



# The MidAmerica Messenger

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*Central Midwest, Heartland, and Prairie Star Districts of the Unitarian Universalist Association have joined together as MidAmerica Region to create a new era in Unitarian Universalism.*

We invite you to read the first issue of the MidAmerica Region newsletter, in which you will find invitations to two events related to our social justice focus - the first ever Regional Assembly in multiple locations, one of which is significant due to the 60th anniversary of Brown vs Board of Education; and "Who are Our Neighbors?" a look at cultural diversity in the 21st century.

-- from the MidAmerica Staff

# Faith and Action at YMLS 2013

*by Dylan Larson Harsch, First Unitarian Society, Milwaukee*

*(Dylan is one of 26 youth who attended Youth Midwest Leadership School this summer.)*

As many know, during one day of the Youth Midwest Leadership School, the youth volunteered with Community Action, a local social justice group of Beloit who plant urban gardens and renovate houses in disadvantaged areas of the city. The area where I and others worked was only a few blocks away from the college where our group stayed. I was stunned to hear that the neighborhood where we worked was once considered one of the most impoverished in the U.S., considering its proximity to a fairly nice college campus. The neighborhood now, however, is certainly not what I would consider to be "deeply impoverished". Kids play happily in backyard pools, houses are maintained and occupied, fresh food is available for free, all due to the work of this one organization.

While I worked, I really felt like I was part of something bigger, because although I only screwed a few planks onto a fence, it was the work of others like me, volunteers, who had brought about this drastic change to the neighborhood.

After about an hour, a policeman drove up and started to chat. He told the story of a shootout that had taken place by the house right next to the garden, and how someone had died on the very ground we now walked across. Community Action had since bought and repurposed the house, and was almost ready to sell it, albeit for a significant loss. It hit me hard that a violent crime had happened right where I was, but comforted me that we were now doing something to make sure that never happened again.

You see, I believe we were doing more than just helping out in a soup kitchen, for although that is great work that saves lives, it is only a temporary fix to the problem; people will get hungry again. What I was doing was making sure that once those people were hungry again, they would have a home in a stable neighborhood with free organic food ripe for the taking right next door. I was helping lift people out of poverty to get them stabilized, making sure they never had to stand in line at a soup kitchen again.

And that is what I believe is truly putting faith into action.

# Who Are Our Neighbors?

Save the Date:

Building Beloved Community: Who Are Our Neighbors? Weekend

February 28-March 2, 2014

Chicago

Many of our congregations strive to be welcoming to people from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. "Who Are Our Neighbors?" is a program that helps us explore multiculturalism and develop our intercultural competencies. By growing and deepening our capacity for successful multicultural ministries and stronger intercultural relationships, we can move our congregations closer to fulfilling our vision of becoming an anti-racist religious movement.

This weekend program is ideally designed for teams from your congregation, though we will accept individuals who are interested. It will begin Friday evening and continue through Sunday mid-day. More information will be available this fall, but now, save the date!

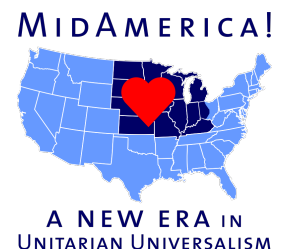
For more information, please contact Lisa Presley, [lpresley@uua.org](mailto:lpresley@uua.org) (mailto:lpresley@uua.org).

## Why Incorporate in Iowa??

*by Dave Martin, MidAmerica Board of Trustees*

The MidAmerica Region officially came into existence when it was incorporated in the state of Iowa on May 16, 2013.

In the fall of 2012, as the board members of the three districts (Prairie Star, Heartland, Central Midwest) met together and discussed the pros and cons of moving forward with the formation of a region, there was unanimous consent that we should incorporate in the state of Iowa because (at that time) Iowa was the only state in the new region in which same sex marriage had been declared legal.



Each district had been incorporated in a different state (Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois) and we knew we would have to deal with three different sets of state laws that determined how we dissolved each district once we had a vote from delegates to move forward. It turned out to be fairly easy to actually file the articles of incorporation. It could be done in a matter of days once we had the necessary wording for an incorporation document. We made the decision to wait until we actually had voted on forming the region before we actually filed for incorporation. We did secure the services of an attorney in Iowa City, Iowa. Once the three districts voted during the month of April to dissolve the respective districts and form the MidAmerica region, we filed with the State of Iowa. At the present time the three districts are in the process of dissolving according to respective state laws.

## MidAmerica Regional Assembly

Save the Date!



One Regional Assembly, in four locations!

Plan now to attend the "Hunger for Justice" Regional Assembly in April, 2014. You'll have your choice of four locations, so you can pick one that's closer to home or somewhere you've wanted to visit!

- o Ann Arbor, Michigan - April 12, 2014 (Saturday only)
- o Bloomington, Indiana - April 12, 2014 (Saturday only)
- o Topeka, Kansas - April 11-13, 2014 (Friday to Sunday)
- o Wisconsin or Illinois - April 11-12, 2014 (Friday and Saturday)

### **Keynote Presenter: Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor**

Paul Rasor is Director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom and Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia Wesleyan College. Paul has a wide-ranging background that includes religion, law and music. He holds a Master of Divinity and Ph.D. in the study of religion from Harvard, as well as a law degree and a music degree from the University of Michigan. He is an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, and has served Unitarian Universalist congregations in Arlington MA and Lexington, MA, near Boston.



Paul has published widely in both law and theology. His most recent book is *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square* (2012), published by Skinner House books in Boston.

Paul has also been active in various forms of community service. He went to El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua several times during the war years of the 1980's, doing both educational and human rights work. He is a classical and a jazz trombonist. He is also an actor and has been involved in college and community theater since the 1970s.

### **Other Highlights**

- First-ever MidAmerica Region Business Meeting
- Workshops, worship, and social justice activity in each location

## AdvisorCon2013: The Return of the MAYANs

August 2-3, 2013 marked an historic moment for Unitarian Universalist youth ministry leaders in the MidAmerica region. After many months of hard work and dedication, the Mid America Youth Advisor Network, (MAYAN) was officially launched.

MAYAN is intended to provide youth advisors with a place to go for information, to ask questions and collectively share our ideas, wisdom and resources. As youth advisors, we are here because we share a passion for youth ministry, and while the work we do with youth is vital, it is also important to make time to honor ourselves and to grow spiritually. MAYAN creates a space for us to connect in meaningful ways and to nurture and support each other.

You can currently connect with MAYAN on Facebook and a MAYAN website is in process. You can also email the group moderator.

MAYAN is here for all of us because of the hard work and perseverance of several veteran youth leaders. A debt of gratitude is owed to Heather Godbout, Kim Tilford and Bill Huber. Thank you for believing in MAYAN and thank you for caring enough about us as leaders and about the future of our youth to hold on to your vision, even in the dark.

*"...we're the generation we can't afford to wait...The future started yesterday we're already late..."*

-- John Legend

A Note from *Nancy Combs-Morgan, Congregational Life Consultant*

### **Tomorrow is Here!**

What an honor to take part in this historic event, the creation of MAYAN at Advisor Con 2013. I was especially thrilled to be asked to serve as the MidAmerica Regional staff liaison for MAYAN.



In this context, I will endeavor to link our respective MidAmerica youth ministry leaders, and to go the next step in providing transformative trainings and resources for our congregational leaders who are endeavoring to create spirit filled, congregationally-focused, multigenerational, and multicultural youth ministry. I will also be a committed advocate for alignment and partnership with our national Youth and Young Adult Office.

I am convinced that this is the start of a significant partnership! As John Legend has expressed...the future started yesterday and tomorrow is already here!

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How to Reach Us

### **Clip and Save:**

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