



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 had to send out last month's Messenger before we could make public the news about our new MidAmerica Congregational Life Consultant, the Rev. Sharon Dittmar. So in case you missed it, you can read more about Sharon in this month's issue. There's news from this year's Regional Assembly, too, including an article about honoring Nancy Heege, who recently retired from the Congregational Life Staff after 22 years of service.



And as always, the current Congregational Life Staff is here for you, so give us a call or send us an email when there's anything we can help you with. Don't know who to call? Visit our Who to Call page (<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/contact-us/who-call>) to find out!

We appreciate your comments and suggestions for the newsletter. Send us a message.

Yours in Faith,  
Phillip Lund

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# Meet MidAmerica's New Congregational Life Consultant!

We are proud to announce that the Rev. Sharon Dittmar will be joining our MidAmerica Regional staff team, come August 2016! She will be filling the opening left when Nancy Heege retired this past December.



During the search process, we received over 25 applications for this position, and it became a difficult job to pare them down to a reasonable number to interview. Many would have brought incredible gifts and skills to MidAmerica, and although we knew that we could only offer the position to one person, we wish that we were in a position to offer it to several of those we interviewed. Eventually, Sharon was offered the position -- we believe that her gifts and skills will enhance our work as a staff team, and that the "fit" is just right.

The Rev. Sharon Dittmar is currently the minister at First Unitarian Church in Cincinnati, a position that she has held since 1998. During her tenure there, Sharon has helped develop leadership in the congregation so that they can work toward understanding their mission and vision, articulate their values and goals, and develop a strategic plan to help them become a more vibrant congregation. First has increased their membership more than 20% during Sharon's tenure. In the role of Good Officer she has become a respected source of perspective and advice to her ministerial colleagues. When asked about her successes in ministry, Sharon emphasized the important of developing emotional intelligence and of focusing on developing long-term strategies with partners.

## Midwest Leadership School Registration Extended!

In case you're interested in deeply exploring what it means to be a leader in your congregation with a more extensive knowledge of Unitarian Universalism, you're in luck! MidWest Leadership School has extended the deadline for registration to June 1st for both the Adult and the Youth Leadership Schools.



MWLS will be held July 10-16 at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin.

You can learn more on our website.



# MidAmerica UU's Honor Nancy Heege



Nancy Heege, the longest-serving Congregational Life Consultant and District Executive in the UUA, was recognized for her years of service during our recent MidAmerica Regional Assembly.

On Friday, nearly 200 UU clergy and lay leaders gathered at a reception in Nancy's honor. Tributes to Nancy were shared by former MidAmerica Regional Staff Lead, Rev. Ian Evison, Prairie Star District UUA Trustees John Blevins and Graham Kreicker, Camp UniStar Foundation Board President Fred Hulting, and former Prairie Star District President and MidAmerica Board member Kathy Burek. Nancy was presented with a crystal star, engraved with, "To Our Star, Nancy Heege, in honor of 22 years of exemplary service to the PSD, MAR, and UUA". Reception attendees and Regional Assembly participants also signed a guest book, so they could share their memories and thanks.

Nancy was honored again on Saturday during the MidAmerica Regional Assembly Business meeting. Kathy Burek and MidAmerica President Eric Huffer shared their praise and thanks for Nancy's leadership.

Regional leaders have established the Nancy Heege Camp UniStar Family Scholarship Fund in Nancy's honor. Contributions may be made online or by check. This fund will help families who might not otherwise be able to go to Camp do so. To make an online donation, go to <https://www.givemn.org/organization/campunistar>. When you fill out the donation form, put "Heege Scholarship" in the box labeled "Tribute or Memorial". Checks made out to "Camp UniStar Foundation" with "Heege Scholarship" in the memo line can be mailed to Camp UniStar Heege Scholarship c/o Glenn Corliss, 10300 Morris Road, Bloomington, MN 55437-2825. Over \$2,000 was raised by the end of Regional Assembly.

## Friends of the MidAmerica Region

*By Dori Davenport-Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant*

For several years, our region has had a program called the Friends of the MidAmerica Region (<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/giving/friends>). It was carried over from the former Prairie Star District, where it had been in place for many years. The program started there when some lay leaders from Prairie Star congregations expressed gratitude to the district staff for helping their congregations navigate thorny issues or for helping them grow in health and vitality. They wanted to make direct donations to the district in addition to the contributions made by their churches through Fair Share.



**MidAmerica Region**



Most of these leaders continued to give to the Region when MidAmerica was formed three years ago. Some more of you from other parts of the Region donated when you heard about the Friends program. We get single donations of \$20 or \$50 or all the way up to \$1,000! We get monthly checks from trust accounts of some donors.

We are deeply grateful to all of these generous Friends of the Region! It is truly an honor to know that our work has made such an impact on the Unitarian Universalist faith communities across the Midwest.

Your regional staff has recently worked with Ben Wallace (First Unitarian of Omaha, NE) to look at the kinds of contributions we've taken in. Ben has some great ideas for promoting the program, so watch for more information on this in the coming months.

In the meantime, if our work has made a positive impact in your congregation or your life, please consider making a donation. Simply make the check out to:

MidAmerica Region, note "Friends" in the memo

2355 Fairview Ave. N. #312

Roseville, MN 55113

## Regional Assembly Keynotes and Business Meeting Video Now Online

A highlight of this year's Regional Assembly was the two-part presentation by our keynote speakers:

Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen, Rev. Jeremy Nickel, and Kenny Wiley.

Building on the New Era theme, these three UU leaders explored who we Unitarian Universalists need to be in order to be relevant, how we will get there, and who will be joining us on this journey. Of course, not every UU in the MidAmerica Region is

able to attend our annual Regional Assembly, which is why we make sure that recordings of the big events are available.



You can watch the videos of the two keynote presentations as well as the business meeting:

2016 Friday keynote (<https://youtu.be/-Dp8lmoCdEQ>)

2016 Saturday keynote ([https://youtu.be/RfsoSJT\\_pgY](https://youtu.be/RfsoSJT_pgY))

2016 Annual Meeting (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyOlbosaqvo>)

# Who You Gonna Call?

*By Phillip Lund, MidAmerica Messenger Editor*

I begin almost every issue of the MidAmerica Messenger with a reminder that your Congregational Life Staff is here to help -- all you need to do is call! But who, exactly, is the right person to phone or email? You can always call any staff person with whom you already have a relationship. Or you can call one of the following staff members as your first contact: Phillip Lund for congregations in ND, SD, KS, NE, MN, IA; Dori Thexton for congregations in WI, IL, MO; and Lisa Presley for congregations in MI, OH, KY, IN. Our job is to connect you with the best person possible to help you be successful, so we might connect you with another staff person if your question is more appropriate to their area of expertise.

We've also created a "Who to Call" page on the MidAmerica website so you can get in touch directly with the staff person best suited to help you. From Administration to Youth and Young Adult Ministry, there's a staff member ready to answer your questions and share the latest resources.

Just visit MidAmerica Who to Call page (<https://www.uua.org/midamerica/contact-us/who-call>) to find out who's the best MidAmerica Congregational Life Consultant for you to call.

## Calendar

PLEASE SEE OUR FULL CALENDAR

