



## *The MidAmerica Messenger*

Volume 3, Issue 5 | December 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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# Happy Holidays

from the Board, Staff, and Volunteers of  
MidAmerica Region!

... and some of our four-legged friends!

Clockwise, from top:

Nancy Combs-Morgan, Nancy Harden, Rev. Phil Lund, Nancy Heege, Gretchen Ohmann,  
Dori Thexton, Rev. Ian Evison, Peggy Bocard, Rev. Lisa Presley

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## "So Long and Thanks for All the Fish"

*By Nancy Heege, Congregational Life Consultant*

"So Long and Thanks for All the Fish." That's the title of a book in the science fiction trilogy "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," by Douglas Adams. And those are the words that came to mind as I sat down to write this "good bye" piece for the newsletter. In the book, the dolphins have left a planet behind, and while doing so, engraved the message onto a crystal bowl.

After twenty-one years of working for congregations in Prairie Star District and then in the MidAmerica Region, I'm retiring from my position on December 31. My commitment to myself had been to continue my work through the transition from districts to region to the point where I was confident that things were stable and congregations were being well-served, and I think we're there. We've also weathered

the retirement of our full time (and long-time PSD) Administrator Sarah Greene and the orientation of our new Administrator Nancy Harden, who is fully up to speed.

I can't express how fulfilling this work has been in my life. The opportunities and invitations to work with your congregations have been a blessing. The congregation members, the ministers and church staff, and the district and regional leaders I've met have been some of the most committed, talented, and interesting people ever. Our district and regional staff colleagues across the country have shared their knowledge, insights, and perspectives. Our own regional staff team is exceptional and excellent. I will miss all of you.



People have asked me what I'll do after I retire. I intend to read, spend time with my family, and decompress after the busyness of the life I've led, especially in the last few years. On impulse, I bought a sewing machine a year ago, and it hasn't yet been out of its box, so that may provide some entertainment! And I'm sure I'll find some volunteer work to do related to the commitments I have. I will see some of you at Regional Assembly next spring. I'll listen to speakers, attend workshops, perhaps be a delegate from my own congregation. I'll look forward to seeing you then.

So thanks for all the "fish" - that I actually got paid for doing this work that I loved so much, the confidence and trust you placed in me, the warm welcomes and friendly faces, the gratitude for my work with your congregations. It's been a blessing in my life, and I will never forget it, or you.



## Call for Nominations

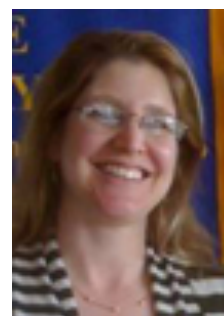
*By Tammy Lemmer, MidAmerica Region Nominating Committee*

The Nominating Committee for the Mid-America Region of the UUA is charged with identifying potential candidates and presenting nominations for consideration at the Annual Business Meeting of the Region for the positions of

Regional Board of Trustees

Regional Nominating Committee

The Midwest UU Conference (MUUC)




Potential vacancies on the MidAmerica Board this year include the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Member-At-Large. The nominating committee seeks to identify the most diverse pool of candidates possible, with a particular emphasis at this time on expanding diversity of leadership in the areas of race, sexual orientation and age.

The committee needs to receive inquiries and/or recommendations no later than January 15, 2016, to allow for appropriate follow-up and completion of the slate.

We encourage potential candidates to review the job descriptions as included in the MidAmerica Region Bylaws. Please feel free to contact the members of the committee via e-mail.

Thank you for your support of leadership development across the Region.



## The Process of Welcoming

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

As I scan the multiple websites of our MidAmerica congregations, I am inspired by the number of congregations who are designated as "Welcoming Congregations;" congregations who lovingly heighten their commitment to welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. In preparing for this article, I spent time in reflection on November 22, 2015, the "Transgender Day of Remembrance," thinking about the many congregations throughout the Midwest who seek to embrace and nurture anyone whose self-identity doesn't conform to our conventional ideas of what it means to be male or female. There is an ongoing consciousness raising that we must feel called to experience engage in the process of welcoming all.



Many of the MidAmerica designated Welcoming Congregations achieved this status more than 5 years ago. Well done, but now it is time to consider the ongoing process of welcoming. You may not realize but the talented leaders in our UUA Multicultural Growth and Witness office have been diligently engaged in updating the Welcoming Congregations materials and process. Consider some of these important opportunities:

- Revisit the Welcoming Congregation Guidelines and Action Steps and use them to create new goals. Each refresher program is different; there is no blueprint.  
<http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program>
- Strengthen relationships with local or state groups and organizations that serve LGBTQ needs. Ask how you can help their work and brainstorm ways to bring their message to your congregation.
- Celebrate the progress you've made and identify areas where your congregation has room to grow. Congregations recognized more than a decade ago often benefit from refresher programming on transgender issues, bisexual and queer issues, race/ethnicity and sexuality, and other intersections of identity and experience. Be sure you are taking steps that will stretch your congregation to new levels of welcome.
- Create diverse opportunities for engagement through education, congregational life, and community outreach.

To find out more, visit our UUA website: <http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program>

In faith that we will seek greater awareness,  
Nancy Combs-Morgan



## Summer Employment at Camp Unistar

Positions Open: Summer employment at Camp UniStar



**Camp UniStar** <http://www.campunistar.org> is a Unitarian Universalist camp of the MidAmerica Region and is located on Star Island on Cass Lake, a 20-minute boat ride from the marina in the town of Cass Lake, in northern Minnesota. Sailing and swimming, sunsets and hiking, good food, and interesting programs are features of this UU camp which has more than 50 years of continuous operation.

Each year, a summer staff is hired to work during the 12-week summer season. Applications for staff positions for Summer 2016 are due January 31, and more information can be found here: <http://www.campunistar.org/jobs>.



## 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.*

