



In Touch

First Unitarian Universalist Church of
Wichita
Founded 1887

December 2019

More Wonder

- Andrew Davis

The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that the word wonder means, among other things, something that causes astonishment. This can be a marvel, a miraculous or supernatural deed, an extraordinary natural occurrence, or an astonishing act, and wonder evokes a feeling of unexpectedness or surprise. As we move into the Yule season, it seems a good time to take stock of the wonder around us.

In her essay “Small Wonder” Barbara Kingsolver writes of a child who was lost and then found in Lorestan, a province in Iran. The wonder of the story was so palpable to Kingsolver that it became not only the title of a collection of essays, but a parable she carries with her and continually ponders to keep in touch with the mystery of the wonderful that keeps the awful at bay.

This child was suddenly discovered missing by the girl in the village who was babysitting a group of children while the parents were off doing parent things. The child was there and then, suddenly, was gone. She immediately notified the parents, and the entire village searched until it was too dark to search any longer, then they started again at first light. For three days they searched, and Kingsolver tells us that most of adults had lost hope by then, whispering words of despair among themselves, but they kept searching because no one wanted to be the ones to tell the parents that there was no hope.

Finally, they came upon a cave that smelled of wet bear, and they at last heard the cries of a human child. Full of fear, they went into the cave and found the child lying there, perfectly healthy and well fed, with the bear curled around him, protecting him from the smell of intruders. Kingsolver then asks and answers the question at the heart of this story:

Continued on page 4

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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.

Ripples

- Caring Committee Representative: Linda Jordan

The Caring Committee is the part 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.

A great thank you to all who stopped by our table during the first Sunday Committee Fair! We enjoyed all the interactions, interest and questions. We gave out free (Hershey) kisses and (optional) hugs. We are pleased to announce and welcome our newest member, Caroline Alexander! We look forward to working with Caroline. We are still welcoming others who wish to participate in our efforts! Please contact Jana Rambo and LaRilla Combs.

Updates on Members:

Lila Arnold is back home and convalescing. Keep her in your prayers and/or positive thoughts for her continued recovery.

Fern Van Giesen is regaining her strength and recovering from surgery for her broken hip. She is in rehab at Larkfield Place and can have visitors.

Joe Mohr still has available time to see congregants wishing spiritual and/or emotional support. He's our pastoral care person. You may contact him directly at 580-729-0781 to schedule an appointment.

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

Treasurer's Report End of Year Tax Deductions

We have money in the bank and the current bills are all paid. We are under budget at this point in our fiscal year. Donations and fund raising are running ahead of what was budgeted.

However, pledge payments are not quite where they could be. We all have just a few weeks to get caught up and qualify for an income tax deduction. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

ECOFEST 2020 – ARE YOU IN?

The time has come to begin work on our sixth annual Ecofest! The 2020 year is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. It takes about six months to plan and organize this event, and the last day of this month will be the deadline, at which we decide whether to launch Ecofest or put it on hold for a year. We know that some of you have been thinking about being part of it; and with a large enough committee, we can still pull it off by the beginning of May. Ecofest involvement is most suited to creative, energetic, and possibly, retired people, as it can be time-consuming. The benefit of satisfaction, as the event roars on around you however, are tremendous.

What we need: YOU! Enthusiastic eco-conscious people ready for shared participation in this thoroughly worthwhile project. We already have people ready to commit to working on the Ecofest food and one person who wants to help with media outreach. There are many roles and it will take all kinds of people; even a small role can have a large impact!

We are planning to have an organizational meeting on **January 19**, by which, potential participants will have a good idea what they are interested in doing for Ecofest. In the meantime, think Greta Thunberg, global warming, and rivers and oceans clogged with plastics--keep in touch and join us in supporting the 7th Principle.

Please contact Marcia Ellsworth at 208-3083, mjelsworth@aol.com or Vivien Minshull-Ford at 683-9295, vminshull@gmail.com. If you are thinking about pitching in but are nervous of taking the plunge: we will be happy to talk about it on the phone, after church, or over lunch, or coffee.

December Anniversaries

Anita Culp, Membership Committee

The following members joined First UU Church during the month of December (with years of membership given). We celebrate your membership and look forward to your continuing participation in our church life: Rachel Rutledge (14) and Jenny Bowen (6).

More Wonder, continued

What does it mean? How is it possible that a huge, hungry bear would take a pitifully small, delicate human child to her breast rather than rip him into food? But she was a mammal, a mother. She was lactating, so she must have had young of her own somewhere – possibly killed, or dead of disease, so that she was driven by the pure chemistry of maternity to take this small, warm neonate to her belly and hold him there, gently. You could read this story and declare “impossible,” even though many witnesses have sworn it’s true. Or you could read this story and think of how warm lives are drawn to one another in cold places, think of the unconquerable force of a mother’s love, the fact of the DNA code that we share in its great majority with other mammals – you could think of all that and say, Of course the bear nursed the baby. He was crying from hunger, she had milk. Small wonder.

It is a small wonder and yet the largest wonder in the world: one child out of billions who not only lives, but thrives, when he should have died a horrible death.

But even more wonderful is the ability of Kingsolver to find the story and tell it in a way that brought wonder to the lives of others. We need more wonder, and I’m not just talking about barely believable stories of survival that stretch credulity to the breaking point, but do not break it. We need to be astonished, especially by the small, seemingly miraculous events that surround us. So, when you find a moment full of wonder, share it; and when you have a chance to listen to such wonder, hear it. We’ll all be the better for it.



Unitarian Universalist Association Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- * The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
 - * Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
 - * Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
 - * A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
 - * The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
 - * The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
 - * Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- (Adopted by the 1984 and 1985 General Assemblies)

Who's Who @ First UU

FIRST UU OFFICERS & BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President— Andrew Davis

President-Elect— Holger Meyer

Board of Trustees— Joe Lozano, Rolando Gomez, Masud Chand, Jayne Henry, Linda Jordan, Vivien Minshull-Ford, and Kent Rowe

Treasurer— Anne Bailey

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Adult RE— Frank Ruf

Aesthetics— Kay Davis

Building & Grounds— Bruce Roby (Bldg) and Anita Culp (Grnds)

Caring— LaRilla Combs and Jana Rambo

Chalice Lighters Ambassador— Bonnie Till

Children's RE— TBD

Chalice Book Store— Joe Lozano

Communications— TBD

EcoFest— TBD

Finance— Charles Merrifield

Financial Commitment— TBD

Fundraising— Marcia Ellsworth and Vivien Minshull-Ford

Green Sanctuary— Linda Jordan

Hospitality— TBD

Kitchen Mavens— TBD

Librarian— Nancy Milner

Marketing— TBA

Membership— Anne Bailey

Music— Jana Rambo

Partner Church— Debbie Wadman

Personnel— TBD

Program Development— TBD

Social Action— Sharon Kniss

UUA Denominational Liaison— Mike Diggs

Worship— TBD

COMMITTEE ON **MINISTRY**— Charles Merrifield, chair; LaRilla Combs, Paula Peare, Rachel Rutledge, Susan Hund-Milne, and Holly Terrell

NOMINATING COMMITTEE— Jennifer Connelly, Charles Merrifield, and Nancy Milner

GROUP CONTACTS

Craft Group— Anita Culp

Digerati Buchgemeinschaft— Rolando Gomez

Eclectic Readers— Anne Bailey

Fourth Monday Movie Group— Vivien Minshull-Ford

Garden Group— Anita Culp and Linda Jordan

Humanist Group— Charles Merrifield

Occasional Book Club— TBA

Pagan Group— Anne Bailey, Linda Jordan, and Paula Peare

Zen Friends of Wichita— Bob Feleppa and Vivien Minshull-Ford

STAFF

Custodian— Linda Jordan

Office Manager— Anita Culp

Pastoral Care— Joe Mohr

Director of Children's Religious Education— Denise Jackson-Simon

December 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Thanksgiving Potluck (First Sunday Lunch)	2 6:30p Zen Friends	3 7:00p UU Craft Night	4 7:00p Committee on Ministry	5	6	7 7:00p Pagan Circle
8 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Small Group 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Leadership Council	9 4:00p Worship Committee 6:00p Vegan Potluck 6:30p Zen Friends	10	11 7:00p Membership Committee	12	13	14 10:00a Caring Committee 6:30p Game Night
15 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:20p Social Action Group	16 6:30p Zen Friends 7:00p Church Growth Meeting	17	18 6:00p Board of Trustees 11:00p Newsletter and Calendar Deadline	19	20 11:30a Eclectic Readers	21
22 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 10:00a Small Group 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Yule Dinner	23 1:00p Movie Group 6:30p Zen Friends	24	25 Christmas Church Office Closed	26 1:30p Newsletter Mailing	27	28 6:30p UU Humanist Group
29 9:45a Adult Relig Explor 11:00a Worship Service 11:00a Children's RE 12:15p Music Committee	30 6:30p Zen Friends	31 7:00-10:00p New Year's Eve Party				

What Does it Mean to be a People of Awe? Worship Services for December Worship Committee

Who among us has never experienced a moment when we were overcome by a sense of awe and wonder? For some such feelings arise when they view the vastness of the universe, or see an overwhelmingly beautiful sight, hear a piece of music that carries them to another plane, or perhaps, to look into an innocent child's eyes. Whatever the cause, we may be overawed with a sense of the smallness of our own place in this vast universe, or conversely, a realization of the larger story of which we are a part. At those moments we tend to feel a sense of connectedness to the universe and to the great conversation of life that we are all a part of.

This month we are invited to consider what inspires awe and reverence in each of us, and we are encouraged to travel through the world with marvel and amazement. Each of the services this month will approach this theme in a different way and invite us to find for ourselves what fills us with wonder.

12/1: Roxanne McKenzie brings us her original presentation, "How Great Thou Art: In Awe-Some Wonder."

12/8 : Dan DeMott will present his adaptation of "Thin Places" by the Rev. Gretchen Haley, exploring the places and random moments in which we feel so connected to and awed by the beauty that we at once "recover our past, claim our present, imagine new futures" for ourselves and we are transformed.

12/15: Andrew Davis will present a sermon titled "Small Things," in which he will explore the awe that can emerge and flourish when we pay attention to the little things around us.

12/22: Lara Pollock joins us in the pulpit to present "Illuminations on Peace, Love and Joy" in which she will encourage us to: Envision deep Peace within; welcome connection with Loving Essence; share Light & Love within our community; and join in heartfelt resonance as we joyfully celebrate the Spirit of the Season.

12/29: Charles Merrifield brings us "UU Christianity" in which he will examine the beginnings of unitarian and universalist thinking in early Christianity through to the 18th and 19th century heydays of Unitarianism and Universalism to the beliefs of today's UU Christians.

Special Online Growth Meeting with MidAmerica Region Consultant

December 16 at 7 pm, the church will have an online meeting with Rev. Phillip Lund. Phil is our Congregational Life Consultant through the UUA MidAmerica Region. He will discuss ideas about how we can grow the church to the point that we can afford to employ a minister. The meeting will be recorded for future sharing. There likely will be more online meetings as we explore the future of the congregation. We are planning on having the meeting together at the church, however as an online meeting, you could check back with Charles Merrifield before the meeting to see if remote participation will be available. All church participants are welcome to attend.

Adult Religious Exploration Starts a New Series

- Anita Culp

Starting Sunday, December 1, the Adult RE will start a new video series, "The Science of Self." Join the class in the corner RE room at **9:45 a.m. every Sunday**.

Some of the most profound secrets about what it means to be human are now being revealed, thanks to the amazing tools of biotechnology. The Human Genome Project opened the book on the genetic instructions that go into making a human. Scientists are beginning to address age-old mysteries, including these:

- What is the difference between living organisms and nonliving things?
- How does DNA instruct a single-cell embryo to create a body with a brain that produces a self-conscious mind?
- What makes us human? Our minds, genes, appearance, or something else?
- Is the human species at the end of an evolutionary line, or will it evolve into something entirely different?

In 24 thought-provoking video lectures designed for nonscientists, "The Science of Self" explores these and many other questions in today's exciting field of genomics. The professor is Princeton University biologist Lee M. Silver, an acclaimed teacher, scientist, and author of popular books on biotechnology, genetics, and its impact on society. Professor Silver says that he and his colleagues are astonished by the pace of discoveries in recent years and by how much has been learned about the human condition from studying the basic ingredients in genes. Enlivened by Dr. Silver's clear and enthusiastic presentation, "The Science of Self" is an unrivaled opportunity to investigate this dramatic new picture of our past, present, and future as a species.

First UU Pagan Circle

- Anne Bailey

You are invited to join us for our regular monthly meeting on **Saturday, December 7, at 7:00p**. We will be talking about the many Holy Days which are celebrated around the world in the month of December and we will be making plans for next year. As always, snack foods are welcome, as well as, drums and other rhythm instruments. Please feel free to call Anne Bailey - 316-650-4905 - if you have questions about our group.

Bullet Points from the Board

- We have scheduled the Mid-year Congregational meeting to immediately follow the Sunday Service on **January 26th**. Among other things, we will present a proposed budget and voting on a new vision statement that we have been working on for about a year now. We will send out the vision statement for your review in early January.
- The Board is sponsoring our annual Yule dinner on **December 22nd**, immediately after the Sunday Service. More details will follow.
- We reviewed three security proposals for the church and will decide at our next board meeting. Part of the final decision will be adding the ongoing costs of the system into our budget, which will be voted on at the mid-year meeting.
- We have had a few people volunteer to help lead EcoFest, but not enough to make it a reality. Please read Vivian Minshull-Ford's piece in this newsletter to see how you can help. The board is unanimous in its support for EcoFest, but we won't schedule it until we have firm commitments for leadership. We have about a month before we have to make a final decision about this year's event.

New Year's Eve with Cheese, Chocolate and Cheer Party

UU Holiday Party Group

The UU Holiday Party Group invites you to celebrate New Year's Eve with Cheese, Chocolate and Cheer! Bring your favorite cheese, chocolate, or cheer, and we will play laugh-out-loud games. Help us ring out the old year in style!

New Year's Eve: **Tuesday, December 31, 2019 from 7p - 10 p** at First UU Church

An Evening with Mr. Dickens

"A Christmas Carol" has been a holiday treat for 175 years. Written and published by the author, Charles Dickens, in 1843, his "Ghost Story of Christmas" was an instant hit in Victorian England. The first edition was completely sold out before Christmas Eve. Dickens himself had a second career reading his works, in person, for an adoring public and "A Christmas Carol" was his most popular reading.

Mr. Dickens, a Unitarian, will begin a new tour in December: he has agreed to give a reading of his "Christmas Carol" at 1st UU on **Saturday 21st December at 7:00 pm**. He will be assisted by A.J.(Andy) Musick, who has performed in many theatre performances in Wichita. He also directs school productions of Shakespeare plays and teaches stage fighting.

Entrance will be \$10, \$5 for students. There will be carol music and refreshments served during the intermission. For information, call 316 684-3481 or Vivien Minshull-Ford at 316 683-9295.

First Unitarian Universalist Church

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The Story of Edgar Sawtelle" by David Wroblewski The Eclectic Book Group

The Eclectic Book Group has selected "The Story of Edgar Sawtelle", a novel by David Wroblewski, as their book for December. From a review by Margot Livesey: "In this beautifully written novel, the author creates a remarkable hero who lives in a world populated as much by dogs as by humans, governed as much by the past as by the present. This book is a passionate, absorbing, and deeply surprising debut."

Please bring your lunch and join us on **Friday, December 20, beginning at 11:30**. Discussion starts about noon. Copies are available for check out in the Church Library.