

# Posthumous plaque promotes Unitarian social justice propensities

By Claudia Loucks

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DAVENPORT — A former pastor's posthumous plaque promotes Unitarian social justice propensities.

The late Rev. Waitstill Sharp, a former pastor at Davenport's Unitarian Church, was honored at a recent special service and plaque dedication memorializing his work with European refugees.

Rev. Sharp, who died in 1983, and his wife, Martha Sharp, were posthumously named in 2006 as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel.

The Sharps were two of the five founding staff members of a Unitarian Service Committee in Europe from 1939 to 1945 helping refugees flee Nazi persecution to find safety.

Only one other U.S. citizen had earned the "Righteous Among the Nations" title, among nearly 21,000 people so honored, said church interim pastor the Rev. Mary M. Moore.

Rev. Sharp served as the Davenport church's pastor from 1954 to 1963. During his tenure, the church moved from its former meeting house at 10th and Perry streets to the church it built and still uses at 3707 Eastern Ave.

Rev. Sharp previously had served as a Unitarian Church pastor in Wellesley, Mass., until he and his wife, an experienced social worker, decided to go to Czechoslovakia in 1939 on behalf of the American Unitarian Association, Rev. Moore said.

The Sharps' mission was to assist refugees flooding the Unitarian church in Prague.

"The couple stayed at some peril several months after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia," Rev. Moore said.

Eventually, the Prague office was closed and the Sharps returned to Wellesley," Rev. Moore said.

"Not long after, the Unitarian Service Committee was established, and the Sharps were called back to Europe as its first employees to continue their humanitarian work in the growing number of refugee and internment camps in France," she said.

The Sharps were early supporters of the Unitarian Universalist liberal/progressive religious tradition Rev. Moore says is so rewarding to follow.

As an interim pastor, Rev. Moore is responsible for the same tasks as a "settled" minister, she said. Those responsibilities include "preaching, administration,

## ▶ Rev. Mary M. Moore

▶ **Birth date:** Dec. 26, 1949.

▶ **Family:** Sons, David Flint, Springfield, and Jonathan Allen, Urbana, and daughter, Elizabeth Carsley, Rantoul.

▶ **Hometown:** Albany, N.Y.

▶ **Favorite Scripture:** "Tao Te Ching, because I think there is much wisdom to be found in the approach of Taoism, which is one of the world's religious traditions. Unitarian Universalists believe that there is truth to be found in many different religious traditions. On any particular day, I also look to the Scriptures of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism."

▶ **Favorite Biblical character I'd like to meet:** "Mary Magdalene."

▶ **Hobbies and activities:** "Reading, singing, playing recorder, listening to music both recorded and live, embroidery, surfing the Web, following current events, talking with my children, walking, camping, canoeing, playing board games, card games, word puzzles and computer games, and working for immigrant rights and for civil liberties."

▶ **One thing I feel strongly about:** "Separation of church and state should be in place, including the right of same gender couples to marry and a woman's right to have an abortion."

▶ **I wish I knew how to:** "Speak Spanish well."

pastoral care, teaching, leading rites of passage and leading social justice efforts," she said.

Rev. Moore previously served as a "settled" parish minister for 26 years, and as a hospital chaplain for five years.

A "settled" parish pastor is "one who comes to stay and establishes a deep relationship with the congregation and the community," she said. "An interim minister is one who comes during a transitional time in the congregation's life to help them to complete the special tasks of the interim period in between settled ministers."

It entails working with a congregation to strengthen it during an interim period while encouraging people to "bring about social justice, a better world for all and to be good stewards of our planet earth," she said, and strive to be "Righteous Among the Nations," as were the Sharps.