



MidAmerica  
Region



# MidAmerica Messenger

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**The MidAmerica Region is where UUs visibly live our faith, create connections, grow our membership, and welcome all persons who share our UU values.**

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## *Welcome*

### Phil Lund, Congregational Life Consultant

Regional Assembly 2017 is over and your MidAmerica Regional staff is already moving on to other things - like Midwest Leadership School and getting ready for General Assembly.

My plans for this summer are a little different, however. I'm going to be on sabbatical between May 1 and July 31. My big project will be working on a book about spiritual direction and interfaith leadership. While I'm away, you can contact Nancy Combs-Morgan ([ncombsmorgan@uua.org](mailto:ncombsmorgan@uua.org))

with questions about faith development and Sharon Dittmar ([sdittmar@uua.org](mailto:sdittmar@uua.org)) for queries from congregations in ND, SD, KS, NE, MN, IA. Sharon will also be taking over as editor of the MidAmerica Messenger.



As always, you can contact any member of your MidAmerica Regional staff team with questions, comments, and concerns. We're here to help!

Visit <https://midamericauua.net/about-us/contact-us> for more information.

As always, we appreciate your comments and suggestions for the newsletter.



## *Saying goodbye is not easy*

### Dori Davenport Thexton

I'll be honest - my heart is broken about having to say goodbye to work that I love, to people that inspire me every single day, and especially to teammates who are so precious and dear to me.

Since I got the news almost two months ago that my position was one of the ones being eliminated in the latest round of UUA budget cuts, I've been through the typical stages of grief. There have been days when I've been angry and there have been days when I've been very sad. And there have been days when I've felt relieved about being able to just take some time off and spend it with all of my grandchildren and to do more recreational reading, cooking and baking, and take long walks with my dogs.



But that broken heart thing...it's not the first time in my 34 year career in Unitarian Universalism that disillusionment has slapped me in the face. Each time, I have sought counsel from wise colleagues and mentors who helped and supported me through the difficult times. I've been unbelievably fortunate to have this enormous circle of friends over the years who knew how to ask just the right question to help me see things in a new light and find a way forward.

In the 2001 Commission on Appraisal report, "Belonging: The Meaning of Membership," they talk about disillusionment being a necessary part of developing loyalty to and trust in a community or an institution. Once again, I find that, even though my commitment to Unitarian Universalism has been tested, I will not walk away. I love this faith and believe in it and its transforming potential too deeply. I look forward to discovering new ways to be part of our important work.

It is with deep gratitude for all that I have received from all of you that I say farewell. And to Ian, Lisa, Nancy, Phil, Sharon and Gretchen and Peggy - and Nancy Heege, too - thank you for being the absolute best colleagues one could ever hope for.

With love,

*Dori*



## *Regional Assembly Re-Cap*

Sharon Dittmar, Congregational Life Consultant



Regional Assembly took place from April 28-30, 2017 in Oak Brook, Illinois. Highlights included a great keynote by Lee Barker ("you can either be right or be in relationship"), a live UUA Presidential Candidates Forum with UUA Moderator, Jim Key, a **White Supremacy Teach-In**, and expressions of heartfelt thanks to Congregational Life Consultant, Dori Davenport Thexton, for 19 years of exceptional service. She will be missed.

Many thanks also to our Right Relations Team (pictured above: Revs. Lisa Presley, Scott McNeill, Chip Roush, Ashley Horan and Darrick Jackson) and Regional Administrators for their help.

There will be no Regional Assembly in 2018 in order to encourage attendance at General Assembly in Kansas City, Missouri in 2018.



## *MidWest Leadership School - Register by June 1*



How will you spend the week of July 9 - 15 this summer? We invite you to join a talented group of UU adults and youth in Decorah, Iowa. This will be a week you'll always remember!

MidWest Leadership School is a week-long intensive program in leadership and group dynamics, for adults and for youth, ages 14 - 18. Led by lay and ordained staff with a deep understanding of UU congregations, MWLS

- develops both youth and adults into congregational leaders
- provides leadership tools and skills
- deepens Unitarian Universalist identity

### **Grow, thrive and renew**

Explore your spirituality and nurture the gifts you bring back to your congregation. MWLS is an immersive and rigorous week of learning in classroom and small-group settings. Our program blends the practical (leadership tools and best practices) with the spiritual (theological exploration and worship) and experiential (small-group challenges) in a safe, welcoming environment. Leaders trained at MWLS have gone on to help their congregations through growth challenges, building new programs, expanding outreach and confronting social justice issues head-on.

"MWLS has changed my life and the life of Open Door Fellowship. I am encouraged every day. ... Thank you all for your strength and encouragement, and for being the beautiful, committed people you are."--  
Dixie Collinson, Class of 2015



More info:

[Adult MWLS Flyer](#)    [Youth MWLS Flyer](#)

**Print out and share these!**

**Registration is now open for Adults and Youth**





## *Chalice Lighters Grant Aids Black Lives Matter Work in Milwaukee Area*

by Ann Heidkamp, BLM2WUU co-coordinator

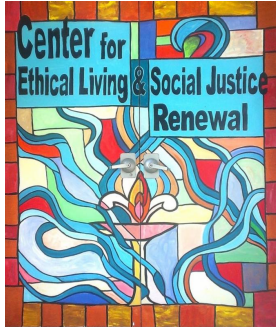


On Sat. April 1st, a capacity crowd of 260 people gathered at Alverno College in Milwaukee to work with Chris Crass, UU racial justice trainer and author, at the **Racial Justice: The Courage to Act conference**. The conference was convened by the Black Lives Matter to WI UU (BLM2WUU) collaboration of the 5 Milwaukee area UU churches. This event, planned in partnership with 15 other area faith and community groups working on racial justice was funded in part by grants from the Mid America Region Chalice Lighters program, the UU Fund for Social Responsibility, local UU churches, the YWCA, the United Church of Christ regional Mission Team, the local ELCA Lutheran Synod, and Alverno College which provided its conference space for free.

BLM2WUU came together in Nov. 2015, following the GA 2015 Action of Immediate Witness to Support the Black Lives Matter movement. Together the 5 churches have over 1500 members. By combining our ideas, resources and efforts we felt we could have more impact for racial justice within and outside of our congregations. During 2016 and early 2017, the collaboration presented 4 "Beyond the Banner" workshops designed to acquaint our members with a basic understanding of the Black Lives Matter movement, systemic racism, and white privilege. About 300 members from all congregations attended. In conjunction with the workshops and banner raisings, we held BLM witnesses on busy streets outside of our churches. We also engaged in community protest actions around the shooting deaths of 2 Black men by area police officers and in coalition actions to end WI highest in the nation rate of Black male incarceration. The collaboration has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BLM2WUU> full of information about local and national racial justice issues...

These sessions and other racial justice resources are available on a Virtual Library created after the conference. The link is <http://bit.ly/courage2act>

For further information on BLM2WUU, please contact Ann Heidkamp at [heidkama@wi.rr.com](mailto:heidkama@wi.rr.com). Or visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BLM2WUU/>



## *Brilliant Bits from Boston: Hands on Service Projects at GA 2017*

Sharon Dittmar, Congregational Life Consultant

General Assembly 2017 is in New Orleans, Louisiana this year (June 21-25) <http://www.uua.org/ga>. Those attending GA will be able to participate in hands-on service/learning projects to benefit over 1,000 local residents. Service projects include opportunities such as rebuilding for folks displaced by Hurricane Katrina and information and care packages for youth in local pre-trial detention. In all, there are four service projects. I signed up to work with the Red Flame Hunters. If you are attending GA, I hope you will join me.

Advance registration required.



## *Camp UniStar Looking for Summer Staff*

Camp UniStar is looking for 2017 summer staff to spend the summer where memories are made and community is cherished. Camp UniStar is a UU family camp located on an island in beautiful northern Minnesota.



Camp UniStar offers competitive pay and lifeguard training reimbursement. Private room and board are included.

Applications open at <http://www.campunistar.org/jobs>



We are seeking to covenant with each other to find new ways of partnering and standing together on the side of love for the flourishing of our world, our communities, our congregations and our members.