Minister’s Message by Rev. Laura Smidzik

Last year, we joined a nationwide UU program called Soul Matters which creates monthly worship and small group resource packets around predetermined themes.

We begin the 2017-2018 church year with the theme of Welcome. Our faith, as Tim Owen-Towle states, is deeply connected to our first principle—the inherent worth and dignity of every person. To truly live this principle at this time in our country requires a level of groundedness and compassion that is hard to come by when people are feeling fearful and the country feels divided.

Somewhere in my reading or listening to the radio, I learned about The People’s Supper. The leaders of this project “aim to repair the breach in our interpersonal relationships across political, ideological, and identity differences, leading to more civil discourse.” The suppers began after the President’s inauguration as a response to a divided nation. The description continues, “This isn’t about a political party, or what is or isn’t happening in Washington. It’s about us, and our relationship to one another. Too often, we exist in echo chambers and see each other as monoliths: one-sided stereotypes who can be reduced to a single word or phrase.”

The supper hosts are given a facilitator guide that contains four questions. Two questions are:

1. Describe a moment, recent or long passed, in which you’ve been made to feel unwelcome, unsafe, unworthy, and threatened.
2. Describe a moment, recent or long passed, in which you were made to feel the opposite: in which you felt fully seen and heard and at ease.

Those who have never claimed a faith or church community as well as those who come from other faith traditions often speak of feeling fully seen and heard and at ease during their first few visits here. They feel seen as a person who has their own story and particular reason why they are looking for a community of faith. They feel heard as their theological doubts and questions as well as those about living a deeper life of purpose are welcomed. And they feel at ease knowing that ours is a faith that strives to be inclusive.

Theodore Parker, a nineteen century Unitarian minister and transcendentalist is quoted as saying we need to be a wide place as well as a warm one. Although our congregation took root by members of the First Unitarian, a Humanist beacon in the Midwest, we now have a greater continuum of faith belief ranging from Atheists to Buddhists to Christians. We create a beloved community when we listen carefully to one another and share our own beliefs and questions. It takes practice to come together and grapple with meaning without alienating others. Together, we continue to practice how to be the community we long to see in the greater world.

Ours is a covenantal faith based on the promises we make to one another. The depth and spirit of the commitments we make in this community differ from those of other areas of our lives. We are called to be mindful, open, curious, compassionate, reflective, and constantly working toward beloved community. My hope is that as we move through the year together, we can continue to practice radical welcome and hospitality and to explore how we want to be with each other here as well as in the community and the greater society.
DRE Digest by Anna Paquette

RE Programming

As September arrives, I’m thrilled to welcome everyone back to Religious Education. We have a very busy, and exciting, year ahead of us! Due to the growth in our program, and the ages of the participants, we will be offering multiple programs throughout the year.

We will start the year with Pre-K – 3rd grade in the teal room (Room 6). They will use a curriculum called “Picture Book UU”, which focuses on a belief, source, and principal with each lesson, but also touches on world religions. The 4th – 6th graders will be participating in the 10 week Elementary OWL program in the yellow room (Room 3/5).

After the completion of the Elementary OWL we will expand our program to three classrooms. The Pre-K – 2nd grade students will continue with their curriculum in the teal room (Room 6). The 3rd graders will join the 4th – 6th grade students in the yellow room (Room 3/5) to begin the much-loved world religion curriculum, “Holidays and Holy Days”. While written in 1983, the curriculum still contains valuable lessons for UU children today. Lessons will be updated as needed to reflect shifts in society’s understanding, and treatment, of other cultures.

Starting on November 19, the youth participating in the high school OWL program will meet in the RE office.

A full schedule for all three rooms, and the weekly lessons planned for each, is available here: http://tinyurl.com/MSUS-Schedule.

RE Classroom Volunteers

While it’s exciting to have so many learning opportunities as a result of our RE Programming (see adjacent column), multiple classrooms require an increased number of volunteers each Sunday. To address this need, I am building teaching teams with a minimum of six people for each classroom. (Pre-K to 2nd grade needs volunteers starting September 10th, but 3rd to 6th require no volunteers until OWL is complete in November.) With six people (Volunteers A–F) on a team, each volunteer would be in a classroom two consecutive weeks and then have four weeks off. With additional volunteers on the team, there would be an even larger gap between weeks a volunteer would need to be in the classroom.

A sample schedule would be:
- Week 1: Volunteers A & B
- Week 2: Volunteers B & C
- Week 3: Volunteers C & D
- Week 4: Volunteers D & E
- Week 5: Volunteers E & F
- Week 6: Volunteers F & A
- Repeat starting at from Week 1

A full illustration of how this will work can be found here: http://tinyurl.com/MSUS-Teams.

The teams have been designed this way in order to address several issues.
- I will be teaching Elementary and High School OWL and will not be able to be in the other classrooms.
- Having a dedicated team of at least 12 leaders, (2-6 member teams, one for each classroom), committed to this rotation for the full year, reduces need to recruit.
- Eliminates the need to do mass appeals to the congregation.
- Addresses one of the largest complaints that both children and volunteers have had previously: not knowing what to expect from week to week. Children disliked that they often didn’t get to know their teachers very well, and had no idea who would be there from week to week. RE leaders disliked not knowing what had happened with the lesson the week before, and how the one they were leading connected.

Since the schedule repeats every 6 weeks, it also allows volunteers to easily calendar their time in the classroom well in advance. Obviously, life happens, but since volunteers will be working in a team, they should easily be able to work together to cover anything that pops up.

If you would embrace the opportunity to share your time and talents with the participants in religious education this year, please contact me ASAP (dre@msuu.org, in person on a Sunday morning, or by phone) so we can be ready for the beginning of the year.

Our congregation is truly the best religious education “classroom” our children and youth could have, so I hope you’ll welcome them with open arms again this year.
Congregational Forums

Join us for new monthly congregational forums at MSUS!

Forums are an opportunity to:

- Meet with congregational leaders to hear about and discuss important topics related to MSUS now and into the future.
- Hear from outside speakers on topics that work best apart a worship service and leave room for questions and answers.
  - Potential topics include environmental issues, transgender 101, identifying dementia in family members, and Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance.

Contact Rev. Laura if you have topics or speakers you want to suggest (revlaura@msuu.org).

The September Forum will be:

**Beyond the building vote: Where do we go from here?**
September 17, 2017
12:00 – 1:00 pm in the Social Hall

On June 28 we gathered to count the vote regarding the potential purchase of a new building. 84 people voted with 72 voting yes and 12 no votes falling short of the 90% required to move forward. We closed that night in a circle holding hands—exemplifying our unity and commitment to continue as one church. September 17 is an opportunity to gather again. A moment to touch base, reflect back, and discuss how we move forward.

New Member Classes

Are you **new** to Michael Servetus Unitarian Society (MSUS)?
Are you interested in exploring more about Unitarian Universalist history and theology?
Would you like to learn about becoming a member?

**Join us for the New Member Class on Sunday, October 1, 2017**
12:00 – 1:00 pm, A brief overview of UU history and theology
1:00 – 1:30 pm, Learn more about becoming a member.
1:30 –2:00 pm, Those who want to join will complete applications and participate in a ritual

A light lunch is served.

Please RSVP to Rev. Laura at revlaura@msuu.org or 763-710-0435.
If childcare is needed, you **must reserve care** by email to Rev. Laura by September 24.
Finding Our Own Wealth
by Katie Johnson

I came across the poem “On the Shady Side” a few months ago – I was especially taken by the ending “… I broke the lid of my chest open and was startled into finding my own wealth.” I found the idea of being “startled” by my wealth interesting – is it that I have more than I thought, once I start looking? Is my wealth of a different sort, such that I don’t recognize what I have to offer, especially compared to my neighbors? Am I startled to find that my contribution is valuable when it seems so small?

My discovery of this poem coincided with the end of the recent pledge drive and I found myself reflecting on the generosity I see within the MSUS community. When made more keenly aware of our budget and income shortfall, we all collectively broke open our chests and found an 11% increase in our total pledges! Our financial generosity is also reflected in the $4000 collected for community organizations through our monthly special collections last year, and in the continued strong support of our fundraising auction. We will never each give the same amount, but together we do make a difference both within MSUS and beyond.

While financial generosity is certainly necessary, it is not sufficient as our contribution to the common good; we must also share our time and talents. The “flaming chalice” poster provides a visual reminder of how much we light up the world with our actions. Each flame recorded how and how much someone volunteered for a cause. Taken all together, we contributed a total of 4450 hours of service! Almost 80% of our volunteer hours were reaching out into the community in support of causes held dear to our members, while the rest of our volunteering helped to sustain and enliven MSUS.

And finally, we share ourselves. I witness over and over again people stepping in with caring words and actions when members of our community are in need due to things like illness, loss, addiction, or a significant life change. And while we often think about generosity towards our friends and neighbors in terms of the sharing of burdens, we are also generous when we share joyful times with smiles and laughter (and food!) as we gather before and after services, or when we make time to share in celebration to acknowledge a milestone event.

May we be continuously startled by the wealth to be found within this beloved community.

On the Shady Side
By Rabindranath Tagore

I lived on the shady side of the road and watched my neighbours’ gardens across the way reveling in the sunshine.

I felt I was poor, and from door to door went with my hunger.
The more they gave me from their careless abundance
the more I became aware of my beggar’s bowl.

Till one morning I awoke from my sleep at the sudden opening of my door,
and you came and asked for alms.
In despair I broke the lid of my chest open and
was startled into finding my own wealth.

Long Strange Trip:
A Journey through Two Thousand Years of Unitarian History

During this church year we’ll offer opportunities to view a six-part series on Unitarian History. We will takes us through early Christian thought through Erasmus. The videos, created by Ron Cornes, include facts, history, and antidotes of the development of our chosen faith.

In the Beginning, Part I: Thursday, September 28, 7:00-8:30 pm
In the Beginning, Part II: Thursday, October 19, 7:00-8:30 pm
In the fall of 2016 the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) made a promise of $300,000 immediately to Black Lives of UU and committed to guaranteeing BLUU another $5 million in long-term funding for its efforts to support black UUs and expand the role and visibility of black UUs within the faith. The energy at the annual Unitarian Universalist General Assembly this year was different. Something is changing in our denomination — and BLUU has been a part of creating that change. Black Lives UU is building and dreaming something into being that is already changing lives. BLUU is grounded in love, action, and ancestry.

Join Rev. Laura and Kathy Burek, MSUS member and UUA Board of Trustee Member, to learn more about what this moment of UU history and how our denomination is responding to the call for a greater love and a more diverse denomination.

Sunday Night Book Club

On September 10th Sig & Marti Reckdahl will host our discussion of *Flying Funny* by Dudley Riggs. *The Star Tribune* reports, "Like Riggs himself, his book is warm and a bit bashful in tone, avoiding the acres of melodrama and flamboyant flimflam found in many show business autobiographies. It reads like the work of a man with more good cheer than worry, making it through life’s travails without deep scars on his body or spirit. He attended public school intermittently and college largely against his will, but he recounts his memories with the clarity and detail a print journalist would envy."

**September 10, 2017—7:15 PM**
Sig and Marti Reckdahl’s Home 7823 Alden Way NE Fridley, MN 55432
MSUS Women’s Book Group

The MSUS Women’s Book Group is a gathering of female MSUS members and friends who meet the first Saturday of each month to discuss women-authored books. The group alternates between fiction and non-fiction works recommended by one or more of the group members. Contact Lois Burnett (burnahan@gmail.com) to be added to the email list.

Meetings are held at 9:00 AM in the Club Room at 20 Windsor Lane. New Brighton, MN

SEPTEMBER MEETING: September 2, 2017
- Non Fiction - Call the Midwife, by Jennifer Worth
- Treats provided by Lois Burnett

OCTOBER MEETING: October 7, 2017
- Fiction - A Wrinkle in Time, by Madeleine L’Engle
- Treats provided by Kathy Forbes and Melissa Winn

Third Thursdays: A daytime group for 60+

September 21, 2017 - 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join us for a one hour program with time for small group discussion followed by a simple lunch. Sign up in the Social Hall or you can email Laura at revlaura@msuu.org or call her at 763-710-0435.

Back to the Future

Can one action change the outcome of your whole future? How do our choices make a difference in our lives, and the lives of others? Join us for a potluck dinner with discussion and activities before we view our movie!

Childcare available BY REQUEST no later than Friday, September 15th
Register for childcare online at: http://tinyurl.com/PopcornChildcare

Popcorn Theology

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22
POTLUCK, DISCUSSION, & ACTIVITIES: 5:30 PM
MOVIE: 6:30 PM
Wren House Recall

Did you purchase a Wren House at the MSUS Bazaar in any of the past years? Know someone who did?

These bird houses are being recalled!

The opening is incorrectly sized and may prevent wrens from using the house.

Dick Kemper will replace the front panel and return the refurbished home to you before next spring.

Contact Dick Kemper to arrange drop off of the birdhouse, or contact the office at office@msuu.org.

President’s Letter by Laures Young

I’m looking forward to the upcoming church year. I had a great summer and I hope you did too. I appreciated having the opportunity to attend a few summer services. I was impressed with the number of people that attended and in the number of visitors that attended.

In preparation for the work of the upcoming year, the Board has a four-hour annual retreat in August to identify issues facing the board and congregation, to talk about issues in depth, and to learn some new things that will help us be an effective Board.

This year, Kathy Burek gave an excellent presentation on the role of the Board. Learnings from this presentation will help the Board focus on being more efficient and effective.

Following are the key issues that were identified during our discussion. We will be addressing these in the upcoming year.

Financial Management
A primary role of the Board is overseeing the finances of the church. There are several questions that need to be addressed including:

- How should our investments be managed?
- How should we manage our holding accounts?
- How should we manage our money given the possibility of a future move?
- What is our long term financial plan?

Space
Given the constraints of our existing space, we need to continue to maximize the use of space. How can we do that? We need to look at program and physical change options. Also, we need to continue to look for new space. We learned a lot during the process in deciding whether or not to purchase the Ibis Street Church. The outcome of the vote indicated that people are willing to move to a new location. We need to continue to search for options.

Next Steps Based on the Proposal for Committee Restructuring Report
Lisa Monson-Hokenson presented the report from the Restructuring Task Force. The goal of the Restructuring Committees Task Force is to recommend an organizational structure for accomplishing the work of the church that reflects the changing needs and goals of our growing congregation.

The task force worked for three years researching and developing recommendations. Many thanks to the task force for their research and insightful recommendations. The Board will review and discuss the report and determine next steps.

Policy
An ongoing role of the Board is to set policy. Setting policy is critical to the efficient operation of the church. Policy issues arise throughout the year, but we will be reviewing and updating the Membership Policy.

Again, I am looking forward to this year.
September Calendar Events

The monthly calendar is located on the MSUS webpage. The calendar changes daily as committees, music and interest groups schedule meetings and the normal course of church business occurs.

To obtain the most up-to-date information on what is happening at the church, please click on this MSUS church calendar link or go to http://www.msuu.org/services-events-calendar.

Music Rehearsals:
- Wednesdays, Choir Setup, 7:00 PM
- Wednesdays, Choir, 7:30 PM
- Wednesdays, String Band, 7:30 PM
- Sundays, Band Practice, 8:00 AM
  (Sept. 3 and 17)
- Sundays, Delphi Jazz, 3:00 PM

PLEASE NOTE: Rehearsals may change at the discretion of the Director. Please contact Bruce for updated information.

Building Use:
- Member Rental, Sundays, Noon
- L & F Fall Walk-through, All Day

Regular Meetings:
- Sunday Service Meeting, Sept. 7, 7:00 PM
- Mom’s Group, Sept. 10, Noon
- Leadership Development Committee, Sept. 11, 5:00 PM
- Weblackeys & Communication Oversight Committee Meeting, Sept. 13, 7:00 PM
- L&F Meeting, Sept. 18, 7:30 PM

Member Opportunities:
- After Service Forum, Sept. 17, Noon
- Third Thursday for those 60+, Sept. 21, 11:00 AM
- Popcorn Theology: Back to the Future, Sept. 22, 2017
- Long Strange Trip Through 2000 Years of Unitarian History Series, Sept. 28, 7:00 PM

Offsite MSUS Events:
- Women’s Book Group, Sept. 2, 9:00 AM
- Sun. Night Book Group, Sept. 10, 7:15 PM
- Committee on Ministry, Sept. 11, 7:30 PM
- Adopt a Highway—Osborne Road, Sept. 1, 9:00 AM
- Covenant Group, Sept. 23, 9:00 AM

Newsletter Deadline, Sept. 20, Noon
September 3, 2017
Speaker: Rev. Laura Smidzik
Service Leader: Leslie Vissage

George Pullman was a 19th century Universalist and an engineer and industrialist. His company, Pullman Company, lives in U.S. labor history as a turning point for worker’s rights. How does this story speak to us as Unitarian Universalists who are called to work for justice?

September 10, 2017
Speakers: Rev. Laura Smidzik
Service Leader: Kathy Burek

Join us for this Unitarian Universalist celebration of coming to together and the strength of community. All are invited to bring a container of water from somewhere special to you (a place you have visited this summer, your favorite lake, or your home faucet). The children and youth will join us for the beginning of worship and then go to Religious Education.

September 17, 2017
Speaker: Rev. Laura Smidzik
Service Leader: Lynne Schumann

Last spring we dove into deep discussion and discernment about growth as we explored moving to another building. We’ll return to reflect on what welcome and growth may look like and how we will move forward as one congregation, forever changed and changing, united in love.

September 24, 2017
Speaker: Doyle Mullin
Service Leader: Michelle Wallace

Some wisdom teachers tell us that we live our lives backward as related to relationships, health, material acquisition, etc. We will examine what they mean and learn how to live life the other way around.
Wake Now Our Vision
Legacy Challenge Matching Gift Campaign
By Katie Johnson

I am excited to tell you about a matching gift campaign called Wake Now Our Vision, created to encourage legacy gifts to UU congregations and organizations. Through this campaign, MSUS could receive a 10% matching cash gift when MSUS is designated in new or increased legacy gifts. Legacy gift intentions made from January 2017 through June 2020 may be eligible.

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In the coming months, I'll be sharing the details about how to participate in the Wake Now Our Vision campaign, as well as procedures for making legacy gifts to MSUS. Byron and I are already considering how we'd like to participate. We hope many of you will join us!

Please contact me, Katie Johnson, for more information or to add your energy to a legacy gift team. (katiejanej@comcast.net; 651-253-8163)

Legacy Gifts show enduring commitment to MSUS - donors indicate their intentions now for a gift that is received after they pass away.

Legacy Gifts include:
- Naming MSUS in a will or trust
- Making MSUS a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement fund
- Gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts

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