

## Services

Sundays 10:30 am

Coffee 10:00 am

*In the Church Sanctuary*

September 5

*No Service*

September 12

***“On the Importance of  
Anniversaries”***

*Potluck following the  
service.*

September 19

***“Jesus Loves Me!”***

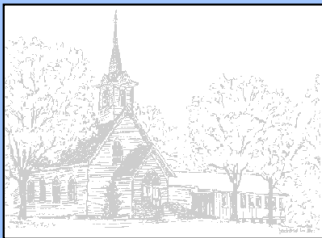
*Speaker: Dick Gurska*

September 26

***“In Memorium”***

***Coffee Hour 10:00 am***

***140 Years  
On the Hill***



# MERE LYS

## September 2021 Newsletter

***Nora Unitarian Universalist Church***

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

When we gather for worship on September 12 (and we *will* gather, all that’s uncertain as I write is *how* and *where*), we will be entering our thirteenth year as minister and congregation, our first year as half-time minister and congregation, and Nora Church’s 140th year. So much significance in those varying lengths of time!

I’ll speak at length that day about 140 years of Nora Church (as well as 20 years of post-9/11 existence). What follows here are some reflections on what it means to be transitioning the nature of our relationship after 12 years.

First, and foremost, it does *not* mean we have any cause to be ashamed. I’ve said this before as we have approached and backed away from and approached this transition point over recent years, and I say again now: rural churches are in decline (and closing) across the country; church-going habits are in decline across the board; sadly, Nora is not unique. An ongoing pandemic hasn’t helped matters but we’d probably be at halftime ministry even without the disruption of COVID. This isn’t because we didn’t try hard enough. This isn’t because we aren’t good enough. This isn’t because we don’t offer depth of worship and warmth of community.

So, what does it mean, to have less of my time as your professional minister, and fewer worship services each month altogether? I believe it offers us the opportunity to distill Nora Unitarian Universalist Church to its most pure essence. And it offers me the opportunity to distill my congregational ministry to its most pure essence, while simultaneously experimenting with a broader ministry at large.

Ideally we already would have had extensive conversation about what must remain unchanged, despite the reduction of my time, what you are able and willing to take on yourselves, and what you can most easily (though not without sadness) let go of. It’s been almost a year since the vote to reduce ministry, but pandemic conditions didn’t allow for frequent informal conversation, and even formal meetings were awkward via Zoom.

So, we will learn as we go. The board announced this year’s worship schedule at last spring’s annual meeting. As and when we are able to return to oth-



er aspects of congregational life--Lunch Bunch, Supper Club, adult education discussions, social justice projects--we'll need to be upfront with one another about your needs and my time. We'll need to be creative and courageous when devising new ways of being church (a challenge after 140 years!). And we'll need to be gentle with ourselves and one another.

The start of a new church year is usually joyous after some months apart. This year is joyous, too, and also a time of grieving. Grieving so many losses--beloved members who were among us at the start of last year and no longer are, our identity as a flourishing congregation with certain characteristics, the ease of pre-pandemic life.

We have it in us, the strength to mourn and rejoice at the same time. It will take gentleness, good humor, and love. Qualities which abound in Nora Church and her people.

—*Lisa*



### **News From the Board**

The board is holding its August meeting on the 31st, on zoom. There's little to report at this time. We will be discussing the Covid situation, needed organ repair, installation of sensors that Church Mutual is providing, budget and any other items brought to our attention.

Thank you to Roger and Norma Breu, Colleen Hokenson, Vicki Sieve, and Georgine Tepley for volunteering at the food shelf in September.

Jeanie Hinsman

### **September Board Meeting**

September's board meeting date will be set at the August 31st meeting. Watch for details.

### **Food Shelf Workers Needed**

September is Nora Church's month to provide volunteers at the New Ulm Area Food Shelf. We share the month with United Church of Christ. Our dates are Monday evening, September 13 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm and Wednesdays the 15th, 22nd, and 29th from 11:45 am to 3:00 pm. The work is not difficult. The report is that usage has increased.

*A Note From the Treasurer*  
**Income and Expenses**  
**June, 20-21 Church Year & July**

<b>June</b>	
<b>Income:</b>	\$ 3,747.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$11,447.34
<b>2020-2021 Church Year</b>	
<b>Income:</b>	\$ 70,450.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$105,026.00
<b>July</b>	
<b>Income:</b>	\$ 1,257.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$ 3,826.00

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

We have two people scheduled for each shift; however, three is recommended. Please let Jeanie know if you are willing and able to support this much needed community food program.

### **Zoom Opportunities!**

#### **Virtual Adult Education**

One of the blessings of the on-going pandemic (and one of the curses) has been Zoom, allowing us to gather virtually, often over great distances. Several Minnesota and Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist congregations are opening their adult education classes and discussion to members from neighboring congregations. Find information about two opportunities below. I'll pass along information about others as it becomes available. I hope you'll consider joining one or more.

#### **Soul Matters: UU Writers Group**

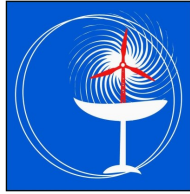
Facilitated by Rev. Julianne Lepp, Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Eau Claire

When: 6:30-8pm, Second Thursdays from September through May. Group starts on September 9th!

Where: Meets on Zoom

### **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.



This group will meet monthly from September through May on second Thursdays via Zoom from 6:30-8:00pm. Writing is a long-loved path to personal insight, spiritual discernment and self-expression. The course will be centered in the Soul Matters themes, and each month will draw from a new Soul Matters curriculum. There will be chances to write within the class as well as bring material to each class for sharing and gaining insights.

Sign up here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNJcyma4aAZDmg79dK8k0hJqsQE0QinjnwooHj7UDZSE UIg/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0>

### **Widening the Circle of Concern: Yearlong Study and Practice Group**

Rev. Laura Thompson, Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Bloomington, Minnesota

Highly recommended for all, and especially for congregational leaders

11 sessions: 4th Tuesday at 7pm, Sept-May and 2nd Sundays at 2pm in Oct. and March

All session on Zoom

Appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in 2017, the UUA Commission on Institutional Change served through June 2020. Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change represents the culmination of the Commission's work analyzing structural and systemic racism and white supremacy culture within Unitarian Universalism and makes recommendations to advance long-term cultural and institutional change that redeems the essential promise and ideals of Unitarian Universalism.

Buy the book: <https://www.uuabookstore.org/>

### [Widening-the-Circle-of-Concern-P18686.aspx](#)

Read free online, get free PDF or listen for free online: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

Clicking on each chapter will give you an option for listening to an audio reading of that chapter

As this is a yearlong study, it is understandable that you might miss a session or two, in those circumstances, please connect with Rev. Laura to get a copy of discussion you will miss, that you may reflect on in your own time; [minister@mnvalleyuu.org](mailto:minister@mnvalleyuu.org)

A Zoom link for the sessions will be sent to all participants prior to our first meeting. Please be sure to sign-up with an email address that works best for you.

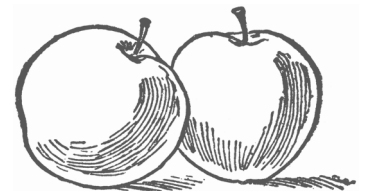
Sign-up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F044EABA823A0FE3-widening>

### **Mail Your Pledges!**

We appreciate it, as you are able, to continue to send your regular pledges in the mail, or arrange direct deposit with your bank (contact Julie for more info on direct deposit). Thank you!

### **Church Directory**

If you have any changes to the current directory please send them to the church email!



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

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

**Weekly order of service content should be submitted by Thursdays.**

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.*



## Belonging

By Ndidi Achebe , Braver/Wiser, July 7, 2021

*“Love is like the sea. It’s a moving thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from the shore it meets, and it’s different with every shore.”*

—Zora Neale Hurston

About two years ago, my hometown of Dayton, Ohio became another city to experience a mass shooting—a very traumatic event for me. For folk like me, who have been diagnosed with Bipolar II, traumatic events can be emotionally triggering. If they aren’t addressed, it can lead to a manic or depressive episode.

I started to process the shooting by journaling and reaching out to my community of family and friends who were, and still are, providing me support. The community was a place where I experienced Black Love, Black Joy, and complete acceptance of my unapologetically Black self. On our social media site, I wrote about what I was experiencing emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually,

and I received an outpouring of love.

Then something happened that I never expected: My posts about the event and my asking for support were no longer appearing on our social media site. When I found out indirectly that this was the case, I felt angry and confused. I felt like my family was no longer accessible to me. I felt abandoned, and my little girl inside of me was terrified. It felt like a rug had been pulled right from under me.

And then the unexpected happened again, except this time it was something amazing: during the next several days, weeks, and months I received an outpouring of love and support from folk who I didn’t even think knew my name, and who were members of the same community.

I learned that love and support can be expressed in many different ways by different people. For me to expect that love from other folks will show up in the exact same manner as mine is unfair to them—and yet my belief that it would only added to the amount of pain that I was feeling.

I learned that there were others in the community who were, and still are, showering me with love and support when I didn’t think it was there.

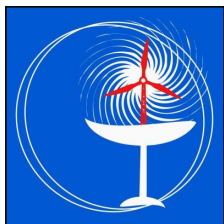
It took close to a year before I was able to finally feel a sense of compassion and understanding towards those who had caused me harm—and to recognize that I had more than likely caused harm to those same people. Most importantly, my circle of chosen family and friends has grown immensely.

## Prayer

*As we continue to move forward on this journey called life, may we remember that love can show up in ways that we might never have imagined, and may we receive all forms of love with grace.*

### 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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