel Ballroom. To her surprise and excitement, she recognized that a very young Bob Dylan was there too, blue jeans, tousled hair, and all. He sat apart though, she said, and looked uncomfortable. And when he rose to accept the Tom Paine Award which the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC) was presenting him, she noticed that he was drunk. As he nervously mounted the stage, all eyes and ears were focused on him.

What happened next shocked and disturbed everyone there, including Dylan. In a surprisingly disaffected, disturbing, and disjointed string of sentences, Dylan proceeded to praise, and simultaneously castigate the assembly. At times that night his inflammatory ramblings were "on the money." At other times, though, his ramblings veered way "off mark." Finally, he was booed off stage. Rattled, the audience was outraged.

Not my mother, though. She took no offence, made no judgement. Mostly, she explained later, it was because she had listened to Dylan's songs and determined for herself that the high praise I'd constantly been heaping on him was merited. She said his hyper-sensitivity and confusion that night were visible a mile away, and that he was clearly impaired by too much drink. So, she soberly catalogued the spectacle away.

But the speech was awful. Dylan had identified himself with the infamous Lee Harvey Oswald, who had only weeks before assassinated JFK. He'd gone on to highly praise his countercultural black friends, but scathingly disparaged "Negroes in suits and ties." And he broadly dismissed the audience that night as a bunch of "bald heads," has-beens who'd outlived their time.

Consider the times. People were severely shaken by the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, April 1961. Those who paid close attention to such things knew of or suspected the existence of the follow-up Operation Mongoose which, before it fizzled out, brought together CIA, FBI, and the Mafia, all colluding behind the scenes to re-establish US political/economic hegemony in Latin America through mercenaries, sabotage, and covert military operations. Millions more were unnerved by the terrifying brinksmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962, which teetered on the edge of nuclear holocaust. Then the KO. Just weeks before the Awards Dinner, on November 22, 1963, countless hearts were shattered by the death shots that yanked JFK from the stage of the world.

Dylan, an unbought, conscience driven, intellectually brilliant musician/poet, who'd thrown in with the countercultural literati, knew of the shameless backroom deals. The counterculture bristled with indignation and rage over the illicit connections between government and the Mob, the perfidies of religion, and the war crimes committed in the name of democracy. Dylan's conscience could not forbid his Furies. Rather, he freed them to vent their rage. For by discharging their wrath, they freed his Muses.

Read Dylan's flawed acceptance speech of December 13, 1963, and his letter of apology that soon followed: <http://www.corliss-lamont.org/dylan.htm>. It may help explain the poet's current, mysterious reticence. It certainly reveals his humility and wisdom. Compare also the lyrical gem, "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine," – <http://bobdylan.com/songs/i-dreamed-i-saw-st-augustine/> – with these, and see the clarity he lacked at the Americana. The elusive "philosopher's stone" he'd wooed but failed to conjure that night in 1963 shows up in "Augustine." Here, his Furies spare no one: "I dreamed I was amongst the ones that put him out to death...." No one is "other." His Muses, setting the table for his Graces, declared that to

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Ministers Musings, continued

regard any other being with a differential outlook is to deny that other's inalienable, constitutional equality with all.

Endorsing a differential outlook inaugurates a process that condones hatred of the "other," with the baleful consequence of condoning hateful actions against them. Dylan's Muses insist otherwise. Sure, there will be and ought to be hatred of the hateful act. But there ought to be love for the misguided, maladjusted, and miscreant actor. Only then can restorative practices be sought and brought to bear to transform the evildoer. So, Dylan's Muses insist upon radical love. By seeing all beings – the best and the worst – with equal vision, a space is created for love. Or as the radical Jesuit priest and social activist Father John Dear declares, "If you cannot love Hitler, you cannot love."

Certainly, Fr. Dear is not condoning Hitler's atrocities. Rather, he makes the same distinction that Dr. Martin Luther King made, between the sinner and the sin, the same distinction Jesus made. It is the same vision that Bhagavan Sri Krishna extols in Bhagavad Gita chapter 5, text 18: "The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle saintly person, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater." This is the wisdom which Thich Nhat Hahn hacks after and achieves in his poem, "Call Me by My True Names":

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2088>. Radical love has redemptive power expressly because it declares that every being is of immutable spiritual equality with all other living beings. And that necessarily includes the misfits, the criminals, the lost, the lowest of humankind.

Radical love performs a sacred function in Dylan's literature. It ushers in the Graces. Only one fully alive to, unafraid of, and willing to stand up for their rage against evil doing can lay claim to radical love. Dylan's best poetry is born of the improbable marriage of heaven and hell, as William Blake put it. Grace, which is a face of Love, is born of the congress of clear-eyed Muses and implacable Furies. Love is a fecund and creative tension. Dylan accepts both chaos and cosmos. They are indispensable to his heartfelt, aching, authentic, and unconditional Love of Life, Truth, and Beauty. Amen, Bob. Rave on!

RE Corner

- Denise Jackson-Simon

Since beginning our World Religions exploration, the children and youth have learned basic facts about Judaism and Hinduism. We have celebrated Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, and Diwali. As we move into the holiday season, we will spend time on gratitude and Thanksgiving. The teens will be involved in a community service project. We will have a Celebration of Light in December where we will embrace many religions' holy days. Please join us anytime. It's much more fun when YOU are there!

Kwanzaa Concert

On December 30 at 6:30 p.m., the Wichita Griots will present a Kwanzaa Concert at First UU Church. The group uses high-energy storytelling and music to teach about African-American history. The Griots are a diverse, grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational storytelling arts in the inner city and the total community. Donations requested at the door.

Oxymoron

A song by Carol Denning, lyrics in collaboration with Myrna Campbell

Life as we know it, isn't that an oxymoron?
Like virtual reality
or other subtle contradictions.

You think you've found a truth
that you finally can count on.
But when you turn around,
you find the certainty is gone.

Hang on, little children, try to not be too disheartened.
Hang on, little children.
Let beauty and truth balance out the loss.
Hang on, little children, hang on.

Life as we know it, what a crazy oxymoron.
Like deafening silence
and other obvious contradictions.

You clearly marked the page,
but the paragraph is gone.
You thought you knew your place,
and then the words have traveled on.

Drive on, little children, try to not be too disheartened.
Drive on, little children.
Let beauty and truth balance out the loss.
Drive on, little children, drive on.

Life as we know it, what a lovely oxymoron.
Spinning through the universe,
control is largely an illusion.

Confusion has its place.
It contains the seeds of clarity.
And when you come away,
a peaceful day begins to dawn.

Sing on, little children, try to not be too disheartened.
Sing on, little children.
Let beauty and truth balance out the loss.
Sing on, little children, sing on.

Music Committee Notes

- Jana Rambo

We are continuing to hold choir practice at 9:30 on Sunday mornings in preparation for singing in the November 20 service. After that, we will practice and perform on an occasional basis. The church has lots of music filed away from previous choirs, so we plan to look through it to see what we might like to learn.

Several of us in the congregation enjoyed hearing Spook Handy's concert; he also performed the next day in the service. If you know of musicians who might like to do a concert for us, please let us know.

We would like to see a lot more people joining the choir, so if you can carry a tune, please join us. Additional Music Committee members would also be welcome.

FIRST UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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Eclectic Readers

Friday, December 16: We'll close 2016 with a "member's choice" offering. Bring a favorite story or poem connected with a seasonal/December celebration or observance, whether it be Christmas, Solstice, Kwaanza, Hanukkah, Bodhi Day, or other. Sharing and discussion follows our brown bag lunch at 11:30. Everyone is welcome! Del Smith, [316-612-0826](tel:316-612-0826).

Digerati Buchgemeinschaft

Come join the Digerati! We are an online book club. For November we are reading Ursula K LeGuin, *Wizard of Earthsea*. Join us to choose Decembers book. Discussions will take place at Goodreads. You can join us at <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/177877-digerati-buchgemeinschaft>

First Sunday Lunch: Sunday, December 4

-Bonnie Till

Got leftovers from the holiday? Bring them to First Sunday Lunch on December 4. Don't have leftovers? If you are unsure what to bring, you might follow this potluck guideline: Each dish and dessert should serve 6. *Last name starts with a letter A to M*, bring a vegetable or salad dish and dessert. *Last name starts with a letter from N to Z*, bring a meat or meat substitute dish and dessert.