
First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

A Guide to How We Work

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Welcome to Your Church!

You are at the beginning of what I hope, for you, will be a great adventure. While many outside of our denomination may think that it is easy to be a Unitarian Universalist: “You can believe whatever you want”, I think you will find many challenges in living the principles of our open, affirming liberal faith. I invite you to embrace the challenges, and to explore the possibilities for transformation of yourself and the world that our religious home provides us.

One of our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles state that we covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. Our church’s Board of Trustees is one way we live out this principle. Board members are elected by congregation for a 3-year term, and the board’s mission is to guide the future-thinking of the church. I am currently in my final year of board service – it has been a great experience, and a wonderful opportunity to serve this community and to work with energetic, talented, generous people.

I joined First Unitarian ten years ago. I was a brand new UU. I started out working in the nursery and recruiting volunteers to help me. I served on the finance committee and taught religious education to middle-school youth. I helped out with our annual fundraising canvass, and our successful capital campaign. When the Nominating Committee asked me to serve on the board, I said yes.

Someday down the road, you may be asked to serve on the Board. I hope you will say yes, too.

What we do individually and together is our ministry to the world. Embrace your ministry. And if you want to talk church, call me – I would love to hear what you’re thinking.

Sally Boeckholt
Board President

The current members of the Board of Trustees

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The Seven Unitarian Universalist Principles

Unitarian Universalists celebrate their individuality and search for truth in many different ways and on many different paths. It is seldom that we agree on the details but, much to our surprise, we have found that there are some basic principles on which we generally agree. Of course we often see these principles in different ways and with various degrees of belief. It is with great delight that we learn new ways of understanding them as we meet new friends with different experiences...or old friends with new experiences.

The denominational principles that we currently "affirm" are listed below. We may agree to change them later...or add to them. We do not think they are carved in stone nor in any way divinely inspired. For the time being, however, we think that these are pretty good.

We affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
 2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
 3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
 4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
 5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
 6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.
 7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
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Get to know our professional staff

Reverend Mark Stringer, Minister

The Rev. Mark Stringer was called as our minister in May 2001 and began serving the following August. Mark, a native of Akron, OH, is a graduate of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and holds an M.A. degree in theatre from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and a B.A. degree in theatre and English from Ashland University in Ohio. Prior to discerning a call to the Unitarian Universalist ministry, Mark taught English composition at Chicago State University and speech at Ashland University, worked as a proofreader for Warner Books in New York City, performed in national tours as a professional actor, and facilitated diversity training workshops sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League in the Chicago area. He resides in Des Moines with his wife, Susan, and their daughter.

Lori Emison Clair, Membership Coordinator

Lori first joined the Unitarian Church in West Hartford Connecticut in 2000. Upon relocating back to Iowa in 2003 with their young son Quinn she and Scott quickly became active in the community at First Unitarian in Des Moines. In 2004 Lori accepted a paid position 10 hours per week as Membership Coordinator. Since that time, Lori's family has grown to include Sierra and the position has grown to 20 hours per week during the church year and 10 hours in the summer months. Lori's responsibilities have also increased to include: coordinating the visitor programs, new members programs and classes, as well as church-wide intergenerational events

Maira Leu, Music Coordinator

Maira Leu has been the Director of Music at First Unitarian Church since July 2008. She graduated from Morningside College with a Bachelor of Music Education in 1999. Maira is a member of UUMN (Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network) and ICDA (Iowa Choral Director's Association). Maira lives in Des Moines with her husband Brad and two active dogs, Sydney and Stella.

Bruce Martin, Pianist

Bruce first played piano as a child in Northern Kentucky, where his parents allowed him to explore music however he wished—something his teachers never discouraged. Playing in bands and for singers and shows began in junior high and continues today. What would become a 39-year career teaching English at Drake brought him from Cincinnati to Des Moines in 1967; two years later he joined the First Unitarian Church. From 1974 to 1986 he directed the choir. He began playing regularly for services in 2000.

Director of Lifespan Religious Education

We are currently in a nationwide search for a new Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Director of Finance and Administration

We are currently in a search for a Director of Finance and Administration.

Religious Services

We gather for weekly services on Sunday mornings in reverence for the mystery and continuous revelation of our shared existence. Drawing upon religious texts from the world's traditions, poetry, music, art, and personal narrative, our services aim to spark the mind, lighten the spirit, and touch the heart. These ideas are framed by the ever-present questions: "What does it mean to be human?"; "What are we called to do in our one, precious life?"; and "How do we leave the world better than we have found it?"

Rev. Mark Stringer leads services on at least 32 weekends a year with the remainder of the services led by lay members or special guests. The Religious Services Committee assists with scheduling, preparing, and presenting these services. This committee meets

on a monthly basis and is open to members and friends of the church. See the *Intercom* for details.

Traditionally important weekends in our First Unitarian liturgical calendar include:

- *Blending of the Waters* service (weekend after Labor Day): Members and friends are encouraged to bring water from their summer travels or their homes to pour into a common bowl that symbolizes our church family.
 - *Day of the Dead* celebration (last weekend of October): An intergenerational service inspired by themes of the Mexican *Día de los Muertos* holiday. This is an intergenerational service with all ages together for entire service. On this day, no religious education classes are held for children and youth.
 - *Bowen Family Systems Theory* service (mid-November or early December): A yearly installment of a sermon that grapples with a concept of Dr. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory.
 - *Thanksgiving Service of Gratitude* (weekend before Thanksgiving): An intergenerational celebration, including child dedications and an eating ritual.
 - *December Music Service* (weekend before Christmas) An intergenerational celebration of the season in story and song, featuring our choir and special guests.
 - *Christmas Eve Candlelight Services*: A 4:30 p.m. family service features carol singing, a retelling of the Christmas story, special music and candlelight. The 8:00 p.m. traditional service features carols, readings, a homily, and candlelight. Following both services, attendees are invited to linger and enjoy cookies (traditionally brought by attendees).
 - *UUSC Justice Weekend* (usually late March): A service celebrating the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and exploring a timely social, political, or environmental justice topic.
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- ~~*Easter Weekend*: A UU take on the themes of Easter and emerging spring.~~

- *Earth Day Services* (late April): an annual intergenerational celebration of the earth and the web of life that connects us all.
- *May Music Sunday* (two Sundays before Memorial Day): Led by our music director and featuring performances by the choir and special guests. This is an intergenerational celebration of song.
- *Annual Meeting Sunday* (first weekend in June): Only one Sunday service followed by the annual all-congregation meeting. Visitors and Friends are welcome to attend but only members can vote at this meeting.
- *Flower Service* (second Sunday in June): At these special services, inspired by the Rev. Dr. Norbert Capeck, a Unitarian minister in Prague during the Nazi era, attendees are encouraged to bring a flower (or two...) from their yard or a shop. The flowers are collected in common vases to symbolize the bounty and diversity of religious community. At the conclusion of the service, participants are invited to take home a different flower to symbolize the gifts of our church family.
- *John Isom Honor Service* (variable date): A service given in honor and memory of our late Minister Emeritus, the Rev. John Branch Isom, who served as minister from 1961-1974.

We gather together after each service to enjoy each other's company at social time.



Musical Opportunities

Music is chosen to thematically and culturally enhance every religious service. The choir is a large part of this goal and performs once or twice a month and rehearses weekly. The choir is always preparing for two mainly music services provided in December and May. Instrumental and other vocal offerings are provided by guest professional musicians and congregational volunteers. Everyone is welcome to join into these musical endeavors. Contact the music coordinator Moira Leu to express your interest.

5th Principle Singers, Sunday mornings, 10:05 am - 10:25 am (Peace Library)

Directors: **Linda Keairns, Anne Rozeboom**

All children ages 4 - 10 are invited to rehearse each Sunday beginning in October.

Contact **Linda Keairns** for additional information: 515-250-9479 or

lindakeairns@yahoo.com

Chalice Choir, Wednesday nights, 6:30-7:15 pm, downstairs in the Preschool Room

The older children choir for 2nd graders on up will begin rehearsals beginning in October. Learn to read music, and become familiar with musical terminology. Contact

Director: **Karen Kraemer** for additional information: 515-422-8704 or

kbkraemer@yahoo.com. Accompanist: **Carol Keast**.

Hospitality Teams

Hospitality Teams are groups of 10-15 people who provide support for each Sunday service. Duties include ushering, greeting, making coffee, setting out treats, which their team provides, and cleaning up after their particular service.

The teams work during one service every two months. There are currently 16 teams, and two of them work each Sunday. They are assigned the same service (9AM, or 10:30AM) the same week in the month from September through June. As an example, the team working the first Sunday of the month at the 9AM service in September will work the first Sunday in November, January, March, and May at 9AM. The fifth Sundays in November, March and May are handled by two additional teams

Religious Education/Exploration

Religious Education is shaped by the following beliefs:

- All people are lovable beings of infinite worth, imbued with powers of the soul. We are obligated to use our gifts, talents, and potentials in the service of life.
- We carry on our Unitarian Universalist religious heritage and are part of a community of faith that has value and provides resources for living.
- We honor our responsibility for the care and creative transformation of our religious heritage and community of faith.
- We are moral agents who can make a difference in the lives of other people—
 - challenging structures of social and political oppression
 - promoting the health and well-being of the planet
 - acting in the service of diversity, justice and compassion
- We recognize the need for community and affirm the importance of families, relationships and connections between and among the generations.
- We appreciate the value of spiritual practice as a means of deepening faith and integrating beliefs and values with everyday life.
- Joy and sadness are all part of our lives; hope, mystery, joy, healing, and personal transformation come together with life's challenges. (UUA Tapestry of Faith)

You are the soul of the program

Religious Education depends on volunteers to develop, plan, and staff the religious education program. The contribution of volunteer time and talents, along with support from our professional staff, guarantees quality programming for children, youth, and adults and the continuation of our Unitarian Universalist legacy.

Intergenerational services

Held eight to nine times each year, Sunday services are specifically designed to appeal to all generations of participants. Families are encouraged to participate in these services by volunteering to light the Chalice, usher, be readers, or simply attend.

Sunday morning programming

- Preschoolers through elementary school children focus on the following themes: Unitarian Universalist identity, the Principles and Sources of our Living Tradition, developing community and service to others.
 - Middle and high school students focus on the following themes: UU Identity; sexuality and faith, ethics, values, and character in real life; leadership development and service within and beyond the congregation.
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- YRUU: is an acronym for Young Religious Unitarian Universalist, also known as our youth group. In YRUU, youth and their adult advisors learn from each other, experience youth worship, build community, and have fun. Empowering each other to lead and make a difference in the world through social action.
 - Youth Small Group Ministry: Senior High students meet using the same guidelines established for the adult Small Group Ministries of First Unitarian. Led by adult facilitators, the group will check in each week, sharing experience of the past week, and explore a topic developed by the facilitators, the youth, and the DLRE.
 - Adult UU continuing education: There are a wide variety of classes and other groups that can stir reflection, discussion, and grow your soul including: Great Decisions, Great Books, Building Your Own Theology, Sunday morning forums and many more.
 - Childcare is available during all religious services on Sunday for infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 ½. Our childcare room is staffed with a paid childcare provider and volunteers. Parents whose children are regular attendees are asked to volunteer on a regular rotating schedule. Multi-age childcare is also provided for selected evenings during the week for choir practice, adult classes, and Small Group Ministry.

Welcome Home Wednesday:

A multi-generational evening of food, fellowship, and an assortment of educational and growth programming. Programs such as quilting, singing, meditation, The artist way, Building your own theology, Our American Roots were enjoyed through out the year. Dinner provided for donation prior to programming. See Intercom for details on current programming available.

Church library

First Unitarian's lending library has a variety of resources available for members and friends to borrow. There are books, videos and tapes on Unitarian Universalism, world religions, leadership development, congregational polity, sexuality, sermons, poetry, and religious education curriculum. The library is downstairs on the north lower level and is known as the Peace Library. Materials may be borrowed for 2 weeks. Please see the Director of Religious Education for more information.

Rites of Passage

Caring Ministry—assistance with life transitions

Caring Ministry is a group of church volunteers who offer services to our members and friends when individuals are experiencing difficult times or milestones in their lives. Two coordinators, in consultation with the minister, oversee and assign tasks to eight smaller groups facilitated by “point persons.” These “point persons” respond with their volunteers to specific needs and types of care. Our groups currently are:

- Transportation (rides to church, appointments);
- Meals/Household Tasks (meals and short-term tasks);
- Visits/Check-ins (phone and in-person calls);
- Memorial Committee (receptions following funerals);
- Communications (written articles and publicity);
- Correspondence (cards of sympathy or joy);
- New Babies/Parents (consultation, respite, and quilts);
- Disability Equipment Lending Bank.

Names of coordinators and "point persons" can be found in the monthly *Intercom* newsletter.

Caring Ministry offers opportunities for new members, old members, and others associated with the church to connect in a meaningful way, and to know each other better. It gives each of us a way to “give back” to the larger community on a volunteer, time-available basis; to reach out and care for each other. October is Caring Ministry month, when all members and friends of the church will have an opportunity to sign up to help out in an area of their interest.

Birth/adoption of a new baby

The New Babies/Parents group helps out families with new babies in many ways. These include providing meals, arranging for consultations with experienced moms and dads, providing respite care such as sitting with the new baby or siblings, running errands and helping out with light household tasks. Each new baby also receives a quilt made by Bent Needles, our church quilting group, and donated by the Nursery Working Group.

If you are expecting a baby or know a church member who is, please let us know. We would be delighted to talk with you about what we can do to help. You may also complete our Caring Ministry form to help us collect information about your needs when a new baby is arriving. The form is available in the entry of the church and from the church administrator.

Having a new baby is such a joyous and, occasionally, challenging time for families. Caring Ministry can't wait to help! Names of coordinators and "point persons" can be found in the monthly *Intercom* newsletter.

Child dedication and naming ceremonies

Several times a year, members and friends of our church are invited to participate in a ceremony of dedication and naming for their children. During this simple ceremony, led by Rev. Mark Stringer, we acknowledge the children's given names, bless (or honor) them with the four elements (water, fire, air and earth) and declare our responsibility to them as parents and as a community. There is also an opportunity for godparents to be acknowledged. Typically each child is given a gift from the Religious Education program (e.g. a chalice sun-catcher for their bedroom window), a rose, and a certificate acknowledging the ceremony.

Most years, these Child Dedication and Naming ceremonies are held during services on the weekend before Thanksgiving, during the Christmas Eve afternoon family service, and during the Flower Communion Service the second weekend in June. Anyone under the age of 18 may be dedicated. If you wish to have your child included in an upcoming ceremony, provide the following information to the minister:

- Full name of child, and any pertinent story behind the names
- Date of birth
- Names of godparent to be designated if you wish (assuming they will be present for the ceremony)
- Service date and time requested

Because only five children may be dedicated at any given service, you will want to let Rev. Stringer know of your intentions as soon as possible, and no later than one week before the service.

Marriage and commitment ceremonies

The UU approach to weddings/commitment ceremonies is that the couple works with the minister to craft the service that best speaks to their commitment and hopes for the future. Rev. Stringer is happy to officiate these services for pledging members of the church without charge.

To arrange a wedding with Mark Stringer, please follow these steps:

1. Agree with Mark on a date, time, and location for the ceremony (and rehearsal if one is deemed necessary). If the church is the wedding site, the space (and applicable rental deposit/fee) must be negotiated with the church administrator.
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2. Meet with Mark for a preliminary discussion about the service. During this meeting, which usually lasts between 30-45 minutes, Mark will give the couple a comprehensive packet with information and guidance about ceremony options (including some reading samples).
 3. A follow-up meeting with Mark (typically less than a month before the ceremony) during which final choices are made and questions answered.
 4. Rehearsal (if needed)
 5. Ceremony

Mark will sometimes perform weddings for non-members, but requires the payment of an honorarium for his services in accordance with UUMA (UU Ministers Assoc.) guidelines: currently \$300 for planning and ceremony, plus \$50 for rehearsal. (Travel expenses are additional if ceremony is not within the Des Moines metro area.)

Memorial (or Celebration of Life) services

Rev. Mark Stringer is honored to officiate these services for pledging members of the church without charge. Every memorial service is unique based on the family's needs; however the following approach is typical:

- Once the family and Mark have agreed on service time and location, he will schedule a meeting with the immediate family and closest friends of the deceased to plan the service. During this one-to-three-hour meeting, Mark will discuss the family's desires for the service and solicit remembrances, stories, etc. that he will use to weave a "soul sketch" of the person that will serve as the eulogy.
 - A UU service often, but not always, features an open mic sharing time, music, poetry, etc. The family is expected to arrange for and compensate musicians (if desired). Our Music Coordinator can recommend musicians.
 - If the ceremony is to be held at the church, the memorial wing of our Caring Ministry will help with arrangement for a simple reception (beverages and light snacks), if requested. If a family wishes to have more than the basic reception, the memorial group will try to be available to help serve whatever food the family provides. The family's reception needs should be conveyed to Mark as soon as possible, and he will convey this information to the appropriate people.
 - Mark, when available, will officiate memorial services for non-members at the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association (UUMA) currently recommended rate.
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Pastoral care

Rev. Stringer welcomes the opportunity to visit with members and friends of our church to discuss their pastoral care/spiritual guidance needs. Mark is not a trained counselor and, therefore, maintains well-defined boundaries and limits for the care he provides, often recommending professional counseling and attention when he thinks it may be helpful. Mark asks that those interested in visiting with him schedule an appointment either via e-mail at minister@ucdsm.org or phone (515) 244-8603, x102.

Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden at the First Unitarian Church is a special place where members may honor loved ones or find a peaceful place for the interment of cremated remains. Our garden is a living reminder of the contributions our members—past and present—have made to our Unitarian Universalist community.

The Memorial Garden is also available for small gatherings, including weddings, memorial services, meetings, and classes. Please contact the church office Administrator to schedule your event.

Donations for care and maintenance of the Garden are always welcome. Contact the church office Administrator.

Interment of cremated remains

The Memorial Garden is available for the interment of cremains of current or past church members. The cremains must be prepared by a mortuary in a biodegradable cloth bag for burial and will be interred in a designated area as part of a special commemoration service. Please note that weather conditions may limit when these services are held.

Although markers are not allowed, a grid drawing will be provided showing the location of the cremains. A plaque is displayed near the garden listing the names of those interred. Names will be inscribed annually and only the names of those interred will be inscribed.

No advance reservation is required for members to use the Memorial Garden. Requests may be made at any time. Members are encouraged, however, to make their intentions known in advance. A statement of intent can be signed by an individual or member of the family. Forms are available in the church office. The care of the Memorial Garden is overseen by the Memorial Garden Committee. The location of the garden is intended to be permanent. If the church should ever move, a symbolic shovel of dirt from the Garden and the memorial plaque will be moved to the new site.

There is no fee for the interment of cremated remains. However, donations to the Memorial Garden Fund are encouraged in whatever amount the individual's family—or other designee—wishes.

Honoring a loved one

A memorial brick or granite paver may be purchased and placed in the walkway through the garden. Either one may be engraved to honor a loved one, celebrate a milestone in someone's life, or commemorate your own contribution to the Memorial Garden. Information is available from the church office, including pricing and space to indicate your engraved message.

Small Group Ministry

Since the spring of 2002, Small Group Ministry (SGM) has established itself as a means by which hundreds of our members and friends have formed meaningful relationships with each other and with the world we share.

What is it?

Small relational groups made up of 5-10 people who meet twice a month for a six month period to establish and nurture themselves in this community.

What happens at a meeting?

- About five minutes of people getting situated.
- Chalice lighting and a short reading or piece of music to open the gathering.
- A check-in: 45 minutes of sharing what is going on in your life. People have an opportunity to share for up to four minutes, without interruption. This is followed by 15-20 minutes of follow-up conversation.
- A discussion topic intended to promote reflective adult conversation is introduced by the facilitator. The group then discusses the topic for about an hour. The topics will be related to life's everyday questions much like those raised by a Sunday service.
- A checkout: An opportunity for people to share what they liked about the meeting and what they wish it could have been.
- Closing words or piece of music.

Who leads the group?

A trained facilitator will make sure that the group meetings begin and end on time, and that the group establishes a covenant of behavior, but all group members share the privilege and responsibility for helping the group to function. Early on, an apprentice facilitator may be designated as well.

Where do the groups meet?

Some meet in members' homes, some meet at church, and some do both. Each group decides for itself.

When do the groups meet?

There are several meeting days and times available throughout the week.

Can couples be in the same group?

That's up to the couple.

Will child care be available?

We have offered child care during some meeting times. They will be indicated on the enrollment form.

What's the commitment?

Groups will meet for six-month sessions from April through September, or from October through March. Each group will covenant to perform at least one service project of their choice for the church or larger community during the six-month period.

How do I enroll?

Initial enrollment takes place during March and September, though people may join groups at any time. To be placed in a group outside of the enrollment periods, contact the Membership Coordinator via e-mail at membership@ucdsm.org or phone at 453-2999.

Affinity and Activity Groups

First Unitarian members and friends can get involved in a variety of social and service groups. A current listing of active groups is listed in the monthly *Intercom* newsletter, along with a contact person. You are also welcome to organize a new group if you have a particular interest you'd like to pursue. Some of our long standing groups include:

Bridge Night

This is an open group that meets at the church the first Friday of each month at 7 p.m. Knowledge of the fundamentals of bridge is needed, but beyond that, skill levels range from novice to expert. Hosting each month is rotated among the group.

Duplicate Bridge

Bridge fans: give Duplicate Bridge a try. You will need a partner. This will be a good social and learning time within the general structure of Duplicate Bridge.

Great Books Discussion

Using a shared inquiry method of discussion, we examine significant works of fiction, philosophy, political science, poetry and drama - probing the many questions raised by a text. Discussions are lively, engaging, friendly, sometimes contentious, enlightening-and a good deal of fun.

Great Decisions

Great Decisions, a group that has met for many years at our church, is a discussion program produced by the Foreign Policy Association, New York City, and featuring a briefing book titled *Great Decisions*. The 2007 version of the book is available for purchase (\$14).

Interweave

Interweave serves three primary purposes:

1. Provide social interaction for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people and allies
2. Publicize the church to the greater Des Moines GLBT community and anyone seeking a liberal religious environment
3. Help the church further its goal of supporting social justice

The local Interweave chapter is part of Interweave Continental, Inc. Its mission states: *Interweave Continental is a membership organization actively working to end oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity, recognizing that we will not be free until all oppression is a thing of the past. We are an affiliate organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and our work is guided by Unitarian Universalist principles. We value and affirm the lives and experience of Queer people of faith of all ages, races, ethnicities, income levels, and abilities. By providing and supporting leadership, and working in collaboration with other organizations of similar vision, we strive to connect and nurture all Queer individuals, communities, groups, and their allies.*

Silver & Gold Circle Suppers

Start off the year with a opportunity to join old friends and new for a meal, friendship and conversation on 4 occasions during the upcoming year. Members and friends, singles and couples, newcomers and old timers, are all invited to sign up for a group of 8 to 10 adults to share a time of fun and fellowship Sign up is in November with groups beginning in January.

Unity Circle

Unity Circle is a historically established, national UU group. The Des Moines Unity Circle has a very proud heritage of contributions over the years to our church, our state, our nation, and our American Culture. From the Women's suffrage movement, to social issues in early Des Moines up to the Supreme Court case of Tinker vs Des Moines Board of Education and into the current group's speakers of the month, the motivation of the Unity Circle has been to improve people's lives.

Unity Circle meets the third Thursday of each month, with a Potluck at 12:00 noon and a program at 1:00. Our speakers are always related to something of current interest. The yearly dues are \$8.00 for women and \$3.00 for men. However, anyone is welcome to come and enjoy the lunch and the speaker. (Our informal motto is: we eat well, talk much, sit long, and laugh lots!) If you would like more information, please contact: Jerry Carspecken, president, at 978-7523 or r.carspecken@mchsi.com.

Windbreakers

New to the church? Not so new? Looking for a way to make new friends-or a night out with the guys? Our monthly men's potluck group always welcomes newcomers interested in good food and good company.

Women's Book Club

Women's Book group meets monthly to enjoy a meal and conversation around the selected book.

Women's Potluck

This group of women loves to get together to eat and visit. Please bring a dish to share. All women are welcome.

Intergenerational Events:

- **Halloween Party**
Join us as we celebrate the spookiest of all holidays. There will be food, games, crafts, Haunted house, S'more roasting, movies and music for all. Costumes encouraged for ALL!
 - **Annual Holiday Workshop**
Potluck dinner, Cocoa and Carols, crafts, and holiday decorating for the whole family!
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What it Means to be a Member:

Stewardship

Merriam-Webster Online defines stewardship as “the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; *especially*: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.” When we join this church, we claim it as our own, and we become its stewards. We want our church to be here long beyond our lives within it. Stewardship encompasses care of one another, care of our staff, our building, and our shared ministries.

There are many ways that each of us can participate in the stewardship of our church. We often talk about “time, talent, and treasure.” “Time” is about showing up and participating in the life of the church. “Talent” is sharing our skills however we can to contribute to our shared journey. “Treasure” refers to supporting the church financially. We strive to be transparent and responsible in all areas of our financial ministry.

Financial Stewardship

The Annual Canvass—One of the commitments of membership in First Unitarian Church is to make and pay an annual financial pledge. When new members join they are asked to make a pledge, and each year, usually in March or April, we conduct a canvass of all members (and good friends) to solicit their financial commitment to the general operating fund of the church for the coming fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). It is very important for our budgeting process and for the sound fiscal management of the church to have a close approximation of our anticipated income each year.

Passing the Basket—During each of our services a basket is passed and those attending (other than first-time visitors) are asked to contribute toward the betterment of not only our church community, but the greater community around us.

Fundraisers—At various times throughout the year, fundraising events are held to support either specific needs or to add to the general operating fund. (There is a line item in the budget for fundraising income.)

Our biggest fundraiser for the general operating fund for the past several years has been the **Fabulously Fun Food Fair Fundraiser**, which happens in the spring. People offer a variety of events that include some form of entertainment or activity, and, of course, food. These events have a set number of “seats” available, and seats are sold at pre-set prices. In addition, there are many silent auction items (e.g., baked goods, delivered meals) that are sold to the highest bidder. The host of the event pays for the event and

it's food as their contribution to the process. The participants by a "ticket" for the event. All income from the ticket sales goes to the church general operating fund.

Other fundraisers (for the general operating fund) have been service auctions and rummage sales. In addition, other fundraisers may be held throughout the year to support specific ministries of the church.

Capital Campaign—In 2005 we kicked off a campaign to fund major renovations and the addition of new office space to our beautiful building. Additional funding is still needed to replace or add to many of the furnishings in our newly renovated space.

If you have questions about the building project, please contact Dan Aten, president of the congregation, or Al Powers, chair of the building committee, or any member of the staff or Board of Trustees. To make a pledge, please contact Dan Aten (457-8053) or by email at atendan@mchsi.com or our treasurer, Rolland Riley (778-4167) or by email at rileyhibbs@mchsi.com.

Endowment Fund—Like many non-profit organizations, the church has established an Endowment Fund in an effort to provide a long-range funding source. Members and friends are encouraged to contribute directly to the fund and to designate the fund as a beneficiary in their estate planning. The bylaws of the fund strictly limit how much of the income can be distributed and for what purposes, as well as the base level of principal that must be maintained. To learn more about the fund and/or how to contribute or designate it as a beneficiary in your will or of an investment or retirement account, please any member of the Endowment Development Fund. These five members are elected by the congregation for 5 year terms each. The current members are:

Linda Appelgate	515-255-2029	appelgate@hotmail.com
Steven Herwig	515-225-0361	stevenherwig@yahoo.com
Margaret Karbeling	515-984-6995	mhkarb@yahoo.com
David Whitaker	515-243-0010	davidwhitaker@mchsi.com

Using Our Building

Reserving a room in the church

Call the church administrator, Mary Reinsmoen, at 515-244-8603, x 101, or e-mail administrator@usdsm.org, to request a date, time, and room. The activity calendar is available on the church website (www.ucdsm.org) to help you check availability. Some non-church events require a rental fee.

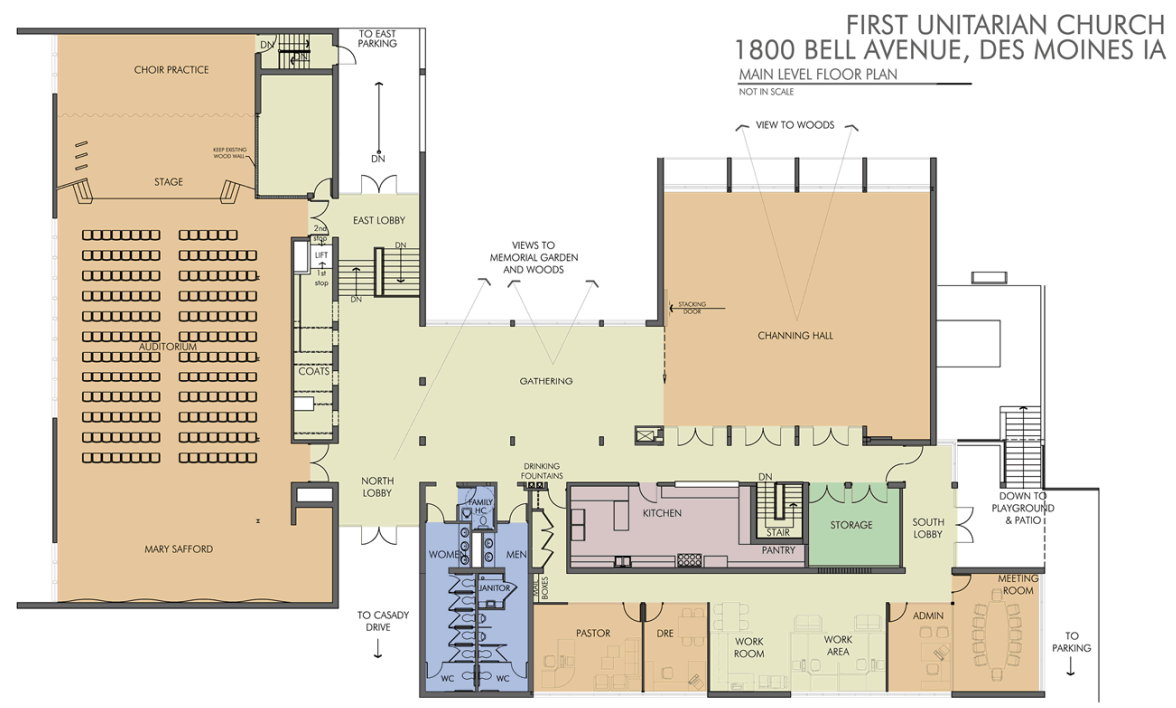
Opening and closing the building

Any church members may access the church property. You must make arrangements with the church administrator to pick up a key and learn the procedure for opening and closing the church. All members are responsible for locking up the building when they request its use outside of normal office hours.

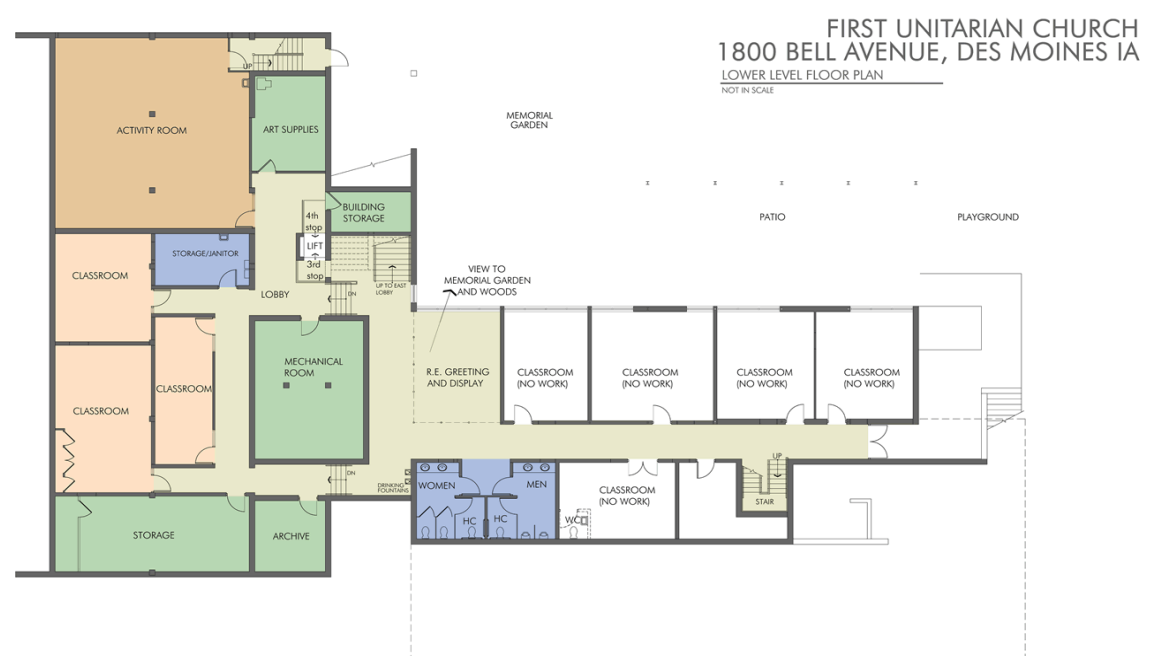
Reporting problems

Call Lori Emison Clair, membership Coordinator at 868-1500. or via e-mail at membership@ucdsm.org. To report trouble after hours, contact Terry Swanson at 515-277-5080. If no response, call Al Powers at 515-989-4295.

Upper Level Layout of the Church



Lower Level layout of the Church



Communications and Publicity

1. **Intercom/Activities and Events** (monthly newsletter) – Deadline is the 15th of the month for the next month's events or notices. Submissions must be sent to communications@usdsm.org or administrator at (515) 244-8603 x 101.
 2. **Order of Service** (weekly service bulletin) – Deadline is Tuesday night each week. Church-related items will be published two weeks in advance, somewhat dependent on space available.
 3. **Website** – includes services, sermons, order of service, newsletter, and other current information. Updated by Terry and Jane Swanson. Contact them at tswanson@website-center.com.
 4. **Bulletin Boards** – These are kept current by church staff. Submit items to the church office or communications@usdsm.org or administrator at (515) 244-8603 x 101.
 5. **E-mails** – Each Tuesday an all-church announcement is sent out to members, friends and current visitors who have asked to be on the church e-mail list. This e-mail serves as a reminder of the events for the week and is traditionally sent at noon.
 6. **Pamphlets** – Committees or other church groups may publish pamphlets to be mailed or made available at the church. Other general Unitarian Universalist information is available on a rack in the foyer.
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The Church as an Organization

First Unitarian operates according to the following guidelines:

- We are a community of liberal religious people from many backgrounds and faith traditions who support and care about each other and our broader community.
- We govern ourselves as a local congregation here in Des Moines, Iowa.
- As a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of congregations in American, we pay dues to the UUA based on the number of active members at First Unitarian. For our membership in the UUA, we receive help and guidance from time to time with church issues (e.g. stewardship, growth, congregational involvement).
- We are also a member of the Prairie Star District, which comprises all or part of eight Midwestern states, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Board of Trustees

Nine members of First Unitarian Church make up the board of trustees, each serving a three-year term. They are not eligible for re-election at the end of three years. Three are elected each year at the annual congregational meeting in June. The Board elects its own officers and appoints a treasurer to serve ex-officio as a non-voting member of the board.

The Board currently meets monthly at the church. Check the *Intercom* for exact dates and times. The Board meetings are open to all members and individuals considering membership.

Council Model

In order to keep in touch with one another, our committees with common interests, duties and responsibilities are organized into five councils. Each is convened by a member of the Board periodically. The councils are:

- **Administrative** - Building Projects, Executive, Personnel, Long Range Planning, and Nominating Committee
 - **Program** –Religious Services, Religious Education, Forum, and Music
 - **Stewardship** –Finance, Annual Canvass, Endowment, Memorials, Ushers, Caring Ministry, Small Group Ministry, and Archives
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- **Outreach** –AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy), Interweave (Welcoming Congregation), Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), UU Social Action Council, Partner Church, Newsletter, PR/Communications, Wayside Pulpit, and Website
 - **Facilities** –Building Maintenance, Grounds, Technology/Security, and Memorial Garden.

Bylaws

The bylaws for First Unitarian Church provide the framework for our operation and governance. A copy can be found in the church office.

A copy of the bylaws may be obtained by requesting it from the Membership Coordinator.

Annual meeting

Each June we hold our annual business and recognition meeting. The time and location are publicized in a notice to active members at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The notice will include the meeting purpose, agenda, the text of any proposed resolution(s), and the Nominating Committee's candidates for elected positions. Visitors and Friends are welcome to attend but only members can vote at this meeting.

Special meetings

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Board of Trustees or by 15 percent of the active members. Two week's notice of the time, place, purpose, and agenda must be given to the active members.

Get involved!

The congregation relies on many volunteers and many committees. We are this congregation! New committees are formed as needed and disbanded or reorganized as their work changes or is completed. Our structure is intended to be flexible, yet organized. We seek to move with the energy and issues at any given time. Any staff member or Board member can help you find a committee or even organize one when needed to address concerns with sufficient interest among members. We invite you to join us and get involved where your interests and energies are.

Denominational Connections

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines is affiliated with the broader Unitarian Universalist denomination. There are many ways to get connected to the broader UU movement. These are just a few, plus a little background to help with some acronyms you might encounter.

Unitarian Universalist Association

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) is the national organization that represents the interests of more than 1,000 Unitarian Universalist congregations on a continental scale. The UUA grew out of the 1961 consolidation of two religious denominations: the Universalists, organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, organized in 1825. As a “*fair share congregation*,” First Unitarian Church pays \$54 per member to the UUA Program Fund. In return, the UUA helps our congregation and others grow and thrive by providing many resources and curricula. You can read more about the UUA at its website, www.uua.org.

UUA General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is the annual business meeting of our denomination, held in a different location each year in late June. An elected, volunteer moderator presides at the General Assembly, leading this gathering of delegates from each member congregation. Serving as a delegate to GA is a great education in the democratic process. GA as a whole is a wonderful place to absorb the essence and diversity of our Unitarian Universalist faith. There are workshops, worship services, meetings, and an exhibit hall featuring a wide variety of UU-minded offerings. General Assembly is open to all members and friends to attend. Members and delegates from our congregation pay their own way to GA but it is an experience that is well worth participating in. To learn more about the GA, please go to the UUA website at www.uua.org.

Prairie Star District (PSD)

There are 20 districts of the UUA in North America. The mission of the UUA districts is to serve as a resource for local congregations and to help extend Unitarian Universalist influence in the larger community. Our congregation belongs to the Prairie Star District, which serves congregations in IA, KS, NE, ND, SD, MN, and parts of WI and MO. The PSD headquarters are in Minneapolis, MN.

Prairie Star District Annual Conference

Our district’s annual conference is a weekend of workshops, worship, and fellowship in April. At the annual business meeting which takes place during the Annual Conference, officers and directors for the district board are elected, the PSD budget is approved, resolutions considered, and reports presented. The PSD Annual Conference is similar to GA, but on a smaller scale. Its location varies, but due to our central location within

PSD, it is usually within easy driving distance and home hospitality can be arranged to keep attendance affordable. Serving as a delegate to one of our district conferences is a great way to learn what's involved in church leadership.

Leadership development opportunities

Beyond our annual conferences, Prairie Star District offers additional leadership development opportunities.

Midwest Leadership School (MWLS) is a week-long leadership training retreat held in July in Beloit, WI. MWLS is an intensive week of workshops, discussion groups, interactions, and fun with UU peers. Participants in the school create an intentional community built on shared experiences, learning, intimacy, and trust. The session is designed to create an environment where leadership skills can be developed. Through individual reflection and facilitated interaction with other Unitarian Universalists, Midwest Leadership School offers opportunities for personal, spiritual, and leadership growth.

More information can be found on the internet: <http://psduua.org/mwls/index.html>.

Fall leadership conferences offer workshops and networking opportunities for congregational leaders on a Friday-Saturday. Multiple tracks of workshops are offered in two locations, giving an option of dates and travel destinations.

Detailed information can be found here: <http://www.psduua.org/Events/Workshops>.

If you're interested in attending any of these offerings, but feel that the cost is prohibitive, consider that our church budget includes a line item for leadership development that can be tapped for scholarship money. Check with the vice president of the Board for more information regarding the process for submitting an application.

History of the First Unitarian Church

by Dwight Saunders, church historian

In 1877, a small number of Des Moines citizens invited a representative of the Iowa Unitarian Association to come to Des Moines, a community of some 16,000 persons, to explore the possibility of the establishment of a Unitarian church in the city. Nine persons signed an agreement to form the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. The church began, holding its meetings in an upstairs meeting hall on Locust Street.

In August 1880, the church hired its first full-time minister, Rev. Sylvan Stanley Hunting, who had been serving as minister in Davenport, Iowa. During Rev. Stanley's six years of service to the Des Moines congregation, the first church building was erected at a cost of \$9,000.

Rights of Women

The emphasis by the congregation members upon the right of women to full membership in society resulted in an early tradition of choosing women as ministers of the church. An early minister was Mary Augusta Safford who served between 1899 and 1910. Her leadership was particularly noted in the suffrage movement, and in helping a women's group Unity Circle to become an important cultural group in this city. The Boone Suffrage March of 1907 was one of the first, if not the first, women's suffrage marches recorded in this country. It was sponsored and organized in large part by Mary Safford and the Unity Circle of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa.

American Humanist Movement

During the late 1890s, the congregation became increasingly less concerned with theology and "other-worldliness" and more concerned with how they, as humans and Unitarians, could interact with society and help bring about change for the better. Growing out of this shift, Reverend Curtis W. Reese became the pastor of the church in 1915. Reese began to increasingly emphasize the role of people as instruments of change and out of this grew what became known as the American Humanist Movement. When Reese left the Des Moines church in 1919, he became involved in the formal creation of this organization and served as its first president. Thus, in a very direct way, the Des Moines church helped launch religious humanism in the United States.

Unity Circle contribution after World Wars

During the period following World War I, and again following World War II, the ladies of Unity Circle sought to make the lives of the victims of war easier. They collected clothing and non-perishable food and sent tons of it to relief agencies in Europe.

The Civil Rights movement and protest

In 1948, Martin Luther King Jr. was ordained a minister, seven years before Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in Birmingham, Alabama. That same year, Edna Griffin, a black member of First Unitarian, ordered a sandwich and a soda at a Des Moines lunch counter where she knew she wouldn't be served because of the color of her skin.

Soon after, Griffin filed suit against the lunch counter for violating Iowa's Civil Rights law, and the case was heard all the way to the US Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Griffin and her friends (many from this church) picketed the lunch counter every Saturday for six weeks. The lunch counter was found guilty, and in 1949, Edna and her supporters walked into the lunch counter and were served. Because of this slight, but not at all mild woman, Iowa's public accommodations were integrated.

John B. Isom years

In 1961, the Rev. John B. Isom, who followed much the same religious path as Curtis Reese, became pastor and remained until his retirement in 1974. A man who had grown up in the sand hills of Alabama, Isom went to Selma to try bring peace to those troubled waters. But mostly, as a religious humanist, the Rev. Isom sought to help members of his congregation to become aware of the great potentials which existed in each human to call forth the "highest and best" from each person.

UU Youth Protest Vietnam War

During the Vietnam war, a group of Des Moines middle and high school students offered a protest by wearing black armbands to school in memory of all the individuals who had died in the war. Daughters and sons of members of First Unitarian participated. Chris Eckhart, whose mother Maggie Eckhart was a member, along with other Quaker children brought suit against the school system for depriving them of their right of free speech. The case went to the U.S Supreme Court, which ruled for the youngsters that "the right to free speech does not stop at the schoolhouse door."

Welcoming Congregation

In the spring of 1991, an ad hoc committee was formed to pursue the goal of our church being designated as a "Welcoming Congregation", a relatively new program of the UUA at the time. Over the next year, a number of activities geared toward this goal took place. These included a series of 10 workshops, several forums and church services about LGBT issues, meeting with other churches in the community to share ideas, and

proposals for changes to the church by-laws to make them more inclusive. The committee was also instrumental in encouraging the UUA to incorporate LGBT materials in the About Your Sexuality program that was presented to UU youth. These activities culminated in a nearly unanimous congregational vote in May of 1992 at which time we became one of the earliest congregations to receive the "Welcoming Congregation" designation. In November 1992, the board voted to change the "Welcoming Congregation" committee from an ad hoc committee to an official committee of the church. This committee continued to sponsor activities and evolved to become a "chapter" of Interweave, the current UUA organization of LGBT persons and their supporters.

Iowa Environmental Council

More recently, 46 Iowa organizations concerned with problems of the environment have been joined into an organization known as the Iowa Environmental Council, so that the pro-environmental forces can gain a united voice when appearing before the Iowa state legislature and the various segments of the media. The council's founding director was church member Linda Applegate. Member Susan Heathcote continues to be a primary researcher for the council concerning the problems of preserving and supplying safe water to the citizens of Iowa.

AMOS

In June 2002, First Unitarian joined A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS). AMOS is a collective of 28 congregations in greater Des Moines and Ames that teaches civic (and civil) engagement in the political processes of our community. As a member, we seek to cross the lines which typically divide us—theology, race, class, geography—to build a stronger community which works for the benefit of all.

First Unitarian's membership in AMOS creates an opportunity for church members to participate in a variety of opportunities, such as joining research teams on community issues (i.e. economic justice, immigration, education and health care), participating in actions with those in power, and attending local, regional and national trainings on political change and power.

Through strategic organizing, AMOS achieved success in creating better charity care policies at our city's hospitals, brought attention and resources to providing after-school programming for middle- and high-school youth, and lobbied successfully for prompt payment to small home day-care providers who receive payment from the state. AMOS continues to grow, and to form its agenda for social change based on issues that arise within the member congregations.

Civil Rights for All

On August 31, 2007, the day after a district court ruling that declared the denial of marriage licenses to same-sex couples violates the state constitution, our minister, the Rev. Mark Stringer, officiated in the front yard of his home, the first legally recognized same-sex wedding in the history of Iowa. When Sean Fritz and Tim McQuillan sought a clergy person to officiate their historic wedding, First Unitarian was there.
