



The MidAmerica Messenger

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As these autumn days get shorter, may our separate fires kindle one flame.

Sincerely,

Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant

All on Board for the Love Bus!

Since 2009, same sex couples have been arriving at the UU Society of Iowa City, (<http://www.uusic.org/>) Iowa, to be married. So far, 138 couples have traveled on the "Love Bus" from Saint Louis to have their marriages celebrated in Iowa!

The Love Bus is organized by a couple in Saint Louis - Ed and Scott. Once they saw that same sex marriage had been declared legal in Iowa in 2009, they contacted the congregation in Iowa City to find out whether the congregation would welcome them. Interim Minister Rev. Benjamin Maucere and the congregation said an enthusiastic "Yes!" and couples have been arriving ever since. Recently, the 13th Love Bus



came, with 13 couples on board, plus family and friends. An October date has already been set for the 14th Love Bus. Ed and Scott have a Facebook page called "Show Me Marriage Equality" - the wishes from previous buses' couples to new couples are especially touching.

When the Love Bus arrives in Iowa City, the congregation is ready, according to UUSIC's current minister, Rev. Steven Protzman. A coordinator does the organizing, arranging for the space, finding volunteers, and arranging publicity. Church members serve as greeters, ushers, and bring refreshments. Rev. Protzman and other ministers, either affiliated with the congregation or ministers who accompany the couples on the Love Bus, conduct the ceremonies. After a brief rehearsal, the ceremonies begin. There are photos, and the marriage licenses are signed. [Marriage licenses are arranged ahead of time with the County Recorder.] After refreshments, the happy couples get back on the bus to go for a festive lunch, and they're on the road back to Saint Louis.

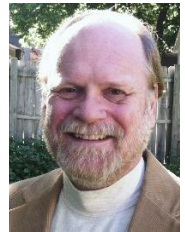
Rev. Protzman says that the congregation has been energized by this ministry to the couples from Saint Louis. Congregation members enthusiastically support this with their time and energy. He comments, "The marrying couples are blown away by how welcomed they feel. One participant said, 'My church in Saint Louis talks about extravagant hospitality. I didn't know what that meant until I came here!'"

And Rev. Protzman says, "Because of the Love Buses, people come from all over the country, from places like Illinois, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Missouri, and Washington, to be married in Iowa City. Those getting married tell us they've been partners for an average of fifteen years. They are so very grateful for our congregation's efforts!"

Round, Round, Get Around... I Get Around

By Rev. Phillip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant

One of the priorities we have as Congregational Life Consultants for the MidAmerica Region is getting to know you--the friends, members, and religious professionals of the congregations we serve. To that end, my fellow regional staff members and I are intentionally visiting congregations in the cities and towns of states we may not have visited when we were employed by the former districts that merged this year into the MidAmerica Region.



So, for example, both Nancy Combs-Morgan and Ian Evison have made their way to Nebraska to work with our congregations in Omaha and Lincoln. Dori Thexton will be coming to Iowa to attend the meeting of the Prairie Star chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. Nancy Heege will be going to Ann Arbor, Michigan the last weekend of October to offer a workshop, and I, Phillip Lund, will be visiting Appleton, Wisconsin for a workshop that weekend as well. Lisa Presley will be traveling to Saint Louis, Missouri the following weekend to offer a workshop to congregations there. All this is in addition to our more traditional work of start ups for religious professionals and consulting with congregations around the region.

And while we love to meet you face-to-face whenever possible, we're also building relationships virtually through the monthly webinars we've been offering. For example, Nancy Combs-Morgan just completed an online training for new DREs. Nancy Heege already has people from all over the region registered for her "Leading Congregations During Times of Anxiety" webinar in October. Lisa Presley will be offering a webinar on "InterCultural Competency" in November. Future webinars will include topics such as "New Ideas for Small Congregation Websites," "Creating a Pastoral Care System for Smaller Congregations," "Conflict and the InterCultural Competency Model," and "Young Adult Spirituality and Vital Worship."

For Board Presidents, Board Members, and Treasurers

Thank you for taking on the responsibility for your congregation by accepting your new leadership role. We hope the year will be an excellent one for you and for your congregation. Here are some resources we suggest

Coming on Tuesday, October 15 - a new webinar on "**Leading a Congregation During Times of Anxiety.**" Facilitator will be Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant.

We also have some helpful webinars on our archived webinars list:

- **10 Good Ideas for New Congregation Presidents**, led by Ian Evison, Congregational Life Consultant.
- **Board Responsibilities: What's a Board to Do?** led by Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant.
- **Robert's Rules and Meeting Management** (<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/events/webinars/roberts-rules-and-consensus>), led by Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant

And for other leaders:

- **Handbook for Congregation Treasurers** (<http://bit.ly/1dm9qM5>)
- **10 Essentials for Managing Congregational Human Resources**, another of our archived webinars, led by UUA Human Resources Director Rob Molla

Don't see what you are looking for on this list? We invite you to suggest ideas to us - in addition to emailing us, "like" our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MidAmericaUUA>) [click the link or look for MidAmerica UUA] and post comments there about what you'd like to see/hear in workshops or webinars. Or you could organize or host a cluster event for presidents or some other group, and we'll schedule a visit with the cluster. Just be sure to check dates with us before finalizing a date.

Answering Your Questions About MidAmerica Regional Assembly 2014



In last month's newsletter, there was an article about the first ever MidAmerica Regional Assembly, being held next April in four locations - Bloomington, Indiana; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Topeka, Kansas, and a location in the former Central Midwest District.

Some of you responded with questions. Here are the answers. This event will replace the Heartland and CMwD District Assemblies and the PSD Annual Conference. The theme of the Regional Assembly is "Hunger for Justice." The schedule will vary depending on location.

Using live streaming over the internet, two of the events will bring together people on Saturday, April 12. Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor will give a keynote address in Topeka, Kansas, which will be broadcast live on the internet so that participants in the other three locations can view the talk. Later that morning, the first ever MidAmerica Business Meeting will be broadcast live from Bloomington, Indiana. Congregational delegates sitting in all four locations will be able to see the meeting and participate in discussing, asking questions, and voting.

In addition to the two events being live streamed, there will be worship, workshops, social justice activities, and opportunities for getting to know other UUs in each location. While we're still working out the logistics, we're very excited to offer a conference that will serve people all over the Region. Stay tuned for more information in coming newsletters, and put April, 2014 on your calendar.

Nancy Heege's Sabbatical Plans

by Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant

As members of the UUA staff, Congregational Life Consultants are encouraged to take sabbatical time about every seven years. The time can be used for work-related study, for professional development or community service, and for work that will be of benefit to the organization served. My proposal for sabbatical time has been approved, and I'll be taking my sabbatical between November 4, 2013 and January 31, 2014. [My last sabbatical was in 2003.]



While I'm away, I'll be focusing on two projects: study recommendations for, and suggest methods for systematizing, the ways we do some of our services to congregations, such as strategic planning, conflict management, start-ups, board retreats; and, by way of deepening my own knowledge and experience of cultural diversity and anti-oppression work, I'll explore the cultural diversity we have in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. There are many possibilities for exploration in the Twin Cities, from visiting restaurants and grocery stores to attending worship services to seeing theater performances to volunteering with an agency that assists families new to the United States, and I'm very excited to have this opportunity. For those of you interested in knowing more about what I'm doing, I'll be posting regularly on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MidAmericaUUA>.

Although I'll be away from the day-to-day work of the region, the work will go on. Other staff members are stepping in to assist, as I will do for them when they go on sabbatical. District Administrator Sarah Greene will be "on call" for administrative questions. Contact Sarah... Regional Lead Ian Evison will be looking after my share of the consulting and resource work for congregations. Contact Ian.

I very much appreciate this opportunity, and I'm grateful to the staff, the UUA, and the Board for this time of enrichment and renewal.

Advertising Congregations Events

Often regional staff are asked whether we can help to advertise events being sponsored by one of our congregations, that might be of interest to UUs in other nearby congregations. We'd be happy to put your event on our online calendar with a short sentence or two about the event. What we need from you is a link to the page on your web site where people can find more information. We can also advertise these events on our MidAmerica Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MidAmericaUUA>). Contact us when the information is on your web site, and we'll link to that. Thanks!

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