

FMUU Congregation Life

Our Congregation and its culture:

While our roots are firmly lodged in the Unitarian philosophy of our founder, William Ballou, the Fargo Moorhead Unitarian Universalist Church strives to keep pace with the times in which we live. With nearly 75 enrolled members, a handful of elders remain from the strongly humanist group that reconstituted the church in the 1950s; the middle-aged crowd is a mix of theist (including christian, pagan, and others) and atheist/agnostic and coexist comfortably. The young families are hungry for discussion and action on social fronts and interested in high-quality, non-prejudicial religious education for their children. The overall culture is an informal one of warmth and laughter. We love music, small group ministries and social justice activism. The congregation's social justice interests have varied widely in recent years, revolving primarily around food and housing security and justice. This last year with Reverend Karen Van Fossan as our half-time minister our focus has been on the water protestors and indigenous issues. Individual members make significant contributions in the areas of homelessness, trans activism, immigrant acceptance, reproductive rights, and social democracy to name a few. The overall numbers of congregants is relatively consistent. The Fargo/Moorhead area is a college/university town and as such provides lots of opportunities for membership and community involvement.

Our Congregation's mission:

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fargo-Moorhead is to provide to its members, and to the community, an environment of religious tolerance, a loving fellowship of diversity, an open forum for the exchange of social, political, and moral ideas and values, and a religious home for spiritual growth without fear of reprisal.

Under Reverend Van Fossan we began a visioning process. The first step was to reexamine our core values. Using a survey method with over 100 hundred values on the survey, the congregation identified a revised set of core values. They are: Community, Compassion, Spirituality, and Belonging. Two of the core values (Compassion and Spirituality) were reaffirmed from the last examination of our values. We are now working on crafting operational definitions for each of the core values.

Examples of how our Congregation lives its values:

Members have volunteered to help with overflow homeless sheltering in local churches in a wonderful collaboration with other area churches. The local homeless services have recently increased their overflow capacity so that this is no longer needed.

Our congregation has participated in a social justice project to collect diapers to donate to local homeless shelters.

Our congregation actively supports Pride week in the Fargo-Moorhead area which occurs in early August each year. We march in the Pride Parade each year and host a table at Pride in the Park. In recent years we have had a float in the Pride Parade. We also have a presence with the Pride Interfaith Service.

Our congregation has constructed three raised garden beds and grown vegetables for local food pantries. This year, alone, we have provided over 47 bags of produce to the Dorothy Day Food Pantry.

In 2019, we became the 69th member church of Churches United for the Homeless. Two members were selected as representatives from our congregation and they have attended the Member Church meetings. Members of the congregation have been volunteering to prepare and serve meals at Micah's Mission. We have also volunteered to help Bright Sky Apartments set up their vegetable garden.

We are a member of Central City Ministries.

Our Safe Congregation policy:

We have a Safe Congregation policy, but it is not available online.

Worship service schedule:

Sunday Service: We are a twelve month church. Dress is casual.

11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Children's Religious Education:

During Service

Infant/Toddler Child Care:

10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Coffee and Conversation:

Following the Service.

Church Office Hours:

Tuesday and Wednesday 8 a.m - 11 a.m. (and by appointment). We have been operating online since spring, 2020.

Personnel

Name	Position	Paid Hours per Week	Year Started
Claudia English	Treasurer		2020
William Thomas	President/Chair	Volunteer	2020
Monika Browne-Ecker	Church Administrator	20	2021
Emma Hetland	Religious Education Coordinator	10	2021

Additional personnel notes:

Jessica Jensen and Jarrad Prasifka are board members at large since June 2019.

Lisa Falk and Joseph DeMasi are board members at large since May 2021.

Congregation History

Our Congregation's founding history:

It was an intrepid group of religious liberals, many of them transplanted New Englanders, who first organized this congregation. William Ballou came to Fargo in 1889, and began giving a series of public lectures on art, literature, philosophy and religion to a receptive audience hungry for intellectual stimulation.

He gathered around him a number of leaders in the young Fargo community, starting in June of 1889. In late November, 1889, F.H. Irons, W.A. Scott, and A.E. Nugent met at the latter's office and agreed to bear the current expense for Sunday meetings, and to canvass the prospects for forming a stable organization which would be called the Unitarian Society. In December 1889, a temporary organization was created. By February, 1890, the church was incorporated. On December 20, 1891, William Ballou was ordained as the first minister.

During early 1892, Mrs. O.J. deLendrecie and Mrs. A.E. Nugent began raising funds for the purchase of two corner lots at Ninth Street and Second Avenue South. A church building was constructed at a cost of \$5,000.00, and the first sermon was preached in it on December 11, 1892.

The church was in constant use for lectures, concerts, study club work, etc., as well as for the religious services of the society.

Date founded: 11/1/1889

Important events in our Congregation's history:

Second Founding

During the First World War, due to external pro-war pressures, threats to pacifists, and dwindling membership, the church was disbanded. It was started again in the 1950s.

In 1952, several people associated with North Dakota Agricultural College (NDAC), now North Dakota State University (NDSU), and a few freethinkers became interested in Unitarianism. They met at the YMCA and the university. They discussed local and national ideas such as brotherhood, racial tolerance, capital punishment, and god & the hereafter. They invited a

variety of speakers from all disciplines. This group continued meeting for several years. They met twice a month on Saturday evenings in the Improvement Building and in the Metropolitan Savings and Loan community room. Those with children wanted to meet on Sunday mornings and to have religious education. In 1958 they rented a larger space in the Opportunity School with a meeting room and two Sunday school rooms. Association with the Unitarian Association became association with the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961. In 1968 they reinstated their UUA membership. Also in 1968 they purchased a building at 18 South 8th Street and were finally able to move from various temporary meeting spaces and have a permanent home. The building included three upstairs apartments to help cover operating costs. In 1993 after 25 years, they sold their building and began searching for a more suitable facility. Several nearby churches willingly shared their facilities while they searched. Finally in 1997 they purchase the church building that was originally built by the Unitarian Society in 1892. A significant addition to the building was made in 2002 to create the church building we enjoy today.

Date of Second Founding: 1952 regrouping, 1961 resumption of UUA membership

Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2020	2021	Contract	Karen Van Fossan	Contract Minister
1992	1994	Called	Mary O'Halloran	Minister
1986	1987	Called	Catherine Vaughan	Minister
1981	1984	Other	Lucy Hitchcock	Minister

Additional ministerial history notes:

Our history also show these ministers at different times:

Helen Grace Putnam, Iowa Sisterhood, 1892-1895

William Ballou, 1889-1917 (credited with the founding of the Unitarian church but not yet ordained in 1892)

Eleanor Gordon, Iowa Sisterhood, 1902-1904

David Phraener, 1980

Lucy Hitchcock, 1981-1984

Paul Johnson Half time visiting minister

David Kraemer (1/4 Intern) 2013-2014

Karen Van Fossan (1/4 Intern) 2014-2015

Describe any important Lay Leaders:

Carolyn Monzingo, Commissioned Lay Leader, 1995- 2001

Membership & Finances

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

Year	Total Pledge Income	Total Operating Expenses	Membership	Youth Enrollment	Avg. Attendance
2021	\$55,511	\$59,257	69		
2020	\$59,786	\$41,687	67	12	42
2019	\$48,484	\$48,330	67	12	42

2018	\$44,136	\$60,041	73	10	37
2017	\$57,590	\$77,156	63	10	46
2016	\$73,285	\$82,448	60	10	48
2015	\$54,184	\$82,195	59	10	44
2014	\$62,000	\$81,000	58	12	51
2013	\$62,281	\$79,195	70	18	48
2012	\$59,000	\$73,000	66	13	44

Demographics

What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?

1-4%

What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?

5-9%

Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation

60% women

40% men

What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?

0

What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?

0

What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?

0

What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?

We are an open and welcoming congregation. From a worship coordination perspective, we have made a concerted effort to implement anti-racism programs/sermons/series from the UUA worship web.

Accessibility

Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible? Yes

Wheelchair accessibility details:

We have a flat floor-level entrance, and an elevator to the top and bottom levels of our church.

Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes

Assisted listening system details:

We have a PA system but no other assisted listening system. We use microphones for all persons who wish to comment, present, or lead the services.

Describe other ways your congregation has dealt with accessibility:

We have a ground level entry. We added an elevator during the remodel to get members from the entry level up to the Sanctuary and down to the community spaces in the basement.

We also have a braille songbook: Singing the Living Tradition.

Resources & Programs

Resources and programs our Congregation used or participated in during the past year:

We have used the Welcoming Congregations programs, as well as, a number of UUA recommended books for wisdom circles. We have recently done "Indigenous People's History of the United States" and "How to be an Anti-Racist".

Our religious educational programs:

Our Children's Religious Education program includes classes for pre-readers through high school-age students. Classes are taught by volunteers from the church community. Some of the content areas covered are world religions, diversity, and social justice.

Children's Religious Education:

During Service

Infant/Toddler Child Care:

10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Our youth and campus ministry programs:

At this point there is no youth or campus ministry programs.

Surrounding Community

Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:

According to the visitor bureau here is a little history of the Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead area:

Less than ten thousand years ago, the area that is now Fargo-Moorhead was 200 feet below the surface of Lake Agassiz, a huge inland sea formed at the end of the last iceage. Over centuries the waters receded, leaving six feet of rich, black soil that today make the Red River Valley one of the world's most fertile farmlands, with Fargo and Moorhead as its center.

The Red River of the North separates the two cities and serves as the border between North Dakota and Minnesota. The city of Fargo was named for one of the owners of the Wells-Fargo Express Company, William G. Fargo. In 1885, the existence of many lawyers in Fargo and easy divorce laws prompted thousands of unhappy married people to apply for the “Ten-Minute Divorce.” Also in Fargo’s history is the Great Fire of 1893, started when Mrs. Rosa Herzman discarded ashes behind her grocery store. They were ignited, and fire spread from what is now Main Avenue to the north. By the end of the day, downtown Fargo was devastated.

The city of Moorhead was named after William G. Moorhead, an executive of the Northern Pacific Railway. In fact, the Northern Pacific Railway had a profound impact on both the economy and population of the area. Originally settled by Scandinavian and European immigrants, Fargo and Moorhead became boomtowns with the arrival of the NP in 1871. When the Northern Pacific Railroad was selecting its crossing site over the Red River, eager land speculators spared no effort to learn of the location. Railroad officials marked a false route a few miles north of Moorhead, Minnesota to throw speculators off the trail. This area, now Oakport Township, was known for years as “Bogusville.”

Under the Homestead Act, settlers were given 160 acres in exchange for living on the land and farming part of it for at least five years. Suddenly Fargo-Moorhead became a mecca for hopeful refugees from the overcrowded east. The railroad brought a constant stream of settlers seeking a new life on America’s newest frontier.

Today the population of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area is more than 200,000, and there seems to be no end in sight to the persistent prosperity and growth of the twin cities on the Red. While agriculture is still prominent in the local economy, Fargo-Moorhead has also become an important focal point for other professions, including government, education, medicine, retailing and manufacturing.

The spirit of the early pioneers remains a treasured part of our proud heritage. We continue to build on our colorful past as we look forward to the promise of the future.

How your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:

We are seen as welcoming but we did not have a real presence in the community until last year when Reverend Van Fossan was our contract minister.

Our Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective:

Our congregation's religious context is a menagerie of theist and non-theist. The majority of members grew up in some kind of Christian tradition, mostly Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist. We have a few members who have spent their whole lives in a Unitarian church. Some members identify themselves as Christian, while others identify as atheists or agnostics. Additionally, some members identify as Quakers and others as Pagan and other earth-centered traditions.

Socially, our members are open and accepting to others inside and outside of the church. There us a strong sense of social justice and desire for community action. In general we are trying to adhere to the UU principles.

Position Basics

Anticipated Start Date: August 2021

Term: Three year with the option to renew

Percent Time: 50% Time

Minimum Salary + Housing: \$30,200 | We also provide \$3,000 of ala carte benefits. We also have money for travel, Lodging, and per Diem if the minister is not local.

Benefits: Self-employment offset tax; Retirement Plan; UUA Health Plan; Other Health Plan; Disability Coverage; Term Life Insurance; Dental; Professional Expense Allowance

Questionnaire

Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff

We have a half time Church Administrator, and we expect the minister to work with this person to plan and facilitate services, to communicate with the congregation and the community, and advise on church operations.

We have a part-time RE Coordinator, and we expect the minister to work with this person to develop and improve RE.

We have a contract pianist to support music, and expect the minister to work with them on music for services.

Primary areas of focus for the minister

To provide Sunday morning service(s)

To provide community outreach

To provide Congregational Care

To coordinate life-long Religious Education and Exploration

To assist in Church coordination

Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning

None.

Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation

Yes, we became a Welcoming Congregation in May, 1998.

Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation

No.

Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation

No. But we plan to be next year!

How the congregation defines good preaching and worship

Last year, in preparation for calling a minister, we engaged in a congregational discussion. Here are items that came up.

- Provide services
- Meaningful Sunday programs (not lecture)
- Maintain and develop rituals that are meaningful
- Intergenerational Services
- Good speaker
- Improved services
- Continue to develop professionally to focus on UU principles
- Sunday services that are inspiring & uplifting give an AHA!
- Consistently good programming
- Worship leader (only occasionally speaker)
- Speaks 2x a month (allows lay speakers 2-3 times/month)

How technology is currently used in your congregation and what are the expectations of the minister around that:

We have a modest public address system with up to 6 mics and are planning a new visual display system, either a rolldown screen with a video projector or a large flatscreen smart TV. We are currently presenting services as a Zoom conference as well as in person. We have recently adopted a system in which each week there is a tech host so the minister would not be required to run the tech side of things. We would expect the minister to be aware of the possibilities and contribute to planning.

- **Minister**



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