



MidAmerica
Region



The MidAmerica Messenger

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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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We're starting the new year with a sense of gratitude. Your regional staff is grateful to have the opportunity to serve our faith by serving you - the people who are part of the almost 200 congregations that make up the MidAmerica Region. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need any resources, consultations, or consulting.

As always, we 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.



Yours in Faith,
Phillip Lund

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Parliament of World Religions - Salt Lake City, UT

October 16-20, 2015

By Dori Davenport Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant

I was prepared for the Parliament to be a very special event and it exceeded my wildest expectations. From the moment of getting off the plane at the Salt Lake City airport, where we were swept up in the crowd of people in beautiful cultural clothing from all over the world, to spending 4 full days surrounded by people of all religious traditions coming together to address the world's most critical problems...it was a holy, intense, and powerful experience.



There were six themes that shaped the plenary sessions and many other activities and workshops at the Parliament.

- Women - gender equality and rights of all women
- Emerging Leaders - youth & young adult voices
- Income Inequality - Dalai Lama video-taped address
- War, Violence & Hate
- Climate Change and Environment
- Indigenous Peoples

There were endless opportunities for worship or reflection, for musical inspiration and entertainment. Just being among the 10,000 participants from 80 countries was awe-inspiring.

Throughout the workshops and plenary speeches, there was an emphasis on partnerships and finding common ground to come together and make a difference in whatever corner of the world we occupy. A couple of highlights from one workshop about overcoming differences to work together:

- Eboo Patel (<https://www.ifyc.org/about-us/eboo-patel>), whose two books have been published by Beacon Press, spoke about inviting people of faith traditions other than our own to put aside our differences to come together and work on a particular issue where our shared values called us to act.
- Allan Boesak, the South African cleric and politician, told a story of Desmond Tutu saying to an intractable political opponent, "I have a vision of justice in our future and YOU are in it! We are saving a place for you to join us."

Another workshop featured mayors of several U.S. cities where important interfaith partnerships have made a big difference in addressing conflict and violence, fair housing and other urban issues. All of the mayors on the panel urged us to go home and get our congregations to look outward-to be involved in urban problems. They said that interfaith partnerships could help to solve so many problems that cities face since we, as religious people, have a voice that can call other segments of the population to the table in a way that politicians can't.

So many more things I could talk about, but space doesn't allow! I'll end with an example of the most radical hospitality I've ever experienced. Every day at the Parliament, the Sikh participants sponsored a *Langar*. The *Langar* is a free meal offered to all who show up - a centuries-old Sikh tradition. They fed about 4,000 people every day!

For more information about the 2015 event, you can visit the Parliament of World Religions website (<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org>) and see live-streamed recordings of the keynote speeches and lots of other information.

Regional Assembly Workshops

By Rev. Dr. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant

We are pleased to let you know that there are many great workshops coming your way at this year's Regional Assembly in St Paul! So many people applied to do workshops that we sadly had to turn some down. Here's a sample of what you can find this year:

- Spiritual Discipline of Followership: UUs and #BlackLivesMatter
- Circle of Belonging: information on how to bring people along from visitor to fully engaged member
- Escalating Inequality: a workshop on our current Congregational Study-Action Issue
- Heresy in the Heartland: Humanism in the Second Century
- End of Life Conversations: how to have these conversation in your congregations
- Navigating the Theist-Humanist Gap with Creativity and Grace
- Positioning Small Congregations for the New Era and Millennials
- Resilient Youth
- Reverence for Diversity: Group Spiritual Direction in Congregations
- Who is Your Congregation on the Web?



These are just a sampling - there are more on governance, funding social justice, planned giving, and faith development. All in all, there will be 23 offerings from which you get to choose. We wish there was more space, but these ones should give you insights and tools for living your UU faith more deeply. Check out our RA page about all the great things happening at Regional Assembly. Registration will be up soon!

Job Opening Posted

Although Nancy Heege is not replaceable, MidAmerica is looking to hire a new Congregational Life Consultant beginning in the summer of 2016. The job description and application process are outlined on the UUA's website under Job Openings: www.uua.org/careers/openings. Please take some time to think about who you know might be great for this job, and forward them the link - even if that someone is you!

MidAmerica Youth Events for the New Year



By Shannon Harper, Our Whole Lives [OWL] and Youth Events Coordinator

Hello MidAmerica Region! As I write this message to you, 2015 is slowly coming to its end. And when you read this, 2016 will have just started, fresh and ripe with new possibilities. It's a magical time, this cusp, a time to reflect, celebrate our accomplishments and mourn our losses; and a time to look ahead to what amazing things we will experience and accomplish together in the new year.

This past year Central Midwest Area hosted their second Youth Chaplaincy Training, helping to continue the tradition of providing safe and mindful CON experiences in MidAmerica. Prairie Star Area was the location of Kamehamehame-CON in Des Moines. And, in addition to their annual Senior High CON, CONtagious, Heartland Area offered two Middle School retreats held at YMCA camps in Kentucky and Michigan plus an MS cluster CON in Lexington, KY. MidAmerica has certainly been busy providing quality youth experiences!

And as excited as I was for all those great youth events of 2015, I'm just as excited about what's coming up this new year. (Please note: all of the following events are open to any youth in the MidAmerica Region unless otherwise specified.) All Souls Church of Indianapolis is in the midst of planning their Middle School Cluster CON, CONivale, January 15th-17th. This is for all 6th-12th graders and the registration form can be found on the MidAmerica calendar. In February MidAmerica youth are invited to join the Heartland Area Youth Council for their annual JusticeCON-a whole weekend dedicated to social, economic and environmental justice issues; it will be held at Birmingham Unitarian Church in Michigan.

And speaking of justice issues, March 11-13 North Shore Unitarian Church in Deerfield, IL has invited myself and Caleb Leman, an alumni and former staff of Youth Midwest Leadership School and current Youth Observer on the UUA Board of Trustees, to facilitate a weekend-long seminar for youth in MidAmerica about dismantling racism and building not just diverse communities, but communities in which all people feel heard, feel safe and feel validated.

The first weekend in April (1-3) the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, IL is hosting the Northern

Spring CON (this event is open only to youth in the northern section of the Central Midwest Area [CMWA]), which is sure to be well attended after their break from Fall CON last year. We are eagerly awaiting news from the South (CMWA) as to location and date of their Spring CON!

At Regional Assembly in St. Paul this year, we're planning some special treats for youth. In November of 2015 Minnesota UU Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA) launched an immersive youth program called SOALS (The Spiritual Organizer/Activist Leadership Seminar for UU Youth) and leaders in that program have been working with MidAmerica staff to plan an educational component for youth at RA. We're also planning a youth track at RA similar to what is done at General Assembly.

And of course, talking about Youth events in MidAmerica wouldn't be complete if I didn't mention Youth Midwest Leadership School! YMWLS is an awesome opportunity for MidAmerica youth to hone their leadership skills, express their creativity, learn how to work in multi-generational worship teams and make connections with other UU youth across the region.

To borrow a line from one of my favorite Dr. Seuss characters, The Cat in the Hat, "And that is not all, oh no, that is not all. . ." I'm sure there are many more wonderful things happening in our Region that I don't know about yet. But I'd love to! So shoot me a line and let me know what great youth events you are planning in 2016. I'll make sure they get on the calendar and are advertised through MidAmerica. Don't worry if your event has a limited invitation, we'll just note that in its description. I envision the MidAmerica event calendar to be a one-stop-shop for all youth events in the region. Please help me make it complete.

You can email me. And remember, I'm also your contact for hosting OWL Facilitator Trainings. Happy 2016!

Thank You to Our MidAmerica Fair Share Congregations

By Rev. Phillip Lund, Congregational Life Consultant

We are deeply grateful for the almost 50 MidAmerica congregations who gave their fair share to the region in 2015. We appreciate and celebrate the priority that you place on support for MidAmerica.

Illinois: Alton-First Unitarian, Bloomington-UU Church Normal, Chicago-Beverly U Church, Chicago-Peoples Church of Chicago, Oak Park-Third U Church, Decatur-UU Fellowship of Decatur, Elgin-UU Church of Elgin, Grayslake-Prairie Circle UU Congregation, Geneva-UU Society of Geneva, Palatine-Countryside Church UU, Springfield-Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation, Rockton-UU Congregation of Rock Valley, Urbana-UU Church of Urbana-Champaign.



Indiana: Bloomington-UU Church of Bloomington, Columbus-UU Congregation of Columbus, Elkhart-UU Fellowship of Elkhart, Hobart-First U Church of Hobart, South Bend-First U Church of South Bend, West Lafayette-UU Church of Tippecanoe County.

Kentucky: Bowling Green-UU Church of Bowling Green.

Michigan: Farmington Hills-Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington, Grosse Pointe-Grosse Pointe U Church, Marquette-Marquette UU Congregation, Escanaba-Bay De Noc UU, Mt Pleasant-UU Fellowship of Central MI, Muskegon-Harbor UU Congregation, New Hudson-New Hope Congregation.

Minnesota: Excelsior-Lake Fellowship of UUs, Grand Rapids-Grand Rapids U Fellowship, St. Cloud-St. Cloud UU Fellowship.

Missouri: Columbia-UU Church of Columbia, Rolla-UU Fellowship of Rolla, Saint Louis-First U Church of St. Louis.

Nebraska: Omaha-Second U Church of Omaha.

North Dakota: Grand Forks-Grand Forks UU Fellowship.

Ohio: Cincinnati-First U Church-Cincinnati, Cincinnati-Northern Hills UU Fellowship, Dayton-Miami Valley UU Fellowship.

Wisconsin: Hartland-Lake Country UU Church, Ashland-Chequamegon UU Fellowship, Elkhorn-UU Church of the Lakes, Kenosha-Bradford Community Church UU, Marshfield-UU Fellowship of Marshfield, Milwaukee-U Fellowship of Milwaukee, Woodruff-Northwoods UU Fellowship, Waukesha-United U & U Congregation, Ripon-Prairie Lakes UU Fellowship Sister Bay-UU Fellowship of Door County.

There were many other congregations who gave within \$50 or so of their fair share level, as well. We are thankful for all of the congregations who help support your MidAmerica Region.

Gratitude for Your Congregation and for What You Share



By Dori Davenport Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant

As we begin 2016, we thank all the congregations in our Region for their contributions to the MidAmerica Fair Share. Whether your congregation has been Fair Share for many years, or is working towards achieving this status, your contributions enable us to provide many services to strengthen Unitarian Universalism across our region and beyond.

As my colleague Lisa Presley says, "Just as you hold the place for your members to practice their faith, we hold the place for all of our congregations." Of course, the most important reason we ask congregations for Fair Share support has to do with the covenantal relationship of which we are all a part.

When congregations affiliate with the Unitarian Universalist Association, they commit to our covenant. The closing part of the covenantal agreement states:

"Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennoble our faith, we are inspired to deepen our

understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support."

Expanding our vision, to me, means that we look outward, bringing the love of our faith and our values to the world around us. We stand on the side of love so that all people can know justice and liberty and peace. And, as our colleagues in the Southern Region state in an excellent document, "So, what do districts, regions and the UUA do for us?":

"We can choose to be a thousand or so little individual lights scattered around the continent - or - We can be a thousand such beacons, joined by bridges of connectivity, mutual reinforcement, and communication that are our districts, regions, and the UUA."

In other words, we are stronger together than we are alone. If you'd like to see a comprehensive listing of all the ways that your congregation benefits from contributing to the UUA and Regional Fair Share, you can read this informative and inspirational paper from our Southern Region leaders. You will never again wonder how to answer that question, What does the UUA do for us?

http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/images/Why_Districts,_Regions,_and_the_UUA-V2.pdf

Here in the MidAmerica Region, we are working more closely with our colleagues at the UUA headquarters so that we can better support congregational efforts in fundraising. Many resources can be found at this UUA website page: <http://www.uua.org/giving/apf/stewardship>

As always, we welcome your comments and questions - let us know how we can support you!

Calendar

PLEASE SEE OUR FULL CALENDAR

