illuminate the past, celebrate the present, inspire the future

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Here's an *Almanac* "Index File" question for you: What significant event took place in a meeting house on Washington Avenue on October 24, 1859?

Answer: the founding of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. Our congregation will celebrate its 150th anniversary, or sesquicentennial, in October of 2009. Your Sesquicentennial Steering Committee has been hard at work on this event since the summer of 2006 (no, that's not a typo). In this article we will update you on what's going on and how you can get involved.

Why does our Sesquicentennial matter? There are a whole lot of reasons that history matters. One is that it is difficult to be grounded in the present if we don't know our past. There is much to learn and much to be proud of. As a congregation we are standing on the shoulders of the many women and men of courage and vision who came before us – people of faith who had the vision to start a new congregation in a frontier town, who had the sense of civic responsibility to contribute mightily to the development of the city of Minneapolis, who had the courage to build a new church on the corner of 50th and Girard when the congregation had shrunk to less than 40 members. By illuminating our past, we can inspire our future.

When and what is planned for the Sesquicentennial celebration? The celebration will start more than a year before the anniversary, in the fall of 2008. There will be an **article about our history** in every issue of the Liberal from September of 2008 through October of 2009. A fifteen month **calendar** with historical photos and dates (and current dates, too) will be available for purchase in October, 2008. Keep track of church events and learn about our history at the same time!

A year of exciting events kicks off the weekend of **October 25-26, 2008**. We will host an all day history seminar on Saturday with noted **UU theologians and historians John Hurley, the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong and the Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor**. Rev. Dr. Rasor will preach at both services on Sunday and the Rev. Dr. Strong will do a Sunday luncheon presentation about the evolution sermon series of the Rev. Dr. Marion Shutter, minister of our church from 1891 to 1939. On **April 18, 2009**, there will be a **gala dinner** featuring the **Rev. Dr. Lee Barker**, who grew up in our congregation and is currently the president of Meadville Lombard Theological School, one of two UU seminaries in the country.

We will have a **big intergenerational party** at church in the fall **of 2009**, with many activities from our past (anyone remember the Maypole dance, or Joyball Sunday?), and the opportunity to be a participant or spectator at our own UU Trivial Pursuit. Our **anniversary service on Sunday, October 25, 2009**, will be a very special "homecoming" service honoring the living tradition of the ministers who have been a part of our congregation. We hope our new UUA president – Bill Sinkford's successor, who will be elected in June of 2009 – will be with us that Sunday, as well as settled ministers, interim ministers, ministerial interns, community ministers and seminary students who have served or been supported by our congregation. Past church members and friends will also be invited.

There are many other events and activities in the planning stages, such as **adult and youth art shows**, **new banners** with our Sesquicentennial logo and a beautiful **new sculpture** for the sanctuary. We are working on a **quarterly speaker's series** of individuals who can educate us about our Universalist tradition and history and also bring our Universalist message of love and hope to the wider community.

We are also doing a **video** that will capture the essence of who we have been and who we are as a congregation. It will feature **oral interviews** with our **Minister Emeritus John Cummins** as well as members of the congregation.

We hope to have a **sesquicentennial web site** up and running before too long to provide information about our history and ongoing Sesquicentennial events and activities. For now, watch the Liberal and the weekly electronic newsletter for information about events and activities.

What if I have an idea for a Sesquicentennial project? Is it too late to add to the list? No, it's not too late. The Sesquicentennial Steering Committee welcomes your ideas and project suggestions. We have only two "requirements" before considering whether we will support a project – that any proposed project support our mission of illuminating the past, celebrating the present and inspiring the future, and that any proposed project have a sponsor – that is, people who are willing to do the work to see the project through to fruition. The Steering Committee can act as a clearing house to approve projects and to help connect people with similar interests or ideas. However, in general we don't have the person power to implement new ideas at this point.

What if my idea costs money? Does that mean it can't happen? No, it doesn't. You may remember that the Sesquicentennial did a fundraising appeal to the congregation last fall. Due to the generosity of the 75 people listed at the end of this article, we have raised over $67,000. Although we don't know yet exactly how much the Sesquicentennial activities that are already in the pipeline will cost, we hope to have some money available to support new projects. Additional contributions are always welcome – just drop your check off in the office, marked "Sesquicentennial" in the memo line. Contributors will be listed in the book in the Welcome Center.

Who do I talk to if I have a project idea, or if I'd like to help with ongoing Sesquicentennial activities? The Sesquicentennial Steering Committee is composed of several "core" individuals with the following general responsibilities (there is a great deal of working together and overlap): **Bette DeMars, Arts and Displays; Peg Meier, External Publicity; Mikki Morrissette, Archives and Publications; Marie Nordberg, Music; Jeff Sylvestre, Video; Jenny Thomas, Events; and Marcia Wattson, Communications. Kim Lund** and **Mark Ritchie** chaired the **fall fundraising. John Cummins** is our **Honorary Co-Chair** and **Nancy Atchison** and **Karin Wille** are the **Steering Committee Co-Chairs**. Contact information for these individuals is at the end of this article. The Steering Committee meets the third Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m.

Many dedicated volunteers have been working with the Steering Committee over the past year in all of the areas mentioned. Although this list won't be comprehensive, Carol Jackson, John Addington and Jessi Wicks have been hard at work on archives. Pamela Vincent, Martha Joy, Pamela Balabuszko-Reay, Kim Stelson and Barbara Kellett are focusing on events. Writers and communicators include Phil Burke, Peg Meier, Chris Bremer, Mary Junge, Paul Riedesel, Mikki Morrissette, and Craig Wilkins.

We still have lots of opportunities for volunteers – specifically someone to head a **publicity group** and someone to **oversee commemoratives**, such as mugs and T shirts. We also need more help with **events** in a variety of roles. Some creative volunteers could take some of the fabulous material the archives group has unearthed and develop **lifespan faith development projects** for congregants of all ages to get involved in and learn about our history. These projects could be **RE curriculum, living history presentations, or adult workshops**.

> We are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us – and those who come after us will stand on our shoulders. The Sesquicentennial is for yesterday and today, as well as for times we shall never see. The materials – our time, our talents, our money, the love and commitment we bring to this beloved community – are very precious, and they are very perishable. May we honor them well.

Steering Committee Members

Bette DeMars, Arts and Displays	**jbdemars@aol.com**	**952-929-2536**
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Karin Wille, Steering Committee Co-Chair	**karinwille@comcast.net**	**952-924-0700**

Giving Levels*	Sesquicentennial Contributors
The John Cummins Level (to $499):	Bob Albrecht, Barry & Karen Johnson, Charles & Kathleen Coskran, Lynn & Donna Elling, Rev. Barbara Kellett, Mary Mahoney & Dennis Dischinger, Preston & Betsy McMillan, David Potyondy & Lianne Knych, Lyn Rabinovitch & John Saxhaug, Mary Djerf & Don Wilson
The Carl Olson Level ($500-$999):	Daniel Berg & Welcome Jerde, David Caccamo & Sofia Ali, John & Dru Cummins, Jane & Joel Johnson, Richard Kain, Geoff Lenox & Anne McBean, Virginia McAninch, Tom Rush & Nora Whiteman, John & Rebecca Shockley, Lynne Stanley & Chris Elliott, Marcia Wattson
The Marion Shutter Level ($1000-$2499):	Thomas & Margit Berg, Karen & Richard Ziegler, Harlan Limpert & Chris Keane, Thomas & Nancy Atchison, Rev. Charlotte Cowtan, John & Bette DeMars, Pamela Vincent, Judy & Ray Goebel, Ann Kay, David Lauth & Lindsey Thomas, Peg Meier & Rebecca Lindholm, Paul & Joyce Riedesel, Kim & Caren Stelson, Rev. Kate Tucker, Paige Winebarger
The James Tuttle Level ($2500-$4999):	Joan and Dick Niemiec, Robert Benjamin, Carol Anderson, Laura & Ben Cooper, Joan & Rick Naymark, Lisa Sinclair
The Caroline Crosby Level ($5000-$7499):	Sue & Gary Schiess, Karin Wille
The W.D. Washburn Level ($7500+):	Elsa Carpenter, Kim Lund

**If you don't recognize the names attached to the giving levels, you will by the time the sesquicentennial is over.*

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