



In Touch

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF WICHITA
FOUNDED 1887

Board Authorizes New Mission Statement

Charles Merrifield, COM Chair

At the September meeting, the Board of Trustees of the church reviewed a proposal from the Committee on Ministry (COM) to shorten and simplify our mission statement. Various sources had encouraged us to have a more direct and brief mission statement that could distinguish us from other churches and that could be memorized easily. A mission statement should be able to be clearly stated to members and guests, and help serve as a unifying principle for church activities. The board agreed in September that our new mission statement would be **“A welcoming community with diverse beliefs united for positive change.”** This statement was judged to meet the guidelines better than our former mission statement: “Our mission, consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles, is to provide a joyful, safe, healing environment where diversity is embraced. We will inspire and uplift the whole person through enriching programs and services for all ages, and serve the larger community through social action and active promotion of the arts.”

RE Corner: With Gratitude

Denise Jackson-Simon DRE

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, let me say that I am grateful to have the opportunity to teach and hang out with the young people of our church. They are bright, inquisitive, fun kids. It is a joy to see some new children beginning to attend. I'm doing my best to create meaningful experiences for the wide range of ages. Please consider joining our RE team so there are more of us available to provide age-appropriate instruction.

We continue to explore respect and responsibility with a focus on gratitude in November. The children will sing a song written by UU kids on the third Sunday.

Then in December, our lessons and activities will center around Peace and Light. The kids and the congregation will participate in an intergenerational service on December 17. Children's RE will NOT meet on December 24 or 31. Happy Holiday time!

Let the Sun Shine In

Vivien Minshull-Ford

The time has come for us to practice what we preach, so to speak. Following EcoFest Wichita 2017, \$1,000 has been set aside from the nearly \$4,000 raised from EcoFest to start a solar capital campaign.

Kent Rowe, Jennifer Connelly, and Holger Meyer, our environmental team, have been choosing the best equipment for roof installation, reviewing several solar panel and mounting plans, and selecting the most reliable source. During 2017 our monthly electric bill has ranged from \$400 to \$700: solar panels will reduce our energy consumption considerably, making it possible to put the savings towards other church needs.

The next hurdle to clear is raising the money. Each panel will cost an estimated \$179; the mounts cost \$63 each; and it is planned to have 18 to 20 panels. The total cost of the installation is estimated to be between \$6,000 and \$7,000, including the inverter (at \$1,560) which converts solar power to energy. As with the LED light campaign in 2014, we are inviting members of the congregation to please consider making donations to the capital campaign. Fund a panel; share the cost of a panel; make a team donation; or give what you would like to give and can afford: any amount will help us to be true to our seventh principle by using a renewable energy source. All donations will be gratefully received and commemorated on a highly visible plaque. Payments may be made via PayPal, credit card, check, or cash. If you would like to donate, or have questions about First UU's bid for solar, please call Kent Rowe, 316-409-7178, or Charles Merrifield, 316-371-3960.

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.

Snow Days Anita Culp

December weather in Kansas means the possibility of snow and ice. When the weather is bad, the board president makes the decision on canceling Sunday services based on the safety of congregants to be out driving and on the weather forecast for Saturday night. The president tries to make the decision no later than mid-Saturday afternoon so there is time to get the word out to congregants. This sometimes means the weather improves Saturday night but the decision has already been made.

Closings are posted on Facebook and ListServe, and three local TV stations are notified: KWCH (broadcast channel 12), KAKE (broadcast channel 10), and KSN (broadcast channel 3). Of those three, KWCH is the most reliable as they use an automated system and the message goes on their crawl line within a few minutes of notification. Look for “First Unitarian Universalist—Wichita” on the crawl line. The church telephone message will also announce the closing. If you do not have a TV, feel free to contact Anita Culp at her home telephone number, 316-744-2840.

As for when we do have church services after a snow storm, the church has a snow-plowing contract for the parking lot for snowfall amounts over two inches. The company is good about getting the job done before the Sunday service. As always, the decision is yours about venturing out in bad weather. We want you to be safe.

Caring Committee LaRilla Combs

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 are glad that Millie Wherritt has returned home to continue her recovery from a fall several months ago. Millie welcomes calls and cards.

We extend our most heartfelt condolences to Carol Denning’s family. A sympathy card was sent on behalf of our members and friends.

We wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy Holiday Season.

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

Carol S. Denning: November 15, 2017

notes compiled by Suzanne Miller

Lyrics [adapted], "Done Too Soon," Neil Diamond: "And [we] wept when it was all done / For bein' done too soon / For bein' done too soon / For bein' done."

Email from Jana Rambo for the Caring Committee: "We deeply regret having to tell everyone that our pianist, Carol Denning, died this afternoon (Wednesday, November 15, 2017). She was hit by a truck that was backing up. David Carter was interviewed by Channel 12, and there was a brief story on the 6:00 news which will be expanded for the 10:00 news tonight. Carol's exuberant music enlivened our services, and her energy and vision greatly expanded the role music has played in our congregation. We will miss her deeply."

Rev. David Carter, interviewed by KWCH TV: "It's like surreal; it's just hard to believe—even when the office manager gave me the message, *her name and death* just didn't seem to go together.... She brought pep and joy. She was an effervescent personality.... Gaiety and joyfulness come to mind straight away. At the same time, she had gravity. She deeply cared about people and about touching people with her music."



Rev. Carter adds, "Let me explain how Carol's 'gravity' complimented her levity. Her 'gravity' manifested through her profound knowledge about and effective application of music's power to transform life. She taught that singing 'rewires' the brain's neurotransmitters and stimulates powerful chemical changes within that boost intelligence, creativity, wellbeing, and joy. And she was intentional in taking her knowledge well beyond rhetoric. Carol organized a dynamic choir whose exuberant singing unleashed a veritable contagion of happiness, fellow feeling, and spiritual health! In gratitude, we will keep prominently lit the healing light Carol's music set alight. She chose to bless our church and the world, abundantly. And we will not forget!!!"

Facebook post from Corey Swertfager: "In memory of Carol Denning—here is the recording of the service that she presented at First UU a few weeks ago, including the choir and the Sylvie Singers that she gently and brilliantly guided: <http://firstuu.net/sermons/singing-from-the-heart/>. Let us keep the torch of music burning for her."

"Remembering Carol" by Holly Terrill, president of the congregation: "Losing Carol has been such a terrible loss—for her family, for our church community, and for the world. A ray of sunshine seemed to continuously emanate from Carol; I don't think I ever once saw her in a bad mood. The music she played during Sunday services was moving and uplifted the spirits of all who heard it. I especially enjoyed listening to her play the piano before service; it was as if she played for no one and everyone all at once. I loved her tenacity. Although we could never quite get the hang of singing in a round, she never gave up on us. Carol will be greatly missed by myself and all who knew her."

Continued on page 4

Carol S. Denning, continued

Facebook post from Susan Hund-Milne: “My heart is breaking. Our church and the Wichita community and the world has lost a wonderful human being. Carol Denning was full of life and love and light. I'll miss her terribly.”

“A brief reflection on friendship...” by Del Smith: “How do friendships begin? My friendship with Carol Denning began first time we met. It seemed clear that neither of us had the same "higher power" the others in the meeting prayed to. I had decades of sober living and trust in the process and knew what worked for me. (Carol and I were both quite open about being in recovery, so there's no abuse of anonymity in what I've written.) Carol accepted my invitation to attend First Unitarian Universalist Church soon afterward. She continued to attend, listened and questioned, eventually became church musician, and finally signed the membership book! Oh, did she question!!

“She was open to the world. Some of our best talks were inspired by the work of Pema Chodron. Carol's spiritual foundation was the Toltec Four Agreements: 1) Be impeccable with your word. 2) Don't take anything personally. 3) Don't make assumptions. 4) Always do your best. (I believe she shared that in a feedback service at church once. I know she talked a lot about the Agreements with me at the very beginning of our regular meetings.) She was passionate about her music, both at church and with The Carol Denning Trio and her original compositions. She did the arranging for our nascent choir, arrangements tailored to the voices available and was positively joyful about the blossoming of the program at First UU.

“She will be missed, missed mightily. But the large hole in the light of the Universe is filling with memories of the Carol we knew and loved and laughed with frequently and cried with occasionally. It is too early after her untimely death to know the full impact of our friendship and her legacy in the music she performed and created. The answers will come.”



Hats and Mittens Wanted

Anne Bailey

As we have for several years, members and friends are invited to decorate our Christmas tree with hats, gloves, mittens, and other winter wear which will be given to Operation Holiday to be distributed to needy Wichitans early in December. Please be generous.

New Year's Eve Party

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

WUUPS: Wichita Unitarian Universalist Polytheists' Society

Our next Full Moon Celebration will be on Saturday, December 2, 7 p.m. at the church. Please join us for song, drumming, and chanting as we prepare for all the December holidays. Snacks are welcome as well, and you are encouraged to bring your drums or other instruments. Call Anne Bailey (316-650-4905), Linda Jordan (316-512-6652), or Paula Peare (316-312-5235) if you need further information.

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.

December 2017

December 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 7:00p Full Moon Circle
3 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p First Sunday Lunch	4	5 3:30p Membership Committee 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p UU Craft Night	6 7:00p Committee on Ministry	7	8	9 10:00a Caring Committee 1:00p Private Event
10 9:45a Adult Relig Exp 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Rev. Farewell Lunch 12:20p Leadership Council 3:00p Nether Consort	11 6:00p Vegan Potluck	12 6:30p Zen Friends	13 7:00p Worship Committee	14	15 11:30a Eclectic Readers Group	16 11:00a Private Event
17 9:30a Seeking Circle 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:20p Social Action Group	18 6:30p Writers Group	19 6:30p Zen Friends	20 7:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	21	22	23 6:30p UU Humanist Dinner and Meeting
24 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 7:00p Christmas Eve Service	25 2:00p Movie Group	26 6:30p Zen Friends	27 1:30p Newsletter Mailing	28	29	30 6:30p Griots Kwanzaa Celebration
31 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Choir Practice 11:00a Worship Service 7:00p New Years Eve Party						

Music Committee Update

Jana Rambo

As I thought about writing this for the December newsletter, I imagined that most of the article would be about how Carol Denning had intended to bring in special music for our services. She had so many contacts around town, and had played music with so many people, it seemed she had an unending list of people she could invite to play, or to join her in playing. Not only that, Carol was more than competent to perform in many genres of music, giving us a variety we hadn't experienced in our services.

At this point, we have many unknowns about how we'll incorporate music into the life of our church. Although I chair the committee, I counted on Carol for ideas and energy that I am lacking. I think it's unlikely we'll be able to keep the choir going unless someone comes along with the skills to direct it. We are fortunate that Jenny Bowen is able to play for services for the next several weeks, and that Eric Whetmore, who played a few weeks ago, is also available. Their involvement will help ensure that we maintain the high quality of music we've come to expect in our services. The Music Committee will be coordinating with the Worship Committee to be sure we have a pianist. We will also begin the search for someone to fill the pianist position.

The Music Committee can't do this by ourselves. To maintain the quality of our music, we need help in many ways, even from non-musicians:

1. If you have any musical ability, volunteer to share it. This will add depth and variety to our services. I can relate to the fact that many of us don't enjoy performing in front of an audience, but think of it as a gift to be shared with others, not an ordeal to be endured.
2. If you know a pianist who might want to apply to play on an ongoing basis, please let us know. Also, if you know a musician who might perform in our service (preferably for free), please put us in touch.
3. Join the Music Committee. Besides myself, we have only two other members—Anne Bailey and Dave Lombard. We have a lot to do, and we need more help.

If everyone works together, we can honor Carol's memory and maintain the high standard she set.

Note from Thea: Transition Support

When David Carter asked me whether I would be available to help the congregation through the upcoming ministerial transition, I immediately said yes. As we wish him fare well and offer our best wishes for his life changes, the congregation can be easy that you can call on me for needed ministerial services such as weddings, memorial services, etc., and I will continue to serve on the Worship Committee. Thea Nietfeld (nietfeldthea@gmail.com)

Farewell Party for Rev. Carter

Our much beloved Minister, Rev. David Carter, is retiring from formal ministry effective December 31, 2017. In January, he plans to move back to his hometown, New York City, and there to resume living as an unpaid religious worker. Your Board of Trustees feels we can't let David go without one more UU pot luck to mark the occasion of his time with us. Plan to join in the fun and farewell following the service on Sunday, December 10. A sign-up sheet for "who plans to bring what" will be posted in the gathering space beginning Sunday, November 19.

The Farewell Pot Luck will be Sunday, December 10, immediately after the service. If you have any suggestions for this event, please contact Bonnie Till at 316-644-4043 or bect@cox.net.

Minister's Musings: Two Poems

Rev. David Carter

A Great Mountain to Cross

Rupa

fifty years ago I knew
a long way few companions
and a great mountain to cross

but even now long years after
as I trudge on
the towering mountain

retreats

those who looked elsewhere
got their desire
still I've got no complaint

only my moment's
passing
and I need your hand

let me confess

I know the obstacle is
the mountain of desire
buried in my heart

even so

without your help
Rupa
I cannot cross

(For a biographical sketch of Srila Rupa Goswami, please visit <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rupa-Gosvami>)

Pain Opened a Door

Rupa

pain opened a door
into your presence

your unspeakably beautiful servant
whose hand holds yours
smiling kindly took me by the hand

how long I stood
rejoicing
I cannot say

but I blinked and your servant appeared to
disappear

pain that turned a key is a serpent again
sit down it hisses sit down.
how long will you stand there in the rain?

Hladini Shakti Das admits

my mind is no better than an ass
every minute it figures
just one more step
one more and the carrot's mine

but Rupa's servant gave me a priceless
jewel

and now
early and late Sri Nama Prabhu*
while putting the ass out to pasture
dances on my tongue

* *Sri Nama Prabhu* refers to the 32 syllable *Maha Mantra* (The Great Mantra For Deliverance) which begins with the words *Hare Krishna*: <http://www.harekrishna.com/col/books/YM/cbh/ch3.html>

(For a biographical sketch of Srila Rupa Goswami, please visit <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rupa-Gosvami>)

FIRST UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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Eclectic Readers

11:30 am, Friday, December 15: In recognition of the busy times in December, Jean Vaughn has chosen A. A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young* for reading and discussion. This best-selling book of poetry was first published in 1914 and has been a favorite of children, parents, aunts, uncles, nannies, grannies, and grandpas ever since. We are introduced to Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh in the book. The discussion will be enlivened by reading about the author (reader's choice) and sharing the information with the group. We meet at 11:30 for conversation and a brown-bag lunch. Discussion starts at approximately 12 noon. Del Smith, 316-612-0826.

Digerati Buchgemeinschaft

Come join the Digerati! We are an online book club. Join us in plotting, er, planning, our next literary conquest! 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.