

January 2019

The Flame



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Chili Cook-off 2019

**The Monthly Newsletter of
First Unitarian Church of
Omaha**

Sunday Services

Sunday, January 6 at 10:30am

"Resting in Mystery"

Rev. Dr. Jean Heriot

Facebook, Instagram, Podcasts, Twitter, Google Alerts—many of us find these temptations endless and the promises of knowledge and entertainment engulfing. And yet, this lifestyle often doesn't live up to the hype. Sometimes walking in the woods, playing with children, or singing in a choir brings home to us the knowledge that our lives are deeper and more mysterious than we acknowledge. We will explore together practices and ways of being that encourage us to dwell in this mysterious world of being: a world beyond our electronic selves, a world of mystery, awe, and joy.

About the guest speaker: Jean Heriot is a UU community minister whose work at Hastings College involves both teaching and social justice. She is a professor of religion and sociology and the director of service learning. At HC, she encourages students to find meaning in their studies and their careers, and she mentors students who choose to seek justice for all.

Sunday, January 13 at 10:30am

"Are You a Player?"

Rev. Michelle LaGrave

Ring in the New Year with laughter! Readings from Robert Fulghum and a special ritual highlight the importance of play in human evolution and development.

Sunday, January 20 at 10:30am

"Many Paths One Journey"

The spiritual journey is one of many different paths and destinations. Although we all travel our own path, we find ourselves stopping together here for awhile to rest, support and encourage each other. Join members of the Worship Arts Team as we tell the stories of our journey to this way station we call First Unitarian.

Sunday, January 27 at 10:30am

"The Promise and the Practice"

Rev. Michelle LaGrave

The Promise and the Practice Service promotes the intention of creating a soul-deep space of feeling and experiencing a powerful sacred text from the voices and stories of black UUs. This service invites white UUs to bear witness to pain and recognize loss as a place of connection.

Sunday Forum

Starting in January, we will have only ONE forum each month. The forum will focus on the Soul Matters topic for that month.

Sunday, January 6 at 9:30am in the Common Room

Soul Matters Monthly Topic: "What Does It Mean To Be A People of Possibility?"

with Mary Kay Peters

Of all the Soul Matters topics this year, possibility is arguably most central to our faith. It has distinguished Unitarian Universalists from the start. Historically, when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human identity, we saw potential—sometimes with hardly any boundaries. When many were preaching that this world was fallen, and we should look instead to the hope of an afterlife, we found ourselves falling in love with the possibility of heaven on earth. Theologically, you might say that we were the people who believed that God hadn't given up on any of us and so we shouldn't give up on each other or this world. Psychologically, it's led to us being a people of "why not?" Why not give people another chance? Why not fight what seems a losing battle? Why not risk a little failure? After all, to us the possible has always seemed more likely than not!

New! Soulful Sundown Service

Sunday, January 27 at 5:30pm

Come experience an alternative UU worship service centered on arts, music, young adults and youth. People of all ages are welcome!

Ministerial Musings from the Interim Minister

By Rev. Michelle LaGrave

Happy New Year! This is the traditional greeting we offer each other as the calendar moves from December 31st to January 1st each year; a greeting which implies the old is better left behind and the new is better welcomed in. We are meant to leave behind old habits and old behaviors and welcome in new habits and new behaviors. We are meant to *celebrate* this transition from the old to the new; a transition symbolized by leaving behind an old (white) man and welcoming in a new (white) baby.

The New Year holiday is especially interesting to me when celebrated within the context of a congregation in transition. The interim period between called and settled pastors can be and often is a time of creative exploration and excitement, as it should be. And, I frequently see these characteristics here at First Unitarian. The interim period can also be a time of anxiety when conflicts seem to take on heightened meaning. And, I see some of this anxiety here at First Unitarian, too.

Within the context of celebrating the New Year holiday in the midst of a transitioning congregation, I'd like to take some time to clarify exactly what it is we are (and should be) celebrating. The symbolism of leaving behind an old person and welcoming in a young person can lead to overly simplistic (and harmful) interpretations of what is good and right to do while moving into a new era. A congregation in transition is not and should not be leaving behind old people and old ways and welcoming in young people and new ways. It's just not that simple. A congregation in transition needs to take the time to reflect upon the past and consciously decide, with intention, what practices and ways of being would be beneficial to carry forward and which would be harmful to carry forward. Everything old is not bad and everything new is not good. Rather, the focus should be on leaving behind harmful, destructive, or sometimes, simply, just-not-helpful behaviors and learning better, healthier, more constructive ways of being a congregation in a rapidly changing world.

And, by the way, the "rapidly changing world" is key to thinking about and understanding who and what a congregation needs to be in this new age. We have left behind the era of the 1950s, when our congregations were filled with baby boom children and run by stay-at-home moms who could volunteer nearly full-time to do the work of the church. We have left behind that same era when atheists, for the most part, dared not speak publicly about their views and Christian churches were filled to the brim. We have entered a time of rapidly developing technology and global communication with most families needing two parents to be working full-time just to make ends meet. We have entered a time when a large percentage of people identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" and skipping church on Sunday is no big deal. My point here is that transitioning also isn't as simple as leaving behind harmful behaviors and practices. Sometimes, the behaviors and practices that need to be left behind are behaviors and practices that formerly were healthy and beneficial, they just simply don't work anymore within the context of this new world.

As together we enter this new year and prepare for a new ministry, may each of you be blessed with the time and ability to deeply reflect on where you have been and what you have done and where you would like to go and what you would like to do next.

Good Health and Happiness to each of you in the New Year!

Rev. Michelle



Note: Rev. Michelle will be out of the office December 25th to January 3rd. In the event of an emergency, please call or text her cell phone at (860) 539-3248.

Church Events

CommUUnity Night

Friday, Jan. 4 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. The main dish is provided by RE. Everyone is welcome to come to this relaxed monthly potluck dinner. Bring games! Chit chat! There will be childcare.

Pathways to Membership

Sundays, Jan. 6—Feb. 3 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. This is your chance to get a more in-depth look at what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. We'll have member-led discussions about the history of our church and the UU church at large, our church governance and much more! See page 14 for details.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Jan. 6 at 11:45am in the Merritt Lounge. This group welcomes everyone ages 18-35 from all over the Omaha metro. Questions? Please email: youngadults@firstuuomaha.org.

CUUPs General Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 6 at 7pm in the Common Room. No potluck tonight! We will schedule for the year and work on our group ritual for Imbolc. Childcare will be provided. Questions? Email: CUUPS@firstuuomaha.org.

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 7 at 7pm in the Common Room. We will watch *Fahrenheit 11/9*. Documentary-maker and leftist activist Michael Moore sets his sights on the 45th President of the United States Donald J. Trump—elected on November 9th, 2016 (hence the title). He reveals just how flimsy American democracy is right now, while suggesting what might be done about it.

Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics Meeting (AHA)

Thursday, Jan. 10 at 7pm in the Common Room. Come at 6pm for a brown bag dinner. Topic: Some Historic Imperatives of Liberal Religion with Ron Knapp. There are some historical imperatives that run through the history of liberal religion. It seems that they are in decline in contemporary Unitarian Universalism. I

have fears that if we continue to neglect these imperatives, Unitarian Universalism may cease to exist in the 21st century. This is an “Agnostic, Humanist, Atheist” meeting, but everyone, of every persuasion, is invited to attend.

The 3F Book Bonanza Group

Friday, Jan. 11 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. The book we'll read is *The Princes of Ireland* by Edward Rutherfurd. We will also be planning the reading schedule for the year at the January meeting. We ask all those interested in joining the group to please bring suggestions for future reads. If you have questions, please email Denise at: denise.allain@yahoo.com.

Breaking Bread for Believers

Tuesday, Jan 15 at 6:30pm in the Merritt Lounge. Are you a Believer or a Christian in any form? We have a new group called “Breaking Bread for Believers” here at First Unitarian for members or others (friends/guests) who would like a forum to share/express their Christian beliefs. As Unitarians, ALL religious and spiritual paths should be considered equally valid and therefore need to be represented within our community. This group will give you a sanctuary to hold those spiritual beliefs close to your heart. If you would like to continue to honor the best parts of your previous experience with Christianity you will always be welcome in this group! For this month's meeting, we will review different progressive Christian writings that will inform our discussion about how we can become relevant Believers within our First UU community. Beginning in February, we will meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month. Questions? Email Joe at joehammer95@gmail.com.

Compassionate Communication Group

Tuesday, Jan. 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. We're learning about Compassionate Communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg, PhD. All are welcome. Contact Suzanne: nvcuzsuz@gmail.com for details. In February, we go back to

meeting the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Women's Alliance

No meeting in January.

Women's Religious Studies Covenant Group

Thursday, Jan. 17 at 1pm in the lounge. This group meets the 3rd Thursday of each month. Our book is *Lifecraft* by Forrest Church. We welcome all self-identified women, and if you are interested, please contact Rae: raeb1@hotmail.com.

Young Adult Game Night

Friday, Jan. 18 at 6pm in the Common Room. All are invited to join the Young Adults for this event. We will have childcare! Bring snacks and board games. Questions? Email: youngadults@firstuuomaha.org.

Poster-Making Event

Saturday, Jan. 19, 1 to 3pm in the Common Room. The Women's March will be held on Sunday, Jan. 20 this year. Please review the Facebook page "[2019 Omaha Women's March](#)" for more information. We have reserved space at church for those who wish to make a sign to carry in the parade. We will purchase poster boards and have markers available. Men are most welcome too! Questions? Email Peg at sjconnect@firstuuomaha.org.

Leadership Talk Back

Sunday, Jan. 20 at 11:30am in the Common Room. The MTC and the Church Board want to hear from you. Have questions? Suggestions? Please join your church leaders at a table in the Common Room during coffee hour. We meet on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

CUUPS Full Moon Ritual

Sunday, Jan. 20 at 6:15pm in the Common Room. Come celebrate the beauty and transformative powers of the Full Moon. We will create a sacred space and raising energy to bring about a positive transformation in our own lives through contemplation and symbolic action. Our rituals are open to the public. Childcare provided.

Church Events

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 21 at 7pm in the Common Room. We will watch *John Lewis: Get in the Way* which is the first major documentary biography of John Lewis, civil rights hero, congressional leader and champion of human rights whose unwavering fight for justice spans the past 50 years.

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Jan. 22 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. Join us to discuss anything and everything related to Taoism! As Taoism is best understood through practice rather than theory, the goal of this group is to provide a participatory space to explore how Taoism is applied in daily life, with an emphasis on experience. With our direct experiences as a reference point, we can then delve into the main texts of Taoism.

Chili Cook-Off—Save the date!

Saturday, Jan. 26 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 6 for details.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 28 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Our January selection is *Pillars and Dreams: A History of First Unitarian Church of Omaha*.

Questions? Contact Dave at drichardson821@gmail.com.

Recurring Events

Women's Religious Studies Group

This group meets every Thursday, except for the 3rd week of the month at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. Starting January 10, we will read *Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class, and the Environment* by Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Jennifer Nordstrom, Editors. For questions, please contact Marcia at mkleise@cox.net.

Dharma Chautauqua

Every Thursday, 6pm to 7:30pm, in the Whitney Young Classroom. More info can be found online: dharma.chautauqua.drycreekhost.net/.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the Conference Room at 11:30am. Contact Scott Kemper at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

YRUU (Youth Group)

Meets every Wednesday at 7pm in the Common Room. For more info, contact Jan at DRE@firstuuomaha.org.

Choir Rehearsals

Every Wednesday at 7pm in the Sanctuary. For more info, email: choirdirector@firstuuomaha.org.

Parent's Choice Listening Circle

Meets the 2nd Sunday of the month at 11:45am in the Merritt Lounge. For questions or to join, please contact Sarah Eades Hamilton (402-306-6339/ seades.hamilton@gmail.com).

AHA Listening Circle--Open to new members!

Meets the 3rd Sunday of the month at 11:45am in the Merritt Lounge. We will deepen our understanding of our personal Atheist, Humanist, and Agnostic values through readings, listening and discussion which will help to enhance the UU experience for those who attend. Please contact AHA@firstuuomaha.org.

Future Events

Social Justice Fair

Sunday, Feb. 3 during Coffee Hour. If you would like to increase awareness of your favorite Social Justice cause, this is a good opportunity to do so. We will need to know how many are planning to exhibit in order to have enough tables. Space is limited so please let us know if you are interested in participating by Sunday, January 27. If you have never attended before, there are around 10 tables set up in the Common Room. Two groups will need to share each table if there is a good turnout of participants. You can make a poster to help define your area and bring related materials for display. Please email Peg to reserve a spot at sjconnect@firstuuomaha.org

POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, Feb. 9 at 5:45pm at Second Unitarian Church, 3012 S 119th St, Omaha (offsite). All parents of preschoolers (from littles through primary grades) are invited to attend (Parents of Preschoolers) Potluck Nights to connect with other parents from both First and Second Unitarian communities. Childcare is provided on-site (please RSVP in advance at least one week prior). Grown-ups gather together for food, fun and fellowship while kids eat and play in the nursery. For any questions, feedback or fun ideas, please contact Sarah Eades Hamilton (email: seades.hamilton@gmail.com or call/text: 402-306-6339).

First Steps Class

Sunday, Feb. 24 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom. Join us for an introduction to First Unitarian Church and Unitarian Universalism. This session is run by Carrie, our membership coordinator. All are welcome to attend—whether you've been here one Sunday or 200 Sundays. If you have questions, email coordinator@firstuuomaha.org.

Save the Date: The 2019 Pride Parade & Festival

is scheduled for Saturday, June 29 this year. Please go to "[2019 Pride Parade & Festival](#)" on Facebook for more information. The parade will be held in Omaha this year and not Council Bluffs. We hope to have a vehicle or float this year in line with the theme of the day, the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall. We would like everyone who wishes to participate in the parade be able to do so this year. More information to come in March. Interested? Please email Peg at sjconnect@firstuuomaha.org.

See page 7 for Heart & Hand Auction Events with Open Seats!

See page 13 for Ways You Can Help and Get Involved at Church!

Chili Cook-Off 2019—Saturday, January 26 at 6pm

Eat Chili With All the Fixins! Free cornbread & soft drinks! Cash bar!

Tickets: \$6/person Children under 10 FREE \$12/family maximum

Childcare provided, but please make a reservation so we know how many kiddos we have to wrangle. Many folks come dressed up as cowboys and cowgirls or as cows and horses—use your imagination.

Enter Your Chili into the Competition! “Lasso” your recipe & start cookin’!

Please bring your chili in a heated dish/crockpot along with a ladle to serve. Please keep additional condiments to a minimum. Arrive at 5:30pm to register your chili.
Enter the NAME of the chili at check-in. Do NOT include the name of the chef!
Bringing chili for the contest? Your admission is free!

Go here to RSVP online: www.firstuuomaha.org/chili-cook-off

Or fill out the form below and mail it to the church office.

RSVP Form for Chili Cook-Off 2019

Let us know how many folks will attend please!

Your name: _____

Email address: _____

Are you bringing chili? _____

How many people over the age of 6 will attend with you?

If you need childcare for kids under the age of 6, let us know their ages and names please:

Can you help clean up, set up, or both? Let us know!

Automatic Contributions—Electronic Funds Transfer

Did you know that you can have your contributions to the church made automatically? Electronic fund transfer will allow you to designate the amount of the money to be transferred biweekly or monthly from your bank account to the church's account. Your bank statement will provide an itemized list of the transactions. The contribution statement you receive from the church periodically will show each contribution as well. It's easy to start automatic contributions! You only need to complete and sign a form and then return it to the church office along with a voided check.

Please contact the church office for the form or just go to this link to print out the form: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6ac81d_fede6d3edd6da6c28a23b9fb995c9eff.pdf. You can start the process any time. After that your contributions will be automatic. They will continue until you notify us to stop. Thank you for your generosity!

Questions? Contact our treasurer, Walt Jesteadt. Email: treasurer@firstuuomaha.org.

January Heart & Hand Auction Events with Open Seats

The following two events offered at the Heart & Hand Auction last October have a few unfilled "seats" available for purchase.

Email auction@firstuuomaha.org to sign-up, and get details online at the auction website ([click here](#)).

Saturday, January 19 at 2pm in the Whitney Young Classroom. Event: Mann Booker Int'l Prize Book Discussion of "Flights" by Olga Takareznk. Cost: \$15/seat. There are five seats open. Hosts: Allain, Conner, Soto.

Friday, January 25 at 7pm (offsite). Event: Single Malt Scotch Tasting. Cost: \$50/seat. There are three seats open. Hosts: Richardson, Byrd.

Holiday Dinner 2018

On Saturday, December 8, sixty church members and friends joined together for the annual Holiday Dinner in the Common Room. Thanks to our Fellowship Team, the room was decorated and the meal was ordered from Pleasure Your Palette. Photos below by Bob Hess.



Preserve Our Building

By Jaime Alexander

The 2019 Preserve Our Building annual fund drive is again underway during January. For our newcomers and others who may not be familiar with the POB campaign, a short review of POB history may be appropriate. Our sanctuary refurbishing in October 2004 was made possible by the gift of the “Erickson Bond.” The sanctuary was refurbished to perhaps better than its original resplendent beauty. Thinking that our ability to fulfill our future building preservation needs should not be completely dependent on hoping for a major gift, the Board authorized asking for donations to a fund that would be a head start towards funding future refurbishments. Thoughts of “Wells we did not dig” and leaving something for those yet to come led to the creation the Preserve Our Building fund drive in 2005.

The POB fund has grown with contributions and interest to just over \$70,000. Your generosity is wonderful! The concept of many of us giving what we can from year to year is proving to be successful. Approval from the congregation is necessary to spend from this account.

At the Annual Meeting last May the congregation approved the use of up to \$20,000 from the POB fund for the ongoing sanctuary windows preservation project. Architect Bob Perrin recently commented on the status of the project. He said POB funds have not yet been needed but the overall progress is only about 20% complete and continuing slowly as is common with restoration work.

Your check should be made payable to First Unitarian Church of Omaha with “POB” on the memo line. A solicitation letter recently sent to home addresses included a return addressed envelope for your convenience. The envelopes and blue cards in the pews at church may also be used for your POB donation during Sunday offering, just annotate the memo line, POB. Thank you for supporting Preserve Our Building.

First Unitarian Choir Chooses New Name: The Sanctuary Singers

Our Choir Director William Miller polled the church choir to determine a new name for the group. There were seven name choices. The votes have been calculated and the new name for the choir is **The Sanctuary Singers**. This group usually sings on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month and has rehearsals most Wednesday evenings (Sept. to May). Interested in joining the choir? Contact William at choirdirector@firstuuomaha.org. Photo by Barb Herring.



Finance Matters

By Walt Jesteadt, Treasurer

People contribute money to the church in several ways. Most contributions are in the form of checks or occasionally cash. For many years we have used a service offered by a company called Vanco for transferring money on a monthly basis directly from people's bank accounts to the church bank account. These recurring contributions are a good way to keep up to date on pledges and about forty members currently use this service. Many new members have asked about using credit or debit cards. The good news is that we should have that option available soon, certainly before the next stewardship campaign.

We are working with Vanco to establish multiple ways to make it more convenient to give money to the church using a credit or debit card. There will be a link on our webpage to a Vanco page specific to our church that will allow members and friends to make one-time payments for the auction, Preserve Our Building or Women's Alliance or to set up recurring monthly contributions towards their pledge. In addition to website access, there will also be a smart-phone app that will allow people to do these things.

It will also be possible to set up recurring contributions from bank accounts, as we do now, so that people can manage their own finances. Those who prefer the current Vanco system can remain under that plan. There will be no additional charge to the church for the additional Vanco services, but there will be a small transaction fee and a charge of 2.75% for credit and debit card transactions. People will be encouraged to check a box to have the amount of the fee added to their contribution, so that they pay the fee themselves rather than having the expense passed on to the church.

We hope to have this in place by the end of January and will publicize it widely when we do. It should be a convenient option for members and friends and should reduce the workload for office staff. One cautionary note is that it would be unfortunate if people take on increased credit card debt as a means of paying their pledges. Anyone who finds it necessary to borrow money at credit card rates for months at a time to pay their pledge should ask to have the pledge reduced to a more manageable amount.

For Church Leaders

January is budget preparation month for the church year starting May 1st. We start in January because we need a preliminary budget before setting a goal for the stewardship campaign. Staff members and team chairs who have budgets should have received information on your budget for the current year and expenditures for the first half of the year. Our treasurer would like to have budget input by Friday, January 4, if possible. Contact treasurer@firstuuomaha.org.

Inclement Weather Cancellations

In the event of bad weather and we have to cancel the service, the church office will email everyone on our enews list, update the church webpage, post on the church Facebook page. The church will also alert the local news stations about the cancellation.



Message from the Transition Team

Transitions, like all change, can be challenging. Our congregation is in flux as we begin our search for a new minister. But transitions can also be healing. It's an opportunity for us to look honestly at ourselves and to truly listen to one another. We can explore who we are now...and who we want to become as a congregation. This will help us determine the qualities and expertise we are seeking in an established minister.

Throughout the next year, the Transition Team, consisting of Kathy Alexander, Klyde Warren, Marcia Leise, John Hruska, Kay Lynn Goldner, Carol Cronin, and Skip Ciulla will be working with Rev. Michelle LaGrave, as well as with the Board, Right Relations and other committees, and with you, members of our congregation as we navigate through this process.

In keeping with our congregation's Annual Vision of Ministry (AVOM), we are paying close attention the five focus points identified as being the fundamental tasks of our congregation during this transition period:
1. Heritage, 2. Leadership, 3. Mission, 4. Connections, and 5. Future. We attended the interim start-up workshop in October and will meet at least monthly.

Please recognize that this is a process. Every member of First UU has a voice. Since the Transition Team replaces the Committee on Ministry during this transition period, we encourage you to freely share your questions, observations, concerns, and/or comments with us. The only thing we ask is that any feedback come with a name attached so that clarifying questions can be asked of and follow up made with the individual. (In other words, no anonymous feedback, please). Thank you.

Church Directory

Have you moved? Changed your phone number or email address? Please contact the church office today by emailing: admin@firstuuomaha.org with your new information. Help us make sure our Church Directory is up to date. Thank you!

A Note About Religious Education

By Jan Wilson, Director of Religious Education

Nothing is quite so meaningful to me as watching the growth of children in our program. Our Youth in YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists—Youth Group) are now the fine young people who were once the dear elementary kids when I started this position.

To the congregation, they are largely invisible, partially because they consider their connection with the church as their Wednesday Night group. Rest assured, they are actively engaged in worship, learning, service and fun. They continue to be youth led, even though they are ably advised by Tom Seguin, Taylor and Jessica Eman, Bethany Cook and Ben Stallings, who comes to us from the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. We are grateful to Justin Short and Carolyn Miller who are advisors from Second Unitarian. You may know that our YRUU is a combined group of youth from both churches.

Also a combined group, is our Parents of Preschool POPS, group. They alternate their meetings between First to Second church. With the trustees' annual vision of ministry, including a closer connection with our fellow UUs at Second Unitarian, these groups are a good start toward that goal.

Parking at Church

Parking is directly west of the church in the surface parking lot or on the street. If you are able to park in the Midtown Crossing garage to the west of our parking lot, it would leave our small parking lot for visitors and those who need to park closer to the building. The entrance to the parking garage is on Farnam Street. Find the ticket-validating machine on the south side of the Common Room on the bookcase. **You must have your ticket validated for free parking.** Questions? Contact the church office at admin@firstuuomaha.org.

Windshield Decals for Church Lot

In an effort to save our church parking for members, visitors, volunteers, and staff, the Ministry Team Council (MTC) has created a windshield decal (see the image below). There's a basket filled with decals in the Common Room or contact the Church Office.

The decals are small (3in. x 3in.) and can be placed in the front windshield in the top left- or right-hand corner on the inside of the car. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, Midtown Crossing shoppers and employees have been parking in the church lot—that causes problems, especially on Sunday mornings and during private wedding ceremonies. Our lot is small and each space is important so we can be welcoming to our visitors.

If you want to leave your car overnight in the church lot, please contact the church office to arrange that.

It's important that all spots are available on Sunday mornings for our members and guests.

Note: We have made an agreement with Alamo Theater to allow their workers to park in our lot during the weekday for the next month. In exchange, Alamo gave the Church a free showing of the film, *The Hate U Give*. If you have questions about parking, please contact the [church office](mailto:church.office).



Hope in Action

Our church believes in community, and that is what Hope in Action, a sub-team of the Caring Team, is all about. Any one of us might need assistance, and we want to make it easier for you to ask for support and easier for you to offer support when others are in need.

WHO IS SERVED?

Church members, friends, regular attendees and their spouses are eligible for assistance from Hope in Action.

WHO CAN HELP?

Everyone! Hope in Action is an opportunity for everyone in our church community to support each other by sharing knowledge, skills and resources.

Hope in Action will use church communications, including the enews, to let our church community know when help is needed to respond to a request for support. And we will report back to the church community about how we were able to respond. All communication will be done in a manner that maintains the degree of confidentiality requested by the person seeking assistance.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN BE EXPECTED?

Hope in Action is there when people are dealing with a medical problem, need transportation or help around the house, can use assistance with referrals to social service agencies or just need someone to talk to about the ups and downs of life. Our response will vary depending on the type of support that is needed in our church community and what resources we have available.

Although Hope in Action is not able to respond to emergencies, short-term financial assistance may be available for lodging, food, clothing, medication, transportation and utilities. Financial disbursements are not made directly to the person making the request for assistance.

HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

Requests for assistance must be made directly by the person needing help. Hope in Action does not respond to any anonymous or third-party requests for assistance.

Here are the ways you can ask for support from Hope in Action. You may send an email to hopeinaction@firstuuomaha.org or use the Hope in Action link on the church website. Or, you may simply complete a Caring Card, located in the church pews and place it in the offering plate.

WHO DECIDES WHAT SUPPORT WILL BE OFFERED?

Hope in Action will use a team approach, so at least three members of Hope in Action must participate in determining the nature of the response.

CHANGE FOR CHANGE

Each week generous people put change in the collection plate. This change goes to the Sunday School kids who decide what to do with the money. In the past they have helped Community Meals and International Bridges for Justice. The kids are now donating this change to the **Neighborhood Ministry Team**, which purchases bus tickets and food cards and gives out blessing bags to people who come to the church door from our area. Your change makes a difference! Thank you for your generosity!

SHARE THE PLATE

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a local cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. Our Share the Plate recipient for January is **Habitat for Humanity**. Last year, Habitat for Humanity of Omaha completed more than 40 homes. Homes are built with donor contributions, volunteer labor and donated materials. Families who partner with Habitat Omaha are required to attend homeownership workshops and complete up to 350 hours of Sweat Equity by helping on the build site or at Omaha's Habitat ReStore. Their monthly mortgage payments are then used to build more homes.

Habitat Omaha builds new houses and renovates existing homes. To learn more, visit: habitatomaha.org/.

SHARE THE PLATE RECAP OF 2018

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. Here are the recipients of the program for 2018. The amount collected in December will be shared in the February 2019 newsletter.

2018 Share the Plate Recipients:

January — Habitat for Humanity
— \$310.50

February — Partner Church
— \$308.50

March — O.T.O.C. (Omaha Together One Community) — \$295

April —Community Meals
— \$412

May — PFLAG
— \$433.50

June — NAMI
— \$216

July — O.T.O.C.
— \$360.50

August —Siena/Francis House
— \$315

September — Project Everlast
— \$292

On Sept. 30th we had a special collection for the Preserve Our Building Fund. That Sunday we collected \$269.

October —Community Meals
— \$133.50

On October 21, we shared the plate with BLUU (Black Lives of UU) and raised \$120.

November — OTOC
— \$202.50

December — YES (Youth Emergency Services)
— pending

Ways You Can Get Involved

YES Meal Prep: Friday, January 18 at 9am in the kitchen. We will prepare noodles and chicken. We will also serve fruit. This month we will collect hair care products for YES. If you are interested in helping or donating, contact Kim please at kjcallaghan@hotmail.com. Every month Kim and her team prepare a meal for Youth Emergency Services (YES). See this website for more info: www.yesomaha.org.

Recycling Volunteer Needed to take our glass, cans, and plastic to one of the city recycling centers every week. This job can be done any time that works for you and is a great project for a small team or for a family. Please contact the church office: admin@firstuuomaha.org.

Help Wanted: Worship Associates

Do you enjoy Sunday morning? Do you see Denise up front and think, gee her jokes are getting old.... (so does she!). The Worship Arts Team is looking for new members. Full training and appreciation are offered. We help keep the pulpit filled when Rev. Michelle takes a day off, we keep things moving in the summer time. Come help us out! Please contact Denise if you are interested in joining us at denise.allain@yahoo.com.

Stream Team

Each week, this team streams the Sunday service so it can be viewed by people who, for whatever reason, could not attend church. We need your help! Training is available. Interested? Contact the office at admin@firstuuomaha.org today.

General Assembly 2019 Group

GA is in Spokane, Washington, June 19th to the 23rd. We have formed a group interested in attending. This group will host fundraisers in order to help lower the shared cost of attending. Interested? Have questions? Contact Taylor Eman at tayloreman15@gmail.com. We would love to have you. For more information about GA, please see page 16.

Social Justice Fair—save the date! Sunday, Feb. 3 during coffee hour

Sunday, Feb. 3 during Coffee Hour. If you would like to increase awareness of your favorite Social Justice cause, this is a good opportunity to do so. We will need to know how many are planning to exhibit in order to have enough tables.

Space is limited so please let us know if you are interested in participating by Sunday, January 27.

If you have never attended before, there are around 10 tables set up in the Common Room. Two groups will need to share each table if there is a good turnout of exhibitors. You can make a poster to help define your area and bring related materials for display.

Please email Peg to reserve your spot at sjconnect@firstuuomaha.org.

A Thank You Note

By Sharon Conlon & the Social Justice Team

In partnership with the Sisters of Mercy, the Servants of Mary, members of St. John's Parish, and many others, including our own church, First Unitarian, the following items have been sent to Annunciation House in El Paso, TX, to help those at the border:

\$7,670
 250 backpacks
 750 stuffed animals
 650 dental items
 225 packages of socks & underwear
 700 pieces of "all other."

Muchas Gracias! Thank you very much!

A Thank You Note

Thank you to everyone who brought in gloves, hats, scarves, socks, and other cold weather gear to the church during the month of December. Our holiday collection will be given to YES (Youth Emergency Services). Thank you to the volunteers who wrapped the collection boxes and took the items to the shelter.

Pathways (to membership)

New session **starts Sunday, January 6, 2019** and runs consecutive Sundays (1/13, 1/20, 1/27 and 2/3/19) following church service in the Whitney Young Classroom (downstairs by the nursery).

This is your chance to get a more in-depth look at what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. We'll have member-led discussions about the history of our church and the UU church at large, our church governance (the congregation-led church), religious education, elements of worship, and much more! RSVP to Carrie at coordinator@firstuuomaha.org or sign up here: www.firstuuomaha.org/classup

(Drop-ins are welcome, but to get the most out of the class you'll want to be there for the five-week course). Hope to see you there!

Week	Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
1	January 6	Introductory class **** Introduction to UU	Carrie Helmberger, Membership Coordinator (This is get-to-know-you time) **** Rev. Michelle LaGrave
2	January 13	Principles and history of Unitarian Universalism	Rev. Michelle LaGrave
3	January 20	Elements of being a UU—from the congregant's point of view **** Religious Education	Jessica and Taylor Eman **** Jan Wilson, DRE
4	January 27	Governance **** Hospitality teams **** Ways to get involved	Maria Wallace, President **** Carolyn McNamara— Hospitality teams **** Carrie Helmberger, Membership Coordinator
5	February 3	Stewardship ***** History of First Unitarian Church ***** What it means to be a member **** Soul Matters **** Evaluation/ Discussion	TBA **** Dave Richardson **** Mike McAtee **** Mike McAtee **** Carrie Helmberger

*Tentative Schedule for sessions (dates/topics may alter)

Right Relations Committee Report

This fall, the Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Church took action to renew a Right Relations program for the church. An interim committee was appointed with Tom Seguin as Board liaison and members Della Bynum, Carol Cronin, Mark Loscutoff and Nadine Keith, chair.

The committee has been meeting to develop a mission, an implementation plan and a Congregational Covenant of Right Relations.

The Right Relations Committee will be a Committee of the Congregation and church members will be asked to adopt a Congregational Covenant and elect members of a permanent committee at a future Congregational meeting.

The proposed Congregational Covenant of Right Relations that the Committee has developed follows:

To strengthen the bond of peace within and beyond the First Unitarian Church of Omaha, we pledge:

- To create a religious community where we freely explore our values and honor our diversity as a source of communal strength;
- To build healthy relationships, seeking to understand each other and respecting our differences;
- To listen appreciatively and endeavor to speak directly, honestly, and compassionately, particularly when we are in conflict;
- To do our best to forgive when we hurt one another, to make amends, and to reconnect in a spirit of gratitude and generosity;
- To abide by this covenant in celebration of the common purpose that unites us.

Members of the congregation will have future opportunities to discuss this covenant and other plans. Be watching for future updates from the Right Relations Committee.

Regional Assembly 2019

The MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association includes nearly 200 UU congregations in parts or all of these states: Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Dates: April 5-7, 2019

Place: St. Louis, Missouri

The theme is “Intersectionalities”—how we live, work, and relate, as well as share, withhold, and leverage power in our world. Presentations and workshops will explore identities we encounter and embody, the challenges of social inequality, and tools and skills we need in order to work more effectively with one another, as well as the general “nuts and bolts” of congregational life, such as leadership, stewardship, membership, and religious education. Our Keynote Presenter will be UUA President, Susan Frederick-Gray. Join us to explore, share, and worship with fellow Unitarian Universalists.

For more information, go here: www.midamericaaua.org/events/regional-assembly.

General Assembly 2019

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Attendees worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process.

Dates: June 19-23, 2019

Place: Spokane, WA

Overview: The Power of We—

In a time of great challenge and heartbreak in our world, what does our faith demand from us? At this year’s General Assembly we will explore the power, possibility, purpose, struggle and joy of finding the path forward together as Unitarian Universalists. Join us as we work for collective liberation inside and outside our faith.

Learn more about GA, here: www.uua.org/ga.

What is Omaha Together One Community (OTOC)?

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) teaches people to become effective leaders, explore their legitimate interests, do solid research, engage in sometimes tough, but always respectful public discourse, hold elected officials accountable and create positive change through collective action. Through the practice of these skills, people build relationships of trust and, by acting collaboratively, become part of solving their own problems.

OTOC Philosophy: We believe in relationships. The issues we work on come out of small-group gatherings called “house meetings,” where people share their stories about issues they’d like to see changed and have energy to work on. We are driven by the testimony of concrete experience, not pre-conceived ideology. We believe in citizen leadership. We identify, bring together and develop leaders across our communities, so that we can accomplish more together than we could apart. We believe in ownership. We accept no money from government sources. The organization is funded by dues from its member institutions, in addition to some foundation and business support. This allows the organization to belong to, and be accountable to, the institutions that make it up. We believe in practical solutions. We work on concrete issues that we can do something about. Once potential issues are identified, community leaders do research to develop practical, achievable solutions.

Community organizing demands time, talent, discipline and commitment. Those willing to do the work experience personal growth and transformation. These leaders have witnessed the impact OTOC has made on their congregations and the city. See more information here: <http://otoc.org/>.

First Unitarian Church of Omaha Statements

Mission

Fostering the Whole Person, Compassion, and Justice

Vision

An inclusive Community that Listens, Engages, Inspires, and Acts

We covenant to:

Listen to understand and grow

Seek and value all voices

Model respect and kindness

Assume good intentions

Resolve conflicts directly and compassionately

Contribute time, talent, treasure

Respect people's time

Celebrate, support, appreciate

Interim Minister
Rev. Michelle LaGrave
minister@firstuuomaha.org

Director of Religious Education
Jan Wilson
dre@firstuuomaha.org

Membership Coordinator
Carrie Helmberger
coordinator@firstuuomaha.org

Church Administrator
Catharine Dixon
admin@firstuuomaha.org

Sanctuary Singers Director
William Miller
choirdirector@firstuuomaha.org

Organist
Pat Will

Sanctuary Singers Accompanist
J. Gawf

EMR Director
Stan Harper

Minister Emeriti
Ronald Knapp
Frank Rivas

Nursery Coordinator
Andrea Laudi
childcare@firstuuomaha.org

Custodian
Bobby Medrano

THE FLAME
Deadlines are the 15th of each month.
Word limit: 200. Send submissions to
admin@firstuuomaha.org.

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Proofers:
Barb Henney, Scott Kemper,
Lois Norris, Debbie Hunsberger
Flame Mailing Team:
Debbie Hunsberger, Lois Norris,
Linda Hruska, Kim Callaghan

Meet Our Leaders

Board Members

Maria Wallace (President), Joe Schaaf (President-Elect), Catherine Plumlee (Secretary),
Sharon Piehler, Floyd Prine, Carol Ramsey, Tom Seguin, Donna Tubach Davis
Email: board@firstuuomaha.org

Trustees of the Capital Trust

Ellen Shurson (2019), Daniel Byrd (2020), Bob Hess (2021)

Ministry Team Council

Dave Richardson, Joe Schaaf, Katie Zimmer, Rev. Michelle LaGrave
Email: mtc@firstuuomaha.org

Nominating Committee

Royal Carleton, Kate Godfrey, Kathi Oliver, Carol Ramsey, Marie Sedlacek, Ben Wallace

Right Relations Committee

Della Byum, Carol Cronin, Nadine Keith, Mark Loscutoff, Tom Seguin (board liaison)

Transition Team

Kathy Alexander, Skip Ciulla, Carol Cronin, Kay Lynn Goldner, John Hruska,
Klyde Warren

Ministry Teams and Team Leaders

AHA—Sheri Conner
Archives—Linda Parker
Baby Welcoming Team—Becca Hatcher, Katrina Schmidt, & Sara Switzer
Black Lives Matter—Rene Harper
Caring—Louise Jeffrey
Chalice Guild—Kay Lynn Goldner
Community Meals—Diane Withem
CUUPS—Steve Switzer
Early Morning Risers—Mary Kay Peters & Sarah Copeland
Fellowship Team—Nadine Keith & Nellie Chenoweth
Finance Team—Walt Jesteadt
Garden—Sharon Conlon
Governance—Kim Dunovan
Fundraising Team—Donna Neff & Katrina Schmidt
Hope in Action—Kim Dunovan
Hospitality Teams—Carolyn McNamara
House and Grounds Team—open
Listening Circles—Katrina Schmidt
Membership Team—Mike McAtee
Midtown Helping Hands—open
Office Team—Carolyn McNamara
Omaha Together One Community—open
Partner Church Team—Janet West
Recycling Coordinator—open
Right Relations—Nadine Keith
Social Justice Coordinator—Peg Pidgeon
Soul Matters—Michael McAtee
Stewardship Team—Mary Kay Peters & Peg Pidgeon
Wayside Pulpitree—Kim Dunovan
Women's Alliance—Catherine Plumlee
Worship Arts Team—Denise Allain
Young Adult Group—Taylor & Jessica Eman
YRUU—Jessica & Taylor Eman & Tom Seguin

First Unitarian Church of Omaha

www.firstuuomaha.org

402-345-3039

Church Events

CommUUnity Night

Friday, Jan. 4 at 5:30pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Sunday, Jan. 6 at 11:45am in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Pathways Class

Sundays in January at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Classroom.
See page 14.

CUUPs General Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 6 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 7 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 8 at 7pm in the Common Room.

Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics Meeting (AHA)

Thursday, Jan. 10 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

3F Book Bonanza Group

Friday, Jan. 11 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Breaking Bread for Believers

Tuesday, Jan 15 at 6:30pm in the Whitney Young Classroom.
See page 4 for details.

Compassionate Communication Group

Tuesdays, Jan. 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Women's Alliance

No meeting in January.

The Flame Newsletter Deadline

January 15th at noon.

Women's Religious Studies

Covenant Group

Thursday, Jan. 17 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Young Adult Game Night

Friday, Jan. 18 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

Poster-Making Event

Saturday, Jan. 19, 1-3pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

H&H Auction Event

Saturday, January 19 at 2pm in the Whitney Young Classroom. See page 7

Leadership Talk Back

Sunday, Jan. 20 at 11:30am in the Common Room. See page 4.

CUUPS Full Moon Ritual

Sunday, Jan. 20 at 6:15pm in the Common Room. See page 4.

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 21 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Jan 22 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 5.

Chili Cook-Off—Save the date!

Saturday, Jan. 26 at 6pm.
See page 6.

Soulful Sunday Service

Sunday, Jan. 27 at 5:30pm in the Sanctuary. See page 2.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 28 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5.

Recurring...

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. See page 5.

Parent's Choice Listening Circle

Meets the 2nd Sunday of the month.

AHA Listening Circle

Meets the 3rd Sunday of the month.
See page 5.

YRUU (Youth Group) Meetings

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Common Room.

Choir Rehearsals

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

Women's Religious Studies Group

Meets most Thursdays at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5.

Dharma Chautauqua

Every Thursday, 6pm to 7:30pm, in the Whitney Young Classroom. See page 5.

Soul Matters Small Groups

Various meeting dates. See here:
www.firstuuomaha.org/soulmatters

Future Events...

Social Justice Fair

Sunday, Feb. 3 during Coffee Hour.
See page 5 for details.

POPS (Parents of Preschoolers)

Saturday, Feb. 9 at 5:45pm at Second Unitarian Church, 3012 S 119th St, Omaha (offsite). See page 5.

First Steps Class

Sunday, Feb. 24 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room. See page 5.

Social Media & First U

Find our public Facebook page here:
www.facebook.com/firstuuomaha/

Find us on Twitter here:

[@FirstUUOmaha](https://twitter.com/FirstUUOmaha)

Be sure to like the church and follow us!



International Cowperson
Chili Cook-Off

January 26 - 6pm

Food
Friends
Music
Costumes

First Unitarian Church of Omaha
3114 Harney St.
Omaha, NE 68131

www.firstuuomaha.org