



# UU REVUE

Summer 2015

*Chalice  
Camp*

*Caring  
Ministry*

*Removing  
Our Barriers*

*Growing  
Up UU*

*Eliza  
Tupper Wilkes*







*Photo by Ron Chrisope*

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# Inside this Issue

**2** *Caregiving*  
*Standing on the Side of Love*  
Belonging to an authentic, supportive community

**6** *The Art of Growing Up UU*  
An interview with Hanneke van Deursen

**10** *Rochester's First Woman Minister*  
Eliza Tupper Wilkes

**14** *Removing Our Barriers*  
The Disability Task Group

**18** *Chalice Camp*  
Super Hero Style

*In our next issue: A Welcoming Congregation*



# LGBTQ

## Welcoming Congregation

## UU Revue

The *UU Revue* is produced quarterly by the First Unitarian Universalist Communications Committee.

Articles in *UU Revue* focus on the positive work done by First UU members and friends, demonstrating our congregation's commitment to the Seven Principles.

Much of the volunteering by our members is behind the scenes and, unless you are closely involved with these efforts, you may not be aware of the time and dedication, the challenges, or the joy experienced by those involved – not to mention the impact on those who benefit from their work.

By telling the stories of our wonderful members, we hope to inspire others to volunteer, become active, and find the reward of working with the church.

## Our Mission

To create a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice

*Cover photo, Chalice Camp 2014*

# Caregiving:

## *Standing on the Side of Love*

By Harriet Hodgson

Millions of Americans are caring for loved ones at home. According to a National Alliance for Caregiving report, produced with AARP, 65 million Americans—or 29 percent of the entire population—cared for a chronically ill, disabled, or aged family member or friend in 2009. As the years have passed, the number of family caregivers has increased. I'm one of these caregivers.

On October 29, 2013, my husband John's aorta dissected and I drove him to St. Mary's Hospital. John was bleeding to death and the medical team kept giving him transfusions. "You got here just in time," a nurse commented. Surgeons operated on him three times in a desperate attempt to save his life. During the third operation John suffered a spinal stroke that paralyzed his legs. The stroke changed his life and my life forever.

Since John couldn't return to a house with stairs I put our home on the market and built a wheelchair-friendly townhome. Leaving the house we



*Harriet Hodgson, author and caregiver*

lived in for 20+ years made me cry. I cried more when I thought about moving hundreds of books, and asked the church Caring Congregation for help. Linda and Bill Thompson, Ella and Glenn Van Laningham, Sue and Phil Wheeler, and Don Hanson showed up the next morning. They moved our books and clothing in record time. Later, Eric Egger helped by hauling away garage stuff.

Thankfully, I have life experience to draw upon. Moving was familiar because John and I have moved about 17 times. Caregiving isn't new to me either. I was my mother's family caregiver for nine years. John and I were our twin grandchildren's guardians and caregivers for seven years, and I've cared for John for two years. Together, we are a caregiving team, and being on this team has taught me a lot.

Caregiving is an expanding role. I visited John three times a day when he was in Intensive Care. These visits continued after he was transferred to Samaritan Bethany for rehabilitation. All the while,

“*It is a special privilege to be helpful to someone in their hour of need. The small kindnesses offered seem to build deeper, more satisfying human connections. We have so many wise interesting folks in our church and some you may never fully meet until you've stopped by with some cheery flowers and your special food offering. What you offer matters less than the time you spend chatting together. It's okay for you to be creative in your own way. My way to help is frequently a delivery box of home raised produce and eggs, with a lovely nasturtium bouquet. (Caregiver Jo Payne)*”



I was monitoring townhome construction: custom doors, wide hallways, wheelchair accessible shower/sink, low microwave, oversized door pulls, and wheelchair ramps. I moved into our townhome in May of 2014, and John moved in at the end of June. I assumed many nursing duties, continued to manage our finances, and took care of other tasks.

*Caregiving is learning and adaptation.* I'm the artistic member of our team and John is the scientist. Because I have no medical training, I had to learn sterile technique and health care procedures, such as proper lifting. As you might expect, John was tired; he needed to rest and build up strength. While he was resting, I was writing up a storm, and produced *The Family Caregiver's Guide*, *Affirmations for Family Caregivers*, and *The Family Caregiver's Journal*. The first two books are slated for fall release and the journal comes out in 2016. Writing these resources has helped me to be a better caregiver.



*John Hodgson, with shawl created  
by the Caring Crafters*

No matter what has drawn us to Unitarian Universalism, belonging to an authentic, supportive community is an appealing feature of congregational life. To feel that we are truly cared for by others comforts, strengthens and encourages us. Based on the UU principles of affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person and respecting the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, our Caring Ministry provides a network of support to all members of the church.

Life circumstances:

- The death of a loved one and other times of grief and bereavement
- Life transitions such as birth/adoption, marriage, separation/divorce, retirement
- Illness or injury
- Relationship conflict
- The stresses of parenting
- Conflict at work or loss of a job
- Challenges regarding sexual orientation
- Changes in living conditions, including financial stress, empty nest, caring for elder parents
- The death of a beloved animal companion
- Making plans for end-of-life decisions

Please let the Minister or Coordinator of Congregational Life, Sarah Rothwell, know when you need support; a phone call or email is always welcome: 507-282-5209 or [pastoralcare@uurochmn.org](mailto:pastoralcare@uurochmn.org)

None of us like to face life's challenges alone, but oddly enough, the hardest part of effective pastoral care is getting folks to ask for help when they have a need.

*Caregiving is isolating.* Being in the hospital for months made John feel isolated, but when Rev. Carol Hepokoski delivered two shawls made by church members, one for him and one for me, he felt less isolated. “Be careful with that,” he advised the nurse. “It’s very special.” Although we used to be active in the community, now we are basically home-bound. “People must think I died,” John commented. Notes, cards, and calls from the Caring Congregation boosted our spirits. We still receive cards and each one makes us feel less alone. Carol and her therapy dog Riley, which looks like a Steiff toy, visited John in Samaritan, and she continues to call us. Gary Donovan delivered a spinach quiche that Ronice made—the best quiche we ever tasted. Beth Plaetzer delivered blooming flowers to our door. Julie Gilkinson visited us and we enjoyed her company.

*Caregiving is rewarding.* Being a family caregiver links me with millions of people across America. We’re all in the caregiving trenches and learning as we go. I’ve met many new people and continue to learn from John, a man of quiet courage. I’ve



*Rev. Carol Hepokoski, a grateful recipient of our caring ministry*

“*Ask for help. So often we do things for others without thought of repayment, but somehow we can’t ask for help when we need it. Please rethink that. When you can, help someone and when you need it, ASK ... You, too, are deserving of the care that you offer. (Jennifer Harveland)*”

benefited greatly from the UU Church Caregiver’s Support Group, led by Mary Amundsen. Although I am unable to attend every meeting, I go when I can and always benefit from the group.

John has belonged to First UU since the Hodgson family returned from Lima, Peru in 1944. We think he is the most senior member of the congregation. Decades ago, when he was in the youth group, he gave a sermon from the historic podium we now use. In March, after being gone for more than 18 months, John finally attended a service. It was an emotional experience. I had to hold back tears as member after member greeted him. We didn’t know so many people were thinking of us and standing on the side of love.

*Freelancer Harriet Hodgson, a church member for more than 30 years, is the author of thousands of articles and 34 books. She writes for [www.thecaregiver-space.org](http://www.thecaregiver-space.org) and is working on another book about caregiving.*

## The Evolution of Caring

In the 1980's, as more women entered the workforce, women's roles at church were evolving. The small cadre of women who remained on the Caring Committee was struggling to find new ways to connect and serve people in times of need due to illness, death, and family or personal crisis.

Enter (former) member Jan Kaplan, the incoming Chair of the Caring Committee in 1989, who introduced a new concept: the Caring Congregation. "I thought we all had to be part of [caring]; it was the one church responsibility that we couldn't relegate to a committee of a few. It was the very CORE of community," says Jan.

Under Jan's leadership the caring group evolved into a congregation-wide lay ministry service. The Caring Congregation chairs recruited volunteers, arranged for training, and served as the communication hub of the caring outreach. "Caregivers of the Month" coordinated the activities of many volunteers – matching needs and services – and followed up with people who had long-term needs. Every member of the congregation was encouraged to sign up to provide care for others in a manner that fell within their capacity. Available for 2 hours every week? Check. Available 2 hours once a year? Check. Love to cook? Check. Prefer to talk? Check. Rather send a card? Check. Like action, not meetings? Check.

This organizational model has proven to be both durable and flexible over the years. The Caregivers of the Month are now called Caring Coordinators and serve two-week terms. In 2003 a new staff member, the Coordinator of Congregational Life, began caring for needs that require training and professional skills.

Nonetheless, our every-member Caring Congregation is still the backbone of Jan's belief that we all "share the gift and responsibility of caring for each other." And we're about to take another step forward in order to reach a younger generation of caregivers. Current chair Jennifer Harveland is looking into online websites that can facilitate scheduling and communication. Stay tuned. And let Jennifer know what gifts you want to share.

Whenever Harriet Hodgson faces a difficult problem, she gets busy. As she puts it, "Whatever challenge I've been dealing with in my life, I sit down and research it." Then she takes the information she has gathered, puts it together with her life experience, adds her talent as a health and wellness writer, and produces a book to help others deal with similar issues.

Her most recently published book is *Happy Again! Your New and Meaningful Life After Loss*. Written after 4 close family members died within one year, Harriet focuses on the stages of grief and the importance of finding a new purpose in life. From this same event also came *Seed Time: Growing from Life's Disappointments, Losses, and Sorrows*, which describes 80 steps a person can take to recover from adversity and grief. Her recent experience caring for her husband John provided wisdom for *The Family Caregiver's Guide: How to Care for a Loved One at Home* and *Affirmations for Family Caregivers: Words of Energy, Comfort, and Hope*. They are due out this fall.

To learn more about Harriet, her 33 books, and a multitude of her other publications, visit her website at [www.harriethodgson.com](http://www.harriethodgson.com). You can find several of her books in our church library.





# The Art of Growing Up UU

By Robin Taylor

*An Interview with Hanneke van Deursen*

For aspiring architect Hanneke van Deursen, growing up in the Unitarian Universalist Church since she was five years old has been “a positive force” in her life.

The daughter of Mayo Clinic researchers Jan van Deursen and Janine van Ree, Hanneke says that Unitarian Universalism has been a great fit for her family.

“When we realized that we were going to be in Rochester for a long time, we felt like we should provide the kids with a church family, since church is such a big part of American life,” says Janine. “This is in contrast to the Netherlands, where very few people attend church services.” A friend mentioned the UU church to them, and they didn’t need to look any further. Our denomination’s rational philosophy appealed to their scientific nature, and our emphasis on tolerance appealed to their Dutch sensibilities.



*Hanneke poses with her painting, “Sometimes”*



*Mother and Child*

“The Dutch are known for their tolerance, as much as tulips, windmills, and the red light district,” jokes Hanneke. She references a service she attended earlier this year: Ramona Barr told a story about going to Madrid with her high school class. One of the girls on the trip almost ruined it for everyone else by comparing everything she experienced to the way she preferred it at home. To preserve her own sanity, Ramona kept repeating, “It’s not better. It ‘s not worse. It’s just different.”

“That has been my mantra this year!” Hanneke insists. “It’s not right. It’s not wrong. It’s just different!”

For an 18-year-old to be able to quote from a church service shows first, that she has been paying attention; and second, that the church community has indeed had a role in subtly shaping the self-assured young woman that she is today.

“I value the personal exploration that our church encourages, and how finding your own path is such a virtue. In my everyday life, it has taught me to be very strong in my own beliefs,” she says, crediting her ability to articulate those beliefs to the

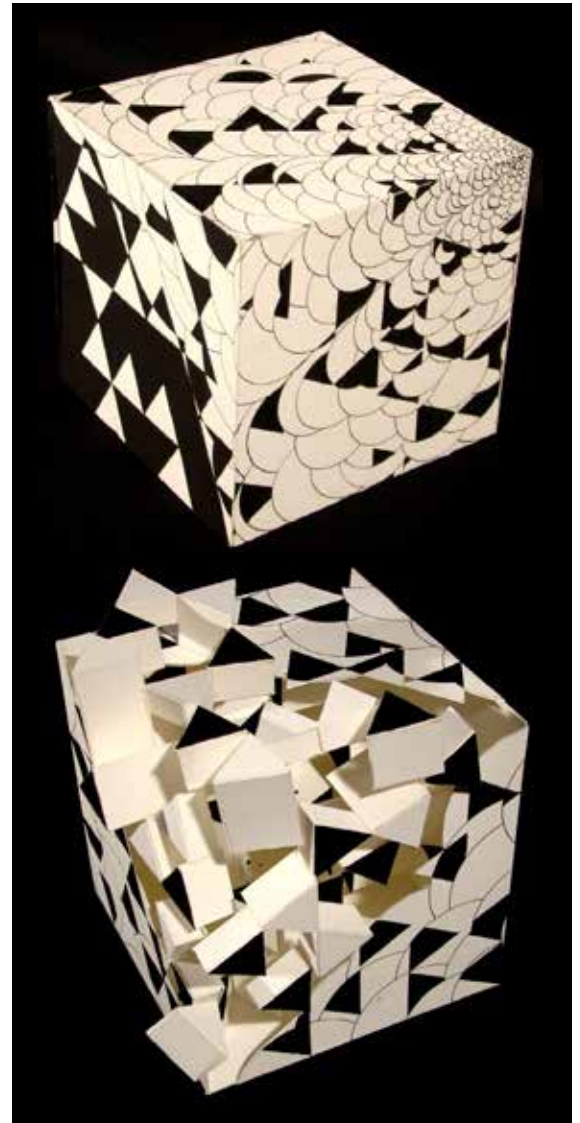


“elevator speeches” she used to have to practice in her religious education classes.

With a name like Hanneke, the subject of religion comes up often. “People always think I am Jewish,” she says with a laugh, even though the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (a.k.a. Chanukkah) is spelled differently. She doesn’t mind talking about religion and is proud of growing up a UU. “I’ve always had self-confidence and felt rooted in my own beliefs. . . If anything, I felt cool.”

Looking back on it from the vantage point of her senior year at Mayo High School, Hanneke’s path of self-exploration seems to have been pretty straight and focused. She loves math and drawing, and has known since seventh grade that she wanted to be an architect. Last summer, she was one of 17 students admitted to a six-week architecture camp for rising seniors at Syracuse University, where she had a chance to test the depth of her interest.

At the summer program, she discovered that architecture allowed for technical challenges and spatial thinking. “The intellectual aspect to architecture is extremely appealing,” she says. One of her assignments was to design a black and white pattern on a cube that would “blur the perception of the edges to defy the boundaries of the cubic form.” Hanneke ended up spending 84 hours designing and painstakingly painting and cutting a pattern on her cube, thereby turning it into a more complex shape. The precision required would have made the majority of us come unglued, but for Hanneke, the time whizzed by. She had confirmed her passion.



*“The Misaligned Cube,” Museum Board 6x6x6*

*“Anyone,” Acrylic 68x24*





*Hanneke working on her collage*

“Architecture influences everything,” Hanneke enthuses. “It has a subconscious effect on us, whether or not we realize it. I feel like ever since that door has been opened for me, it is like being let into a secret club! I am always examining new spaces.”

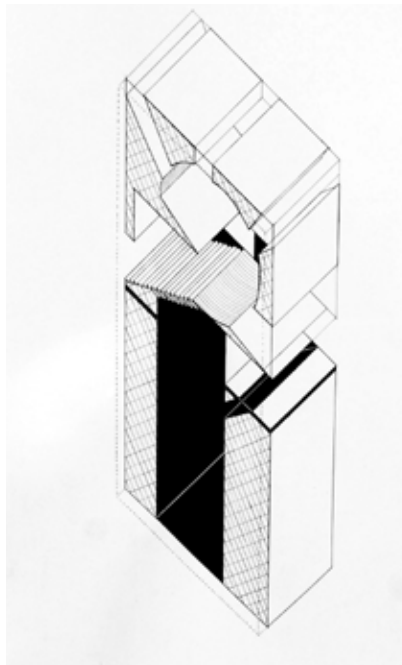
Her goal in architecture is to “fight placelessness”—meaning she wants to create buildings that are absorbing experiences to be in and to be around, exuding a singular sense of “Place.” She recalls fellow UU Stephanie Podulke telling her about a visit to Newgrange, the Neolithic passage tomb built in Ireland in 3,300 B.C. The enormous cairn is remarkable for many reasons, but the feature that caught Hanneke’s imagination is that it was designed so that at dawn on the Winter Solstice, the light enters a slat in the roof box and lights up the passage to the altar. “I want to go there!” says Hanneke, but one almost thinks she means, “I want to build that!”

In complete contrast to her carefully planned and measured architectural assignments, Hanneke discovered the freedom of painting a year and a half ago. She had created a caveman doodle out of geometric shapes, and her father encouraged her to make a painting of it. They went to the store together and bought canvas, paint, and brushes. Jan, who used to paint himself, showed her how to hold the brush and get started.

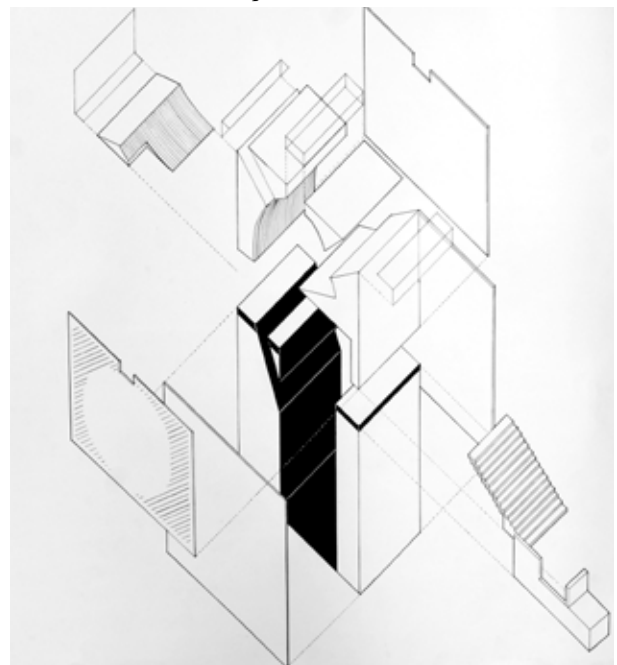
*Cantilevered Block  
for Isaac Newton,  
Museum Board 8x4x16*



*Sectional Axon*



*Exploded Axon*





Since then, Hanneke has used painting to release frustration or celebrate joy. Painting gave her the chance to experiment and play with color, lines, texture, and technique. “For me, art is a necessary release,” says Hanneke. “Art is not something you have to do...it is about interpreting, not copying. There are no rules. Although,” she concedes, “composition is important.”

This winter, some of Hanneke’s artwork was featured in an exhibition at First UU, where it was hung above the stairs going down to the Commons.

In a recent mixed media piece, Hanneke glued maps of Minnesota and the United States (particularly featuring the colleges to which she applied), along with blueprints or drawings of some of the buildings in Rochester of significance to her, including the church. The collage tells the story of her preparing to leave home after graduation. After many offers and visits to college campuses, she has accepted a scholarship to study architecture at Syracuse in the fall, her first choice.

“I’ve already found the UU Church in Syracuse, but the amount of time I have to visit it will be very limited,” says Hanneke. “I think my free time will be devoted to sleeping! But just knowing it is there is very comforting to me.”

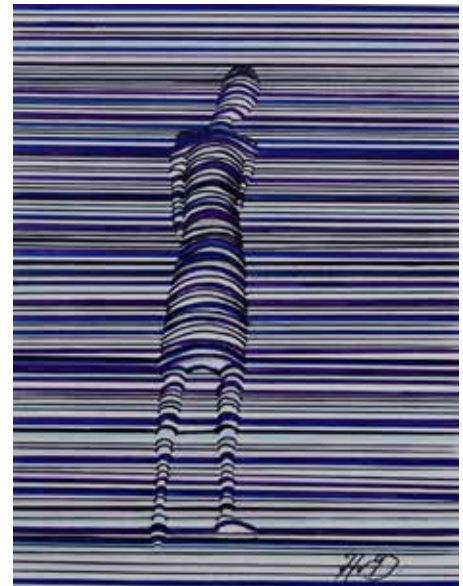
Remember that congregational vow we all take at Child Dedication ceremonies, when we pledge to nurture and support the child and their families as they grow in our religious community? Hanneke’s story reminds us of the importance of that vow, and how our thoughts, words, and actions have an impact on our church youth, maybe when we least expect it.

Looking far, far ahead, Hanneke says, “I hope my future children will be nourished in the same way I was, because the church was very important to me growing up.”

Looking equally far ahead, we will be proud to say, “We knew her when...”

*Robin Taylor is a freelance writer  
and long-time church member*

*“Bound”  
Pen 9 x 12*



*“Experimental Blooms”  
Pen and Ink 8.5 x 11*



*“Wooden Maiden”  
Acrylic*



# Rochester's First Woman Minister: Eliza Tupper Wilkes

By Patricia Calvert

*“I left the devil behind ...”*

Eliza Tupper, born October 8, 1844, in Houlton, on the eastern border between Maine and Canada's New Brunswick province, was the oldest child of Allen Tupper, a liberal Baptist minister. His ancestors in America could be traced to the Mayflower; his wife Ellen, daughter of Noah Smith, a governor of Maine, was descended from a long line of successful New England farmers.

Eliza was five years old when the family moved to Brighton in southern Iowa, founded in 1840 near the Skunk River, where her father intended to minister to Native Americans. Her mother, as progressive as her husband, was an exceptional model for Eliza in a day when women seldom had professions beyond homemaking.

Ellen Smith Tupper was called “the queen bee of Iowa,” due not to her privileged position in frontier society, but because in addition to editing the *American Bee Journal*, she taught beekeeping at Iowa State College and researched the introduction of Italian bees into American apiaries to improve honey production. She also found time to edit the popular children's magazine *Youth's Companion*, as well as *Mrs. Tupper's Journal for Women*.

Eliza was tutored at home until her mid-teens. When she was 16, her parents—uncertain about the quality of rural high schools—sent her to live with her grandfather Smith in Calais, Maine, where she attended a private academy. Three years later she returned to finish her education at Iowa Central University in Pella, a newly founded Baptist college, and graduated with honors in 1866.

Eliza's first job was teaching school in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. To the amazement of her family, discussions with Quaker friends had caused Eliza to



*Eliza Tupper Wilkes (courtesy All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota)*

question her faith. Although her parents were liberal, no doubt they were shocked when, in 1867, their 23-year-old daughter was re-baptized and announced her intention to become a Universalist minister. They probably were further dismayed by her assertion she “left the devil behind” when she abandoned her Baptist beliefs.

Their concern was understandable: (1) Universalism was criticized (and sometimes still is) because of its interpretations of scripture, among which was that salvation is for all, not the few, and (2)





**ROCHESTER'S SKYLINE—1868.** This photo from 1868 makes a wonderful guide to early Rochester. Since most of these buildings are no longer in existence to serve as reference points, the structures that succeeded them are also listed here. 1) Open yard at the corner of First Avenue and Second Street SW, later site of the Rochester Public Library (1898–1948). 2) Hunley's Cabinet Store. 3) An old barn that became the site of the Cook Block, later known as the Massey Building (built 1878). 4) Isaac Simonds' home, currently the east end of the Plummer Building (built 1926–1928). 5) Original Universalist Church (1866–1877), later site of Grace Universalist Church (1877–1915), currently SW corner of the Plummer Building. 6) Central School (1868–1950), current site of the Mayo Clinic Building (constructed 1950–55). 7) Calvary Episcopal Church (built in 1863) has remained in this location for over 140 years. 8) Olmsted County Courthouse (1866–1957), later site of a second courthouse that was redeveloped and expanded in 1993 as the Mayo Clinic's Ozmun Building. 9) Congregational Church (built 1864–1866), later site of a second Congregational Church (1916–1963), currently site of the Mayo Clinic's Hilton Building. 10) Presbyterian Church (built 1865), later site of the second Rochester Public Library (built 1937), which was converted for use by the Mayo Medical School in 1972.

*Rochester, Minnesota - Author: Ted St. Mane*

*ISBN: 9780738531502, Publisher: Arcadia Publishing*

Universalism was the only faith tradition that educated women in its seminaries at a time when female ministers were scorned and ridiculed. Eliza was undaunted, as later were sisters Mila, Kate, and Margaret, who followed in her footsteps.

After preaching at the Mt. Pleasant Universalist Church—and encouraged by temperance lecturer Mary Livermore to continue in ministry—Eliza accepted her own pulpit in Manasha, Wisconsin. A year later she moved to Neenah, Wisconsin, where she met William Wilkes, a 23-year-old law clerk originally from Fremont, Ohio. Wilkes had arrived in Wisconsin at age 18 to pursue an education in law, and he and Eliza were married in November 1869.

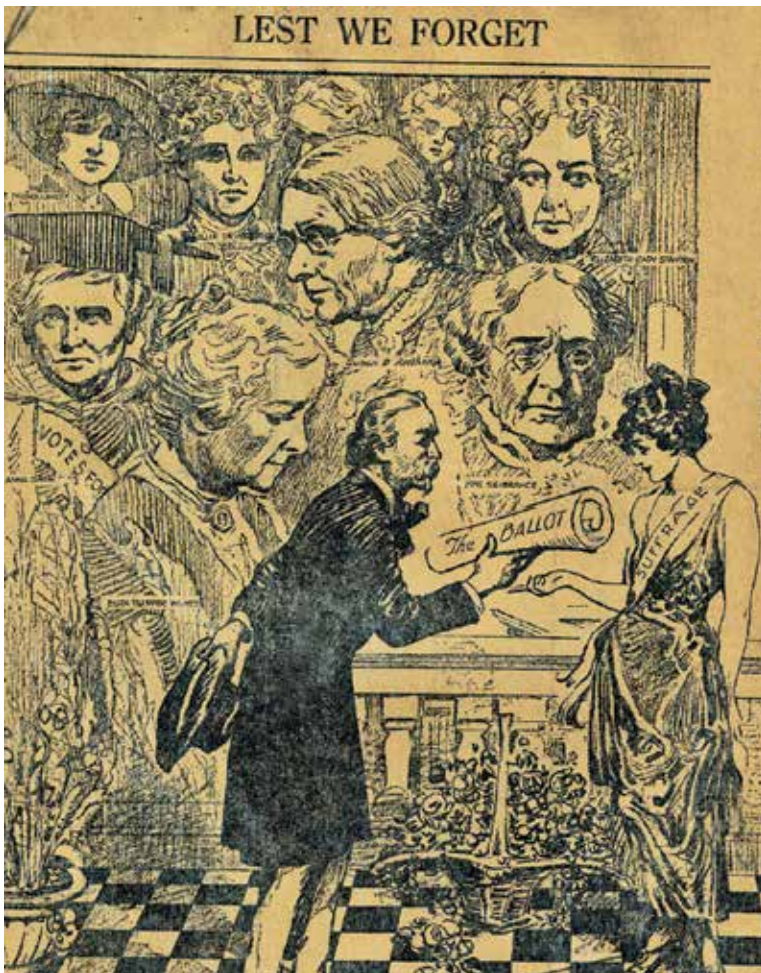
It was common for ministers in an era of westward expansion to serve congregations for one to three years and move on to establish new ministries. In 1870, Eliza Tupper Wilkes answered a call from Rochester, Minnesota. It was a settlement of 50 persons when George Head named it in 1854, but had a population of 4,000 when she arrived to occupy the pulpit of an established Universalist congregation.

On May 2, 1871, Eliza became not only the congregation's first woman minister but also the first Universalist minister to be ordained in Rochester—and William passed his bar exam the same year. Her three-year ministry in Rochester was “enjoyed by pastor and people” and “recalled by both with much satisfaction,” noted one church historian.

In 1873, Eliza headed even farther west with a move to Colorado Territory (which became the 38th state in 1876). Her husband established a law practice, and three of their six children were born in Colorado Springs. Throughout their marriage, Eliza was able to continue her ministry due in large part to William's encouragement and support, which included hiring household help and tutors for their children.

She soon became a friend of Coloradoan Helen Hunt Jackson (author of *Ramona*, a social-justice novel that dramatized treatment of Native Americans by the U.S. government), and helped her establish Colorado College. In 1875, Eliza attended a Women's Ministerial Conference in Massachusetts organized by Julia Ward Howe, and in 1876 campaigned for the inclusion of a woman's right to vote in Colorado's new state constitution. The effort failed, but passed in 1893.

Both Eliza and her oldest son suffered heart problems that were blamed on Colorado's high altitude; in 1878, searching for a solution, the family moved to Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory (which became two states in 1889). Her parents settled on a homestead nearby, indicating that Eliza's conversion to Universalism hadn't damaged their relationship. William established the law firm of Wilkes and Welles, was nominated to a judgeship by the Populist Party and was then elected to two terms as a judge of the Minnehaha County Court.



*Suffrage Poster, Eliza Tupper Wilkes shown in center of photo (directly to the left of the man holding the ballot).  
Photo courtesy Thinklink.com*

By 1890, continuing issues with her heart affected Eliza to the extent that she spent winters in California while continuing ministerial work on a reduced scale. When William died in 1909, 65-year-old Eliza decided to retire officially. However, at the request of the governor two years later, she agreed to represent California at the International Women's Suffrage Congress in Budapest in 1911.

On February 5, 1917, while visiting her daughter, Eliza Tupper Wilkes died in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The death certificate listed her occupation only as "housewife." (Eliza and her mother both would have smiled.) She was buried in the family plot in Sioux Falls beside her husband, son, and parents.

Eliza Tupper Wilkes deserves the last word. Doug Chapman, in a biographical portrait of Rev. Wilkes (available online), quoted from an article in *Unity Magazine*, April 2, 1887, in which Eliza responded to criticism that her faith was "too simple," and lacked enough "emotional power" to appeal to a mass audience:

"If starving souls are reaching for something...have we no food?" she demanded in a brisk reply. Her long and distinguished ministry had, in fact, been a banquet for those who sat at her table.

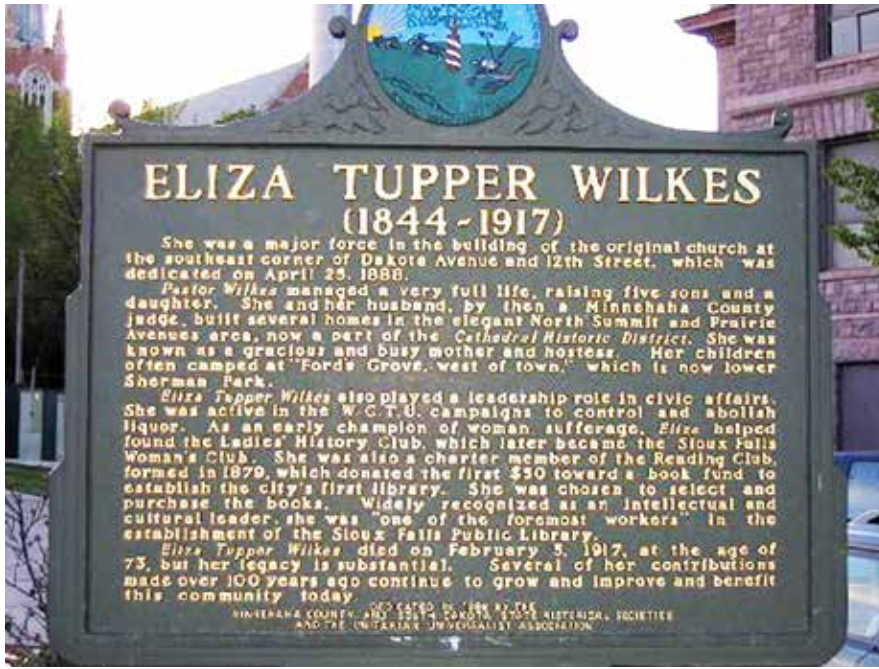
There was no Universalist congregation in Sioux Falls at the time, so Eliza held services first in her home, then in space offered by the Congregational and Methodist churches. She also organized a Ladies History Club for women interested in the important issues of the day. Finally, in 1886, she organized All Souls Church, as well as helping to found many other congregations in the region—one church historian counted 11—including one in distant Palo Alto, California.

Eliza had been a first many times: the first woman minister ordained in Rochester, Minnesota; the first ordained woman minister in Dakota Territory; and in May 1895, she became the first woman invited to preach at the Stanford University Chapel. Her sermon, "Character, the Light of Evolution," might be as timely today as when she gave it.



*International Women's Suffrage Congress in Budapest, Hungary, 1911. Photo courtesy Hungariangirl.com*





*Sioux Falls, South Dakota)*



*Judge William A. Wilkes (courtesy Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Sioux Falls*

*Patricia Calvert is the author of many books for Young Adult readers, several of which are biographies and histories of ancient cultures (her favorite subjects to read about, too).*

Another 144 years passed before a second minister was ordained by the Rochester congregation. After a 24-year career in journalism, David G. Kraemer had a life-changing conversation with Mary Sawyer, professor of religious studies at Iowa State University, on what he called "a blue-sky day" as they returned from a canoe camp. Mary encouraged him to consider ministry as a midlife career. He did. On a much later blue-sky day, April 12, 2015, David Kraemer was ordained at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Rochester, with his wife Mary Duerson and grown sons Colin and Michael in attendance.



*Rev. David Kraemer (courtesy Angie Joyce)*

# Removing Our Barriers: The Disability Task Group

By Kathy Brutinel

When Shelly Maciujec, who is re-learning how to walk after the difficult removal of a cerebral cavernous angioma in her brainstem, and her husband Dave decided to look for a new church, Shelly searched the Internet for information. When she found our website, she was struck by the “sense of family” and the “social justice work” of the congregation. “And you even have a page on the website especially for people with disabilities!” says Shelly. “I have felt so welcomed.”

Twenty years ago Shelly might have felt quite different. When our church was built in the mid-60’s, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which imposed accessibility requirements on public accommodations, was more than two decades away. Although religious institutions were exempted from the 1990 law, it did serve to make people more aware of the ways buildings and attitudes needed to change in order for our community to become more equitable for all.

## EqUUal Access

### **Our Mission:**

To enable the full engagement of people with disabilities in Unitarian Universalist communities and the broader society.

### **Vision:**

There are no attitudinal, physical or communication barriers preventing full participation in the life of our Unitarian Universalist communities and the broader society.

Unitarian Universalists are active in disability justice issues.

Further resources at  
[www.uua.org/accessibility/aim](http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim)

Our church had to come to grips with the fact that a person in a wheelchair could not get in our door unless that chair was pushed by a burly and patient person who could negotiate the twists and turns of a narrow ramp and entryway. Getting into the sanctuary, which involved passing through more narrow doors and bouncing over uneven exterior stone pavers to the sanctuary’s back door, was even more daunting. Getting down the stairs into the Commons or up the stairs in the RE wing with dignity intact was not possible.

Although our congregation had talked about making our building more accessible for years—starting even before the passage of ADA—the plan, fundraising, and financing did not come together until 1999. In that year we added an accessible entrance, installed an elevator that serves all levels of our building, built two accessible restrooms, and carved out spaces for handicapped and limited mobility parking.

Still, the ADA is about more than mobility. More waited to be done. As the Social Justice Empowerment workshop was drawing to an end in February 2008 and participants were identifying their particular interests, ten people knew they had found their passion. They formed the People with Disabilities Task Group.

Paula Horner, whose professional life ranged from being the first director of a day center founded by the Association for Retarded Children (now The Arc) in Wisconsin to assessing children with developmental and learning disabilities at Mayo Clinic, wanted to create awareness in our church of “the needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities and their families. I felt we could really accomplish something in our church.”

Gail Bishop, who has had intermittent mobility challenges due to her rheumatoid arthritis and who



has a daughter with a developmental disability “wanted to be part of something that will eventually make everyone feel included in our church.”

From its beginning the People with Disabilities Task Group has focused on “projects that help our congregants to support and be more sensitive to issues of inclusiveness and hospitality toward our members and their families who are living with disabilities” (from 2008-09 Annual Report).

In its first year the Task Group conducted an inventory of the church community, asking congregants to identify ways they are connected to people with disabilities. In addition, they began educating the congregation about the needs of and resources for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families and they partnered with RCTC to bring “Imperfect Apple,” a play written and performed by a teenage cancer survivor from Hayfield, Minnesota, to Rochester.

The next year they began pairing programs for adults and youth. A speaker from the Rochester State Hospital Cemetery Recognition Group shared stories during the Sunday service about the lives of residents of the former state hospital, while a speaker from NAMI talked to our teens about suicide prevention. Task group members Steve and Lyn Smith brought new eyes to the accessibility challenges posed by our building, and the group decided to contract with the Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL) to do an accessibility audit.

With the results of the study in hand, the following year a guest speaker from SEMCIL reviewed the report with the congregation and urged us to promote barrier-free environments and universal access. In addition, our 4th and 5th grade class did their own accessibility study. To see our church from a different perspective, they took turns using a wheelchair and noticed a critical problem: they couldn’t get in the front door. “What came out of that is that we got the automatic front door opener,” says Paula.

The task group began the 2011-12 year with a focus on mental health. One speaker from NAMI spoke during a lay-led service about mental health challenges and another spoke to 24 of our middle and high school youth about suicide. A registered therapy dog that visits people in prisons played a significant part in a Sunday service and also was a big hit in the RE classrooms. In another innovative experiment, our 5th and 6th graders learned how to use adaptive aids for hearing and visually im-

## Board Approved Changes 2014-2015

1. Automatic doors throughout the building including in restrooms and on fire doors;
2. Painting of the stairs leading to parking lot which will make the rise and fall more clearly defined;
3. Automatic towel dispensers for the restrooms;
4. Threshold ramp leading out to the courtyard/memorial garden;
5. Valet parking sign for anyone, including families that wish to use it;
6. Portable wheelchair/walker ramp to be donated for the church and during community outings
7. Signage to make the men’s restroom accessible for unisex restroom facilities when needed;
8. Map at the entrance of the building showing room and facility location throughout the building.



paired persons; they, in turn, taught those skills to the 3rd-4th graders one Sunday and K-2nd graders the next.

The next year the focus was on traumatic brain injury. A speaker from Mayo's Traumatic Brain Injury program shared a Sunday service with Laurie and Myatt Helmers, who told their stories about Myatt's accident and unexpected but remarkable life over the last 14 years. A head injury prevention specialist from the Mayo Clinic spoke to our youth about the prevention of brain injury, using a striking visual demonstration. "He put helmets on melons and dropped them," according to Paula. "Then he dropped melons without helmets. The difference made a big impression on the kids."

Shortly after the task group was formed, they called the Prairie Star District office to find out what other congregations were doing. "They told us that we were the only congregation they knew of that was doing this," says Paula. Consequently, it was natural that the Unitarian Universalist Association approached our task group to review the



*Paula Horner, teaching sight impaired reading*

credentialing process they were creating for accessibility and inclusion, similar to the Welcoming Congregation credentialing.

In 2013-14 our church became one of only 10 congregations chosen to pilot the Disability/Ability Action Program Handbook. "One of the ideas that came from us was the accessibility audit," says Paula, "and our worship service is included as one of the examples" in the final document.

The Disability Task Group is now concentrating its efforts on the Accessible and Inclusive Ministries (AIM) certification, a joint program of EquUal Access and the Unitarian Universalist Association. As Gail explains, "It sometimes felt like we were hopping from topic to topic each year. The certification process has given us focus." The purpose of the certification is to engage congregations in "welcoming, embracing, integrating, and supporting people with disabilities and their families in our congregations. Its sacred challenge to congregations is that they recognize the humanity and gifts of all people" (from <http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim>).

This approach to accessibility changes the question from "what do you need from us?" to "what can we do to make you feel more included in our church?" – a subtle but important difference.

Paula has already begun to see that shift in attitude. "I love seeing how our church has developed a culture of awareness. People have spontaneously come to us with ideas and people act on their own. Our Office Administrator, Jody Tharp, began order-



*Therapy  
Dog*



ing unscented soap for the restrooms. Patty Trnka noticed that someone was having trouble holding a large print hymnal, so now Jody copies the hymns for the day and inserts them in the large-print bulletins. People who arrange tables in the Commons are being more consistent about leaving a path for wheelchairs."

Meanwhile, Shelly has wholeheartedly jumped into church life. With her long and incredibly diverse work history, she has offered her many skills to our community. Her perspective is invaluable on the Disability Task Group. Her experience with social media is being tapped by the Communications Committee. She is part of a Chalice Circle and she's using her skill in production management to organize a trip to the "Reel Abilities Film Fest" in the Twin Cities. "This is the first place I've gone since my brain surgery where I feel comfortable being me. I don't feel like I've lost something," she says.

Likewise, Ali Bishop, who grew up in our church with a developmental disability, also feels welcome and comfortable at church. "People she knows give her big hugs and she absolutely loves Beth Atkinson, who has spent lots of time with her," according to Ali's mom, Gail. "She enjoys being a greeter and she loves the music during our services." Although Ali was the target of some mean words when she was in RE, attitudes are changing. Our children are learning empathy and being taught the power of words. "I absolutely do not allow demeaning language, whether in jest or otherwise," says Ryan Shriver, Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth. In addition, Ryan has been talking to the Rochester Autism Center about bringing in a guest speaker regarding autism and other spectrum diagnoses, so we can learn how to meet the needs of children with autism in the RE classroom.

Still, the work of the Disability Task Group is far from done. We face some daunting challenges.

Shelly has pointed out that she and Dave face a quandary when she needs his help in the restroom. "We have to choose 'Men' or 'Women.' We usually choose the men's room and I try not to look around." In addition, the parking in our upper lot is inadequate now and is heading toward a crisis as the baby boomers age. Where do we add an accessible gender-neutral bathroom? How do we move a hill?

Other challenges are mental, not physical. They involve stepping outside our ingrained patterns of behavior and seeing ourselves through the eyes of others – like the person in a wheelchair trying to wend a way through the crowd that gathers between the door and the elevator.

But we'll find a way. The Disability Task Group is prepared for the long haul. As Gail Bishop says, "Systemic change takes time, but it's happening." As Shelly puts it, "I feel like I'm around people who have dreams...."



*Ali Bishop and Beth Atkinson*

Our faith calls us to regard each precious human being with inherent worth and dignity. Our mutual goal is to see inner beauty in every face, the holy in every spirit, and to accept people as they are - in their infinite diversity - whether or not their inherent differences are stereotyped and discriminated against elsewhere. We look towards each person as having gifts to offer, inner strength, valued life experiences and the capacity to grow.

From Accessibility Guidelines for Unitarian Universalist Congregations: Creating Welcoming Congregations for People of all Abilities, prepared by the Policy Committee of EqUUual Access, 2011.

# Chalice Camp

By Mariah K. Mihm

In its fifth consecutive year—this year celebrating in Super Hero style—our week-long summer day camp will continue to meld outdoor camp fun with theme-based games, crafts, and learning experiences that increase awareness of our values and principles. Chalice Camp is an invaluable opportunity for our children and youth to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a member of the UU community.

Five years ago Ramona Barr, a volunteer Girl Scout day camp director and member of our Board of Directors, suggested the idea of a summer camp for our children and youth to Director of Religious Education (DRE) Ryan Shriver. With enthusiastic support from the church Board, the idea took off. Ramona secured a week at Camp Edith Mayo (the local Girl Scout day camp), Ryan eagerly connected with other DRE's and looked into summer camp



*Chalice Camp 2014 - Getting ready for a hike*

curricula that would best fit the mission of our congregation, and BOOM! Chalice Camp was born.

In that first year the Board offered an advance of \$800 with the understanding that it would be paid back through camp tuition. Since then Chalice Camp has become “a self-funded enterprise of the religious education program,” according to Ryan. Camp attendance has doubled from 31 campers in 2011 to 63 in 2014. The number of youth counselors has grown from 8 to 14 and the number of adult volunteers has more than tripled from 6 to 21. This year, Ramona expects the growth to continue with even more campers, counselors, and adult volunteers who are excited to become UU Super Heroes for a week.

From the beginning, having a theme to anchor the week was deemed important. Each year Ryan selects the Chalice Camp curriculum from a large database of themes available to UU churches. Themes often come from popular culture, such as “Hogwarts Magic,” based on the popular Harry Potter book series. The world of Dr. Seuss characters was the focus for 2014. Once the theme is determined, the curriculum and activities are designed around it.

A short religious service, based on the year's theme, centers each day. The campers light the chalice, listen to a brief lesson, and sing hymns, along with camp songs from the Girl and Boy Scouts. Camp activities also include confidence and team building activities like the spider's web and a traversing wall. Other big hits each year include the Water Fun Day, an overnight option, and an archery activity. Thursday night is a family pot-



*Reading Camp “Seuss” Notes - Chalice Camp 2014*





*Weaving Chalicees - Chalice Camp 2014*

luck dinner. Parents enjoy seeing the grounds, experiencing a bit of “camp life,” and hearing what the campers have been doing all week.

The planners decided early on that giving back was an important part of camp and they began looking for a service project. “It was difficult to find things the kids could do while at camp,” Ramona says, “But we found a way and out of the first camp came the ‘booty bags’ that provide quiet activities for kids during Sunday services. We have also held a book drive.”

Adult volunteers from the congregation are invited to get in on the fun while providing services that enhance the camp experience. Volunteers as-

## 2015 Chalice Camp “UU Super Hero Academy Social Justice League”

Based on the Curriculum UU Super Heroes

**July 20-24**

*Our camp offers opportunities to encourage the children to lead their own lives fully and to use their own positive “super powers” as they interact with the world around them.*

**Registration forms available in the commons or contact church office**

semble amazingly creative snacks related to the camp theme: magical string cheese broom sticks that disappear as quickly as Harry Potter on his Nimbus 2000 and banana and strawberry striped “Cat in the Hat” hats. And there is always an edible chalice or two, since it’s Chalice Camp after all. In addition, adults join various groups of campers to provide a little extra assistance and security; others take photos in order to share the fun of camp with our congregation.

Creativity is welcome also. Each year the camp co-directors design fun and colorful Chalice Camp t-shirts, based on the annual theme. In 2014 volunteer Denise Fedderson helped create a quirky adaptation of our 7 UU principles: “The UU Seven Principles – Dr. Seuss Style.”

Over the last five years Ramona and original co-director Sam Olson have implemented and refined a system to keep our youth engaged as they grow in age and capability. 11-year-old Leaders in Training (LIT) begin learning how to work with younger kids by leading songs and games. 12-year-old Counsel-



*Chalice Camp 2014 - “Dr. Seuss and UUs” theme*





*First Chalice Camp 2011 - "History & Identity" theme*

"I love that Riley, who is in the front in the middle with the only white shirt has a big smile on his face. He told me he didn't want his shirt tie-dyed and was very concerned that it would accidentally get colored and when I gave it to him still white, he had the biggest grin on his face. Such a UU kid!" (Ramona Barr)

ors in Training (CIT) learn practical skills from one guest speaker each day on topics such as how to provide first aid and CPR, how to redirect children exhibiting disruptive behavior, and how to keep food safe for children with allergies. The Junior Counselors (age 13-15) and Counselors (ages 16-19) pair up to lead all the camp activities, with the Counselors having more responsibility for major decisions.

Our youth blossom as they are entrusted with increasing responsibility. In 2013 former counselor Rose Mish excelled as co-director of camp when Sam Olson had to step aside that year. In 2014 counselors Sarina Feddersen and Garrett Harveland created the current CIT curriculum and this summer Sarina will be the camp's co-director with Ramona. Many of our youth are looking forward to the challenges of their increasing responsibilities—as well as the fun and camaraderie of camp life. Ramona notes with pride, "We have youth

### Marketplace 29-AD (Summer, 1989)



*Virginia Huffine as "Miriam"*



*Making mud*



*Making bricks from the mud*



counselors who are planning their entire summer around Chalice Camp this year.”

This year campers will experience a change in venue, with the camp to be held at the church and its surrounding grounds. Space will be used both indoors and out. There will be challenges, but the team is up for it. “There are always obstacles to overcome,” Ramona explains. She can’t help but laugh while recounting how the basement at the Girl Scout camp flooded one year and the campers couldn’t sleep in the tents, either. It has to be looked upon as a learning experience, the camp counselors good-naturedly decided.

This summer’s theme, “Super Hero Academy: Social Justice League,” is adapted from the UU Curricula: “UU Super Heroes” by Gaia Brown.

Kids find camp fun, while parents see the significance. UU member and RE teacher, Lindsey Hobbs explains the importance of camp for her two daughters, “Chalice Camp gives kids a chance to build friendships while having a great time outdoors, all the while learning ways to incorporate the 7 UU Principles into their daily lives.”

The memories made, the bonds created, and the lessons learned during Chalice Camp are an important part of growing up UU. Many of the campers will become counselors themselves and pass along their own memories—or perhaps they will become a future co-director. Who knows?

*Mariah K. Mihm is a freelance writer, currently writing for ‘Rochester Women’ and a member of the church.*

*Professor “Minerva” (Ramona Barr) and the Sorting Hat Chalice Camp 2014 “Hogwarts Magic” theme*



## Peace Camp (Summer, 1991)



*Peace Camp snacks*



*Diane Langton leading a group*



*Peace Camp T-Shirts*

# The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

We covenant to **affirm** and **promote** ...

The inherent **worth** and **dignity** of every person

**Justice, equity** and **compassion**  
in human relations

**Acceptance** of one another and encouragement  
to **spiritual growth** in our congregations

A free and responsible search for **truth** and **meaning**

The right of **conscience** and the use of the  
**democratic process** within our congregations  
and in society at large

The goal of **world community** with  
**peace**, liberty, and justice for all

**Respect** for the interdependent web of  
**all existence** of which we are a part



## First Unitarian Universalist Church

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