

MERE LYS

December 2019 Newsletter

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

Services

Sundays

Coffee 10:00 am
Worship 10:30 am

2nd Wednesday

Worship 7:00 pm



December 1

“The Three Gorillas”

Guest Speaker Rev. Laura
Smidzik

December 8

“As You Are Able”

December 11

“The Ancient Worldwide Way”

Wednesday 7:00 pm

December 15

No Service

December 22

“Already Growing Light”

December 24

Christmas Candle Lighting Service

5:00 pm

A View From the Hill

Behold...I bring you glad tidings of great joy.

I chose these words from the Gospel of Luke for the message on Lucia's and my Christmas cards this year. This particular holiday season, perhaps more than some, we need both the exhortation and the promise the angel of the Lord brought to the shepherds in the field.

Behold...look, see, notice, pay attention. Look up from your device. See beyond the headlines. Notice divinity in human form. Pay attention to common place injustice.

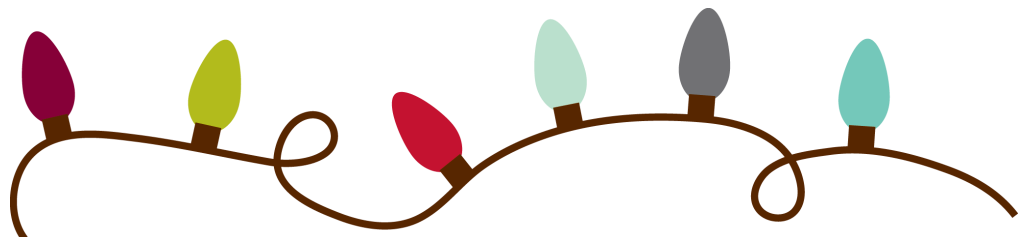
Behold...the world, as it truly is, is both more beautiful, kind, and sweet than we can ordinarily see, and more ugly, cruel, and broken than we can ordinarily see.

I bring you glad tidings of great joy...

I don't know anyone who thinks recent weeks and even months have been an easy time. The rapidly increasing effects of climate change have wreaked havoc on our driveway at church and on the planting and harvesting schedules of surrounding farms. Trade sanctions with China brought further uncertainty to the local agricultural economy. Political rhetoric long ago devolved past spin into harsh, truth-deficient accusation slinging and outright lying. Family separation and other refugee-at-the-border stories have lost headline space to impeachment and Presidential tweets, but the human tragedies themselves unfold and multiply daily. On a much more personal, tender level, membership, attendance, and participation here at Nora Church all continue to decline as our membership ages, and demographic and cultural shifts trend away from church membership and participation across the country across denominational lines. This last weighs especially heavy on our hearts each time we walk through the doors at church—or decide not to.

Into all this heartbreak, ill-will, fear, and disappointment, comes the angel's glad tidings of great joy. Just when we most need great joy and just when we might be least disposed to believe such tidings. But we **can believe** because we **have beheld**. If we have looked with open and willing eyes to the world as it truly is, we can believe in the not too distant arrival of great joy because we have seen the beauty, kindness and sweetness already here, and because we have seen the places and people and circumstances we are called to repair, to bring kindness, to offer forgiveness, to make justice.

Now, the shepherds' encounter with the angel ends with *a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”* We Unitarian Universalists like to preach the *peace on earth* message of the Christmas season. It's less problematic, given the way our theology has evolved over the past 150 years or



so. But my focus for this season is the first part of the angel's message, the one exhorting us to behold and promising us great joy—and that part of the message ends thusly: *to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Oops. *Savior. Messiah* (or *Christ* in some translations). Not words that readily trip off Unitarian Universalist tongues these days, because we insist that Jesus was fully human, no more divine than the rest of us.

Yep. Exactly. And we are no less divine than Jesus.

So, if we behold the world as it really is, seeing the places and people and circumstances we are called to repair, to bring kindness, to offer forgiveness, to make justice, then the glad tidings of great joy are ours. Because a savior was born that day in Bethlehem. And one was born the day you were born in your birthplace. And one was born the day today in Hanska, and in New Ulm, and in Mankato, and in Comfrey.

Behold... I bring you glad tidings of great joy. The world is beautiful and broken, and you have been born into it to praise the beauty and heal the brokenness. We have been born into it to praise the beauty and heal the brokenness. What a gift, our birth, and a Christmas blessing to a world in need of blessing.

-Lisa

Board Meeting

The next Board meeting is Tuesday, December 10th, 6:00 p.m. at the Hinsman residence, 69 Roslyn Road, New Ulm.

Smorg Survey

Please complete your Smorg questionnaire and turn it in to the box in the entry area or give it to Joy Rathman or Jeanie Hinsman. We'd like responses to be in before Christmas. Thanks.

Cookies and Community and Christmas

If your plans allow, please join other Nora members, family, and friends for coffee, cider, treats and holiday cheer in the social hall following the candle lighting service on Christmas Eve.

Volunteers to bring treats are appreciated, please contact Karen.



Save the Dates

January 25, February 29, March 28 and April 25 are the dates for Toward an Honorable Death, a Nora Church sponsored community ed class. Each session will be 10:00 a.m. to noon. Professionals in end of life will help us face our own mortality, know options for end of life remembrances, learn about services of a death doula, hospice, organ and body donation, advanced care directives, how to have conversations with friends and family, and much more. We look forward to a very worthwhile and engaging experience. There will be a \$5.00 cost for each session. More information in January.

Lunch Bunch

If you want to take a break from the holiday hustle and bustle, join the Lunch Bunchers for our December gathering on Tuesday, December 10, at 11:30 a.m., at The Lakes on 1st, 512 First N. St., New Ulm. Hope to see you there. Happy Holidays.

Supper Club

Supper Club will be Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30. Watch the order of service and grapevines for location.

Lisa at Large

In November Lisa presided over the NUMAS Haus board meeting, and attended the United Way board meeting. She welcome attendees and offered grace before the meal at the NUMAS Haus gala, Hope: a Night of Stories and Music. A pared down version of her November Mere Lys column appeared in the St. James Plaindealer on Thanksgiving Day. She made pastoral calls in New Ulm and Minneapolis. And ate well this month, having lunch with church members from Windom and Worthington, as well as joining the Supper Club.

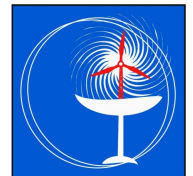


Pastor Lisa's Schedule

Pastor Lisa has Mondays off.

Friday is sermon writing day.

She can be reached on her cell when not in the office—507-766-7822.



2019-2020 Server/Volunteer List

Volunteers are needed for all Sundays that are **not a potluck**. Sign up in kitchen or when the sign up sheet is passed around in church.

If potluck assignments don't fit your schedule please call someone on the list to take your place. Contact information is in the Nora Directory.

If your name is not on this list and you would like to participate, please call Susan Allen 359-2856.

PARTNERS: Please communicate with each other regarding food provision, as needed.

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve—Karen Farrell & Dick Gurska

Jan. 5 Potluck—Kristine & Warren Paulson, Kristy Paulson

Feb. 2 Potluck—Darrell & Jeanie Hinsman, Nor-

A Note From the Treasurer **October Income and Expenses**

Income: \$ 4,716.00

Expenses: \$ 14,371.83

Income and expenses are listed for the full month prior to the publication of the newsletter, not including special collections or memorial gifts.

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Mar. 1 Potluck—Julie Sellner, Susan Evers, Shannon Hoechst, Lee Schmitt

Apr. 5 Potluck—Karen Farrell & Dick Gurska, Bev & Wally Wellmann

May 3 Potluck—Sally Anne & Dave Benson Louise Guggisberg Brett Lehman

June 7 Potluck—Shirley Olson, Nita Gilbert, Jeremy & Candi Schmitt

Passage to the Light

2nd Annual Solstice Celebration

On the longest night of the year we will rejoice in the darkness *and* entice the sun's return with poetry, reflection, and light refreshments.

Music by Dick Kimmel.

All invited, all welcome to this no-cost family friendly, community event.

Saturday, December 21, 2019 at 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Beach House, Flandrau State Park

Park entry is free with a state park sticker on your car.

Park entry for those without a sticker choosing to drive in is \$7.

The Solstice Celebration is sponsored by Nora Unitarian Universalist Church www.norauchurch.org

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church ~ norachurch@sleepyeyetel.net ~ Nora Church UU on facebook ~ 12333 155th Ave., Hanksa ~ 507-439-6240

Inclement Weather

In case of Sunday morning inclement weather, the decision to cancel church service will be made no later than 8:00 a.m. Announcements will be made via Grapevine email, posting on the Nora website and Facebook page, and a cancelation notice will be sent to KNUJ and KTOE. When church is not cancelled, you are responsible for your own safety. We love to see everyone at church but we would rather know everyone is safe. Please do not drive to church when road conditions, high winds or frigid temperature feel *unsafe to you*. We'll see you the next Sunday, or the next month or in April!!

Minister's Discretionary Fund

Lisa has a small sum of money at her disposal to use to meet emergency financial needs of Nora church members and friends, or members of the surrounding community. In the past she has been able to pay utility bills, purchase prescription medications, and cover the cost of a tank of gasoline. If you have a need, please be in contact with Lisa. If you know of a need, please be in contact with Lisa, or suggest that your friend or acquaintance be in contact with her. The minister's discretionary fund is outside of the annual operating budget of the church and is replenished by gifts made to the church marked clearly "for the minister's discretionary fund". Please consider making this fund the beneficiary of one of your holiday or year-end charitable contributions.

Energy Assistance

Many local families find it difficult to pay their monthly energy bills. Minnesota Valley Action Council's Energy Assistance Program provides a grant for income-eligible households which can help defray some of these costs. This leaves more of the family resources available for other expenses. They can also assist households in crisis situations with disconnect notices or when they are almost out of heating fuel. Grants are paid directly to the vendor on their behalf.

Households can request an application by calling MVAC at 507-345-6822 or 800-767-7139 or by downloading it from mnvac.org. The deadline to apply is May 31, 2020.

New Ulm's Own Holiday Hours

Holiday hours at New Ulm's Own include Sundays 12:00—3:00 and Thursday, December 12 until 8:00. Usual hours are Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00am to 5:00 p.m. Support fair trade artisans, NUMAS Haus and local artisans while also enjoying small town shopping.



Notes from the Nora Office...

Please get me your content for the January newsletter in a timely fashion. Send it before Christmas, if the after Christmas deadline will be difficult for you to remember OR set up a reminder for yourself. I will be out of the office Dec. 18-26.

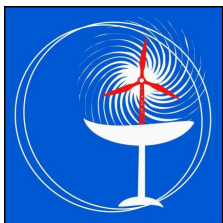
January Mere Lys

Content due Friday, December 27

Order Of Service: Content due Thursdays

Please send content of any kind, for the newsletter or order of service to the Nora email.

*Brooke Knisley, Office Assistant
Working from home, and in the office most Tuesdays & Fridays.*



Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

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Phone: 507.439.6240

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/NoraChurchUU