



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.***

## In This Issue

Workshop Applications Wanted for Regional Assembly

UUs Counter Bigotry in the Spirit of the Sharps

Self Care for the Busy Leader Webinar

Chalice Lighters Fall Call

Gracious Bequests

Gather the Spirit...



Fall is in the air and the church year is in full swing. In this issue you'll find helpful information about Regional Assembly, Chalice Lighters, upcoming webinars and more. As always, if you have any questions or comments about these or any other services we provide to the MidAmerica Region, feel free to contact any of your MidAmerica staff. You can find our contact information on our website.

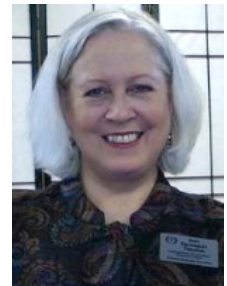
We appreciate your comments and suggestions for the newsletter. Send us a message.

Yours in Faith,  
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# Chalice Lighters Fall Call

*By Dori Davenport Thexton, Congregational Life Consultant*

Every once in a while we have a Chalice Lighter call cycle when we do not receive any applications. This fall is one of those times. When this happens, it's been our practice to put a call out for funds to support congregations in their work around a specific area, like support emerging congregations or youth and young adult programs.



Your MidAmerica Regional Chalice Lighter Committee has decided to apply funds from the Fall 2016 Call to assist congregations in supporting Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU).



**BLACK LIVES of UU**

According to their website [www.blacklivesuu.com](http://www.blacklivesuu.com), "Black Lives of UU provides information, resources and support for Black Unitarian Universalists and works to expand the role and visibility of Black UUs within our faith."

One of the ways congregations can do this is to use Chalice Lighter funds to cover the cost for Black UUs who wish to attend upcoming Unitarian Universalist gatherings, like the BLUU 2017 Convening in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 9-12, or MidAmerica's Regional Assembly in Oak Brook, Illinois, April 28-30, or next year's General Assembly which will also be in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 21-25.

Funds could also be used to help MidAmerica congregations create and display their own Black Lives Matter banners, or help cover the cost of replacing banners that have been vandalized.

Another way congregations could help support Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism could be to respond to BLUU's call of action encouraging UU congregations to open their doors and make meeting and healing space available to Black organizers during times of crisis, such as the recent shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. Congregations could use Chalice Lighter funds to cover expenses related to refreshments, copy services, and use of office space.

Bringing speakers to a UU cluster event might be another way to use a small grant from Chalice Lighters. Noted UU speaker Chris Crass or one of the leaders of BLUU could offer a lecture to some congregations coming together to learn more or get their own group started. Or possibly having a lecture that is open to the public for community education.

So please start thinking of ways that your congregation can support Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism and contact Rev. Phillip Lund ([plund@uua.org](mailto:plund@uua.org)) or me with your ideas!

# Gracious Bequests

*By Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant*

Over the past year, our MidAmerica Region has been blessed by the generosity and long-term planning of two of our dedicated lay members from the former Prairie Star District.



Cheryl Lee left a bequest of \$10,000 to help fund work of the Region and are congregations. After a period of discernment, the Board decided that half of this money would be divided between two of our Chalice Lighter calls, while the other half would go to help fund social justice work in the former Prairie Star district. These funds were used to help provide the social justice conference that happened before this past April's Regional Assembly.

Cheryl was a member of our Mankato congregation. She was active in resettling Cambodian families, joined peace delegations to the former Soviet Union, Northern Ireland and Nicaragua, was active in peace groups, and worked to end domestic violence, and many other causes dear to her heart. We appreciate her thinking about our wider Association.



D'Ann Prior was an active member of our Michael Servetus Unitarian Society in Fridley, Minnesota. Throughout her life she was a supporter of many social justice issues including women's rights, LGBTQ rights, Black Lives Matter, and civil rights for all. She served terms as president of both MN NOW and WIS NOW, chaired the first National Lesbian Rights Conference, and worked on Minnesota's "Vote No" campaign.

She worked for the Prairie Star District as a volunteer, and helped develop Stonetree, an online resource. Her generous donation will help MidAmerica carry on our work of both helping our congregations and working for social justice.

## Workshop Applications for Regional Assembly 2017

We hope your calendars are marked for our Regional Assembly next spring - April 28-30, 2017 at the Oak Brook Marriott hotel, in the western suburbs of Chicago. Our theme is "Finding Our Partners - Faith in Action."

In spite of our small numbers in the national religious scene, Unitarian Universalists have been at the forefront of every significant social change in our nation's history. Now, more than ever, we need to work with partners to have an impact in our cities, states and country.

We are seeking your applications for workshops that illustrate our theme through your congregational activities. What ways does your congregation put its faith in action? Have you joined with other faith communities or community groups to improve something in your locality? What have you learned about working with partners that can help others? Submit a workshop proposal by October 31, 2016.

# UUs Counter Bigotry in the Spirit of the Sharps

*By Sharon Dittmar, Congregational Life Consultant*



Many of us sat down and watched *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War* (<http://www.pbs.org/show/defying-nazis-sharps-war/>) on Tuesday, September 20, 2016. It's not often that a Unitarian minister and his wife get featured on a PBS documentary with a national television audience. The Sharps have an incredible story of resistance, sacrifice, and courage in their efforts during WWII to rescue Jews, dissidents, and refugee children. For congregations wishing to go further, check out "Defying the Nazis - UU Action Project (<http://www.uua.org/action/defying-nazis-sharp-story>)" which includes a congregational study action guide, resources to counter bigotry faced today, and a map that displays congregations doing work related to these efforts. (Waitstill Sharp served as minister at our UU congregation in Davenport, Iowa, from 1954-1963.)

In the MidAmerica Region we have several congregations working to counter bigotry faced today. In Oak Park, IL, Unity Temple is partnering with RefugeeOne to host refugee families from Burma and Cote d'Ivoire. To learn more contact the Unity Temple Refugee Response team at [immigration@unitytemple.org](mailto:immigration@unitytemple.org).

Earlier this month the Unitarian Church of Evanston (IL) welcomed a family from Aleppo, Syria. Prior to their arrival, the congregation studied the issue for 7 months, partnered with RefugeeOne, raised money for rent, and engaged many lay volunteers. If you would like to learn more, please contact Carol at [carolsnielsen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carolsnielsen@sbcglobal.net).

The UU Church of Greater Lansing, MI worshiped in a local mosque (<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/uu-interfaith-partners>) this summer while awaiting completion of their building. Reverend Suzelle Lynch of the UU Church West of Brookfield, WI has an active presence countering Islamophobia (<http://www.brookfield-elmgrovenow.com/story/news/local/brookfield/2016/02/23/hundreds-attend-beginsponsored-presentation-on-islam-in-elm-grove/87049322/>) in her community.

All of this work begins with relationships that build trust and a network of support. Small acts of welcome and hospitality over many years lead to larger offers to use a building or help a family in need. If such a project seems overwhelming to you, see if you can partner with other organizations and/or congregations. We do this work together in faith and covenant, spreading our values one loving relationship at a time.

# Webinar: Self Care for the Busy Leader

*By Sharon Dittmar, Congregational Life Consultant*

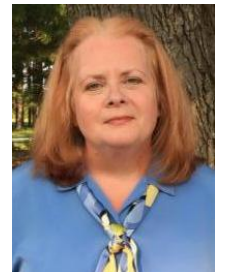
Join me for a 75 minute webinar on Wednesday, November 10 at 7:45 pm Eastern Time/6:45 pm Central Time/5:45 Mountain Time on "Self Care for the Busy Leader." Using the work of writer and educator, Parker Palmer, we will explore the challenge of caring for oneself as a congregational leader, while listening to what Palmer refers to as the most important teacher, your inner voice. This webinar will offer time for readings, story, questions, and even reflection! It is one session in a six part webinar series I will be offering for congregational leaders in the winter of 2017 entitled "How to Build Your Personal Leadership Toolkit." Join me on November 10 and see if you are interested in going farther. Registration limited to 40 participants.

Questions? Contact Sharon Dittmar at [sdittmar@uua.org](mailto:sdittmar@uua.org) (mailto:sdittmar@uua.org). You can find out more about this and other MidAmerica webinars at <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/events/webinars>.

## Gather the Spirit...

*By Nancy Combs-Morgan, Congregational Life Consultant*

Recently I took part in a remarkable Youth Ministry Revival, in Portland, OR, where we explored what it would mean if we put "spirit at the center" of Unitarian Universalist youth ministry. The answer was a resounding response, from youth and adults, of the difference it makes when we deepen our multi-generational relationships in spiritual practices and shared community experiences. With that in mind, stay tuned for next September when the next Youth Ministry Revival will be in MidAmerica, exploring the power of spirit in community.



In the meantime, save the date for our MA Regional Assembly, April 28-30, 2017. There will be engaging, spirit-filled, programming for all ages, including some super youth ministry workshops, lifting up the importance of growing in faith by building relationships with community partners.

With deepening relationships in mind, I want to extend a warm invitation to any religious educator in the region to take part in a series of **RE: Let's Talk** virtual sessions. The monthly sessions, posted on our website, will be focused on answering questions; sharing practices and resources, and building momentum for our face to face opportunities. The October **RE: Let's Talk** session will be Wednesday, October 12 at noon Central and 1p EST.

Let us seek to deepen our connections so that we can gather the spirit....

