



First Unitarian of Des Moines Social Action Opportunities

First Unitarian of Des Moines provides members and friends of the church a rich variety of social action programs and activities. We invite you to explore here the general information about these opportunities and hope that you find your own rewarding opportunity to serve. We've indicated whether a program or activity directs its efforts inside the church (internal) or outside the church (external). Some, of course, do both. —The UUs in Action Group

Caring Ministry

Internal

Caring Ministry is a composite of volunteers who render direct service to members of the church who have specific needs or milestones. Two coordinators in consultation with the minister oversee and assign tasks to point persons. Point persons facilitate subgroups who respond to specific needs and types of care. The subgroups include transportation, visits/check-ins, limited household tasks and meals, communication, correspondence, and assistance for families with new babies. Those who participate, both volunteers and receivers of service, gain in education and understanding of themselves and others.

How can you get involved? The month of October is designated as Caring Ministry Month. Each member and friend of the church is sent a registration form. Interested parties are invited to sign up to participate in one or more subgroups.

Meeting Info: Caring Ministry attempts to keep meetings to a minimum. The co-coordinators meet with each other when needed. They meet approximately twice a year with the point persons. The volunteers within subgroups do not meet and are usually contacted by phone or email by the point person of their group.

Contact: Co-Coordinator: Jo Fitz at 278.4884 or jfitz1972@hotmail.com or Pat Winters at 255.6229 or wintersIA@aol.com

Green Sanctuary Initiative

Internal

This team researches and recommends technologies, practices, and policies to make our church building and grounds efficient, healthy, and environmentally friendly. The team is particularly interested in recommendations that can impact upcoming building renovations.

How can you get involved? The team needs people to research different technologies, to determine best options, to write up recommendations to give to the architect and Room to Bloom committee with cost/benefit analyses, and to follow the adopted recommendations to fruition. The team also needs help communicating to the congregation, soliciting ideas, and generating support for green technologies that might require more cost upfront.

Meeting Info: At the most, once per month with people taking on individual research tasks between meetings.

Contact: Teva Dawson at 244.8590 or greenteam@ucdsm.org

Sunday Forum

Internal

From 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month, First Unitarian presents a forum that is open to all members and visitors. During forum, guest speakers and church members address current topics such as social concerns, responsible food, environmental issues, international affairs, social justice issues, ethics, and other topics of interest that educate us about the world we live in and our responsibilities within this world. Topics and speakers are listed in the monthly *Intercom* newsletter and at www.ucdsm.org (look within the Order of Service).

How can you get involved? To recommend speakers, email or call the Forum Committee co-chairs. Also, please support forum by attending.

Meeting Info: Anyone is welcome at the Forum Committee meetings held on Thursday evenings as shown on the church calendar.

Contact: Dan Aten at 457.8053 or atendan@mchsi.com



Diversity Projects

Internal

The diversity project group at First Unitarian seeks to build awareness of the value of diversity through courses, films, discussions, and gatherings.

How can you get involved? UUs in Action has purchased materials to support those interested in expanding their understanding and appreciation of diversity through teaching, leading discussions, organizing groups, showing films, and attending such gatherings. Past activities have included organizing potlucks focusing on food from different ethnic and cultural groups, showing films, conducting the “Weaving the Fabric of Diversity” course, and organizing the UU “Jubilee Weekend.”

Contact: UUs in Action, Louise Jacobs at 279.1650 or louisemjacobs@aol.com, or Amy Knudsen at 262.1291 or gumby123490@msn.com

Interweave

Internal/External

(Formerly Known as The Welcoming Congregation Group)

Interweave is a First Unitarian sponsored group, open to both church members and friends, that offers social interaction for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons; publicizes the church to the greater Des Moines GLBT community; and helps the church further its goal of social justice.

How can you get involved? Interweave organizes annual events including a church service, educational programs, and the church's participation in the Des Moines GLBT Pride Parade. We are also hoping to work with other local social justice groups. First Unitarian's Interweave group is a member of Interweave Continental, a national Unitarian organization. Interweave is open to all interested persons without regard to sexual orientation.

Meeting Info: Second Sunday of the month at 11:30 a.m. People generally bring food to share.

Contact: Erich Riesenbergs at 440.6604 or erich@dmicapital.com or Mark Metz at 274.0925 or scorpiored48@yahoo.com

UUs in Action Social Action Group

Internal/External

UUs in Action serves First Unitarian of Des Moines by connecting members to outreach opportunities at church and in the greater community. Through these opportunities, we connect with each other and discover ways to individually and collectively express our UU values.

Volunteer UUs in Action coordinators and point persons work to accomplish this service in the following general ways:

- Interfacing with current programs, activities, and members
- Encouraging new social action activities
- Communicating about social action and sponsoring social action oriented events

How can you get involved? Whether you have a few hours a week or a few hours a month, consider being a UUs in Action coordinator or point person for a specific social action focus.

Whatever your gift, skill, or desired involvement level, we hope you find a way to be involved in enjoyable, meaningful social action work. UUs in Action volunteers currently meet about four times a year and coordinate much of their effort via email, phone, and ad hoc meetings.

Contact: Bob Henderson at 254.1004 or Judy Lonning at 255.6587 or socialaction@ucdsm.org

Second Basket Program

External

First Unitarian takes up a collection twice a month for local non-profit organizations that address human needs. The Board of Trustees has set up a selection process for Second Basket nominations and selections. Organizations are selected by majority vote at the annual meeting.

How can you get involved? Nominate an organization and serve as a liaison between the church and the organization or contribute to the offering collected twice a month for the Second Basket organizations.

Contact: Amy Knudsen at 262.1291 or gumby123490@msn.com



AMOS

External

Are you interested in connecting with members from other congregations in the area to engage in the process of social change? First Unitarian Church of Des Moines is a dues paying member of AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy). AMOS is a non-partisan, broad-based organization of over 20 institutions in the Des Moines metro area and central Iowa. AMOS exists to recreate community. In our fragmented society, people are disconnected and conversations about important issues are often difficult. AMOS seeks to reweave the frayed social fabric and connect people across the lines that tend to divide (e.g., race, economics, religion, and geography). AMOS also strives to create positive change through collective action.

How can you get involved? Attend AMOS events or core group meetings.

Contact: Sally Boeckholt at 255.5622 or salgal23@yahoo.com or Jan Svec at 279.8427 or jansvec@mchsi.com

Birthday Bags

External

Once a year with help from our UU adults and youth, children at First Unitarian create Birthday Bags during one of several Social Action Sundays that take place throughout the year. This past year we donated 25 birthday parties in a bag to our local Home Connection and the Young Women's Resource Center. This social action project is truly an intergenerational event. Throughout the year, adults and families donate birthday supplies, toys, and gifts for children and youth between the ages of 1 and 17. Then on designated Social Action Sundays, the children decorate bags and fill them with wrapped gifts, birthday plates, cups, napkins, candles, balloons, a birthday card, and a certificate for a birthday cake.

How can you get involved? Contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Education to help serve on the Social Action Sunday working group that helps to organize this event. Adult and youth are also needed to help on Birthday Bag Sundays to assist children with decorating bags and cards, wrapping gifts, and filling bags with birthday supplies. Donations of toys, gifts, backpacks, paper sacks, and birthday supplies are welcome anytime.

Contact: Joan McDonald at 244.8603 x104 or dre@ucdsm.org

Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC)

External

DMARC is an interfaith group with about 150 congregations, including First Unitarian. DMARC responds to basic human needs; offers a context for interfaith dialogue, outreach, education, fellowship, and support; and serves as a liaison between DMARC member congregations and the Des Moines metro area. DMARC has the following program areas:

- *Direct Services:* An Emergency Food Pantry (see Giving Basket below), a financial support program for family emergency needs called Compassion in Action, and child care assistance
- *Support, Education, and Fellowship:* Hope in the Center, a volunteer mentor program for at risk children and youth; LADOS, a support group for those who have experienced death of a spouse; January Thaw, enlightening programs each January; Breaking Bread, an annual fellowship brunch; a weekly interfaith dialogue group; and other programs that promote cooperation and understanding among diverse peoples and faiths

How can you get involved?

- Sustain DMARC programs with donations of food and money
- Support First Unitarian's Giving Basket, our program to support DMARC's Emergency Food Pantry, by donating or transporting food items to the DMARC food warehouse
- Participate in a Sack Saturday collection at a local supermarket
- Attend DMARC activities and programs
- Volunteer in the Hope in the Center program or in the DMARC Food Pantry Warehouse
- Serve as a focal point for the DMARC activities at First Unitarian or as a First Unitarian delegate to DMARC

Contact: for DMARC specifics: Bob Henderson at 254.1004 or rhende@attglobal.net; for Giving Basket, Amy Knudsen at 262.1291 or gumby123490@msn.com



Commission on Social Witness

External

The Commission on Social Witness is charged by the church bylaws with selecting not more than 10 study/action issues for inclusion in the Congregational Directives for General Assembly Action Poll. In 2005, 6 issues were selected, and a class was then organized that researched and discussed the pros and cons of each issue. At the end of the class, thoughts generated were sent to the General Assembly representative.

How can you get involved? If you are interested in the positions that the Unitarian Universalist Association is taking on the Commission on Social Witness and would like to have an impact on those positions, please join the study of the new 2006 issues ranging from Affordable Housing to Women's Rights Worldwide to Moral Values for a Pluralistic Society.

Contact: Tom Thurtell at 225.3794 or T.Thurtell@mchsi.com and www.uua.org/sw

Iowa Coalition for Housing & the Homeless (ICHH)

External

Founded in 1988, the ICHH is a statewide nonprofit agency consisting of low-income housing and homeless service providers, advocates, local governments, lending institutions, and low-income and homeless individuals. Their mission is the following: "Through policy development, technical assistance, and education, the ICHH works to create structural changes that alleviate poverty and empower low-income individuals and their allies in advocating for change."

How can you get involved? Volunteer to assist through board member opportunities; office work; special projects; mailings; marketing; and legislative advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels.

Contact: Amy Knudsen at 262.1291 or gumby123490@msn.com

The Giving Tree

External

Each winter holiday season, First Unitarian participates in The Giving Tree Program. Children and families who participate in local programs benefit by receiving gifts of clothing, learning games, and a variety of other items. First Unitarian members and friends participate by bringing gifts to the tree set up in the church auditorium between late November and late December.

How can you get involved? Donate gift items, assist with gift wrapping either at First Unitarian or at Border's Books each year in December, and deliver gifts to participating families. Help is needed coordinating this important project. Please contact Amy to get involved.

Contact: Amy Knudsen at 262.1291 or gumby123490@msn.com

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

External

With more than 32,000 members, the UUSC is a non-sectarian organization that promotes human rights and social justice worldwide. The UUSC maintains partnerships in the United States, South and Southeast Asia, Central Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Through a potent combination of advocacy, education and partnerships with grassroots organizations, UUSC supports programs and policies that empower women, defend the rights of children, and support the struggles of indigenous people and oppressed racial and ethnic groups. It also provides financial and technical support when disasters strike impoverished areas. The UUSC also acts as a channel of giving and action for disaster relief. Each winter holiday UU youth raise awareness and funds for children's programs through the Guest at the Table project.

How can you get involved? Join UUSC. Participate in Justice Sunday or Guest at the Table.

Contact: Sam Howells at UUSCdsm@aol.com or visit <http://www.uusc.org>. For Guest At The Table, contact Joan McDonald, our Director of Lifespan Religious Education at dre@ucdsm.org.



Don Justo Coffee—Iowa Connections in El Salvador

External

Since 1990, the Presbytery of Des Moines has maintained a relationship with the town of Berlin in the Department of Usulután, El Salvador, providing support from churches and individuals in central Iowa through the Social Ministries Task Force. A lay-led committee in Iowa called “Companeros” works with a lay-led Pastoral Team in Berlin to develop and administer projects focused on improving living conditions, health care, education, and economic development for a more healthy and stable population in the rural mountainside communities around Berlin called cantons.

Financial support and delegations of volunteers have developed projects in the following areas:

- buildings
- education
- health care
- “Just Light” soy wax candles
- drinking water
- solar cookers and food dryers; solar photovoltaic panels
- Don Justo coffee
- employment for women in a sewing cooperative

First Unitarian is purchasing the high quality, shade-grown, organic Don Justo coffee for church use and also facilitating sales to individuals. Two thirds of the purchase price goes directly back to the community – Fair Trade Plus! The land on which the coffee beans are grown is managed with sustainable practices. Small growers receive a better return enabling them to stay on the land. Workers are paid better wages that help support families in the community. And, a portion of the proceeds support on-going development projects in the cantons under the leadership of the Pastoral Team.

How can you get involved? If you are a coffee drinker, please consider purchasing Don Justo coffee. You’ll get great coffee and help support families and communities in El Salvador. Look for our table in Channing Hall on the first Sunday of each month, or contact a member of the Coffee Team to place your order by the 5th of the month for delivery at the end of the month.

Contact: Coffee Team Members include Judy Haver, David Riddle, Darcie Vandegrift, Sam Howells, and Kent Newman. Contact Kent Newman if you’re interested in joining a delegation from First Unitarian to visit El Salvador next winter.

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI)

External

The goal of CCI is to empower and unite grassroots people of all ethnic backgrounds to take control of their communities; identify problems; and be a vehicle for social, economic, and environmental justice. Thousands of people across the state are CCI members. People from both rural and urban areas and immigrants and lifelong Iowans are involved. CCI helped Iowa develop its first ever clean air standards for factory farms and has helped people recover millions of dollars from predatory lenders, including the defunct and convicted Wolford group. CCI is also working for voter owned elections and immigrant rights.

How can you get involved? Join your friends and neighbors in educating your legislators about the issues important to you. CCI’s motto is “We Talk. We Act. We get it done.”

Contact: Erich Riesenbergs at 440.6604 or erich@dmicapital.com