



## *The MidAmerica Messenger*

Volume 2, Issue 6 | February 2015

*MidAmerica Region is building a new era in Unitarian Universalism, where UUs visibly live our faith, create connections, grow our membership, and welcome all persons who share our UU values.*

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Join us in Naperville for the Regional Assembly on April 17-19. You'll be challenged and inspired by our theme speakers, Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt and Rev. Dr. Marlin Lavanhar.

**<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra/ra-archives/2015>**

We always appreciate your comments and suggestions for the newsletter. Click on the "email the editor" link in the menu on the left to send us a message.

Sincerely,

Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant

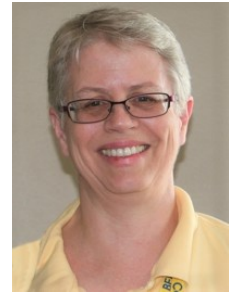




## Congregations, Conflict and Mission

*By Rev. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant*

Recently, I was on a phone call discussing a colleague's work when one of the wise women in the conversation said something that made me stop in my tracks. In not too many words, she summed up one of the hardest parts of conflict in our congregations. She said:



"If all you are about is relationship, then when that relationship gets broken, there's nothing else left to bind you together again, or to know what bigger frame of existence might be able to call you back together." \*

For many of our congregations, and sometimes more particularly for our smaller congregations, there is little articulated sense about why the congregation exists beyond the companionship of others on the journey. When asked about what they like most about their congregations, most people will answer "the community." Heck, the most prevalent word in names of newer congregations these days is "Community," so why wouldn't this be true? Many of us are seeking for community-with distances, travel, moving, and time issues, many of us no longer have the built in community of multi-generational families. We are seeking communities of like-minded people, and frankly if we didn't enjoy the people in our religious communities, we'd find somewhere else to be.

But herein lies the problem: if it's only community, only our relationships with one another that calls us together, then what happens when things aren't going right? What happens when there is disagreement? Without mission -- a sense of calling in the world -- then many congregations have no real place to turn in the midst of or the aftermath of conflict. ...

\* Diane Bosman



## MidAmerica Vice President Resigns

We regret to announce that Charlotte Preston has resigned from her position as MidAmerica Region Vice-President, effective January 15, 2015, due to health-related reasons.



Charlotte has been a wonderful colleague over the past several years, first as a member of the Prairie Star Board, and more recently in the formation and activation of the MidAmerica Region. Her contributions include leadership in the "Linchpin" communications process leading up to the votes to form MidAmerica, her initiative around celebrating the anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multicultural accomplishments of our congregations, and her work to strengthen MidAmerica's sense of identity. She has added a great deal of fun and emotion to the work of our Board, while at the same time taking it seriously and understanding it spiritually.

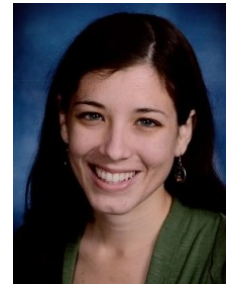
At our February meeting, the MidAmerica Board will begin our process relative to this vacancy. In the meantime, please join us in wishing Charlotte the very best as she focuses her energy on renewing her health. Thank you so much, Charlotte!



## Young Adult Ministry Workshop at Regional Assembly

*By Nancy Combs-Morgan, Congregational Life Consultant*

Here is some great news - Annie Gonzalez-Milliken, the Young Adult and Campus Ministry staffer from our national UUA office will be with us for our April 17-19 Regional Assembly in Naperville, Illinois. Annie and I will be offering a workshop on new ideas and resources in **young adult ministry**. This workshop will be of interest to young adult leaders, but also to religious educators, ministers, seminarians, and so many more.



A total of 24 outstanding workshops will be offered at Regional Assembly this year, on topics from stewardship to social justice, from alternative forms of worship to theme-based ministry. Don't miss out!

We will be looking for you at our Regional Assembly!

<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra/ra-archives/2015>



## Two New Congregations Join UUA

In the past few months, two congregations in MidAmerica Region have been welcomed into affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Association. Congratulations to the Iowa Lakes UU Fellowship (<http://uuokoboji.com/>) in Okoboji, Iowa, and to the Unitarian Universalist Bay de Noc Fellowship (<http://baydenocuu.org/>) of Escanaba, Michigan. Welcome to MidAmerica Region!

### Iowa Lakes:



### Bay de Noc:





## UU History Comes to Life

To honor the significant history of Unitarians and Universalists in what is now known as the MidAmerica Region, we're creating a new History and Heritage section of our web site, to highlight the stories, photos, and history of our region. New material will be added over time. <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/history>



Here you will find a series of monthly History Vignettes, written by members of the History and Heritage Committee. Two are currently posted, with one more coming soon. They will write one every month for the next year or so, maybe longer. If you have a story to suggest, contact Victor Urbanowicz, [vurbanowicz@yahoo.com](mailto:vurbanowicz@yahoo.com). You will also find links to stories about how congregations have celebrated significant anniversaries, as well as videos congregations have produced about their own history. We'll be adding some information about how your congregation can begin working on its own history.



## Not Too Early to Make Plans for Summer!

*By Dori Davenport Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant*

Engaging with leaders - whether it's new ones just learning leadership skills or with experienced ones honing theirs and mentoring others - is one of the great joys of our work as Congregational Life Consultants for the UUA and MidAmerica Region.



Every summer, Midwest Leadership School for both youth (high school-aged teens) and adults gives us an opportunity to delve deeply into what it means to be a leader and to build meaningful relationships with leaders from congregations across our region. This coming summer, Youth and Adult MWLS will be held July 12-18 on the Beloit College campus in Beloit, Wisconsin.

As one of the staff members for Youth MWLS, this week spent with 30+ awesome teens is a highlight of my summer. But rather than trying to describe it for you, I'll let two of last summer's participants do that. From Colleen Lee and Phoebe Mussman of Eliot Chapel in Kirkwood, Missouri:



We arrived with little preconception about the week's activities. We hoped for fun and eye-opening experiences. What we encountered was far more than we could have hoped for, particularly the relationships we developed with 32 other open-minded UU youth. We created a unique UU community where together we pursued acceptance, spirituality, communication, peace, equity, and unconditional love. We bonded until the idea of leaving sounded impossible. We departed feeling we'd evolved into new and better versions of ourselves who had experienced a real taste of what community, spirituality, and love truly means. ...

Full story on p.38 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17hzH55sWblaWcXFI4FDzlp4TSN56nA3-/view>) (PDF).



We hope you will consider participating in Midwest Leadership School for either youth or adults to more fully explore your own leadership abilities and make connections with other Unitarian Universalists from across the Midwest. Learn more about YMWLS (<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ele/mwls-sunsetted>).



## Retirement

Our full time District Administrator, Sarah Greene, has let us know that she intends to retire from her position on June 30, 2015. By summer, Sarah will have worked for Prairie Star District, and then through the transition to MidAmerica Region, for twenty-five years. She started in 1990 as a part-time office assistant with one computer shared by three people and a desk phone. How things have changed since then!!



Sarah's work has been exceptional. Over the years, she has worked with Boards and other staff, managed the office, handled communications, directed the work of volunteers, done much of the financial work, and anything else that came her way. Her attention to detail, her management of the timeline of the work, and her dedication to our congregations have been extraordinary.

Sarah is a committed Unitarian Universalist, member of Michael Servetus Unitarian Society in Fridley, Minnesota, and has served in many leadership positions in that congregation. Her husband Chris spent many years volunteering in various capacities for Prairie Star District, including serving as Treasurer and District President and President of the District President's Association. In her retirement, Sarah intends to spend more time working on family genealogy and visiting with their grandchildren who live on the East Coast.

There will be opportunities to express our gratitude to Sarah in the next few months, and we'll keep you informed. We will also be posting a job description for the Administrator's position later in the spring.

Thank you, Sarah!



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*Central Midwest, Heartland, and Prairie  
Star Districts of the Unitarian Universalist  
Association joined together as  
MidAmerica Region  
in July 2013.*