



The MidAmerica Messenger

Volume 3, Issue 4 | November 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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I've enjoyed being the Editor of our MidAmerica newsletter in the last two years. This will be my last issue. Our staff team member, Rev. Phillip Lund, will take on the work of editing future issues of the newsletter, as I retire from the staff on December 31. Thanks to all of our faithful readers and to those who have sent suggestions.

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

Sincerely,

Nancy Heege

Congregational Life Consultant

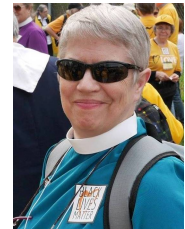




Insurance in Congregations

By Rev. Dr. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant

One of the most important investments a congregation can make is comprehensive insurance coverage for their congregation - buildings, liability, directors and officers insurance, malpractice, and other aspects of insurance keeps our congregations going strong. Seventy percent of our UU congregations are covered by Church Mutual and so there is a close relationship between Church Mutual and the UUA that has some decided benefits.



One of those is the annual Safety Group meeting. With representatives from the UUA and Church Mutual, they work to promote loss control activities to save congregations from unnecessary claims and to facilitate the safety dividend that gets shared among their insured congregations as a "reward" for a good (read: low) loss experience.


Here's some news, and some resources.

- As a group, our total claims and losses are trending downward - good work, you all!
- \$235,000 is being returned to UU policy holders as the safety dividend.
- The number of weather-related claims is on the rise: frozen pipes, water/storm damage and weight of snow represent over 70% of all claims in the last 5 years.
- Falls are the most common liability claims (70%) - and are the most preventable.

Resources:

- Church Mutual has a quarterly e-Newsletter available for free to anyone, even non-subscribers: Risk Reporter (<https://www.churchmutual.com/237/Sign-Up-Page>)
- They have an extensive selection of Risk Alerts - a way for congregations to learn from the losses of others. These give many tips on how to avoid following in others' painful footsteps. <https://www.churchmutual.com/95/Risk-Alerts>. Again, these are readily available for anyone, even non-customers.
- For policy holders (and that's 70% of you!), they have great groups of forms, checklists and sample policies to cover things such as people working with children and youth, driving, property and grounds, etc. Go to www.churchmutual.com, and you'll find the links.

Whoever you are insured with, don't forget you can ask them to help you perform an audit of your building and procedures so that you can increase overall safety for your people, and reduce your congregation's losses.



You're Invited!

By Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant

You're invited to experience the great hospitality that Saint Paul, Minnesota, has to offer during the MidAmerica Regional Assembly, next April 29 - May 1, 2016.



Our hotel, the Intercontinental Saint Paul Riverfront, is located on the bluffs above the Mississippi River in downtown Saint Paul. The hotel is newly refurbished and has many amenities. Best of all, it's within walking distance of the Science Museum, the Children's Museum, the Ordway Theatre, CHS Field (home of the Saint Paul Saints baseball team), the art galleries in Lowertown, and many outstanding restaurants. We look forward to welcoming you!



A Note About Future Regional Assemblies

By Rev. Ian Evison, Congregational Life Consultant, Regional Lead

Following our very successful first face-to-face MidAmerica Regional Assembly last April in Naperville - and after consulting many people - the program staff of the region has decided to have yearly face-to-face assemblies in one location. The plan is to meet in the central part of the region every two years, alternating between the eastern and western parts of the region in the other years.

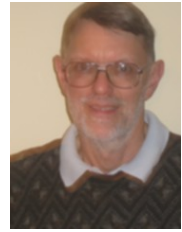


So, we plan to have the 2017 Regional Assembly somewhere in the greater Chicago area followed by an assembly in the eastern part of the region in 2018. There are many things which could shift this general plan - if the UUA were to decide to change the pattern of its assemblies, for example. And we expect technology to continue to evolve making it ever easier to connect to the assembly from a distance. But, for now, what we are projecting are yearly face-to-face assemblies moving around the region.



Learning Network Covenant Update

By Rev. Bill Sasso, Past President of MidAmerica Region Board, on behalf of the Learning Network Covenant Task Force




Last April, MidAmerica Region delegates endorsed the Learning Network Covenant (LNC) -- an open and inclusive visioning process intended to help us explore the possibilities that our new region can engage. Here's a quick update to keep you informed about the LNC process. Part of our Task Force charge from the MidAmerica Board is to ". . . bring a preliminary statement of direction and principles to the 2016 Annual Business Meeting." As of October 20th, we've met twice, and have begun to find consensus on principles we want the LNC process to embody. We've agreed that we want the LNC process to be

1. open and inclusive;
2. one of engaged learning and
3. experimentation;
4. grassroots-based (rather than top-down);
5. clearly-structured;
6. one that generates living, meaningful results;
7. congruent with our UU principles;
8. one that enables a connection to the larger movement, to something larger than ourselves and our own individual congregations; and
9. one with significant theological grounding.

As a Task Force - and more broadly, as MidAmerica! - we've only just begun to walk together in living relationship. We are excited to reflect on how this initiative can embody key elements of our theological heritage, such as The Cambridge Platform and Henry Nelson Weiman's concept of "creative interchange."

We want the LNC process to be one in which participants can be honest and open while showing respect for each other, one in which all can "speak the truth in love." In order for that to happen, we understand that we have a responsibility to create the container of deep trust by being open and honest ourselves. As a first step in that direction, we have agreed to develop a covenant for our task force, in terms of the behavioral commitments we will make to each other.

For more information, or to share your suggestions and insights concerning the MidAmerica Region Learning Network Covenant process, please email. Your questions and/or reflections are always welcome!



EqUUal Access Launches New Certification Program and Sermon Contest

By Meredith Plummer, Director of Religious Education at The First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati

**EQUUAL
ACCESS**



I have a quick question for you - What is the largest minority in the United States?

Did you say, 'People with Disabilities?' If not, then I hate to break it to you, but you were wrong! One in five people in the United States live with a disability; this makes them the largest minority in the country. If you got this answer wrong, don't sweat it; I didn't know the answer either, until my daughter was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy four years ago. You know what else is surprising? While the Americans with Disability Act was supposed to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, even in the workplace, 70% of adults with disabilities are still unemployed.

If you have researched disability as I have, you would know that disability is as much a societal construct as it is a physical or cognitive one. That is, 70% of people with disabilities are unemployed, not because they are physically or cognitively limited, but because our society believes they are limited, 'less than,' 'other.' Unfortunately, the stigma does not end in the work place, either. This societal misconception carries over into our congregations as well. I can't tell you how many times people extol their congregations for having ramps and grab bars, and in the same breath, condemn the person with autism who stims* during service.




That is why I am so excited to be the newest board member of EqUUal Access. EqUUal Access, if you don't know, is a UUA affiliate organization committed to the full engagement of people with disabilities in our congregations, and beyond. And, they really are doing some wonderful work.

Just this year, EqUUal Access launched its Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry (AIM) program. In the style of 'Green Sanctuaries' and 'Welcoming Congregations,' this certification program is designed to make our congregations more welcoming to people with disabilities and their families. I'd like to recognize three MidAmerica congregations who have already begun the process of becoming certified: Tree of Life in McHenry County, Illinois; The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, Michigan; and the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN. Visit uua.org/accessibility/aim.

In addition to the AIM program, EqUUal Access has also launched a sermon contest. The sermon, of course, must be about disability, and both ministers and lay-leaders are eligible to apply. The winner will be announced at General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, and will receive a \$500 prize. For further details, you can visit EqUUal Access' website at www.EqUUalAccess.org.

Of course, if you can't participate in either the AIM program or the sermon contest, you can always become a member of EqUUal Access and further the work of this wonderful organization. After all, here is another surprising reality - you, or someone you love, may also acquire a disability one day.

** a way that autistic people have of stimulating and calming themselves in stressful situations*



Webinar: Managing Complex Change

Thursday, January 21, and Tuesday, January 26, 2016

07:45pm - 09:00pm Eastern Time

With guest presenter Amy S Courter

Host: Rev. Dr. Lisa Presley, MidAmerica Staff



Change is happening all around us, but intentional change in congregational life can be very difficult. Learn about how to manage complex change, and motivate others to be part of the change with you. Amy S. Courter is the Chief Operating Officer of Dynamic Computer Corporation, and has been a change agent in both for profit and not for profit sectors for over 25 years. She led the Civil Air Patrol as their National Commander, helping transform the organization of 61,000 members.



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.*

