

MESSAGE FROM MARK

Welcome to our annual look back at the life of our church, this wonderful, meaning-filled place where we are encouraged to be “Open to life, expecting to love, and prepared to serve”.

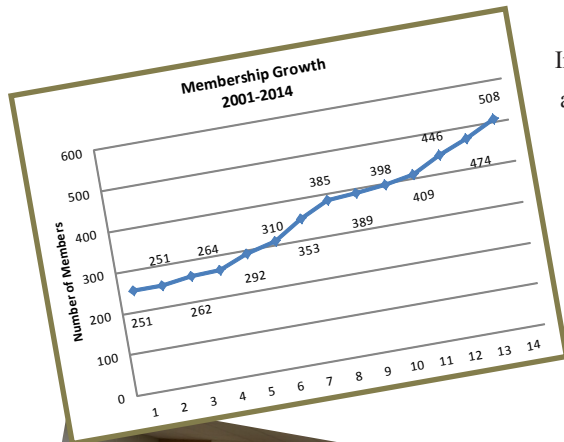
The story of this past year is that the reach of our UU message and spirit is growing. Our adult membership now totals over 500. Our religious education program for children and youth continues to expand, highlighted by the 30 middle schoolers who participated in our Coming of Age program. Our internet presence has increased with video podcasts of sermons now available and regularly viewed. And we are all eagerly anticipating the arrival of our new associate minister, the Rev. Erin Gingrich, who begins with us this August with a role of helping us further develop our justice witness within and beyond our walls.

This is an exciting time to be a UU in Des Moines! Let’s savor the success we’ve already achieved and look forward to the opportunities to live our liberal religious values more boldly and broadly in the days to come. We have so much we can yet, together, become.

See you in church!
Rev. Mark Stringer



GROWING IN NUMBERS



In January 2014, we certified to the UUA our church membership at 508. By the time of printing this Annual Report, we have 519 members and 88 friends. We have more than doubled in membership since Rev. Mark Stringer arrived at First Unitarian in 2001. Although “growing pains” are inevitable, the benefits of an increasing membership are many.

With more members, our budget is able to sustain valued programming and staff to support that programming. This year, our Wednesday Programming featured a Coming of Age program for 30 middle school youth, Spirit Play curriculum for Pre-K - 2nd grade, an all new UU Explorers class for 2nd - 6th graders, as well as choirs for all ages, and several adult religious education classes.

As a larger church, we are a leader of UU churches in the region and our staff is called on to lead workshops and speak at conferences. Rev. Stringer led the Sunday worship service at this year’s national UUA General Assembly (GA). Tracy Beck, DRE, co-led the Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module for DREs from around the US, and co-led the UU Identity Module for UU religious professionals in May. Lori Emison Clair, DCL, presented at GA, while serving in her role as VP of UUAMP (UU Association of Membership Professionals).



Growing membership inevitably leads to greater diversity in ages, interests, and beliefs. As always, we embrace this diversity, but also seek ways to connect with one another through small group involvement. Small groups give us the chance to find commonalities in our diversity and to celebrate the differences. In its second year, Soul Matters is an excellent small group opportunity to form on-going relationships while exploring meaningful reflections of our lives. Face to Face, social justice working groups, hospitality teams, and affinity groups provide everyone with a chance to get to know others in our growing community.

As we will continue to grow, we welcome the opportunities for additional programming, social justice initiatives, and the greater impact we can have in the Des Moines community.



FUTURE PLANNING

As the number of church members, friends and children continues to grow, we must ask ourselves and each other: Does the church have enough space to meet who we want to be as a church? To offer the programming that brings people of all ages into our church? To fulfill our vision for the future as described in the End Statements?



Building - While the 2006-2008 building renovation and remodeling project made significant enhancements to the building, additional improvements to the existing facility are needed. Window replacement for energy efficiency, acoustical improvements, commercial-grade window shades for light control, enhanced sound and projection capabilities, additional climate control on the lower level, a “gateway entrance” at the corner of Bell and Casady are just some possibilities.

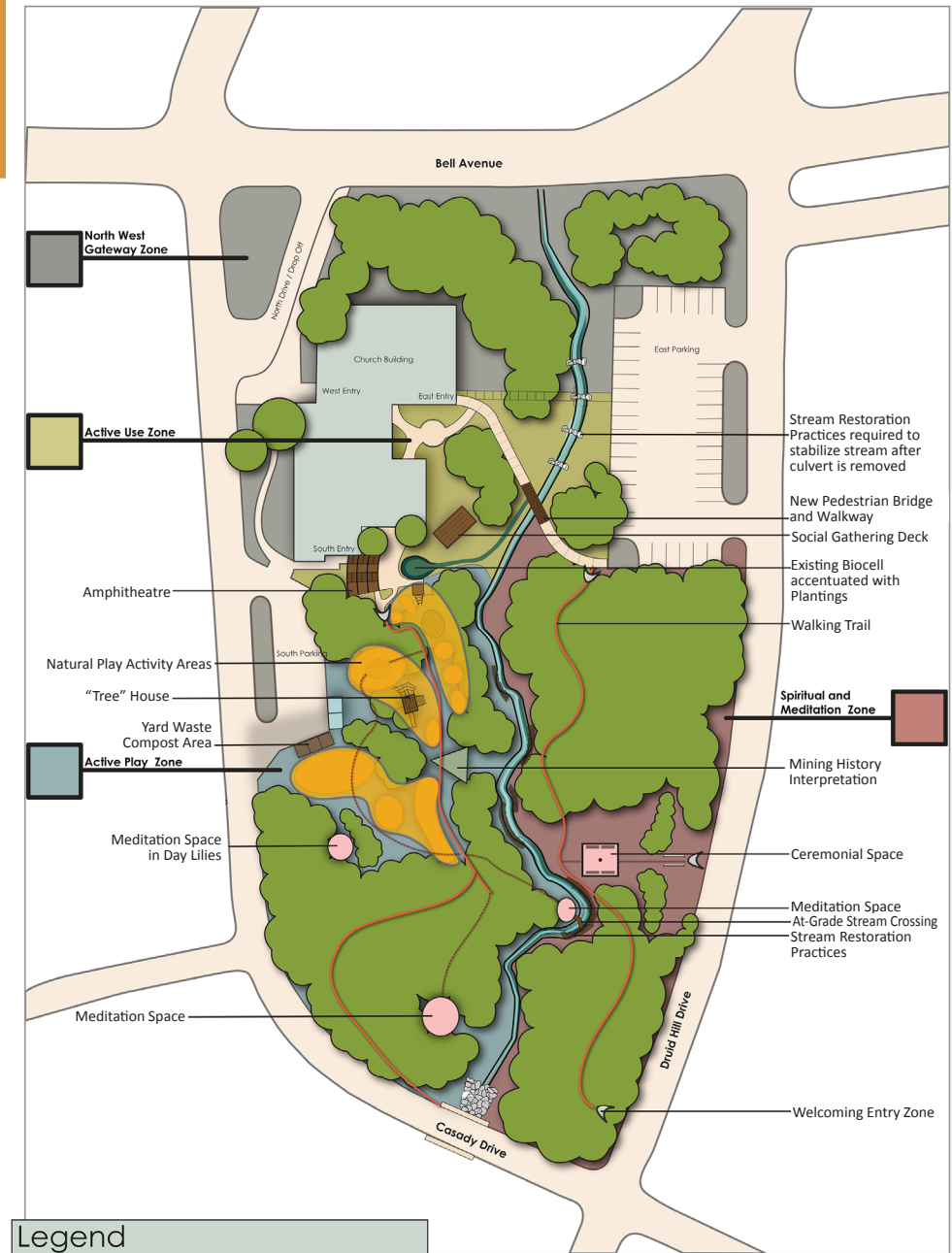


Parking and East Building Access – In the recent church survey, there was an overwhelming consensus on the inadequacy of our parking! With the expected (and hoped for!) church growth, we must improve the east parking lot. In addition, safety concerns dictate a new lighted pathway and bridge from the east parking lot to the east building entrance.

Woods Master Plan - This master plan is an overall vision for the use of the church woodlands. People of all ages, members and non-members, will have the opportunity to enjoy the features that have been created in the woods for meditation, play, walking and just “being” in nature. Be sure to check out the beautiful colored drawing that illustrates these features!



The Future - A “Tomorrow Team” has begun planning for congregational engagement in a process of visioning for the future - an exciting, courageous and important exchange of information and ideas, a discussion about possibilities, a creation of a common vision for the future of our physical facilities, a vision that will align us with the declarations we’ve already made about who we are and the difference we wish to make in the world! Look for your opportunity to participate in the months ahead!



Legend

Use Zones	Trail Types
Grey square: "Front Yard" Zone	Red line: Walking Trail
Yellow square: Active Use Zone	Blue line: Mulched Path
Blue square: Active Play Zone	Black line: Existing Path
Red square: Spiritual & Meditative Zone	White line: Entrance Feature



GROWING POSSIBILITIES



A \$7,000 Chalice Lighters grant was received from the Prairie Star/ Mid-America District to install video recording equipment in the auditorium to capture a weekly recording of the sermon to post on the web. Posting of our weekly sermons began in September 2013. The video podcasts are in addition to our audio podcasts and sermon text downloads, which we continue to provide on the church's web site.

Our YouTube channel enables two important opportunities for our growing church:

- 1) Current members and friends who are unable to attend services can still listen to the sermon at their convenience.
- 2) Many potential church goers "shop" for churches on-line. Videos of our sermons give others a chance to check out our church in advance of a visit. If you have a favorite sermon, please help spread the word by sharing it via social media.

Did you know?

There are 3 ways to enjoy past sermons you missed or want to revisit:

- You Tube: Do a YouTube search for First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. Bookmark or subscribe!
- MP3: Use the link on our past sermons page or subscribe to our free iTunes podcast. Search for UCDSM in the iTunes store!
- PDF text: You can view text versions of many of our sermons from our Past Sermons page on the web site.



NURTURING THE FUTURE

What brought me to First Unitarian Church of Des Moines? I felt called to Unitarian Universalist ministry, first as a small voice in my private mind, then it grew louder and more compelling until finally, in 2011, I gave in and applied to Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. After fifteen years as a community college biology professor, I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to be able to direct my life's work differently. Internships are required as part of the educational process by both the seminary and the Unitarian Universalist Association. This is what brought me to First Unitarian Church of Des Moines – seminary, internship, and ultimately, what I need most, experience.

In our first year together I have gained experience in a number of areas. Here are a few highlights. I learned that our Wednesday evening group of 4th – 6th graders, The UU Explorers, are totally awesome, squirrely and actually a very thoughtful group of human beings. I was honored to serve as a facilitator for the Soul Matters Facilitator group.

Our conversations were meaningful, nuanced, and supportive. It is a fine example to me of what small group ministry can be. Finally, working with the Celebrant Team to put together and deliver services is another highlight of my first year. I am humbled to feel the support of the congregation when I deliver a sermon. Thank you for that.

In particular, I am most grateful to Rev. Mark Stringer and to my Congregational Lay Committee for providing me with meaningful conversation, gentle guidance and thoughtful feedback. The time you have spent with me has made all the difference. Next year I'll be leading an initiative to explore how we welcome visitors. I hope some of you will join me in that exploration. I am very much looking forward to our second year together.

Linda Barnes
Ministerial Intern



GROWING OUR SPIRIT



Greetings Members and Friends of First Unitarian Church!

I am absolutely thrilled to accept the position of Associate Minister for Social Justice in your church. I spoke with many people about your congregation during the search process, including UUA district staff, your local AMOS organizer, and more than a dozen ministers located across the country. Across the board, people celebrate your leadership as thoughtful, visionary, courageous, committed and mature. It is clear you are a vibrant congregation with excellent lay, ministerial and staff leadership!

I am eager to meet you and learn more about your successes in social justice and your dreams for how we might build upon them together.

Life has continually called me to the work of social justice, calling my heart to open, to love, and to alleviate suffering and injustice wherever I can.

I studied social inequality as a cultural anthropology major at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. My volunteer and professional experience has ranged from working in a homeless shelter, to being a community educator at a Rape Crisis Center, to directing a statewide leadership program for youth and adults in Vermont. The culmination of these experiences led me into ministry with a desire to spiritually support and nourish that in each of us that calls us to make the earth fair and all her people one.

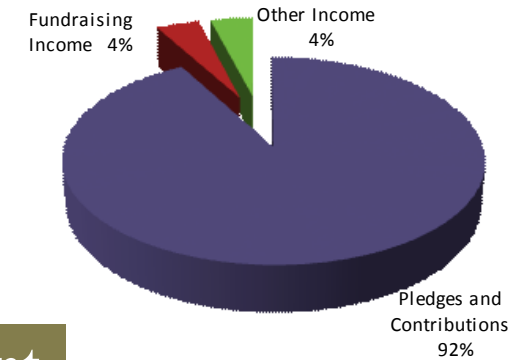
I look forward to getting to know you— your hopes, your dreams, the call of your faith— and to sharing this powerful and transformational Unitarian Universalist path together.

With joy and thanks,
Rev. Erin Gingrich

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

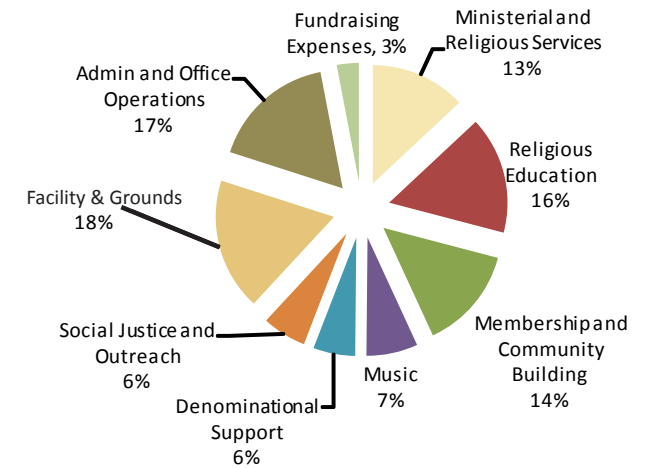
2013-14 Financial Support

Pledges & Contributions	\$616,000
Fundraising	\$27,000
Other Income	\$24,000
Total Support	\$667,000



2013-14 Money Spent

Ministerial & Religious Services	\$88,000
Religious Education	\$102,000
Membership & Community Building	\$95,000
Music	\$43,000
Denominational Support	\$39,000
Social Justice & Outreach	\$37,000
Total Programming	\$404,000
Facilities & Grounds	\$120,000
Admin & Office Operations	\$113,000
Total Administration	\$233,000
Fundraising Expenses	\$19,000
Total Spent	\$656,000



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF DES MOINES

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