

Services

Sundays 10:30 am
In the Church Sanctuary

December 5

*“Christmas Stories and
Stories About
Christmas”*

December 12

No Service

December 19

*“Thoughts about
Faith”*

Program Committee

December 24

*A Christmas Eve Ser-
vice of Music and Light
and Poetry, 5:00pm*

December 26

No Service



MERE LYS

December 2021 Newsletter

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

A View From the Hill

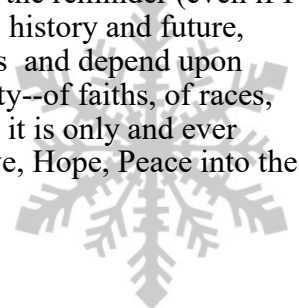
The holiday lights went up on Broadway in Hanska last night. Of all the small town light displays in the area I like Hanska’s blue and white snowflakes best. Festive, elegant, not dated immediately after December 25, and secular.

I’ve held an interesting juxtaposition of roles for the past 18 months--faith leader at Nora Church and municipal employee at the Hanska Community Library. A casual observer, particularly a non-Unitarian Universalist observer, might think one person serving in these two capacities is bound to run into conflicts as Christmas (or Easter) approaches. Surely as a pastor I want to fling up religious displays wherever I go, and I must bridle at the separation of church and state. It is true that I’m a minister at heart, but it is that minister’s heart that *approves* of the secular holiday lights, and that insists that the library’s December displays be either secular or multi-faith.

I love Christmas in all its pagan/Christian/secular glory. I’m a bit sad that I have just one December Sunday to plan and lead worship this year, in addition to our Christmas Eve service. How am I going to fit in all the reflection, all the celebration, all the invitation to participate in the birth, once again and always, of Love, Hope, Peace into the world in human form? Well, first of all, I’ll trust that the program committee has something special lined up for you for the service on December 19. (Actually, I know they have something special lined up! You won’t want to miss it). And I’ll try to fill some more of the gap by sending you a resource each Sunday of Advent (11/28, 12/5, 12/12, and 12/19) via our Grapevine. Resources that will probably include Solstice music, Hanukkah stories, words from Unitarian Universalists, and tales both ancient and modern.

Whether I’m motivated to defend minority faiths by insisting on a clear separation of church and state, or motivated to celebrate the richness of our country’s multiplicity of faiths, so many of which honor light and darkness this time of year, I delight in Hanska’s blue and white snowflakes (do you suppose the city knew, when it purchased those lights, that blue and white are colors of Hanukkah?). I delight in the splash of light on winter evenings that start early and stretch for hours. I delight in speculating that should a stranger happen through our town in search of shelter, a stranger who might not be Christian, they’ll be cheered by sparkle that doesn’t tell them they’re an outsider, through its imagery or colors. I delight in the reminder (even if I create the meaning in my own mind) that our nation’s history and future, battered, imperfect, fragile though they be, encompass and depend upon attempts to defend minorities and celebrate multiplicity--of faiths, of races, of languages, of cultures, of genders, of abilities. And it is only and ever through such attempts, imperfect and fragile, that Love, Hope, Peace into the world in human form.

—Lisa



December Board Meeting

Board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Time and location (virtual or not) are flexible month to month.

News From the Board

The board met November 17th on zoom. Buildings and Grounds reported that gutters had been installed on the parsonage kitchen area for a cost of \$1,770. Two quarters of dues are owed to the UUA. Rev. Lisa Doege is in the process of completing her ministerial search packet. The board will need to engage in conversation with church members regarding how to proceed for the '22-'23 church year.

At the service on November 21 a Christmas greeting was passed around for members to send holiday wishes to our partner church in Benced.

Jeanie Hinsman

December 19 Service

Program Committee Sunday *"Thoughts about Faith"*, we will hear from a few Nora members regarding their thoughts on faith and their Unitarian Universalist experiences. The service will also include Nora's first ever hand bell choir!

First Nora Bell Choir performance December 19

Christmas carols and bells go together like hand and glove. A musical contribution will be presented by seven church members and friends during the service on the 19th. The bells are an heirloom collection of Sally Anne Benson's family and we thank her for making them available to us for this musical interlude.

Christmas Eve Service

A announcement will be made on or before December 15 regarding the medium of our Christmas Eve service, whether in-person at the church or online via Facebook Premiere or Zoom. If you have not yet replied to the Grapevine survey regarding your plans for Christmas Eve, please do so as soon as possible.

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

In Memorium *Janet Mae Rosenbloom*

January 2, 1931 - November 14, 2021

In Memorium *Melvin Mikkelson*

August 27, 1917 - November 12, 2021

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!!

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 through May.



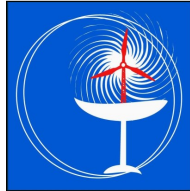
Pastor Lisa's Schedule

Lisa takes Monday and Tuesday off, and Saturday and Sunday of the weeks she is not preaching at Nora.

She responds to messages and phone calls, and holds meetings on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Friday continues to be her writing day.

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



Where: Meets on Zoom

This group will meet monthly 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/1FAIpQLSeNjCyma4aAZDmg79dK8k0hJqsQE9tQinjnwooHj7UDZSEUlg/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, through May and 2nd Sundays at 2pm in 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

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/>

A Note From the Treasurer

October Income and Expenses

Income:	\$ 3,427
Expenses:	\$ 4,224

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

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.*

Braver/Wiser: Words Fail

By David Glasgow

November 17, 2021

“‘Cause what if everyone saw? What if everyone knew? Would they like what they saw? Or would they hate it too?” —Evan in “Words Fail (YouTube)” from *Dear Evan Hansen*, by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul

“Words Fail,” he says, with a wry smile that’s trying hard to be teenagery and ironic. “I could use a good cry.”

I know he’s talking about the song from *Dear Evan Hansen*, but the title answered my question with poignant accuracy: “What do you want to sing today?” “Words fail.”

When I was fourteen years old, I was a closeted gay kid who spent approximately ninety-six percent of his daily calories trying not to make a blip on anyone’s radar—staying academically solid, musically reliable, emotionally unflappable—and the other four percent trying in vain to develop pectoral muscles solely through the power of prayer. The young man in front of me is in conversations with his parents about beginning hormone replacement therapy, and what that will mean for his blossoming musical gifts. Oh—and school, and choir, and the locker room. And a pandemic.

On the surface, he and I are so different. A voice on one shoulder insists it would be presumptuous and spiritually aggressive of me to try to “help.”

But I’ve smiled that wry smile. I smiled it at fourteen years old, and I smiled it this morning at forty-

nine. We navigate different seas, but we both know what it’s like to feel salt water wash over the deck. And he trusts me—God help me, this kid trusts me to be there for him on those days when the salt is particularly hard to rinse off.

So I acknowledge his joke with a nose-sniff chuckle and a broad, tight-lipped grin, and as our two pairs of shining eyes connect with one another. I inhale deeply.

There’s a moment of stillness after I’ve made space in my chest and the pressure of the world outside has filled my lungs with air, but before I’ve reclaimed the air for my own speech. It’s a gaping moment, full of memories and analogies and prayers, and it hangs overhead and colors the light like a summer rain cloud at sunrise.

“Isn’t that the truth,” I say, with a catch in my own voice, as I set my hands on the keys and start to play.

Prayer

*Spirit of Life who dwells before
and between and beyond all words...*

we open ourselves to you.



Direct Deposit for Pledges

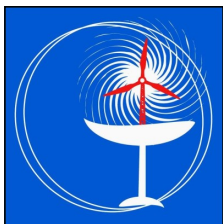
Direct deposits for pledges become even more pertinent during this time of distance worship.

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.

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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