



The MidAmerica Messenger

Volume 3, Issue 1 | August 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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Our August newsletter is chock-full of articles and opportunities for congregations. Read on!

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 Hege, Congregational Life Consultant



The Invitation to Ferguson is the Next in a Series of Opportunities to "Show Up"

By Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant

When UUs gather in Ferguson, Missouri, August 7 - 10 for events on the one-year anniversary of the killing of Michael Brown, it will be just one in an ongoing series of opportunities to "Show Up" for social justice. Here's the latest information, for those who'd like to know more: ...



It's been said that the past year has seen the biggest outpouring of UUs for civil rights that we've seen since the Civil Rights Movement fifty years ago. UU congregations across the MidAmerica Region and across the country are joining with others who are organizing and demonstrating in the streets that things have got to change. Some are motivated by local events, such as the deaths of young black men at the hands of police officers. Others are passionate about issues such as states' attempts to restrict peoples' voting rights. In North Carolina, UUA President Peter Morales and hundreds of other UUs joined many others in a Moral Monday March for Voting Rights on July 13. Some are energized by other issues.

One thing we're learning in all this is that there are times when it's important for us to listen to our local partners, step back, and let others take the lead; times for us to show up and be present in solidarity and support, but not to speak; times when we need to trust others' wisdom and experience, and not insist on our own perspectives or ideas.

Additionally, let's remember there are several different ways of being involved in justice work. Here are just four. There is service - cooking and serving meals for hungry people, for example. Another is education - learning for ourselves and teaching others about the issues. A third is advocacy - "Now that I have heard the number of homeless people on our streets, I'll talk with my city council person about the need for a new shelter." And a fourth is witness - demonstrating in our Standing on the Side of Love t-shirts in solidarity with others. All are needed, and all are valid ways to participate. Not everyone can, or will want to, do all of these.

If you have stories to share about your own congregation's efforts in justice work, or photos, let us know. We'd love to hear what you are learning and celebrate your efforts.





Conversation on MidAmerica Hiring a New Program Staff Person



By Rev. Ian Evison, Congregational Life Consultant and Lead

Nancy Heege is retiring at the end of this calendar year. Our preliminary plan is to have a thoughtful deliberate process of considering what new position we need as a region, with lots of space for hearing what you think, and have this culminate in having a new person start work next summer (2016). This is a rare opportunity for our region. As other regions have offered such positions recently, there has been huge interest from amazingly talented people. We expect to do a lot of listening this summer and early Fall as we get deeper into the process.

We want to start this listening this summer with an open call-in evening where you can help us get started in our thinking. **Tuesday, August 18th, at 6:30 Central, 7:30 Eastern, 712-432-0140, Pin: 885 339#**. No need to register in advance. Just phone in. We will see who is there and start the conversation.

The question will be what you think we most need in a new staff person for MidAmerica Region. This is a wonderful opportunity to open our thinking considering what we most need.



Building a Culture of Generosity - Des Moines, IA

by Dori Davenport Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant

This workshop is designed to build and train a team of people - lay leaders and professional staff - to support the annual pledge campaign in your congregation.

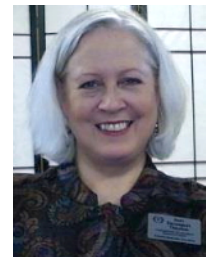
Teams of five or more from each congregation who will support and run the pledge campaign will spend the day:

- Exploring generosity as a spiritual practice
- Imagining what their congregation would look like if it was truly generous
- Examining obstacles to creating the culture of generosity in their congregation
- Creating ways to enable members to experience the joys and rewards of being generous
- Learning about the vital link between mission and generosity

It is crucial that the teams be large enough to ensure success in bringing their experiences and knowledge home, hence the requirement of 5 or more. It is also very important that a key staff member - either minister or another professional staff member - be part of the team, since staff involvement in creating the culture of generosity is essential.

There will be time during the day for the teams to work together on plans for their own congregations, as well as times for networking, sharing and inspiring each other.

Saturday, September 26, 2015 9:30am - 3:30pm



- First Unitarian Church of Des Moines 1800 Bell Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50315
- Facilitator: Dori Davenport-Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant
- \$30 per person.
- Registration Deadline is September 16, 2015.

Register Now or Download a Flyer



New Dates for MidAmerica Regional Assembly 2016

Here are the revised dates: **April 29 - May 1, 2016.**



Plan now to attend this weekend in St. Paul, MN, where you will find inspiring keynote speakers, excellent workshop presentations, and compelling worship services. Plan to bring a team of three or more from your congregation for maximum impact. More information will be coming soon!



Do You Want Us to Help You Host an Educational Event?

By Rev. Ian Evison, Congregational Life Consultant and Lead



In recent years we have found our most successful educational events have been those hosted by our local congregations on topics of their choosing, and opened to neighboring congregations. This gives congregations both the opportunity to do leadership development on some crucial subjects like growth, communication, finances or healthy handling of conflict--and to network with other UU leaders in their areas.

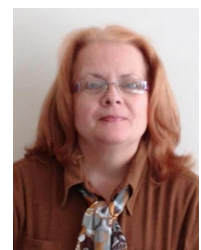
Examples of this were when a group of congregations in Kansas invited Lisa Presley to come to lead a workshop for congregational finance people. Or when congregations in Carbondale, IL, and Michigan invited Dori Thexton to lead Generosity Workshops.

Nancy Heege was similarly asked to lead an event on new directions in strategic planning (strategic planning without dots). Congregations in a number of areas including Chicago, Louisville, St Louis and Indiana have hosted events focused on multicultural issues and have opened their doors to their neighbors, while we have provided the content.

Support for Religious Educators in MidAmerica: "Let's Talk"

*By Nancy Combs-Morgan, MLCRE, Master Level Credentialed Religious Educator,
Congregational Life Consultant*

Each spring, our MidAmerica staff team sends out a survey to many leaders throughout the region, seeking input and feedback. One of the groups who receives this survey are our MidAmerica religious educators. We were very pleased with the survey response from religious educators, who had a host of questions of how the region supports them in their service to our member congregations. One outcome of the survey has been a series of meetings with LREDA chapters



and religious educators seeking ideas on five areas they are particularly interested in -- support for transitions, for new or departing religious educators; support and training for new Directors of Religious Education; a system for ensuring that there are regional "Our Whole Lives" comprehensive sexuality trainings; information about LREDA, the Liberal Religious Educators Association, and the availability of continuing education events, in particular, Renaissance Modules.

As the Faith Development Program Manager for the MidAmerica Region, I have been participating in these conversations with religious educators, and am looking forward to more intentional opportunities to continue these conversations. With that in mind, there will be a series of teleconference meetings starting in September and extending through November, open to LREDA members and or any religious educator, to find out answers to their questions, and, in particular, get more information about the five areas mentioned above.

I hope that folks will take part. The timing will rotate, so we can make sure that any religious educator, regardless of their schedule, can participate. The "Let's Talk" teleconferences are:

September

Thursday, 9/3 from 7:30 - 8:30 pm

Tuesday, 9/8 from 12:30 - 1:30 pm (Eastern time)

October

Thursday, 10/8 from 7:30 - 8:30 pm

Tuesday, 10/13 from 12:30 - 1:30 pm (Eastern time)

November

Thursday, 11/5 from 7:30 - 8:30 pm

Tuesday, 11/10 from 12:30 - 1:30 pm (Eastern time)

The teleconference number for all of these "Let's Talk" sessions is:

Also, I hope that any new Director of Religious Education will sign up to take part in a 2-part webinar series for "New DRE's" that I will be leading on Tuesday September 1 and Thursday September 10. Be sure to register for those webinars.



Clergy Discount on Spiritual Direction Training



By Rev. Phillip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant

Register now for the **Clergy Seminar Series in Congregation-Based Spiritual Direction** and receive a 20% discount on tuition. Join your MidAmerica-UUA colleagues from around the region for this extraordinary series of seminars designed to help you bring a spiritual formation focus to your ministry. Now in its third year, the Clergy

Seminar Series in Congregation-Based Spiritual Direction has reignited the passion for ministry in dozens of clergy from around the country. During each three-day session of the seminar, participants will explore paradigms for congregation-based spiritual direction on the personal, communal, and missional levels. By the end of the training, participants will

- Understand the history and concepts of spiritual direction.
- Explore how congregation-based spiritual direction can transform a religious community.
- Incorporate their pastoral care experience into short-term spiritual direction.
- Gain experience in facilitating small group spiritual direction.
- Add a spiritual formation focus to their supervision of lay leaders, especially those leading small group spiritual direction.
- Develop a plan for bringing a spiritual-formation focus to their ministry.

The first session of the seminars begin in October and will be held in two MidAmerica-UUA locations this year: Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Naperville, Illinois. Tuition is \$1250 for the entire series of three sessions, with MidAmerica-UUA clergy receiving 20% off tuition with the discount code CLERGYUUA.

For more information about locations and dates, contact Phillip Lund at plund@uua.org.

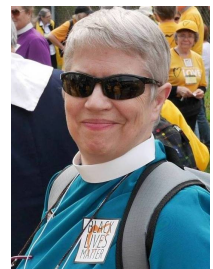


Ministerial Transitions

By Rev. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant

This summer we'll see quite a number of new ministers coming to MidAmerica, or at least moving around the spaces in our Region.

We bid farewell to interim ministers Lise Adams Sherry, David Johnson, Gabrielle Parks and Justin Osterman. Thanks so much for helping the congregations you served move into their next stage of life.



We welcome the following ministers who have been called to new congregations:

- Leslie Mills will be serving in Elgin, IL
- Brian Chenowith will be serving in Lexington, KY
- Chris Rothbauer will be serving in Houghton, MI
- Rachel Lonberg will be serving in Kalamazoo, MI
- Greg Martin will be serving Miami Valley in Dayton OH (leaving contracted ministry in Portage MI)

We also have four ministers who have been hired by congregations:

- Scott Lewis will be the second minister in Geneva, IL
- Krista Taves will be serving as consulting minister in Quincy, IL
- Jonalu Johnstone will be serving as developmental minister in Manhattan, KS
- Joyce Palmer will be the second minister in Brookfield, WI

And then, these ministers will be coming (or moving around) to be Interim Ministers:

- Michelle La Grave will start as interim in Decatur, IL
- Janet Newman will be returning to MidAmerica as interim in Urbana, IL

- Gretchen Woods will move from Lexington, KY, to Lincoln, NE
- Mary Moore will move from Dayton, OH, to Columbus, IN
- Fritz Hudson will return to MidAmerica to be interim in Rochester, MN
- Dawn Fortune will serve as interim in Ellisville, MO
- Don Cameron will serve as interim in Mankato, MN

We wish all these ministers welcome, and expect great things out of their ministries with the lay leaders in the congregations!



Calendar

August

- 7: UU History Online RenMod
- 7-9: Call To UUs to FERGUSON in August
- 7-9: AdvisorCon2015: Integrating Youth into Congregational Life
- 15: Chalice Lighter Grant Applications Due
- 21: UU History Online RenMod
- 21: OWL Training - All Levels

September

- 1: Webinar: New DRE Part I
- 3: Teleconference: "Let's Talk" Religious Educators
- 10: Webinar: New DRE Part II
- 15: Webinar: New Youth Advisor Part I
- 24: Webinar: New Youth Advisor Part II
- 26: Building a Culture of Generosity - Des Moines, IA

October

- 8: Teleconference: "Let's Talk" Religious Educators
- 9-11: UU Women's Connection Retreat - Racine, WI
- 13: Teleconference: "Let's Talk" Religious Educators
- 16-18: Kansas UU Cluster Retreat

November

- 5: Teleconference: "Let's Talk" Religious Educators
- 10: Teleconference: "Let's Talk" Religious Educators
- 13: Chalice Lighter Grant Applications Due



Calendar

PLEASE SEE OUR FULL CALENDAR



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