

## **Services**

### **Sunday Services**

**10:30 am**

*Streamed on Facebook Live*

**January 3**

*“New”*

**January 10**

*“Nothing New”*

**January 17**

*“A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”*

**January 24**

*“It’s All We Do Really”*

**January 31**

*“Life Is A Gift”*

*Guest Speaker: Rev. Wes Hromatko, Zoom*

*Join all services on Facebook Live at 10:30*



# **MERE LYS**

## **January 2021 Newsletter**

### **Nora Unitarian Universalist Church**

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#### **A View From the Hill**

Whereas 2020 brought death, illness, loss and grief to our world and our individual lives in unprecedented numbers; and

Whereas 2020 imposed isolation upon us in order to protect our most vulnerable and preserve health care resources; and

Whereas 2020 stretched our capacity to parent, partner, work, do church, go about daily life to and sometimes past the snapping point; and

Whereas the 2020 presidential election brought unprecedented uncertainty, vitriol, and division to our country; and

Whereas police continued to murder black and brown people with impunity in 2020; and

Whereas cities erupted in the language of the powerless in 2020; and

Whereas the powerful and the monied responded with might and renewed acts of oppression in 2020; and

Whereas acts of racial hatred continued unabated in 2020; and

Whereas ‘ordinary’ disasters (wildfires and tornadoes and hurricanes and earthquakes) also continued unabated in 2020; and

Whereas the full force of the financial devastation of 2020 will not be known for years to come; and

Whereas 2020 wounded us, challenged us, changed us, and blessed us in ways we have not yet begun to comprehend

Therefore be it resolved that we welcome 2021 without expectation, without frenzied change, without erasers in hand or fingers on delete buttons, despite the temptations;

Be it further resolved that we greet 2021 with gentle kindness toward others and ourselves, with patience, with hearts open to unimagined possibility,

And thus, may 2021 be a blessing, in each unfolding moment and in the fullness of time.

—Lisa

## Sunday Services

Join all services on Facebook Live at 10:30 Sunday mornings or later on YouTube.

## Wednesday Zoom Meetings

**January 6 and 20.** Every other Wednesday we'll gather on Zoom at 7:00 p.m. for a chalice lighting and general conversation. It's not the same as coffee hour or potluck, but it is as close as we are going to get for the time being, and it really does strengthen connections we've all been missing. Please commit to joining in. Clicking on the link sent in Grapevines, on your smart phone or tablet will connect you.

## Board Meeting

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, December 13th on Zoom, at 7:00 pm

## January 31st Guest Sermon

**The Life Is A Gift.** With all the losses of the past year, it seemed to be a good time to think about life as a gift. The holidays are now long over the cookies eaten, and the bright paper from gifts discarded or put away. The depth of winter is often a time of discontent even though the earth is slowly moving back to bring warmer days. The time from the New Year's to another holiday seems long, so it is a good time to reflect on life and its gifts.

Our speaker today Wesley Hromatko grew up on the Century farm where he still lives and attended a one room school before leaving for the University of Minnesota, the University of Chicago, and our seminary Meadville/Lombard in Chicago where he earned a M.A., and D.Min. He served our congregations in the Midwest and on the East Coast before returning home where he helped his parents on the farm.

## News from the Board

Welcome to year 2021. We are all hoping for significant change in a very positive direction for our personal lives, our families, our communities, the country, and the world. May 2021 be rich in community building, scientific and medical progress, social justice and international relationships. High hopes but optimism is easier to live with than pessimism.

### *A Note From the Treasurer*

#### **November Income and Expenses**

**Income:** \$ 7,228.00

**Expenses:** \$ 7,045.00

*Income and expenses presented at the last board meeting. Income does not include memorials and gifts.*

### Garage Door Replacement

There isn't much news from the Nora Church board. At our December meeting we concurred on the purchase and installation of a new garage door. The old door has been very unreliable and has had numerous attempted repairs which are never long lasting. It has outlived its functional life. The new door with installation will run just over \$1,000.

### Thank You

The board wishes to thank Kristin Wellmann for a generous donation to the church after Wellmann family and friends held a lefse making event to benefit 19-year-old Logan Anderson of Madelia, who was injured in an accident on Lake Hanska. We also wish to acknowledge the fine work of our program committee who organized a thoughtful service on the topic of death for our November 30 service. Thank you Sally Anne Benson, Colleen Hokenson and Brett Lehman.

### Financial: A Look At the Last Four Years

This financial information was provided by Julie Peck. It is for income/expense comparison July 1 thru Nov. 30 for the past four years. You can see our expenses are high this year. Unfortunately, our aging buildings require consistent care and maintenance. Thank you for continuing to support our church in the loving way you do.

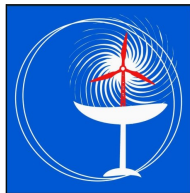
<u>YR</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENSE</u>
2020	39,313	47,334
2019	38,158	45,095
2018	40,619	42,282
2017	41,290	41,016

Jeanie



### **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.



### **Direct Deposit for Pledges**

Direct deposits for pledges become even more pertinent during this time of distance worship.

To initiate this, anyone interested would need to set this up with their bank, much like an automatic payment for a utility or credit card.

If you would like to make electronic pledge payments, please contact Julie Peck for Nora Church account information.

### **Lisa at Large**

My off—the—hill activities in December started with the NUMAS Haus virtual gala on December 3 and wrapped up with guest preaching (virtually) at Headwaters Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on December 27. In between I presided over the regular NUMAS Haus board meeting and attended the monthly meeting of the New Ulm Ministerial Association—both on Zoom.

I also snuck a little separation of church and state evangelism into my library job. The list-serve from the Small and Rural Libraries Association was full of librarians and library directors talking about what they were doing for holiday decorations--or what they were too overwhelmed or tired to do for holiday decorations. I contributed my storefront window/Facebook page project—Count Down to the New Year with the Library! (Posting the cover of a book each day—a book with a number in the title that corresponded with the number of the day of the month, December 1 - 31). And I prefaced my email with my explanation for not doing a

Christmas-themed display: “as an ordained pastor and a small town library director I am doubly committed to the separation of church and state...” Lots of respondents liked my project and promised to duplicate it in their own settings, this year or next. I’m hopeful that, though most of them didn’t mention it, some of them took some note of the fact that even religious leaders take the non-establishment clause of the Constitution seriously.

### **General Assembly Goes Virtual**

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend; congregations must certify annually to have voting delegates. The UUA Board of Trustees has passed a resolution making the 2021 UUA General Assembly a 100% virtual event. Let’s reach record-breaking attendance June 23-27, 2021!

Registration for virtual GA 2021 is now open! Registration is \$200 per person. Financial support for registration as well as a payment plan are available. General Assembly registrants receive access to the 2021 Online Participation Portal, including live, simulive, and on-demand video content, the virtual exhibit hall, chat features, support, and a (new!) GA mobile app.

[Register now!](#)

[GA Website](#)

### **Notes from the Nora Office...**

#### **Mere Lys Newsletter content due the 20th of each month**

Since there will be no printed orders of service, please send announcements for Grapevines via email, or pass along to Rev. Lisa for me.

Please send content of any kind, for the newsletter and more, to the Nora email.

*Brooke Knisley, Office Assistant  
Working from home and in the office Tuesdays or  
Wednesdays.*

## On the Brink of a New Year

By Lois Van Leer

We light this chalice on the brink of a new year  
Letting go of what has been  
Open and hopeful for what may come  
Renewed, restored, ready  
To live Life fully anew  
May we move forward with intention.

### Braver/Wiser: Honesty Over Comfort

“Surely we are safer behind  
some sort of a wall, protected  
from the grief of belonging.  
But all along your heart knew  
it was a lie, the polite fiction  
that you tell a child.  
*Nothing bad can happen.  
You’re safe with me.*”

—Rev. Lynn Ungar, in “Distance”

In the early days of COVID-19, my older child started to fear venomous snakes. While walking through our neighborhood, he asked if rattlesnakes would bite him. When I assured him that there are no rattlesnakes in Michigan, he asked about vipers. Then cobras. Then boa constrictors. Then anacondas. We had read a book about snakes a few days before; he remembered all their names. I offered reassurance after reassurance: They don’t live in Michigan. They don’t live in Kalamazoo. They don’t live in our neighborhood. They can’t bite you. I won’t let them. I will keep you safe.

It was as though in his four-year-old wisdom, he recognized the uncertainty of everything right now by asking questions that had reassuring answers—even if they’re not the real questions of the moment. When he asked about snakes, I could tell him, *Nothing bad can happen. You’re safe with me.*

I was relieved when he asked about snakes, because I can’t offer nearly as much reassurance about “the big bad germ”—the name we’ve given COVID-19. The big bad germ is why everything is closed and cancelled, why we socialize through the computer screen, why his parents are acting differently.

The herpetologists among you might know my mistake: there’s a rattlesnake that lives near me—the eastern massasauga rattlesnake. (I Googled this later.) While it sticks to wetlands and avoids sidewalks, my reassurances were not as true as I thought they were. When my child started talking about snakes again, I apologized for my earlier mistake. I told him that there are snakes who live nearby, but I would still do everything I can to keep him safe. It wasn’t as reassuring, but it was more honest.

In these days, when “I don’t know” is the only true answer to many of my child’s questions—When will the big bad germ be over? When can I see my Nana? Will I get to keep going to kindergarten?—I’m grateful for a question with an answer, even if it’s not the answer I want it to be.

### Prayer

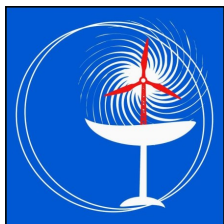
Sources of courage and compassion, sources of reason and radiance, in these days of so much uncertainty, may we choose honesty over comfort, love over complacency, and truth over convenience. May it be so. May we make it so. Amen.

By Rachel Lonberg

September 30, 2020—Braver/Wiser

### To ♥ Keep In Touch

If you know of anyone needing our assistance or attention, please call one of the **Caring Committee** members: Georgine Tepley: 359-3060 (weekdays after 5 pm), Diane Becken: 354-3103, Carol Chambard: 354-2242



## Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

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