

Standing
on the
side of LOVE
— and reason.

THE FIRST Unitarian

VOL. 91, NOVEMBER 2009 • THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MINNEAPOLIS

From the Minister

I do not know on what basis such claims are calculated, but I have heard it reiterated for several years now, both from local folks and from UUA sources, that we here in the Twin Cities have the highest per capita proportion of Unitarian Universalists to the general population of any place outside Boston. It is certainly true that we have an impressive assortment of lively congregations of all sizes and personalities in the metro area. Also remarkable is the vitality of the interfaith community here in Minneapolis. As you may know, I feel privileged to participate in a group of clergy from the downtown congregations that includes Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders, and to consider these people my colleagues and friends.

This fall, our annual Interfaith Forum is taking a different form from years past. Instead of inviting members of all our congregations to gather on Thursday evenings to consider topics of current interest to our faith communities, the planning committee has organized a series of dates when we are invited to attend normal weekly worship services at several of our participating sites. Each congregation will plan a special welcome and question and answer program for those who attend, to help us all learn more about how others practice and experience their different faiths. In some cases, of course, this will mean that participants miss their own services on a couple of Sunday mornings, but we think these experiences will be important enough to justify those absences. You can find the brochure outlining the dates and sites for this program at the Ask Me table, or in the FUS office.

Of particular note for us is that First Unitarian Society will be the host congregation on November 8. It's hard to know how many visitors we may have that day, but it will be important to welcome them with enthusiasm, and I hope we can make a special effort to be hospitable and to share information about our humanist path and our UU heritage as openly and graciously as possible. We can assume that the folks who come as part of this series will mostly have deeply rooted and nourishing connections to their own congregations, and are not looking for new options personally. Yet they want to be knowledgeable citizens of a diverse urban community, and good neighbors to those who have different beliefs and practices from themselves. This visit will be an opportunity for us to demonstrate, as well as to explain, the meaning of UU Humanism, about which

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A UU Thanksgiving?



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Order of Service
announcements are
due by noon on
Wed. of each week. Please
email your submission(s) to:
info@firstunitariansociety.org

Newsletter submissions are
due by the 7th of each month
and should be sent to:
[newsletter@
firstunitariansociety.org](mailto:newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org)

Forum and Assembly Previews

Forums are at 9:30 a.m. in the Lower Assembly Hall.

Assemblies are at 10:30 a.m. in the Upper Assembly Hall.

■ 11/1/09 FORUM: "A Minnesota Without Poverty"

Presenter: Dan Hoxworth

The Legislative Commission to End Poverty published its report in January of 2009. The Commission became an official nonprofit organization to act on the recommendations contained in the report. Our speaker will fill us in on what the commission recommends and how citizens can be involved in actually bringing poverty to and end in Minnesota. Dan is a member of the White Bear UU Church and a Board member of A Minnesota Without Poverty.

■ 11/8/09 FORUM: "The World in Six Songs"

Facilitator: David Leussler

A chance to further explore this popular forum that addresses the question, "What influence does music have on the evolution of emotion, reason, and spirit?" What do the songs "Smoking in the Boys Room" and "America the Beautiful" have in common? What link is there between sexual orgasm, communal singing and the comfort of religious ritual? In every Unitarian's dream singing session, we will not only "read ahead" the lyrics of songs but will also discuss evolution, brain science and the important spiritual dimensions of singing together. Dave Leussler will lead this singing/discussion session using the book *The World in Six Songs* by Daniel J. Levitin. Come prepared to listen, sing, and share your own story.

■ 11/15/09 FORUM: Summer Social Justice Program Year Two

Presenter: Summer Social Justice Program Participants

How did you spend your summer? Four youth from our congregation learned more about social justice as they attended a social justice workshop and worked over 350 hours in our community. On **November 15**, we will recognize these youth and the people who've mentored them, first by hearing about their work at the Forum, and later by giving them a "shout out" at the morning assembly. The **November 8** Soup Lunch proceeds will help us continue the program. Please plan to give generously so that we can make this program sustainable.

◆ 11/1/09 ASSEMBLY: "Eternal Light"

Performers: The FUS Chorus and Orchestra



Celebrating the Day of the Dead with our neighbors to the south has become an FUS tradition, including the presentation of a Requiem by the chorus and orchestra. This year we will hear the inaugural performance of a new composition by Howard Goodall, as well as reflecting upon

the importance of remembering those who have died, and coming to terms with our own mortality in order to deepen our embrace of life. It is sure to be a meaningful and memorable morning.

◆ 11/8/09 ASSEMBLY: "Heading Home Again"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

The religious community of Minneapolis has become tired of managing the human suffering that results from homelessness. What would it look like if we came together with a shared determination to end this blight on our city, and make sure that everyone is decently sheltered? Why is this a religious issue that touches all faith traditions? At this Assembly we will welcome guests from the Minneapolis Interfaith Forum. A Soup Lunch will follow.

◆ 11/15/09 ASSEMBLY: "That We Understand More, Means We've Succeeded"

Speaker: Kao Kalia Yang

Kao Kalia Yang is an award-winning Hmong author, community activist, and teacher. Yang was born in Thailand's Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in 1980 and immigrated to Minnesota when she was six years old. A graduate of Carleton College and Columbia University, Yang is author of *The Latecomer, A Hmong Family Memoir*. Critic Chris Beam says of her work, "Across jungles, refugee camps, and oceans, *The Latecomer* is a journey to the center of everything; one's fast-held understanding of home." Yang is cofounder of Word Wanted, an agency dedicated to helping immigrants with writing, translating, and business services. She has recently released *The Place Where We Were Born*, a film documenting the experiences of Hmong American refugees.

Forum and Assembly Previews

Forums are at 9:30 a.m. in the Lower Assembly Hall.

Assemblies are at 10:30 a.m. in the Upper Assembly Hall.

■ 11/22/09 FORUM: Movie Chat: *The Singing Revolution*

Movie Chat

Discussion Host:
Elizabeth Bendtsen

Most people don't think about singing when they think about revolutions. But song was the weapon of choice when, between 1987 and 1991, Estonians sought to free themselves from decades of Soviet occupation.

During those years, hundreds of thousands gathered in public to sing forbidden patriotic songs and to rally for independence. Join us in discussing this inspiring 2006 film. Special commentary by FUS member Andreas Rosenberg.

The film will be shown at FUS on Wednesday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m.

■ 11/29/09 FORUM: “Dorothea Dix: 19th Century Unitarian Reformer”

Presenter: **Mary Bohman, Ministerial Intern**

Dorothea Dix was an advocate for the indigent mentally ill, a teacher and promoter of education for all, and Nursing Superintendent during the Civil War. She was a

complex woman who, on one hand conformed to female Victorian societal expectations, and on the other, quietly devoted much of her life overcoming the barriers posed by her gender. Modern day advocates for the mentally ill have been critical of Dorothea Dix's work and legacy that advocated the institutionalization of persons with psychiatric disabilities. Come explore Dix's story and its relationship to 19th century Unitarianism.



◆ 11/22/09 ASSEMBLY: “The Uncoerced Heart”

Speaker: **Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons**

The buyer of the 2009 Service Auction sermon, Shelley Shreffler, has asked about the relationship between creativity and spirituality. What I know for sure about both of these enterprises is that they can only really work in a context of freedom. Neither truly creative work nor authentic spiritual growth can be forced, and that necessary freedom nurtures both at the same time. I suspect that it takes a certain kind of subversive energy to find that open space in our lives amid the culture of responsibility and success. How can we help each other cultivate both the spirit and the artist within us?

We will celebrate 10-year membership anniversaries at this Assembly. Super Rolls will be sold at the social hour.

◆ 11/29/09 ASSEMBLY: “When the Going Gets Tough”

Speaker: **Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons**

The novelty has definitely worn off the economic challenges that we have now been confronting for more than a year and there is no reason to think that things are going to get a lot easier any time soon. For those who have lost jobs or significant income, discouragement is mounting. These realities have their inevitable impact on institutions like ours, that depend on donations for operating funds. How can we collectively respond to these difficulties in a way that models honesty, hope, and fidelity to our key values, as a way of supporting individuals who are confronting the same questions personally?



Trustee Tidbit—FUS is Now a Green Sanctuary!



We are proud to join just 101 other UU congregations in the U.S. that have been honored with this accreditation, awarded by the UU Ministry for Earth program. Green Sanctuary is based on a framework of four focus areas: worship and celebration, religious education, environmental justice, and sustainable living. Green Team chair Madalyn Cioci provided details at the September 30 Board meeting on the accreditation that she had announced to the congregation on September 27. The Green Sanctuary program provides a path for congregational study, reflection, and action in response to environmental challenges.

From the Minister

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they may have little information to start with. I ask every member of FUS to join the Membership Committee and me in being an effective ambassador for our faith on that day. For one thing, make a special effort to be here; we

want to offer a lively assembly, and plenty of members to chat with our guests. Be sure to greet anyone you may not know, and offer directions, or help in understanding what is going on. I am looking forward to this opportunity for our Society to become increasingly integrated into the interfaith community of Minneapolis.

Looking further forward, what are you doing New Year's Eve? We are contemplating a new venture for FUS, which will begin with an appetizer reception at 8:00 on Thursday, December 31, in the Lower Assembly Hall at FUS. From 8:30 – 10:15 we'll have dancing, to recorded tunes selected by those in attendance. At 10:15 an elegant surf-and-turf dinner will be served, with chocolate fountain for dessert. From 11:00 to 11:40 there will be a mellow concert in the Upper Assembly Hall, followed by a brief meditation ritual, and then ringing in the New Year with a champagne (or sparkling juice) toast. Does it sound appealing to join your friends for an evening of fun and reflection that is a bit less loud, and a bit less alcohol-centered, than most commercial options? We hope to be able to pull this off for \$40.00 per person, but that partly depends on what the attendance figures will be—which is why we are inviting those who might be interested to sign up now, so that we can plan effectively. You can find the sign up sheet at the Ask Me table, and you don't need to give us any money yet, but we need to know that we have at least 35 participants in order to move forward. This could be a lovely event, and a cost-effective way to celebrate. If you would like to be part of it, let us know; sign up soon!

Kendyl Gibbons, Senior Minister

From the Intern

I spent my first month at First Unitarian Society observing and absorbing. It is quite an opportunity to arrive at a new place with fresh eyes and witness things for the first time. While the entire nine months I am here will be filled with new experiences, no time is like those first few weeks. Here are some observations from the alien intern plunked down in your midst.

I've been a bit infatuated with the FUS building since I arrived. My training as a music therapist taught me to pay attention to how space is structured and arranged, and to see how this affects mood and behavior. There is elegant beauty in the brick and wood throughout the building that I find soothing and peaceful. It is striking that almost every room has many windows directing attention to the outside world. As one sits in a committee meeting or class or Discovery Group it is as though the windows are reminding us to not become insular or too focused on ourselves; to bring the love and hope we find at the Society out into the world. What a thrill it is to be situated on one of the few significant hills in Minneapolis! The enormous wall window in the Upper Assembly Hall pulls the eyes to the sky, the tops of trees, and the expanse of city—on Sunday mornings it seems to help the heart and mind open and reflect on the words, music, and meaning. I also love how some rooms provide passage to the outside, giving us a chance to commune with the greenery, trees, and abundant hostas: a respite from city streets and urban busyness.

The building would be nothing without the people. So far I have done some mighty fine eating, a little dancing, and a lot of heartfelt conversation. It seem to me that the people of FUS are a dedicated group; from the passionate and searching questions at Sunday morning forums to the Board of Trustees, who are focused on stability for today while dreaming of a growing and expanding future. Somebody told me that to be a humanist is to have the desire to be fully alive. What more can one hope for? Sign me up today! I am grateful to be living fully with you this year.

Mary Bohman, Ministerial Intern

Stewardship Corner

Well, here we are again, we of the Stewardship Committee, ready, as we look ahead to November, to reestablish a dialogue with you, our virtuous readers.

First, we have some thanks to offer, sending them especially to those of you who made the list of top donors at FUS and were celebrated on a delightful Sunday afternoon in September at the home of FUS Treasurer Mary Ann Lundquist and husband John. We keep striving to expand the number of donors and the size of their contributions within the second and third quartiles of congregational givers; but we remain enormously grateful to our largest contributors. And we thank especially those who have even raised 2009–2010 pledge levels above those of 2008–2009, despite recessionary challenges. To all of you: THANK YOU!

Second, we have to express a concern. Last year at this time, pledge income was so low that the FUS Board began cutting previously planned expenditures before the end of the 2008 calendar year. This year the Board's Finance Committee is anxious to alert members early enough to avoid a repeat of last year's frightening event. So their request is before you even now. Please help to keep the November 2009 cash flow far stronger than it was in 2008. And thanks on that too.

Third, we have to ask any who have joined recently, but not yet decided on a pledge, to make as generous an offering as possible and record it on a 2009–2010 pledge form. Forms are on the volunteer desk in the FUS office.

And fourth, if you've been a member for some time, you may not have made any adjustments to your pledge. So now is a good time to reconsider your pledge and, if possible, increase it to help with the necessary increases in the Society's operating expenses. Bob Calgren, our FUS Financial Manager, or Will Hegeman, our FUS Administrator, would love to see a 2009–2010 form from you.

Finally, your Stewardship Committee hopes that the current budget will support all our activities without monthly shortfalls or deficit spending to the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2010. It's a tight budget. If all of us pitch in, we'll succeed. Let's DO IT!

Your Stewardship Committee

online at: www.firstunitariansociety.org/newsletter/main.html

Membership

A UU Thanksgiving?



Do you have an extra spot at your table this Holiday season? I will be facilitating matching extra spots with couples or those flying solo who want to share their holiday with a larger group.

Please let me know if you are interested by contacting me with your name and information.

New Member Sunday

Join us on November 22 during service as we celebrate the new members to our society. We will also recognize one year and 10-year anniversaries.

Visitor Orientations

We will be holding three more orientation sessions this year. Please RSVP if possible, as we will provide a light lunch. They will be held after service at noon on the following days: January 17, March 21 and May 23.

You can become a member anytime you wish. Contact me, Teresa West, membership director. We recommend attending the orientations and then joining us for the New Member discovery group, which is held once a month after service. These groups are a great way to meet others and to learn from our minister, Kendyl Gibbons.

In between the orientations, we would love to meet you at the Minister's Tea in the Upper Assembly Hall after service on Sundays. Look for us by the wall opposite the window wall. The minister, a board member and the membership director are there to meet you and answer any questions, regardless if this is your first visit or your twentieth.

Happy November Birthdays!

Astrid Alexander	Kelvin Nichols
Frank Evans	Carolyn Olson
Katy Ghiasi	Thorsten Otterness
Mike Illes	Andreas Rosenberg
Audrey Jerome	Terri Stark
Nellie Jerome	Dan Stewart
Bernadine Joselyn	Celeste Stokes
Joel Linck	Olivia Thornton
Jean Mulvahill	Kevin Walsh

Teresa West, Membership Coordinator

Religious Education

Death is a life passage, but one we are not too willing to talk about in the United States.

Many religions and cultures have wonderful ways of thinking about death; the one that we will talk about here is the Day of the Dead celebration that takes place in many Mexican households, traditionally on November 1. Since that is a Sunday, we will be right on schedule to look at the joyous way that many Mexicans approach death and remembrance.



ICE CREAM EXTRAVAGANZA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

6:00–9:00 P.M.

3070 Excelsior (Between Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard, to the left of Whole Foods)

TOP 10 REASONS

WHY YOU MUST EAT ICE CREAM

10. I Scream! You scream! We all scream ...
9. Supporting an FUS-member-owned business is a good UU thing to do.
8. C'mon, you need to buy ice cream for all your Thanksgiving à la mode offerings anyway!
7. The Youth Group will get 25 percent of all sales at the store during that time to help fund their trips to Boston and General Assembly this year.
6. You need to order a cake for a special occasion (They'll get credit for ordered goods too!) Think: Turkey cake, Christmas cake, Super Bowl cake ...
5. Supporting the Youth Group is a *super*-good UU thing to do.
4. Kendyl, Jan, some of the members of the FUS Board of Trustees, the Youth Group and advisors will be serving you.
3. You want to see if they'll be wearing funny hats.
2. You deserve a treat!
1. Ben & Jerry's ice cream is really, *really* yummy.

First of all, Day of the Dead is a celebration for the families. A celebration that those who have died have graced their lives, have taught them, loved them, and helped make the living who they are. They make foods that the loved ones enjoyed, create an altar with pictures of the departed ones, and festoon the house and altar with marigolds and candles. People create special treats like sugar skulls and *pan de los muertos*. They take this occasion to clean up and decorate the grave sites of relatives. They do all of this not in a spirit of mourning, but in a playful and joyous tribute to those who have died.

This kind of thinking makes death a passage, and not a mournful occasion of loss. It is the remembrances of those that have died that keep them with us, that make their lives matter and our lives richer. This is what Day of the Dead is about and something that FUS children can use in their lives to think of those who have died.

On November 1 the children will be creating an *ofrenda* with candles that they can light for a person or a pet that has died that they would like to remember. Please ask them to bring in a picture to put on the altar. Everyone will be given a chance to talk about the person or pet that has died and a chance to tell what that person or pet taught them. They will then create some of the more playful activities that this celebration incorporates like mask making and skeleton decorating.

This is a special day and I hope that all children can be here to get yet another perspective on death—where else but church can this topic be so fully addressed?

Jan Devor, Director of Religious Education

Music Notes

On Sunday, November First at the assembly, the FUS Chorus and Orchestra will present a beautiful new Requiem called *Eternal Light*.

This work, composed by British composer Howard Goodall, takes a poignant look at loss as he deals with those that have lost loved ones, as well as those that have passed on. The texts are taken from the Latin Mass along with various English poems.



In Goodall's words, "For me, a modern Requiem is one that acknowledges the unbearable loss and emptiness that accompanies the death of loved ones, a loss that is not easily ameliorated with platitudes about the joy awaiting us in the afterlife. This like Brahms' is a Requiem for the living, addressing their suffering and endurance, a Requiem focusing on the consequences of interrupted lives." This lovely Requiem is scored for soloists, chorus, strings, keyboards, and harp.



Please join us as our new orchestra conductor, Dr. Jeffrey Stirling, conducts this moving new work.

See you on Sundays!

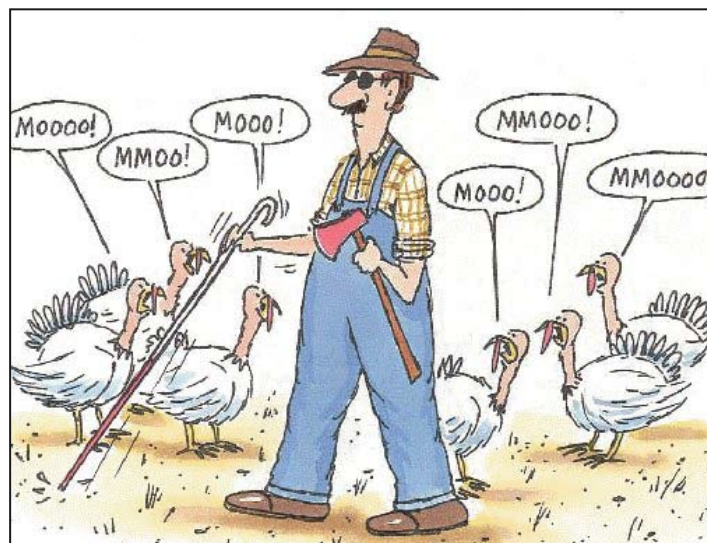
Barbara Brooks, Music Director

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The First Unitarian is published once a month. The deadline for submission of items is the 7th of the previous month. Items submitted may be edited for style, content, and to fit the space available. Submissions may be left in Morgan's mailbox in the FUS office, or made by mail, fax (612-377-2151) or email (preferred) to newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org.



This newsletter is printed on post-consumer recycled paper with soy-based inks.

Social Action

The Social Justice Focus for November is Homelessness/Poverty—in the First Unitarian Society as well as in all the other member congregations of the Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness (DCEH). The kickoff for our efforts during the coming legislative session will be on November 8.

November 8

The sermon topic will be on homelessness. While you are in line for your soup lunch, you will be handed a card asking if you will agree to be an advocate for ending homelessness and poverty. Suggestions will be on the card. During lunch members of the Homelessness/Poverty Issues Group of SAC will collect the cards and answer any questions.

After the soup lunch, we will have an opportunity to learn from the staff members of two community agencies, St. Stephen's Shelter and Avenues for Homeless Youth, about support services they and others provide, and why these services are so necessary if we have any hope of truly ending, not just managing, homelessness.

November 11

The Eat 'N Meet program that night will be the documentary movie, *Minnesota; The Land of 10,000 Homeless*. Discussion will follow.

The Steeple People Collection Van will be parked outside FUS to receive furniture, clothing and household items. Items donated are sold and proceeds go to help support the Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church Dignity Center, which provides resources to the homeless or others in poverty. Clients of the Dignity Center also receive vouchers to "shop" at the Steeple People Store.

If you are donating large furniture let us know at least a week in advance by emailing sac@firstunitariansociety.org.



**Downtown Congregations
To End Homelessness**

Important to Know—See Below

The Social Action Committee is ALWAYS collecting non-perishable food for local food shelves. The recently emptied collection box is located in the hallway next to the display cabinet by the Lower Assembly Hall. Thank you very much.



FUS will again be partners with the Minnesota Visiting Nurses Association by sponsoring two families for the winter holiday. More about that later.

For timely information about the Social Action Program at FUS, subscribe to the *SAC Flash*, an e-newsletter that is published on the first and third Fridays of the month. To sign up, email sac@firstunitariansociety.org.

Carol Koepp, Social Justice Coordinator



Announcements

Movie Chat

A NEW event at FUS!

Screenings of thought-provoking films on Wednesday nights, followed by discussions of the films on Sunday mornings at Forum Time! The kickoff will be *The Singing Revolution*, a wonderful and inspiring film about the nonviolent revolution in Estonia against the Soviets. Come eat at the Eat 'N Meet on November 18, then come to the movie. Andreas Rosenberg, FUS member originally from Estonia, will join our discussion on Sunday, November 22. Look for us again in the new year. Movie Chats will be held every fourth week of the month in 2010.

November's Movie Chat: *The Singing Revolution*

Screening: Wednesday, November 18

7:00 p.m., Dietrich Room

Discussion: Sunday, November 22

9:30 a.m., Lower Assembly Hall

Sign Up for Circle Suppers

Circle Suppers bring members together to share an evening of good food and lively conversation in the homes of the Circle "hosts." Each month there is a slightly different Circle. The hosts contact the members of their circle to arrange date and time. The host provides the entree, the guests bring an appetizer, vegetable or salad, or dessert. Check the Ask Me Table for the Sign Up sheet before November 15. Questions? Talk with Adele Hansen.

Women's Awareness Group

The November meeting of the Women's Awareness Group will be held at the home of Wanda McCaa. Mona Brown is the cohost. FUS women are invited to join us at 6:30 p.m. for a potluck supper followed by a discussion of "Loneliness and Solitude." Please call Wanda or Mona to RSVP and for directions.

The Alliance

Rev. Wendy Jerome will speak on "Women in the Bible" at the Alliance program Wednesday, November 4. Luncheon tickets for \$8 go on sale at 10:45 a.m. and the program starts at 11:00 a.m. Lunch from the Wedge begins at noon, with a short business meeting immediately following. Anyone interested in helping with Holiday Temptations planning, please call Linnea Asp or Gretchen Clemence ASAP. The Alliance is a dynamic group of dedicated members and friends of FUS. New members are welcome. If you are interested in becoming a member, call Clara Asp, Membership Chairperson.





Art in the Gallery

On display in the Foyer Gallery through November 15 is Marilyn Allysum's Chinese brush paintings. On exhibit November 22–December 28 will be photography by Robert Roscoe and oil paintings by Herbie Sewell.

Sunday, December 20

beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Save the Date!

-  Festive Dinner and Sing-along
-  Midwinter Revels Program
-  Dessert and Folk Dancing
-  Yule Log Fire Ring



Prairie Star District Awards

Every spring at the district conference, the Prairie Star District acknowledges those hard-working UUers who bring life and vitality to our congregations. Maybe this year somebody from YOUR congregation will be honored with an award. If you believe that someone from your group qualifies for one of these awards, why not nominate him/her? You can find a description of the six awards and the nomination forms at <http://www.psduua.org/Awards/Awards>.

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The First Unitarian Society

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November 2009

November 1:

“Eternal Light” Requiem performed by
the FUS Chorus and Orchestra

November 4, 11 & 18:

Eat 'N Meet Dinners and Programs

November 8:

FUS Hosts the Minneapolis Interfaith
Forum during Assembly

November 19:

Ice Cream Extravaganza

November 22:

New Member Sunday and
Membership Anniversaries

Board of Trustees

Beth Gohdes (Chair)

Adele Hansen (Vice Chair)

Martha Hardesty

Dan Hunt

Elizabeth Hutchinson

James Leighton

Bruce Nelson (Secretary)

Polly Peterson

JD Rickard

Mary Ann Lundquist (Treasurer)

For an up-to-date listing of events at FUS, check the
calendar online at the FUS website.

1. Go to www.firstunitariansociety.org
2. Click on “Calendar” on the left menu bar.

If you do not have access to the web, contact the
FUS Office at 612-377-6608 for event information.