

January 2017

The Flame



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

Page 2

Sunday Services &
Forums this Month

Page 6

Chili Cook Off:
January 21st

Pages 13-14

New Member
Celebration

Sunday Services — All are welcome

Sunday, January 1 at 10:30am
"Why I'm Religious but not that Spiritual"

Rev. Shawna Foster

There are a lot of problems with religion which can understandably push us to walk away from disorganized religion and engage in a spiritual practice disconnected with others. This is a growing trend in the United States—one that Rev. Shawna Foster bucks, because she is religious, not spiritual. Come find out what this means on New Year's Day!

Sunday, January 8 at 10:30am
"Weorthscipe"

Rev. Frank Rivas

Sometimes etymology helps us understand not only our language, but also ourselves. "Worship," for example, is derived from the Old English "weorthscipe," to acknowledge what is of worth. Odyssey: Denise Allain

Sunday, January 15 at 10:30am
"This Moment, Now"

Rev. Frank Rivas

My Buddhist dog continues to teach me to live in the present. With her permission, I will share some of her wisdom through word and silence. Odyssey: Ed Kelly

Sunday, January 22 at 10:30am
"The State of the Union"

Rev. Frank Rivas

How do we heal a divided nation? How do separate image from reality? Religion (derived from roots that mean "binding back together") offers some guidance. Justice Pulpit: Ben Wallace

Sunday, January 29 at 10:30am

Guest speaker Amy Miller will speak. Amy is the Legal Director of the Nebraska ACLU.

Sunday Forums This Month

No Sunday Forum on Sunday, January 1

Sunday, January 8 at 9:30am in the Common Room.

Forum: Forums for Sale

Denise Allain will discuss the future of Forums at First Unitarian. What is involved? What topics do we want to have? How do you volunteer to present? And any other ideas you may have to make this a successful program!

Sunday, January 15 at 9:30am in the Common Room.

Forum: Unitarian Observations on Death and Dying

John Goldner will recount 60 years of observations regarding the natural phenomena of dying and death.

Sunday, January 22 at 9:30am in the Common Room.

Forum: The Chalice and the Cauldron: Pagans in the UU Community

Join Cassi Moucka in a discussion about the addition of earth-centered traditions into the Unitarian Universalist fold and how these paths fit into the UU theology. We will specifically focus on a pagan perspective on the sources and principles of contemporary Unitarian Universalism. All are welcome. People who are not pagan are especially invited to attend.

Sunday, January 29 at 9:30am in the Common Room.

Forum: Unitarians and the Fight for Democratic Values in the 1930s & 40s

Dave Richardson will discuss the role of UU and our church in opposing fascism and other challenges to democracy both foreign and domestic in pre-war and wartime America. In addition we will reflect upon how democratic values are under attack today and what role the church can play in defending those values.

New Sunday Schedule

Beginning Sunday, January 1st we will have our one service at 10:30am. Forums will be held at 9:30am in the Common Room. At the congregational meeting on Dec. 4 it was decided to stay with one Sunday service. For more information about upcoming services, please go here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/worship>

Rev. Elations

Monthly Column from our Minister, Rev. Frank Rivas

We begin 2017 with some strengths and a clearer vision of who we are as a church community and who we chose to become.

Strengths. First of all, we are a growing church. For the first time in years, our membership exceeds 230—not a force to be reckoned with, to be sure, but modest growth at a time when many churches are coping with smaller numbers. Second, we are deeply involved. Both in sanctuary and in classroom, our attendance is up on Sunday morning, weekday events are well attended, and we are actively seeking a stronger voice in the community. Third, although our most generous donor died last year, our members continue to generously support our program as well as maintenance and improvements on our extraordinary building.

Vision. Each of us has ideas about direction, but before we go off willy-nilly, Jackie Anderegg, our board president, has suggested an open gathering of church members to identify our strengths and to envision how we can build upon them—not just looking a few months or years down the road, but looking toward the church we wish to become in 25 or 30 years. The process, both lively and focused, will be led by an outside organizational expert and facilitated by church members from various parts of church life; it will take place in the spring. With a well-defined sense of where we're heading, we can tack our course more effectively.

This is the moment for broad vision. We are strong, and the changing culture offers an opportunity. Our church has been around long enough to have experienced several golden moments and several times of struggle. Struggles will come again, to be sure, but a clear, shared understanding of our direction may keep us on a productive course even through rough seas. It is an honor to be part of this community. I am grateful each day.

Blessings for the new year,
Frank

Inclement Weather Cancellations

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

Church Events

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 2 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie we'll watch is *The Armor of Light* which follows an Evangelical minister and the mother of a teenage shooting victim who ask, is it possible to be both pro-gun and pro-life? Go here to view the movie trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSP0Soy8ACk&feature=youtu.be>

Examined Life Group

Tuesdays, Jan. 3 and 17 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. This is a group determined to become democratic with each participant presenting a topic related to how we assess ourselves personally and as members of society. The ultimate aim is to foster mutual understanding among ourselves and the others attending. We meet the first and third Tuesdays. Interested? Contact Jack at jackheidel@yahoo.com.

CommUnity Night

We do not meet in January. Save the date for Feb. 3.

Community Meals

Saturday, Jan. 7 at First Baptist. Help us serve a meal to our neighbors. See page 7 for details.

CUUPS Planning Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 8 at 6pm in the Common Room. If you have attended or wish to attend our CUUPS meetings and rituals, bring your calendar to our January planning meeting! Our goal is to meet eight times in 2017; one meeting near each Sabbath. We would love to plan out who is leading which ritual for the next year with you; we're interested in collaborating with Second Unitarian as well. See you there! Feel free to bring a dish to share for a planning potluck.

Women's Alliance

We do not meet in January. Save the date for Feb. 13.

The Tolerant Atheist Group is Now Called AHA (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists)

Thursday, Jan. 12 at 7pm in the Common Room. For those interested in "bring your own dinner," doors

open at 6pm. At this AHA meeting, our Minister Emeritus Ron Knapp will explore one of the most important humanist thinkers of the 19th century with a presentation entitled "Of Life Immense: The Humanism of Walt Whitman." Here is a Whitman appetizer quote: "And I say to mankind, be not curious about God, for I who am curious about each am not curious about God."

Black Lives Matter Team Meeting

Friday, Jan. 13 at 6pm in the Common Room. This is a general meeting. Questions? Contact Rene at sweetnlow@cox.net.

YRUU Brunch Fundraiser

Sunday, Jan. 15 during coffee hour. See page 8 for more information.

CUUPS Book Study Group: 12 Wild Swans

(Due to the new Sunday schedule, this group has changed its meeting time). *Sunday, Jan. 15 at 11:30am in the Merritt Lounge.* CUUPS will lead a book study on *The 12 Wild Swans: A Journey to the Realm of Magic, Healing and Action* (available from Amazon & other sellers). In this book, renowned leaders in the Wicca movement use a fairy tale to teach about the "reclaiming" model of witchcraft that blends magic and personal growth. This group will meet after church every third Sunday.

Arts and Crafts Night

Sunday, Jan. 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. Bring your current project and supplies and join us for some artistic fellowship! Contact Kate Godfrey at coachkate@cox.net or 402-880-1327 for details.

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 16 at 7pm in the Common Room. The movie we'll watch is *All The Way* which offers a riveting behind-the-scenes look at President Lyndon B. Johnson's tumultuous first year in office after the assassination of John F. Kennedy. More details here: www.allthewayhbo.com

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, Jan. 19 at 1pm in the

Merritt Lounge. Reuline Nightingale will be our facilitator for Chapter 13 Leap of Faith in *Listening Hearts*. All self-identified women are welcome. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Harriet Major at hmajor323@cox.net or 402-391-0248.

Chili Cook Off

Saturday, Jan. 21 at 6pm in the Common Room. Our annual Chili Cook Off is always a fun time! See page 6 for more information. Visit this page to RSVP: <http://www.firstuuomaha.org/chili-cook-off>.

First Steps Class

Sunday, Jan. 22 at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room. Gather at the visitors table in the Common Room. You're invited to join us as we gather together to get acquainted with the basics of Unitarian Universalism and our vibrant community. We look forward to discussing the unique opportunities offered by First Unitarian Church of Omaha. To RVSP contact Carrie at coordinator@firstuuomaha.org.

Board Talk Back

Sunday, Jan. 22 at 11:30am in the Common Room. The church board wants to hear from you and will have a table set up in the Common Room to discuss issues that are important to you and the congregation. Board Talk Backs are held the fourth Sunday of each month.

Young Adult Game Night

Join the young adults for some fun and games. We are still deciding the date for January. Please email Anne for information: torimuse@gmail.com.

Omaha Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, Jan. 23 at 7pm in the Common Room. We meet every fourth Monday from 7pm-9pm. We invite any who embrace and support ethical non-monogamy-based loving relationships. We strive to offer a safe place to meet and discuss topics, issues, and hardships we face as polyamorous individuals and families. If you have any questions, please contact Susan at iamdosh@msn.com.

Church Events Continued...

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Jan. 24 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. This group will be led by Geoff Erikson. Contact him at: gerickson03@yahoo.com.

YRUU Overnight

Friday, Jan. 27 to Saturday, Jan. 28 at the church. The Youth Group will hold an overnight. If you would like more information about this group, please contact Adam: asagertui@yahoo.com.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 30 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. Our book for January is *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* by Sebastian Junge. For more information, contact Dave: richardson.david@westside66.net.

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. New members welcome. Our book is *The Battle for God* by Karen Armstrong. For information, please contact Rae at raeb1@hotmail.com.

Lunch With the Minister

Thursdays at 11:30am in the Common Room. All are invited to join Rev. Frank for a "bring your own brown bag lunch." No RSVP required.

Dungeons and Dragons Group Meeting

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month in the Common Room at noon. All D&D role players are invited. If you have questions, contact Roman at RobertmNoriega@gmail.com, 402-769-4260.

Bridge Group

Meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the Conference Room at noon. If you've played before, come for some entertainment and time at the game table. Novices welcome too. Contact Scott Kemper at scott.kemper@gmail.com.

Young Adult Discussion Group

Calling all people aged 18-35 within this age range. We'll be covering any topic that we think is relevant to who we are and our lives. Usually we meet after service at Delice on the first Sunday of month, but due to the holiday we will meet a different day. Please contact Anne at torimuse@gmail.com for details. Info will be posted in the enews.

Future Events

CommUUnity Night

We do not meet in January. Save the date for Feb. 3.

Women's Alliance

We do not meet in January. Save the date for Feb. 13.

Meet & Greet with Rev. Kati: Partner Church All Church Potluck

Tuesday, Feb. 21. See page 15 for details.

Pathways to Membership Class

All Sundays in March at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room. See page 11 for details.

MidAmerica Regional Assembly '17 Finding Our Partners:

Faith in Action

Dates: April 28-30
Where: Oak Brook, IL (Chicago area)
Keynote speaker: Rev. Dr. Lee Barker, President and Professor at Meadville-Lombard Theological School. For details visit: www.midamericauua.org/RA.

Holland Lecture

Speaker: Jacob Hacker

Topic: American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper
Wednesday, May 10 at the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Description:

This lecture in 2017 will cover material in Jacob Hacker's most recent book, *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper*. Like every other prospering democracy, the United States developed a mixed economy that channeled the spirit of capitalism into strong growth and healthy social development. In this bargain, government and business were as much partners as rivals. Public investments in education, science, transportation, and technology laid the foundation for broadly based prosperity. Programs of economic security and progressive taxation provided a floor of protection and business focused on the pursuit of profit—and government addressed needs business could not.

The mixed economy was the most important social innovation of the twentieth century. It spread a previously unimaginable level of broad prosperity. It enabled steep increases in education, health, longevity, and economic security. And yet, extraordinarily, it is anathema to many current economic and political elites. And as the advocates of anti-government free market fundamentalist have gained power, they are hell-bent on scrapping the instrument of nearly a century of unprecedented economic and social progress. In *American Amnesia*, Hacker and Pierson explain how—and why they must be stopped. More information about the lecture series can be found here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/holland-lecture-series>.

All Church Retreat

Scheduled the weekend of June 10-11. For more information see page 17.

UU Summer Kids Camp

June 19-June 23 at church. This year's theme is Harry Potter. Contact Jan at dre@firstuomaha.org to reserve your child's space.

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 need to wrangle.



Enter Your Chili into the Competition

"Lasso" your recipe &
start cookin'!

RSVP:

www.firstuomaha.org/chili-cook-off

Chili Cook Off 2017

Saturday, Jan. 21st at 6p.m.
First Unitarian Church of Omaha

Ways to Help

Community Meals in January & February

Every Saturday our church preps and serves lunch for those in need at First Baptist Church. In January, we will serve bean soup, bread, fruit and desserts on Saturday, Jan. 7. We have signed to serve a meal in February as well. The date is Saturday, Feb. 4. We will serve chili, cornbread, veggies, dip and desserts. Volunteer jobs: Make food. Prepare on site. Serve food. Clean up after. Please contact Diane at dianewithem@gmail.com if you can volunteer to help with either of these dates.

Streaming Services

We are looking for a few more volunteers to help us stream our service online. Check it out here: <http://www.firstuomaha.org/streaming-video>. If you are comfortable with an iPhone or iPad, you can be trained. Please contact the church office at admin@firstuomaha.org today.

Weddings at First Unitarian of Omaha

Did you know that our church is considered the wedding church in Omaha? If you have a friend or coworker who is planning a wedding, why not suggest our church for the special day? Just have your engaged friend call Catharine in the church office at 402-345-3039 ext. 101 or email admin@firstuomaha.org. Help us spread the word about our beautiful church. Thank you!

Upkeep of Our Church Building

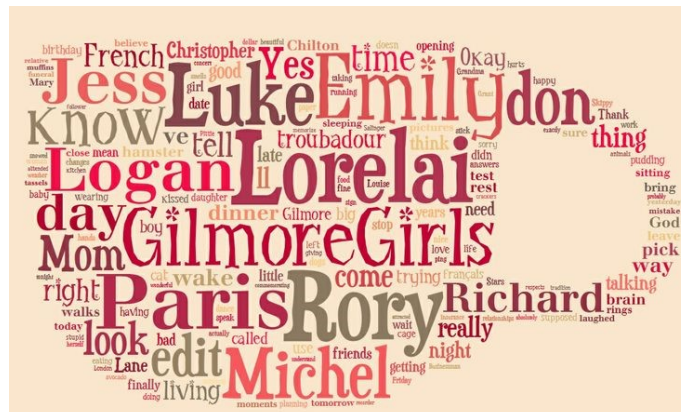
When you have an event or meeting at the church, please be sure before you exit the church that lights are turned out, chairs and tables placed in correct positions, church doors are locked and you return the thermostats to the temperature they were set at when you arrived. When the sanctuary is not in use, we have the temperature set to 65. The Common Room is the same. Thank you for your help!

Heart & Hand Auction Bills

Auction bills and statements for purchased items have been sent out (either via email or regular mail). Prompt payment is much appreciated and will save the church postage. If you need more information or lost your bill, please contact Donna at auction@firstuomaha.org.

Ways to Get Involved

8 SEATS LEFT!! Unbelievable--a full Gilmarathon!! 12 hours (more or less) or Gilmore Girls to the max. Starting with pop tarts and pancakes and gallons of coffee... and ending with burgers and pizza, with lots of fun, surprises, Rory, Lorelei & Luke all day!! Fabulous for fans OR new inductees to this long-running TV classic. Please be aware that there are pets residing at the venue. Fixed price: \$20/seat. Date/Time: Saturday, January 28 10am-10pm!! Location: TBD (invitation to follow). RSVP to Kathi: 402-214-2718, kathryn.lewis.kl@gmail.com.



A Note from Jan, Director of Religious Education

Religious Education is alive with anticipation about the holidays. All over the world children are looking forward to winter festivities of giving, special foods, and celebrations with family. In class our focus has been on the role of light as the world cycles from the darkest days of the year to the hope of sunny days to come.

From the burning of the Yule log, to the lanterns of Hindu Divali, to the coming of Christmas with Advent, to the candles of Hanukkah and Kwanza, the darkness of winter brings a natural longing for light.

We learned about the Swedish festival of St. Lucia. Lucia, who was blinded, gave up the life of a princess to care for the poor. The story goes that she can be seen delivering treats with a crown of candles to the families in Sweden on the 13th of Dec. She represents the hope of the miracles of kindness and caring which we can bring to our dark world.

We learned from the Buddhist tradition that life is about reconciling opposites. This is most readily symbolized in the yin/yang. We welcome the darkness so we can appreciate the light.

Youth Group Brunch Fundraiser

YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) will be serving brunch on January 15th during coffee hour as a fundraiser for YRUU and the Refugee Empowerment Center. Donuts and breakfast casserole will be served in the Common Room immediately following the service, so be sure to bring your appetites and some folding money!

For Church Leaders: Budget

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 6, if possible. Contact treasurer@firstuuomaha.org.

Mitten Tree

Thank you to all who brought in mittens, gloves, hats, scarves and other winter apparel to decorate our holiday tree in the sanctuary during the month of December. Special thanks to Kay Lynn Goldner for dropping off these donations to the Stephen Center.



Congregational Meeting and Other Odds and Ends

Well...the results of the congregational meeting were clear and positive. The process was not. We bogged down in the vote about the quorum needed to authorize spending \$15,000 or more on window repair. The board president here did not anticipate the preparation that was needed to explain and then move the motion forward.

The discussion about retaining the one service format included comments from Jan Wilson representing RE, Molly Dewell representing EMR, our organist Pat Will, Kay Goldner representing our choir, Carolyn McNamara representing hospitality teams, Denise Allain representing worship associates and other members of the congregation. There was positive testimony about keeping the Story for All Ages in the service and a general discussion around the timing and place for the forums. The decision about the forums will be made by the Ministry Team Council (see page 2 in this newsletter for new Sunday service and forum schedule).

The vote to retain one service was 68 members voted to retain and 8 members voted to return to a two-service format, so the motion passed by a wide margin.

According to our by-laws, we need a quorum which is 20 percent of our membership to vote to authorize the spending of \$15,000 or more of any church funds. Dean Christensen and Bob Perrin with help from Pierce Carpenter and Floyd Prine are in charge of a major project to repair the windows in the sanctuary, which badly need repair to avoid catastrophic expense down the road. This is in the initial stages of planning and Dean explained that because of the difficulty in finding contractors and getting accurate estimates for this particular effort, he and Bob Perrin are going to organize a test repair of one of the windows to get an estimate of what the whole project will involve, both with the kind of contractors, the kind of work, and the expense involved.

The intent of the vote which should have been publicized, and explained clearly in advance of the meeting, was simply to authorize spending church funds above \$15,000 if we needed them, to fund the one window repair as a template for estimating further work. As it turns out, Dean is donating the cost of that initial repair.

The larger funding effort down the road will include a donor effort, an investigation into what we need to do to apply for funding from various organizations committed to preserving historical buildings, as well as church money. We will continue to keep everyone informed about the progress of this as we go along. There was some confusion about putting a cap on the amount of funds the board is authorized to use for each project and that is a necessary part of any further action. It should be up to the project managers as well as the board after reviewing detailed information about the project and the church funds to recommend what that cap needs to be before we put this to a congregational vote.

The motion to authorize the board to spend more than \$15,000 of church money to get the project started prior to our annual meeting in May passed with 57 in favor and 2 opposed. We will continue to provide information about the project.

The last agenda item was a messy effort due to the lack of board leadership preparation about the resolution we really needed and the amazing tangle of Robert's Rules of Order. I plan to speak with Robert.

Jackie Anderegg,
President

Preserve Our Building Fund Drive

By Jaime Alexander

The 2017 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 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, I wondered if we could build a fund to lead the way towards funding a needed refurbishment in the future. 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 \$58,000. 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. Our just underway sanctuary windows project is a likely candidate. Please join in this year’s effort.

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.



Pathways to Membership Class

**Sundays, March 5, March 12, March 19 and March 26 at 11:45am
in the Whitney Young Room (downstairs classroom)**

This class explores who we are and what we believe and provides opportunities for members to share with newcomers what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. Whether you are new to the church, or have been coming for a while, this is a great opportunity to learn more about this community. Questions? Want to RSVP? Contact Carrie: coordinator@firstuuomaha.org.

Schedule:

Week 1	March 5	Introductory Class & Religious Education
Week 2	March 12	History and UU Roots
Week 3	March 19	Church Governance and Elements of Unitarian Universalism
Week 4	March 26	Membership, Stewardship and Fundraising

Why Do We Have Pink Attendance Sheets?

You have probably seen the note in the order of worship announcements that says: Please sign in on the pink sheets in each pew. The information gathered will not only help us count attendance at each service, but will let us know that someone has not been seen lately and may need assistance. We take attendance so we know how many friends, members and visitors are here. Attendance helps us determine how many orders of worships to print. Now that we have decided as a church to stay with one service, knowing how many people are here helps us determine if the sanctuary is too full. Plus, if we notice that someone is missing for a few weeks, we can reach out and make sure that person is okay. The office and its volunteers appreciate that folks have been signing in on the pink sheets. Thank you!

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.

Community Meals

Every Saturday churches in our area join together to cook a meal, serve their neighbors and bring a sense of community to our neighborhood at First Baptist Church (401 Park Ave). First Unitarian Church has committed to the following Saturdays for Community Meals:

January 7
February 4

We will need people to help with desserts, cooking, serving and cleaning up. See page 7 for more information about the upcoming meals.

Did you know? You may be reimbursed for money you spend making food for one of our meals or you may choose to donate it. If you have questions or would like to sign-up to cook, serve, or clean-up, please contact Diane. Thanks! Diane Withem, dianewithem@gmail.com

Share the Plate This Month

Each month one-half of the loose currency collected in the offering plate is donated to a cause that advances important principles of Unitarianism. Our Share the Plate recipient for January is Habitat for Humanity. To learn more, visit: <https://habitatomaha.org/>.

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 blessings 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 Recap

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 2016 (excluding December because the newsletter must be sent before the end of the month). The amount collected for Partner Church in December will be shared in next month's newsletter.

2016 Share the Plate Recipients

January — Habitat for Humanity — \$437.50
 February — Community Meals — \$595
 March — OTOC — \$565
 April — Community Meals — \$674
 May — PFLAG — \$499.50
 June — NAMI — \$291
 July — OTOC — \$373
 August — Siena/Francis House — \$348
 September — Project Everlast — \$280
 October — Community Meals — \$326.50
 November — OTOC — \$421.50

The Ministry Team Council (MTC) has chosen the recipients for the 2017 year. They are:

January: Habitat for Humanity
 February: Community Meals
 March: OTOC
 April: Community Meals
 May: PFLAG
 June: NAMI
 July: OTOC
 August: Siena/Francis House
 September: Project Everlast
 October: Community Meals
 November: OTOC
 December: Partner Church

If you know a nonprofit that would be a good fit for the Share the Plate program please email the MTC. The form to fill out here is here: http://media.wix.com/ugd/6ac81d_60d1e8c496734397b892cbca2823df70.pdf

New Members Joined On Dec. 11

Thirteen people joined on Sunday, Dec. 11. Here is a list of our new members with brief bios:

Della Bynum is originally from Baltimore, Maryland and has spent all of her adult life in Omaha. She is retired from the city of Omaha after 35 years of service, her last 20 years were with the Omaha Fire Department. After retirement, Della realized her dream of having a dance studio—Chrysalis Studio of Belly Dance, where she teaches daily. She says that what calls her to UU is its overall philosophy of inclusiveness.

Seth and Kerri Wingert first visited in April 2012 on a day when Dave Rosser sang The Beatles' *Imagine*. (*Imagine* is Seth's favorite song.) They were married here that June and lived in Seattle for four years. Seth just started working for Woodmen, and Kerri is writing her dissertation in education and looking for a job. They care a lot about social justice, oldies music, and bicycling.

Mike McAtee was born and raised in Northern California, mostly in the San Francisco Bay area. He is a retired Air Force officer and veteran of the first Gulf War. Mike, his wife Deb and their kids having been living here since 1993. They now have deep family ties in Nebraska as Mike is a proud grandpa of five grandchildren. Mike is so happy to have found this community and he truly believes that he has found his religious home here.

Jamie Major lives in Papillion and is married to Sandy and has four grown children. Jamie likes to stay active. He plays tennis and golf and likes to ski, but will try any sport or activity. He first attended with his mother, Harriet, several years ago. Basically, she has been right about everything in his life (not really). She was right about First Unitarian, too.

Sara Fox is originally from Grand Island where she lived until 2015. She has two children: Blake who is 7 and Maddox who is 6. Her interests include going to the Y with her kids, cooking, singing, enjoying music, museums, camping and helping others. When she's not chasing her two boys around, she likes to volunteer, Sienna Francis is her favorite place to volunteer. She never really felt like "part of something" until she came to First U. Both of her children and she absolutely love it.

Peter Piehler enjoys football, reading, and time with friends. He is an inventory coordinator at ConAgra in Council Bluffs. The father of one son, Pete earned an associate's degree in business administration prior to moving to the Midwest. He has found the feeling of community at our UU church and enjoys the opportunity to ask questions and learn from an inspired congregation.

(See more new members on next page)

Sharon Piehler is from western New York and attended the State University of NY earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree of science. Sharon has long volunteered with animal rescues and was involved in the delegate process during the presidential election. She enjoys reading and needlework. She feels this church provides a safe learning environment and a chance to deep her spiritual being.

Tom Seguin is from Cincinnati, Ohio and is stationed at Offutt Air Force Base. He plays the trumpet with the Nebraska Wind Symphony, occasionally performs with the EMR, sings in the choir, and leads the Membership Team with his wife, Caitlin.

Caitlin Seguin is from Fairfax, Virginia. She is a speech pathologist in Bellevue Public Schools. She is an oboist in the Nebraska Wind Symphony. Like her husband, she sings in the choir. The couple decided to join the church because they feel they've found a church home here at First Unitarian.

Katie Zimmer is from Omaha. She lives so close that she can see the church from her house. She works as a recruiter for Mutual of Omaha. Katie enjoys being active by walking her dog

and practicing yoga. She helps out at Community Meals, and decided to join because she loves the open exchange of ideas and the strong sense of community.

Geoff Erickson is from Santa Barbara, California, and moved to Omaha three years ago to work with Marriott Customer Care. Geoff leads the Taoism Discussion Group, enjoys spending time with close friends, playing board games and reading. He's joining the church because the diversity of perspectives makes him feel at home and he'd like to share the warm welcome with others.

Suzanne King recently returned to Nebraska after 27 years in the Houston, Texas area where she and her husband had a small educational no-kill chicken farm. She is part of the Women's Religious Studies Group, a Covenant Group, and CUUPS. She likes the nurturing spiritual environment provided for her young granddaughters.

Please welcome all our new members!

Bios provided by Carrie Helmberger and Ellen Shurson



Celebration of new members in the Common Room.

Photos by Scott Kemper

New Members
with Rev. Frank.

*Photo by
Scott Kemper*



Rev. Katalin from Our Partner Church Will Visit Omaha in February 2017

Submitted by the Partner Church Committee

Rev. Katalin, the minister of our Partner Church in Firtosmartonos, Transylvania, Romania, will be attending the UU International Women's Convocation to be held in Pacific Grove, California, February 16 through 19, 2017. This is a gathering of Unitarian-Universalist church women from, literally, all over the world. Rev. Katalin applied for, and received, a scholarship which will subsidize her conference and room and board costs while she is attending the Convocation. Rev. Katalin ministers to two neighboring villages in Transylvania. Two American churches support these two Transylvanian Unitarian churches—our church and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis, Oregon. Our Partner Church Fund and the Partner Church Committee have paid for Rev. Katalin's airfare to and from the United States. Our Partner Church Fund will also pay for Rev. Katalin's airfare from the Convocation to Omaha. Janet West, the team leader of the Partner Church First Unitarian Team, will also be attending the Convocation and will accompany Rev. Katalin to Omaha.

Rev. Katalin will be in Omaha February 19 through 23. An All-Church Potluck will be held in the Common Room on February 21. More details later.

If you have not donated to the Partner Church Fund yet, please help pay for Rev. Katalin's visit to Omaha. These check donations can be placed in a pew envelope and put in the offering plate or sent to the church office. Make the check out to First Unitarian Church and write "Partner Church Fund" in the memo line of your check.

*Rev. Katalin's round trip ticket from Cluj Romania to Portland Oregon and from Omaha to Cluj cost \$1,077 and was paid for by our church's Partner Church Fund and the Corvallis church's Partner Church Committee. The cost of the ticket to fly Katalin from San Jose California to Omaha, \$237, was paid by our church's Partner Church Fund.

**None of Janet West's travel expenses or Convocation expenses will be paid by the Partner Church Fund.

***Democracy, Humanity and Unitarianism; Past and Present* Part II** **"First Unitarian in Postwar America; Three Eloquent Ministers Lead Us Through Interesting Times"** by Dave Richardson

In the first installment of this three-part series, we noted that recent political events and societal divisiveness have caused concern for Unitarians and other religious liberals. It is not surprising that a church that cherishes democratic values as much as we do would feel as if these values are being eroded by demagoguery and nativism.

Unitarians have a long history of fighting for progressive causes and democratic values. The preceding installment looked at the 1930s and the war years and the strong stands against fascism and isolationism taken by our denomination and two First Unitarian ministers who served during that period. This type of leadership was continued by the ministers who served the church in the postwar era as well.

The Rev. John Willoughby Cyrus was called to First Unitarian in 1943 after Rev. Robert Sheridan Miller left to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy. Rev. Cyrus served this congregation until 1956. The postwar years are often depicted as a time of prosperity and complacency for most Americans. This idyllic life was not available to all. Equal opportunity in housing, jobs and education was not a part of the lives of many Americans, particularly African-Americans. Rev. Cyrus not only advocated for racial equality, but worked for it in the community.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

A man who was to become one of the leading figures in The Civil Rights movement affiliated with First Unitarian in the early '50s. Whitney Young and his wife joined the church in 1950 when Mr. Young came to Omaha to head up the Urban League of Nebraska. Rev. Cyrus served on the board of the Urban League and worked closely with Mr. Young on equality in housing and access to other previously restricted facilities. Another member of the church, N.P. "Phil" Dodge, a prominent real estate figure, joined Young and Cyrus in these efforts. Mr. Dodge used his considerable influence in Omaha to help pass an "Open Housing" ordinance.

This was also the era of the Cold War marked by fear of the Soviet Union. Rev. Cyrus urged the congregation to take a more rational attitude toward Russia. In a sermon titled "Survival Knowledge" he noted that the "Iron Curtain," should not be "impermeable" when it came to cultural exchanges and increased understanding between the peoples of both nations. These two issues, civil rights and the cold war, would dominate the next two decades. Fortunately, our church had two ministers during the late '50s and early '60s whose rhetorical skills, insights and activity helped the congregation to remain informed of potential and real threats to democratic values in this period.

While many Americans were content to remain ignorant or apathetic regarding the nuclear arms race and other critical national and international issues, Charles Phillips put to work his considerable intellect and concern for the preservation of democratic values.

Rev. Charles Phillips came to our pulpit from the Des Moines Unitarian Church in 1956. His activities, while in Omaha, included a sabbatical in the Middle East in conjunction with the Institute for Jewish and Palestine Relations. In one of his more notable and prophetic sermons titled "Democratic Vistas" he called on us to nurture key democratic virtues such as being informed and vigilant citizens. He also commented on the threats to free thinking caused by fearmongering and suppression of political thought during the McCarthy years. He noted that few of those labeled "pink" turned out to be "red."

The next minister to be called to First Unitarian was Reverend Robert Terry Weston. Rev. Weston is best known nationally for his poetry, especially his inspiring work "Out of the Stars." His eloquence and inspiration is also displayed in his sermons.

Rev. Weston, like his predecessor, was concerned with the fear and paranoia engendered during the McCarthy era. In his sermon "Religion is Serious Business" he warned against candidates who openly or covertly supported the KKK, The John Birch Society and "the hatred which is willing to risk humanity by atomic war." He lauded the courage of Senator Margaret Chase Smith who publicly condemned the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy. He further challenged the congregation with these words "...this church exists to nourish this kind of integrity and sincerity. It will do so to the extent that we, its members, take this as a serious responsibility and are willing to defend it at whatever cost to ourselves."

His dedication to the practice of democratic principles is evident in his sermon "Democracy Begins With You" in which he warns "democracy is worthwhile only as it becomes method as well as goal." He was particularly concerned with how these principles were taught and practiced in educational institutions.

Rev. Weston took a strong stand in support of a noted church member, Thomas Bonner, who was a political science professor at Omaha University (now UNO.) Professor Bonner was attacked by ultra-patriotic McCarthyites who claimed he was a Marxist who should be fired for his views. The University officials expressed support for Professor Bonner and for academic freedom. Rev. Weston wrote a thank you note to University President Milo Bail praising him for his courage in not giving in to "the demands of crackpots and vengeance-minded misguided folks."

Professor Bonner also ran for congress as a progressive candidate. His campaign was unsuccessful, but he did bring a liberal agenda into the public dialogue.

The seeds of the issues and ideals that would explode into the public consciousness in the late '60s and early '70s were planted in the previous decades during a time marked largely by apathy and complacency. The church was somewhat of an exception to the rule during that time. Two issues that helped define the late '60s were Civil Rights and the Vietnam War. The church's role in these contentious times will be our subject for the next installment.

**Registration Form for Church Family Retreat – June 10-11, 2017
at the Carol Joy Holling Center (near Mahoney)**

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please make your check payable to First Unitarian Church. All payments and RSVPs are due by **Friday, May 19 at noon.**

If you want to spend the night please mark below:

___ 1 person attending: \$131 if booked by March 13th (\$138 after)

___ 2 people attending: \$105/person if booked by March 13th (\$111 after)

___ 3 people attending: \$94/person if booked by March 13th (\$99 after)

___ 4 people attending: \$84/person if booked by March 13th

(\$89 after)

___ 5 or more people attending: \$74/person if booked by March 13th (\$78 after)

\$ _____ Total *(Please note: kids 5 and under are free)*

Please list the names of those in your group:

New this year:

**Save 5% if you book by
Monday, March 13!**

If you would like the Saturday-only option which includes lunch and dinner, please mark below:

Number of people in your group _____ Cost is \$29/person includes lunch and dinner. Kids 5 and under are free. \$ _____ total Please list the names of those in your group:

A note from Rev. Frank Rivas

A church retreat benefits us as individuals by providing an opportunity to escape the demands of our lives and to reflect on who we are and where we're going. There will be workshops for adults (yoga, listening circles, values clarification) and for the children (art projects, nature stories, and a scavenger hunt) as well as a time to walk the grounds, to sit quietly, and to play with others. No programs are mandatory.

A church retreat also provides the opportunity to deepen connections within the congregation. We reflect, eat, play, and even wake up in the context of the church congregation—the entire community, children and all. Imagine how this experience might affect our community in the year ahead.

Please note:

First, we recognize that the cost can be prohibitive, and we are willing to subsidize members--particularly children since the cost increases significantly with each child over 5.

Second, we have added a Saturday-only option. If you would like to attend on Saturday only, the cost is \$29/person, lunch and dinner included. Kids 5 and under are free.

I look forward to seeing you there,

Frank

Minister

Frank Rivas

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**Organist**

Pat Will

Early Service Pianist

Stan Harper

Choir Director

William Miller

choirdirector@firstuuomaha.org**Choir Accompanist**

Elizabeth Kelly

Minister Emeritus

Ronald Knapp

Nursery Coordinator

Jenny Hastings

childcare@firstuuomaha.org**Custodian**

Bobby Medrano

Nominating CommitteeKim Callaghan, Molly Dewell,
Nadine Keith, Dave Olson, Carol
Ramsey, Ben Wallace**THE FLAME**

Deadlines are the 15th of each month.

Word limit: 200. Send submissions to

admin@firstuuomaha.org.Editor/Designer: Cat DixonProofers: Lana Hammel,

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Meet Our Leaders

Board MembersJackie Anderegg (President), Alan Vovolka (President-Elect), Sheri Conner,
Joe Schaaf (Secretary), Linda Parker, Kabin Thomas, Floyd Prine, Cy Leiseboard@firstuuomaha.org**Trustees of the Capital Trust**

Steve Hutchinson (2017), Evelyn Whitehill (2018), Dean Christensen (2019)

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Skip Ciulla, Jack Round, Donna Tubach-Davis

Ministry Team Council

Rev. Frank Rivas, Nellie Chenoweth, Alan Vovolka, Diane Withem

mtc@firstuuomaha.org**Ministry Teams and Team Leaders**

Archives—Dave Richardson

Black Lives Matter—Rene Harper

Caring—Louise Jeffrey

Chalice Guild—Kay Lynn Goldner

Community Meals—Diane Withem

Fellowship—Judith Wright, Nadine Keith & Nellie Chenoweth

Finance—Walt Jesteadt

Fundraising—Donna Neff

Hope in Action—Kim Dunovan

Hospitality Teams—Carolyn McNamara

House and Grounds—Pierce Carpenter

Membership—Caitlin & Tom Seguin

Neighborhood Ministry—Royal Carleton

Office—Carolyn McNamara

Omaha Together One Community—Janet West

Partner Church—Janet West

Religious Education—Sheri Conner

Social Justice—Lori Schaaf

Women's Alliance—Nellie Chenoweth

Worship Arts Team—Megan Gustafson

Young Adult Group—Anne Rodriguez

YRUU—Adam Sagert and Caroline Miller

Church Events

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 2 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

Community Meals

Saturday, Jan. 7, offsite. See page 7 for information.

Examined Life Group

Tuesday, Jan. 3 and 17 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4 for details.

Sunday Forum: Forums for Sale

Sunday, Jan. 8 at 9:30am in the Common Room. See page 2 for details.

CUUPS Planning Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 8 at 6pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 10 at 7pm in the Common Room

AHA Meeting (Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists)

Thursday, Jan. 12 at 7pm. See page 4.

Black Lives Matter Team Meeting

Friday, Jan. 13 at 6pm in the Common Room.

Flame Deadline

Submit your newsletter articles to admin@firstuuomaha.org by Jan. 15 at noon.

Sunday Forum: Unitarian Observations: Death & Dying

Sunday, Jan. 15 at 9:30am in the Common Room. See page 2 for details. See page 4 for information.

YRUU Brunch Fundraiser

Sunday, Jan. 15 during coffee hour. See page 8.

CUUPS Book Study Group

Sunday, Jan. 15 at 1130am: in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5 for information.

Arts & Crafts Night

Sunday, Jan. 15 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for information.

People's Film Festival

Monday, Jan. 16 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 4 for details.

The Women's Religious Study Covenant Group

Thursday, Jan. 19 at 1pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 4.

Young Adult Game Night

Saturday, Jan. 21 at 6:30pm in the Whitney Young Classroom. See page 4 for information.

Chili Cook-Off

Saturday, Jan. 21. See page 6 for details.

Sunday Forum: The Chalice and the Cauldron

Sunday, Jan. 22 at 9:30am in the Common Room. See page 2 for details. See page 2 for information.

Board Talk Back

Sunday, Jan. 22 at 11:00am in the Common Room. See page 5 for information.

Polyamory Discussion Group

Monday, Jan. 23 at 7pm in the Common Room. See page 5 for details

Taoism Discussion Group

Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 6:30pm in the Common Room. See page 5 for details.

YRUU Overnight

Friday, Jan. 27 to Saturday, Jan. 28 at the church.

Sunday Forum: Fight for Democratic Values

Sunday, Jan. 29 at 9:30am in the Common Room. See page 2 for details. See page 2 for information.

Book Club

Monday, Jan. 30 at 7pm in the Merritt Lounge. See page 5 for details.

Recurring...

YRUU Meetings

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Common Room.

Choir Rehearsal

Wednesdays at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

Lunch with the Minister

Every Thursday at 11:30am in the Common Room. See page 5.

Women's Religious Studies Group

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

Dungeons & Dragons Group

Meets the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month. See page 5.

Bridge Group

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

Future Events...

Community Meals

Saturday, Feb. 4, offsite. See page 7.

Meet & Greet with Rev. Kati: Partner Church All Church Potluck

Tuesday, Feb. 21. See page 15 for details.

Pathways to Membership Class

All Sundays in March at 11:45am in the Whitney Young Room. See page 11 for details.



International Cowperson Chili Cook-Off

January 21st - 6pm

Food

Friends

Music

Costumes

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

www.firstuuomaha.org