



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA

FOUNDED 1887

Growing Abundance

- Corey Swertfager, President

There was a plethora of great ideas about fundraising, cost reduction, marketing, and outreach submitted before, during, and after the special congregational meeting that was held on April 30. Within a couple weeks, more than a dozen people convened the First UU Growth Group. The group sifted through the ideas and selected five for immediate action:

- Adopt-a-Bill: each bill could be adopted by one person or several people (bill sharing);
- 50/50 raffle: drawing to be held at the Annual Meeting on June 4;
- June 25 Richard Crowson & Scott Smith concert promotion (see article in this issue);
- Dillons Community Rewards enrollment promotion; and
- Provide pledge statements by email instead of mail for those who have email addresses on file.

We'll be putting other ideas into action to grow abundance of people and treasure at First UU. Come join the fun!

An Open Letter from the Director of Religious Exploration

- Denise Jackson-Simon

Attendance on Sundays in our Religious Exploration program for children has been low and sporadic the past couple of years. We have lost several school age children due to a number of factors. We have continued to try and provide a meaningful, enjoyable program for those who come. But, frankly, when we have Sundays where two or three show up, ranging in age from 5 to 16, well, that's a challenge.

It is so much more fun to have others with whom to share the church experience. The opportunities for age appropriate group activities and discussions are valuable and enriching. With so few in attendance, we have had to group everyone together, and that limits our ability to provide the most meaningful experience for each child. Occasional whole group gatherings and celebrations are great too, but not every Sunday.

I would like to see some interest around children, youth, and family activities at church outside of Sunday morning. Movies, games, themed parties, lock-ins come to mind. I also think it is important to have the children and youth more visible in the

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Garage Sale Success

- Marcia Ellsworth

A great big thanks to everyone who participated in our Second Annual Jumble/Garage Sale! We surpassed expectations and made about \$5000 from donations of lots and lots of household items. It is so true that one man's junk is another man's treasure. There was a steady stream of traffic for the three days we were open, most leaving with a happy face and a good deal. Thank you volunteers and those who donated the merchandise. We will have another sale next spring, so as you see things you no longer need or use, put them aside for our annual sale! Most anything that is clean and in good condition sells.

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.



Richard Crowson and Scott Smith in Concert June 25

- Annie Welsbacher

Local celebrity Richard Crowson will join U.K.-based performance artist Scott Smith in a special, family-friendly concert at 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, at First UU. There will be a cash bar, and light snack items will be available for purchase. Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased in advance in person, by phone (316-684- 3481), or online (send an e-mail to office@firstuu.net, or visit firstuu.net). Although early reservations are encouraged, tickets will also be sold at the door. Since all proceeds will support our church, we encourage friends and members to help us publicize this terrific event widely.

Richard Crowson—born and raised in Memphis, is a bluegrass musician and champion banjo player who has been part of the Wichita acoustic music scene for more than two decades. He performs with Pop and the Boys, a local acoustic jam band, and with his wife Karen Crowson in his family band, The Crowsons. Crowson is best known as an award-winning editorial cartoonist—his iconic cartoons are featured every Sunday in *The Wichita Eagle* and have been reprinted in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. He is also an editorial commentator for KMUW.

Scott Smith, a musician/composer, sound designer, teacher, and collaborator with a wide range of practitioners, plays in the band Porchlight Smoker, which features banjo, guitar, lapsteel, stand-up bass, and mandolin accompanying four-part vocal harmonies. The multinational band highlights Smith's interest in American roots traditions, Scotsman Steve Bell's Celtic folk influence, and London-born Fred Gregory's very English identity. Porchlight Smoker's *Water into Sand*, released in 2015, is the band's third CD. Smith, residing in the U.K. and working internationally as a freelance performer and composer for dance, theatre, and video, grew up at First UU and is longtime member Del Smith's son.

EcoFestWichita
Saturday, September 23, 2017
- Bonnie Till

The first official EcofestWichita planning meeting took place on May 1. This year's EcoFestWichita will be much the same as last year with, but not necessarily limited to, vendors, demonstrations, educators, book sale, plant sale, collectable sale, bake sale, and super soup lunch. There will be a few surprises, as well.

Any new idea(s) you may have to make this event more exciting and successful are very welcome. We need participation by the entire church family to put the fun in this learning/fundraising event. Part of the fun is all of us working together to make this the most successful EcofestWichita to date—lots of positive energy and First UU becoming known as the church that cares about the environment. What are some of the ways you can help?

1. Joe Lozano would like help setting up and tearing down the book sale. Toting all those books from and back to the storage shed takes strong people. Also, he needs help during the sale.
2. Bonnie Till needs volunteers to make the super soup and help with clean-up after lunch.
3. Annie Welsbacher is coordinating media. If you have expertise with electronic media, especially Twitter and Instagram, please contact Annie at awelsbacher@gmail.com.
4. If you would like to help with **EcoFestWichita**, want to have a booth, or have an idea for a sponsor, vendor, or educator, please contact Marcia Ellsworth, jelsworth@aol.com, or Vivien Minshull-Ford, minshull@yahoo.com.

"An Open Letter From the Director of Religious Exploration", continued

Sunday service from time to time. They can share things they're learning, topics of interest, songs, skits, etc....

For all the obvious reasons, children and youth are a vital part of our church community. So, ***I am asking parents to consider a stronger commitment in getting their children to church more regularly.*** When we have had more children in attendance and active parent involvement, our program has thrived. It was an exciting place to be full of energy and vitality. It can be that again. But, we need you, and we need your children!

I'm also asking for volunteers to join the RE team. The more we have, the less time commitment it is for anyone, and we can accommodate the different grade levels more effectively. This summer, it's our congregation members' opportunity to share their hobbies and interests with the children. I hope you'll consider signing up for a summer Sunday. We will begin new curricula in September, so I hope you'll also consider joining our RE team by then.

Please help us be the church you want for our UU children and youth. Contact me anytime with your comments, ideas, and suggestions at 316-945-7622 or simontrio3@aol.com.

Congratulations, Graduates!

- Bonnie Till

Bret Pollock graduated from Wichita Area Technical College in April with an Associates' Degree in Applied Science in Aircraft Maintenance Technology. Bret is currently employed at Bombardier Learjet in West Wichita.

Tiger Pollock graduated from Rose Hill High School in May and will attend Johnson County Community College in the fall. Tiger plans to major in Theater Arts.

Bret and Tiger are the grandsons of Rev. Greta Crosby and the late Bob Crosby. Rev. Crosby is Minister Emerita of First UU of Wichita. Lara and Danny Pollock are the proud parents.

Landen Schmidt graduated from Wichita Southeast High School in May and will attend Wichita State University in the fall. Landen intends to pursue degrees in Secondary Education and Physics, and a minor in Linguistics. Lynn and Thong Dy Vouthilak are the proud parents.

Your First UU family wishes the three of you success in your chosen careers. You are the light of the future.

Caring Committee

- LaRilla Combs

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 acknowledge celebratory events such as birthdays, weddings, births and graduations. What touches one of us affects us all. In caring for one another we are cared for.

Welcome to new Caring Committee members Lois Nelson and her daughter Jayne Henry!

Our thoughts are with Elaine Edens as she recovers from a fall on her knee that resulted in a tibial plateau fracture.

Congratulations to our graduates!

Inquirer Class June 3

Want to learn more about the UU denomination? Interested in learning more about First UU of Wichita? Considering becoming a member of First UU? Then, an Inquirer Class is for you.

Our next class is on Saturday, June 3, 2017, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the church. **First UU 101: History of our Church and Denomination** begins at 9:30, followed by a break for lunch, provided by the church. **First UU 102: Meaning of Membership** begins at approximately 12:15.

*Please contact church manager Anita Culp to register for this class: 684-3481 or office@firstuu.net. **Need child care? Let Anita know at least 3 days prior to class.***

June 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 9:30p Inquirer's Class
4 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Choir Practice 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch 12:30p Annual Cong Mtg	5	6 4:00p Membership Committee 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	7 7:00p Committee on Ministry	8 7:00p Green Sanctuary Committee	9	10 10:00p Caring Committee
11 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Choir Practice 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:30p Leadership Council	12	13 6:30p Zen Friends	14 1:30p Worship Committee	15	16 11:30p Eclectic Readers Group	17 6:30p UU Humanist Group
18 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Choir Practice 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:30p Social Action Group	19 6:30p Writers Group	20 6:30p Zen Friends	21 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	22	23 1:00p Private Event	24 2:00p Private Event
25 9:45a Adult RE 10:00a Choir Practice 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 2:00p Crowson-Smith Concert	26 2:00p Movie Group	27 6:30p Zen Friends	28 1:30p Newsletter Mailing	29	30	

More Candidate Bios

- Corey Swertfager

Last month's *In Touch* featured bios from some of the great candidates we will choose from at our Annual Meeting (June 4, 12:30 p.m.). One of the candidates since then has had to withdraw. Luckily, Amy Geyer agreed to be added to the slate.

President-Elect, to be empaneled by affirmation at annual meeting: Doug Wilson.

Board of Trustees, two to be elected for three years, one to be elected for two years: Amy Geyer (running for three-year term), Dave Lombard (running for two-year term), Joe Lozano (running for three-year term), Holger Meyer (running for three-year term), Paula Peare (running for three-year term), Lori Young (running for two-year term).

Nominating Committee, three to be elected: Masud Chand, Rolando Gomez, Dee Dee Jordan, Vivien Minshull-Ford, Peter Ninemire.

Here are the other the candidates' short bios:

Masud Chand (Nominating Committee): Being a member of the nominating committee would be a great privilege, and if I were to earn that responsibility, I will look forward to fulfilling it to the best of my ability. As an educator, I see the principles that underlie the Unitarian Universalist tradition as a living manifestation that can help us better ourselves and our communities. As a firm believer in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the importance of justice and equity in all of our relations, I will strive to ensure that these principles guide my actions throughout my tenure.

Amy Geyer (Board of Trustees): I have been a member of First UU since about 2007. I have served on and chaired the worship committee for several years and was a member of the Board from 2008 to 2011. I would like to see First UU not just survive, but grow and thrive! I would like to work with people to develop and implement a foundation based on our principles that facilitates long term growth for our congregation and establishes First UU as a leader in bringing people together on social issues in the Wichita community.

Peter Ninemire (Nominating Committee): I joined this wonderful church in 2002 by a chance encounter. It has since become one of the most important and stabilizing factors in my life. It certainly is where I am in time of need, and other times to be spiritually enriched and connected to a group of like-minded justice-serving people who do so much for this community. My greatest regret is that I cannot do more to support this church, so I do what I can when I can, which is why I could not turn down one of the most respected members of this community when she asked me to serve in the Nominating Committee, citing my understanding of and involvement in some of the more recent church history and our members. I am honored to serve if elected, and if not, I would be very supportive of whoever is, as this is a great group of nominees. Professionally, I own and operate a behavioral health and addictions practice in Wichita, which incorporates child play therapy delivered by another UU church member who helped me establish this practice. Personally, I have a 14-year-old daughter who remains the joy, love and center of my life. I remain grateful for the many members of this congregation and the role they have played in both of our lives.

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How Did You Find Us?

- Annie Welsbacher

Ever wonder how people find their way to First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita? A new bar graph – created by First UU’s stalwart webmaster, photographer, and overall tech guy, Jack Regehr – gives clues to that information. Far from scientific because of the relatively small number of units it measures, the visual nevertheless gives us insight into how people discover us. And it will help us determine how to make it easier to do so in the future.

It Takes a Village: We’ve had myriad greeters over the years, but you’ll frequently find the smiling faces of Anne, Susan, and LaRilla Combs, among others, when you enter our gathering space. Sunday service greeters hand visitors cards that include the question, “How did you hear about First UU?” The cards are developed and maintained by the membership committee (Bonnie Till, chair; Anne Bailey; Debra Clements; Anita Culp; and Susan Hund-Milne). Office Manager Anita Culp compiles information from those cards into the church computer.

Numbers into Art: Fueled by his interest in marketing and his devotion to our church, Jack Regehr worked up a bar graph of this information in preparation for the April 30 congregational meeting to discuss our financial challenges. The membership committee, communications committee, congregational officers, and board of trustees then contributed clarifying suggestions.



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"How Did You Find Us?" continued

The Story Behind the Picture: Covering a period between November 2014 (following the installation of the electronic sign) and mid-April of this year, the graph shows that most visitors hear about us from their friends (primarily) and relatives: our members. This information underscores how important it is that we all be actively engaged in marketing our church in our own way – by talking about a wonderful experience, new friend, different hobby, great musical performance, or thoughtful insight that we found at First UU.

Following “friends and family,” the next most commonly cited factor is the website, suggesting that continued and future support for this powerful vehicle will be a good investment. The membership committee thanks Jack for the remarkable job that he has done on creating, revamping, and maintaining our website.

Next is the electronic sign, whose messages appear and are regularly updated thanks to our diligent office manager, Anita Culp. We will continue to research and explore use of the sign’s content and how it might further aid our visibility.

Facebook is the final category. To expand our social media presence, we are eager to recruit young people willing to post on Twitter, Instagram, and other popular sites. (Please contact me or Debra for more information about this important need.)

Not represented visually because of their small individual numbers (but adding up to a significant percentage overall), additional responses to the question cite “phone book; TV news; UU churches in Hutchinson, Topeka, Kansas City, and California; Inter-Faith Ministries; EcoFest; the UUA website; library; brochure at Donut Whole; and ‘other.’” We hope these numbers grow as we continue EcoFest Wichita, social action efforts, and other involvements.

Men to Sing

- Jana Rambo

The Music Committee continues to invite new members to join us in our work to bring more music to the life of the church. The choir sang for a service in April and will do so again in June. We need more members for the choir, especially men. We will begin practicing again at 10 a.m. on the first Sunday in June.

Thanks to Del Smith, her son Scott Smith along with Richard Crowson will present a concert on June 25. Since Richard is well-known on the local music scene, we hope to draw many people from the community. This is a fundraiser for the church; Scott, who grew up in the congregation, is donating his time and talents. (See details in the Smith-Crowson Concert article in this issue.)

More Candidate Bios" continued

Doug Wilson (President-Elect): I was born and raised in Wichita. My family is Catholic, and I went to Catholic grade school and Catholic high school. I pushed back against Christianity as early as 6th grade, and as soon as I was permitted to, I avoided church altogether. I spent my twenties in Oregon, Utah, California, and Arizona, hiking, backpacking and mountain biking, and going to outdoor music and art festivals. Perhaps most importantly, I immersed myself in a progressive community in Eugene, Oregon. I learned more about environmental sustainability, holistic health, and politics. In Eugene, I experienced a sense of spirituality that I believe can result from a balanced, holistic life, knowledge of certain aspects of the Universe and science while counterbalancing that knowledge with creativity and imagination, and acknowledging the oneness and love we can all share. But oh! It can be overwhelming and easy to distract oneself with fun less important things. I got away from that progressive life for years, and following a divorce, realized I needed more of it. I reached out to friends online and met some of their friends worldwide, all very incredible people. Soon, I realized I needed that community locally, and I found First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita, where I overcome my fear of religion, in the traditional sense, to engage in a community that is collaborating to cultivate a world that aligns with my beliefs.

Lori Young (Board of Trustees): I first learned of Unitarian Universalism 20 some years ago while living in Missouri. I was employed at Ft Leonard Wood, Missouri, an Army training base, and lived near the Mark Twain National Forest. I spent many days in the forest doing adventurous activities with the Ozark Outdoor

Society. It was during that time that I developed a true appreciation and love of nature. While talking with one of my companions about spiritual and religious matters, he offered that I might be interested in Unitarian Universalism. So I did some research and found a church 30 miles away in Rolla. Unfortunately, it was closed during the summer, and I never did get to visit when it did open. In 2000, I moved back to Wichita and found the First Unitarian Universalist Church and became a member. But shortly after that, I moved to Pratt for a job, so my attendance was inconsistent. My job in Pratt involved traveling to provider based rural health clinics that I was managing. During those drives, I listened to audiobooks on Buddhism and physics. The mysticism of both helped form whatever my spiritual path is now.

In 2010, I moved back to Wichita and have tried to involve myself in the church but haven't really stepped up until now. I've met some great people here through Seeking Circles and the Buddhist groups. I've attended and enjoyed the Pagan gatherings, Meatless Mondays, Humanists events, and I had the pleasure of taking a memoirs class with Marguerite Regan. And, I believe that the First UU has a brilliant, funny, talented and enlightened minister, David Carter, who I adore! But what I cherish most is the spiritual freedom to not believe in traditional dogma and to be honest about our individual beliefs, knowing that we have a church home that will not only accept but embrace us.

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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Eclectic Readers

11:30 am, Friday, June 16: *The Bluest Eye* is Toni Morrison's first novel, a book heralded for its richness of language and boldness of vision. Set in the author's girlhood hometown of Lorain, Ohio, it tells the story of black, eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove. Pecola prays for her eyes to turn blue so that she will be as beautiful and beloved as all the blond, blue-eyed children in America. In the autumn of 1941, the year the marigolds in the Breedloves' garden do not bloom, Pecola's life does change – in painful, devastating ways.

The book is available from Wichita Public Library. Join us for a brown bag lunch and spirited discussion. Contact: Del Smith, [316-612-0826](tel:316-612-0826).

Digerati Buchgemeinschaft

Come join the Digerati! We are an online book club. We are deciding what to read next. Discussions will take place at Goodreads. You can join us at <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/177877-digerati-buchgemeinschaft>. Contact Rolando Gomez, shadoe7@mac.com, for questions on how to join.