



The MidAmerica Messenger

Volume 2, Issue 9 | May 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.

In This Issue

Called to Selma and Montgomery

Selma Revisited

In Pursuit of Excellence in Religious Education

Our First All-together-in-one-place Regional Assembly

In Pursuit of Excellence in Religious Education

Coming Soon: Workshop Fee

Congregation Based Spiritual Direction

Calendar




About 500 UUs went to Selma in March to remember the events of Bloody Sunday. Included in this newsletter are reports from two people from our Region.

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





Called to Selma and Montgomery

By Graham Kreicker of Lawrence, Kansas [From the editor: Graham is 78 years old and a former member of the UUA Board of Trustees from Prairie Star District.]

The U.S. Supreme Court has gutted the landmark voting rights laws that stood for fifty years. Meanwhile, there seems to be an endless string of white police officers shooting unarmed black men and boys, even one as I write this. These overbearing and extra-legal acts are a disgrace to the nation. As tragedy after tragedy piled up, I felt an inner calling to go to Selma and walk the 54 miles from Selma to the Statehouse in Montgomery. I could never permit myself to participate in the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the "Bloody Sunday" bridge crossing unless I had first made the journey as a walking meditation.

I made that walk alone, with help from a couple of local people who picked me up at night and then took me back to the same spot to start again the following day. After completing my walk, I joined members of the UU Fellowship of Montgomery in returning to Selma for President Obama's speech and then the ceremonial bridge crossing the next day. At least 500 UUs were among the 50,000 that crossed the bridge on Sunday, March 8.

I lived in Selma for eight days and participated in some of their excellent anniversary events.

Over the next few days after the bridge crossing on Sunday, I walked some with the group of 100+ marchers that made the journey from Selma to Montgomery. I participated in special services at the James Reeb Memorial in Selma and the Viola Liuzzo Memorial at the spot along the highway where she was murdered. That week I volunteered with UUs from Montgomery in supporting the group of marchers. Most significant to me: in my frequent interactions with African Americans, they were always surprised and inspired that I came to support them. Call this witness if you like.



Selma Revisited

By Rev. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant

I came to Birmingham and Selma last March to commemorate the events of March 1965, and to be reminded of why it is that racial justice is so crucial. I came home rededicated and recommitted to doing whatever I can to help move us forward as a country to realizing that **Black Lives Matter**, and that there is much work still left to be done to bring about the equality we UUs believe in so completely.

I'd already been to Birmingham and Selma-in 2013, I joined the UU Living Legacy Pilgrimage to learn about our UU involvement in the Civil Rights movement in the south. It was a transformational experience, with us learning from veterans of the Civil Rights movement-those who had been arrested, those who transported others during the bus boycott, those White clergy who served in African American congregations, children of the martyrs, and more. It helped me understand more deeply the cost of hard won freedom.



The conference of commemoration and re-commitment in March was more than I had imagined. We heard from Rev. C.T. Vivian, one of the leaders in Selma 50 years ago; Rev. William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP; Opal Tometi, one of the founders of **#BlackLivesMatter** movement. We had a keynote from Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed, who helped us understand what is needed going forward.

In the midst of all the incredible workshops, worship and presentation, there were two parts of the conference that stood out: honoring the families of the Selma martyrs, and marching across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. ...



General Assembly in Portland Oregon

Every year, delegates from our UU congregations gather at the UUA's annual meeting and conference, General Assembly. This year, nearly 5000 of us will gather in Portland, Oregon, from June 24-28th to learn, celebrate, grow, and attend to the UUA's business.



There is nothing quite like being in worship with so many UUs, and listening to some of the most stellar preachers of our era. Workshops help lay leaders and religious professionals learn how to do "church" better, and how they can help their congregations grow and thrive in these changing times. There is an overwhelming number of workshops, enough to entice anyone. And for those who like to sing, the GA choir is a marvelous experience.

This year, GA will begin with Regional Ingatherings-a place to be able to connect with others from MidAmerica, and learn how to navigate GA's variety of events. This will take place on Wednesday from 5:45 until 6:45 pm, with the Opening Ceremony and Banner Parade starting at 8:00 pm.

MidAmerica staff member Lisa Presley will be part of a workshop presenting the Military Ministry Toolkit. This program helps congregations learn how to support members and friends (and their families) who are part of the military, and how to be open to veterans who have served. Over the years, we have gotten better about separating the decisions of our leaders concerning war, and those individuals who serve-but too often we don't know how to be supportive. The Military Ministry Toolkit is one way to help your congregation understand the particular ways in which to let current and former military families know that they are welcome. [This workshop will be Thursday afternoon, 1:15 until 2:30 pm; check the program for location]

Cornel West will be the Ware Lecturer on Saturday night, and many events (including all the business meeting segments) will be live streamed. You can check out the UUA website for more details of programming, registration, and (closer to the date) the live streaming details. Just visit: <http://www.uua.org/ga> to see details for this year, and links to programming from previous years.

And get ready: in 2018, GA is coming to MidAmerica when we all gather in Kansas City!



Our First, All-together-in-one-place, MidAmerica Regional Assembly!



"I'll need to watch these [videos of keynote speakers] again and again, there was so much to absorb! I learned how much more flexible we will need to be in order to make our congregations welcoming to people who aren't white, educated, middle-class folks."

"The hard conversations need to continue."

"Stay at the table."

"That in some ways UUs are recognizing that our over-intellectualism is a weakness in these times when we do not have the luxury of sitting around and pontificating while injustice wins again and again and again."

These are some of the comments from participants about what they are taking away from the presentations by Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt and Rev. Marlin Lavanhar at this year's Regional Assembly in Naperville, IL. Our theme was "The New in the New Era." In light of events this past year from all over our country that affect us all, we learned that our history of being a justice-seeking faith tradition has never been more important than it is right now.

Having 435 Unitarian Universalists from all 13 states in our Region at the gathering created an unforgettable experience which many likened to a mini-General Assembly.

In addition to the two-part keynote address, there were 22 workshops offered, three worship services, a well-run business meeting, exhibitors and lots of opportunities to connect with other UUs throughout the weekend. Regarding the business meeting, it was gratifying to read numerous comments saying that "the Region is in good hands." I hope our hard-working board members know how much they are appreciated!

About a third of the attendees have completed evaluations at the time of this writing, and one message was overwhelmingly clear: everyone loved the energy and excitement generated by having so many people present, along with the outstanding speakers and worship leaders.

We learned a few things that we will attempt to improve on for next year, so thanks to everyone who filled out an evaluation. All of us on the staff team are excited to begin planning ***next year's Regional Assembly in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, the weekend of April 22-24, 2016.***

A couple more quotes from the evaluations to close:

"I have many ideas now on how we could make new connections with other faith communities in our area. Perhaps we could share facilities. We know now that we need to be proactive."

"There is an urgency of moving as a faith community with others to reclaim our humanity and to really work for justice and fairness for all."

Please put the dates on your calendar for next year - we hope to see you there!

Miss Regional Assembly? Videos Available Online

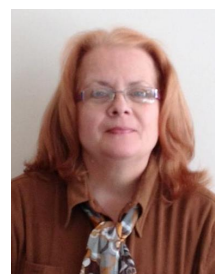
If you weren't able to attend 2015 Regional Assembly, or if you were there and want to share the major events with others in your congregation, the videos of the two keynote addresses and the Business meeting are now available for viewing. <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra/ra-archives/2015>

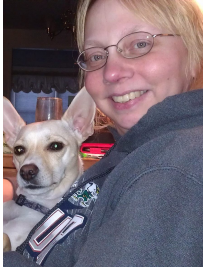


In Pursuit of Excellence in Religious Education

By Nancy Combs-Morgan, Congregational Life Consultant

Our MidAmerica staff seeks to support our congregations and religious professionals as they strive for excellence in religious education. To that intent, we are partnering with religious education professionals throughout the Region, who shared their greatest hopes at a pre-Regional Assembly LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) gathering.





Michelle Richards will be helping this conversation to continue as to how the MidAmerica staff can support the many talented religious education professionals in MidAmerica. Our conversation began with clarity around our commitment to provide two Renaissance Modules (one in the Fall and one in the Spring), with the Spring offering as the new online UU History Renaissance Module, extending from May 8-August 21st. If you have questions about next steps, please contact Michelle Richards.

As a Masters Level Credentialed Religious Educator, Michelle has been an inspiration. I close with joy and hope in our pursuit of excellence in religious education.

From the editor: Congratulations!

Congratulations to MidAmerica staff member Nancy Combs-Morgan, who has completed the requirements to become a Masters Level Credentialed Religious Educator. Great work, Nancy!



Coming Soon: Workshop Fee

Beginning July 1, 2015, the fee charged for face-to-face workshops offered by MidAmerica Region will be \$25 per person for a one-day workshop (higher for a longer workshop), plus an additional amount if lunch is provided. This fee will help to offset the true costs of putting on a workshop.

We have to cover our costs. In past years, we heavily subsidized our events, but like our congregations, we are adapting to changed economic circumstances. Many services we offer are either free or at very low cost because of the generosity of our congregations' contributions to Region Fair Share and to the Annual Program Fund.

We do offer a number of workshops "virtually" as webinars, at no cost. If a congregation can't afford to host or to attend a workshop, we may be able to offer something to them online.



Congregation Based Spiritual Direction

By Rev. Phillip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant

Registration is now open for the 2015-16 sessions of the Clergy Seminar Series in Congregation-Based Spiritual Direction. This ground-breaking professional development opportunity, co-sponsored by the MidAmerica Region and the Center for Congregational Spirituality, is designed especially for ordained clergy, spiritual directors, and other qualified religious professionals.



The goal of the training is to start with the skills clergy already possess through their experience and training (such as Clinical Pastoral Education and pastoral counseling courses), and increase their competence as spiritual directors in three specific areas:

- brief spiritual direction
- group spiritual direction
- supervision - of peers and of lay leaders of spiritual direction groups

While designed with the parish in mind, this training would be equally useful in any number of other ministry settings, such as chaplaincy and counseling.

This year we'll be offering the seminar series at two locations in the MidAmerica Region:

Naperville, Illinois

October 19-21, 2015

February 8-10, 2016

May 9-11, 2016

Minneapolis, Minnesota

October 26-28, 2015

January 25-27, 2016

May 23-25, 2016

TUITION: Full tuition: \$1,250.00 ... Early bird rate: \$1,000 through June 30, 2015

The seminars will be led by the Rev. Phillip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant in the MidAmerica Region, and the Rev. Sue Sinnamon, former Program Consultant in the Southern Region. Sue has a graduate certificate in Spiritual Direction from the RUAH School at Richmond Hill, and Phil has completed certification in Interspiritual Counseling at One Spirit Learning Alliance in New York.

Learn more! Register! <http://congregationalspirituality.org/clergy>

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at plund@uaa.org or 612-875-0959.



Calendar

May

1-3 - InCONceivable - Northern area Spring HS Youth Con - Naperville, IL

8 - Renaissance Module Online, first session

19 - WEBINAR - How to Be a Great Congregational President

21 - WEBINAR - How to Be a Great Congregational President

June

June

5-7 - UU Women's Connection Spring Women's Retreat
(<https://www.uuwomensconnection.org>) - Princeton, IL
24-28 UUA General Assembly (<https://www.uua.org/ga>) - Portland, OR

July

5-11 - MidWest UU Summer Assembly (<http://www.muusa.org/>) - Potosi, MO
12-18 - MidWest Leadership School for Adults and for Youth, Beloit, WI
14-19 - Chalice Sparx Camp (<http://www.chalicesparx.org/>) - Sturgis, MI

August

7-9 - Advisor CON - Indianapolis, IN

FULL CALENDAR



**MidAmerica Region of the
Unitarian Universalist Association**

2355 Fairview Ave. #312
Roseville, MN 55113

Web: <https://uua.org/midamerica>

Phone: 312-636-9724

Email: midamerica@uua.org

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

