

Second Thoughts

The Newsletter of Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

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March 2002

Sunday Worship - 10:30 a.m.

First Hour - 9:15 a.m.

Children's Religious Education - 10:30 a.m.

March 3

First Hour: "Thoreau as Spiritual Guide"

Jodi Polaha Jones

Family Worship: "Humor and Stewardship" Mark Darby

March 10

First Hour: "Buddhism" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

Worship: "Upon this Rock; Ecclesia and Unitarian Universalism" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

March 17

First Hour: "Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice" Rev. Marge Newton

Worship: "How Good Do We Have To Be?" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

March 24

First Hour: TBA

Worship: "Becoming a Contemplative in Action" Rev. Don Bredthauer

March 31 Easter Sunday

First Hour: TBA Darrell Draper

Worship: "Easter--The Rebirth of Spring" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

Details about First Hour programming are listed on page 4 of this newsletter.

Josh's Journal

When I was younger, and attending the Protestant Christian churches that my family would go to, I always knew when they would be asking for money. The scripture reading for that Sunday was almost always from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, in which he says, "God loves a cheerful giver." You could always tell where that sermon was headed!

Now that I am a minister, I find that I have to write the "God loves a cheerful giver" sermon without the benefit of consulting a lectionary. But I think that the heart of the message, that generosity is an important aspect of religious participation, is still a good one. It is moving to see the amount of generosity that has come forth from all of you in the previous years. This can also be seen throughout our nation as people have been giving to charitable causes as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Generosity is the fruit of a sensitive soul. It is the recognition that the well-being of others affects my well-being. Generosity is a spiritual practice that puts our faith into action, and demonstrates the interconnections we all have, each to another.

This month, we will be once again doing our pledge drive and canvass. This is really a sacred time of the year because it allows us to practice generosity. It also gives us the opportunity to reflect on the importance of our religious community in our lives. Think back to all that you have done for Second Unitarian Church, and all that it has done for you. When your canvassers come, talk to them, not just about money, but also about your values, your vision of what you would like to see our Church become. If God loves a cheerful giver, then certainly the rest of us can as well!

May You Always Be Blessed,

Planks and Slivers From the Board

The Calling Committee headed by Heather Lipsey has jumped into full gear with a great vision. There will be small group discussion meetings from April 7 - 30. On June 9 there will be a Congregation Meeting where we as a congregation will vote on asking Rev. Snyder to continue as a permanent Minister.

Second Unitarian Church was well represented at the Prairie Star District, Healthy Congregations Workshop. Our attendees included Josh, Marcia, JoAnne, Cheri Cody, Betty Allen, Dodie Robison, Bill MacMillan, Clyde Anderson, and Barb Roth. Ask them what they found interesting.

The Prairie Star District Annual Meeting will be held in Ames, IA on April 5-7. Come to a stimulating weekend of speakers, workshops, worship and fellowship. Everyone is welcome and see JoAnne Draper for additional information. The Annual PSD Youth Conference will be held in Boone, IA, at Camp Hantesa for ages 13 to 18. Please contact Lucky Dehn

for further details. I have fond memories of attending camps in my youth. Wonder if I could pass for 18?

Josh is working with Tom, Tricia and the Finance Committee to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the Treasurer and Office Manager. As we have grown, this needs to be adjusted.

Our very own Richard Koelling, Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a preliminary budget, based on budget requests received from staff and committees. He also presented a draft of the Pledge Drive brochure. The Pledge Drive will be held March 3 - 17. This is a time to reflect on YOUR church community and what it means to you and your family.

Norma has been working feverishly on a Leadership Handbook which includes Bylaws, policies, etc. Kathy Bell has been revising the Standing Rules. The long-awaited Leadership Handbook will be hot off the press for the Committee on Committees Meeting that Marcia Forbes is chairing on February 16. Special thanks to

all of you for your outstanding efforts.

Of course we just got done revising these important documents and the RE committee came up with an excellent question. What happens if we need to cancel church due to weather or other emergencies? So Josh and his staff are working a policy. In the meantime, he will be responsible for making a cancellation decision if the need arises.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 7 at 7 p.m. and is open to everyone.

Respectfully submitted,
JoAnne Draper -President, Board of Trustees,
Kathy Bell, Marcia Forbes, Norma Hansen,
Ruthann Irby, Heather Lipsey

Offerings From the Minister *by Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder*

Newcomer Session. Every second Sunday of the month, at 12:00 p.m. in the minister's office, we have our newcomer session. This session, led by Rev. Snyder, is intended for people who are new to Second Unitarian and to Unitarian Universalism and who are interested in learning more about both. Lunch and child care are provided for this event. No sign up is necessary, just come to Church on March 10, enjoy the coffee hour, and then attend the newcomer session. I look forward to seeing you there!

Ethics Class. The Ethics Class will continue this month on March 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the back of the Sanctuary. This month we will be discussing motivation as a part of ethical decision making. This class is open to everyone, and meets every first Monday of the month. Contact Rev. Snyder for more information and to collect the reading for the next session.

Meditation Group. The Meditation Group is a group specifically aimed at people beginning a meditation practice. It is a place where you can go to do some meditation, ask some questions, and discuss the practice. We meet this month on March 28 at 7:00p.m. in the Sanctuary, and on every fourth Thursday of the month. This group is open and welcoming to all who are interested.

Supporting Our Community

by Craig Piquette, Finance Committee

Since the events of September 11, 2001, we, as a people have taken stock of who we are and what constitutes 'our' community. Many of the members of Second Unitarian gathered in a special service after September 11th to share our grief and our concerns for the future. Sharing our thoughts that evening provided an opportunity for 'our' community to support us in our hour of need. The service, arranged on short notice, allowed us an outlet that would not have been possible without our Second Unitarian community. That was a special community event.

Recently, the sanctuary of Second Unitarian provided the community a means to celebrate and to say good-bye to a member to whom the church meant a great deal but who died too young. Without our community and Rev. Dr. Snyder, that wonderful service would not have been the same. The members of many of the committees within 'our' community donated their time to helping make the arrangements and Rev. Dr. Snyder knew what to say when most of us found it hard to know what to say. This is 'our' community.

Now is time to give something back to 'our' community. We must look into our hearts and ask 'What does Second Unitarian mean to me?' For some, it provides spiritual uplifting that lasts for a whole week and for others, First Hour, or the sermon of the week, provides an opportunity to think about something that one does not have time to consider at other times. The wonderful music and the inspiring choir may be the attraction that brings you into 'our' community. Many parents want their children to hear a positive message of love, respect and tolerance in Children's Religious Education.

You know the reasons you are part of 'our' community. At this time of year, as we plan for next year, we have to raise the money, which helps to provide all those things that 'our' community provides for you. The Finance Committee cannot tell you how much to give; that is for you to decide. Consider what you receive from our community and know that until now, 10% of our annual budget has been subsidized by the larger UUA community

and a diminishing ministerial fund which was raised by members in the years prior to Rev. Dr. Snyder's arrival. It is time that 'our' community stands on its own and provides for its own. 'Our' community is like family and needs everyone to contribute. 'Our' community is special and requires a special gift from the heart. Look into your heart, ask what 'our' community means to you and pledge all you can, to help 'our' community become self-sufficient. I know you will feel better for having done so as it helps us by 'Fulfilling the Promise.'

First Hour Discussions 9:15 a.m. Sunday Mornings

March 3: "Thoreau as Spiritual Guide" We will be discussing the chapters, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," "Reading," and "Sounds." In response to these chapters, we will be answering the personal questions, how do we wake up? how do we grow?

March 10: This month we will be learning about Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism has a high degree of visibility in America, and the Dalai Lama is said to be the most popular speaker on the college campus circuit. Tibetan Buddhism is at once perhaps the most complicated, and the most interesting, form of Buddhism in the world. Please join us in exploring it together.

March 17: Rev. Marge Newton will speak to the group about the history and purpose of the organization, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

March 24: TBA

March 31: TBA, Darrel Draper

The Music and Worship Committee welcomes comments and suggestions from the congregation and hopes Second Unitarian members will bring any concerns they have about the service to the attention of the committee.

Religious Education

by Barb Roth, DRE

During the children's worship time, I have been reading a book of poems written by an eleven-year-old boy, Mattie Stepanek. Mattie suffers from a rare form of muscular dystrophy, which caused the death of his three siblings. Mattie writes words beyond his years. He writes words of inspiration and celebration of life.

His words don't ask "why me." His words are full of thanks for the gifts he has been given. Gifts such as beautiful colors, birds, flowers, rainbows, snowflakes, butterflies, people, and another day. As I read his poems, I can imagine him smiling and breathing in every moment.

I think children are more likely to take notice of those important moments in life. Our adult lives can be so busy and we are too distracted by our schedules to take notice of the wonders around us. If it starts to rain, we might think of the mess on our cars or the need for an umbrella and predestine the day to be gloomy. But a child will likely take that same day and imagine the fantastic puddle-jumping opportunities that lie ahead.

Is it a gift to be able to live for the moment? I don't believe so. Does it take practice? This I do believe. Am I there yet? I am not even close. But what better time to take it all in than Spring. So I will practice and I challenge you to do the same.

"What a special idea
To be, today."

Mattie Stepanek

Child Care

by Suzanne Baker, Coordinator

Child care for First Hour and special events is now being coordinated by Suzanne Baker. Any committees that wish to arrange child care for their events, or parents wanting to sign up for child care for a particular event, should contact me at either

Thank you!

Pajama Party! (and a parents' night out!)

by Anita Jeck, YRUU

In collaboration with the caring committee, the youth are planning a monthly "Second Saturday" pajama party for kids approximately 4th grade and younger. Kids wear their jammies and bring their sleeping bags. The youth will provide activities, a video, and popcorn. The March pajama party will be Saturday, March 9, from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Second Unitarian Church. This will be a fundraiser for the YRUU youth group. The cost is \$10 for the first child, and \$5 for each sibling. A volunteer adult will be on hand to provide general supervision and infant care. The night will end with a video while kids snuggle into their sleeping bags, so they'll be all ready to turn in when they get home! Please call Anita Jeck by Thursday, March 7th to register.

Finance Committee

by Richard Koelling

The finance committee pretty well wrapped up preparations for the pledge drive during the meeting of February 12. Undoubtedly, you have received the pledge packet by now and are thinking seriously about your contribution for the next church year. By the way, the church year will run from July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003.

The pledge drive this year will be short - only two weeks - which hopefully will be sufficient time to decide the importance of the church community to you. In that regard, please read Dr. Piquette's letter on a separate page in this newsletter. He makes several good points for enhancing the strength of our community and for continuing our growth under the leadership of Rev. Snyder.

Also, be sure to attend church on March 3, the "kick-off" Sunday, when Mark Darby will present his sermon on "Stewardship is a Laughing Matter." Stewardship, of course, is one of those things that is too serious to be serious about all the time. After the service, we will have a brief presentation of the pledge program for this year.

Serving Our Community
Monthly Report of the Social Justice Committee
by Vicki Pratt, Committee Secretary

Advocacy for the Homeless: During a February First Hour, Paul Koch, former director of the Siena Francis House, provided some ideas for how we could act as advocates for the homeless in Omaha. Paul's major point was that "people have to learn the language of homelessness." The Siena Francis House has no criteria for who can qualify for services or maximum length of stay and "serves a population that no one else wants to serve." This shelter is also unique in that they have four counselors on staff. Two are psychologists. Among the homeless in Omaha are people with mental illnesses, women with children who are escaping from abusive situations, and people with addictions. The goal of the Siena Francis House is to get people off the streets and into independent living, although "there is a segment of the population that is never going to get out of the system." Paul also noted that lax monitoring of rules in the housing projects, such as Logan Fontenelle, allowed extended family members to stay in the apartments. Now that public housing has transitioned to single family homes throughout Omaha, these extended family members have been displaced and the number of homeless has increased.

Paul's outlook on life is that every human being has a value to the community. It's up to us to find that value and celebrate it. "We don't all play on a level field, some of us are given wonderful gifts: bright minds, good social skills. Some of our clients are intimidated just by opening a checking account." Paul also stated that advocates need to be able to interact with people. If anyone would like to coordinate activities for this new subgroup of the Social Justice Committee, contact Clyde Anderson . On an individual basis, the Siena Francis House always has need of donated clothing and toiletries.

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC): The Institute of Public Life will sponsor a 7-hour training session on Saturday, March 9. This session is titled *Fundamental Principles of Broad-Based Community Organizing*. Topics include:

- The world as it is vs. the world as it should be
- Broad-based community organizing
- Public vs. private
- One-to-one relational meetings
- Relational power vs. unilateral power
- Conducting house meetings

The class begins at 9:00 a.m. at St. Leo Catholic Church, 102nd & Blondo, Classroom W-4. The only cost is a \$5 donation for lunch. If you would like to attend, contact Clyde Anderson.

Coffee Sales: Thanks to everyone who purchased the coffee as a fund raiser for Social Justice! In addition to a pleasant taste, this coffee is grown with consideration of environmental, economic, and social concerns.

Unitarian Universalists take pride in their tradition of social activism and community outreach. We keep that tradition alive at Second Unitarian. You are invited to attend our next meeting on Sunday, March 10, at 12:00 p.m. If you have concerns about the topics being addressed by our Committee or other social justice issues, attend our meeting and share them with us.

Creative Writing

by Jodi Polaha Jones

Do you enjoy creative writing? A writer's group is held once monthly, providing an opportunity to get new ideas, start new works, or spend time on ongoing projects. This is a "for fun" group - reading your work aloud is optional! Contact Jodi Polaha Jones: _____ for more information.

Office Hours

Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder; Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturday, by appointment.

Tricia Genereux; Monday through Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.; Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Barb Roth; call _____ for an appointment.

Calling Process

by Craig Piquette

In 1998, following congregational approval of a new long-range plan, the members of Second Unitarian embarked on a journey. That journey was to include a search for a minister who could facilitate our spiritual journeys, the search for truths, and the journey to create a greater world in which to live. Like a pilgrimage, this is a collective journey with many individual tales. There are many steps on that journey and what follows is a brief account of the journey thus far and a view of the road ahead.

The first step was to apply to the UUA's Extension Ministry Program. The application process required a lot of hard work by many determined people. Our vision for Second Unitarian, as conceived by the congregation, was refined with the help of a UUA consultant. That mutual hard work paid off when our application was accepted. The UUA, based on their evaluation of our application for an Extension minister, matched us with Rev. Dr. Snyder, a new graduate of Meadville/Lombard Seminary in Chicago. In May 2000, the congregation voted to accept him as our Extension Minister. He's held this position for the last year and a half and we have seen many changes and improvements since his arrival. It is now time for us to take the next step on our journey, the 'calling' process.

As an Extension Minister, Dr. Snyder was appointed by the UUA to serve as our minister for a limited three-year term. As a congregation, it is now our responsibility to decide if we want to 'call' him to become 'our' minister, that is, to form a covenant with him, which binds us together towards a common purpose. The 'calling' process provides a means for the congregation to re-examine their shared vision and goals; a process, to quote our mission statement, leading to "an inclusive, nurturing religious community that promotes the search for truth, a spiritual grounding in life and a challenge to act."

The calling process will begin with the first sermon this April. This 'Calling' sermon will define and stress the importance of the calling process, explaining what it means to us and to the minister.

During the month of April, each member will be asked to participate in small group discussions (approx. 10 people). These meetings will be led by a facilitator who will be aided by another member to help record the resulting discussion points and opinions. Congregational goals will be reviewed and discussed, to provide a temper that will steel our resolve to meet them. The Calling Committee will communicate more information on this process through the newsletter and in May, we will forge the opinions and comments from the small group meetings into a report to the Board. This report will be discussed with Dr. Snyder, informing him of congregational intent. The final step in this process will take place Sunday June 9th. Assuming a favorable report from the small group meetings, the congregation will vote as a community to affirm our intention to 'call' Dr. Snyder to join us to help us meet our goals.

In one of his earliest sermons, Dr. Snyder talked about the meaning of covenant. He reminded us of an important covenant in our Judeo-Christian heritage, the promise of a rainbow after the storm. Promises are important and should not be made lightly. As a religious community within a democratic denomination, we find that the Calling process is necessary for us to show that we have decided to make a promise to 'our' minister, to support him financially and to determine if Dr. Snyder and we share a common vision for our community. By 'calling' our minister, we as a congregation are forming a covenant with Dr. Snyder and offering him a challenge to help us meet our common goals for Second Unitarian.



January Financial Update

by Tom Rundquist, Treasurer

On January 31, 2002, the Operating Fund balance was \$3,838.81 and the Building Fund balance was \$2,487.00. Total Money Market Reserves (Memorials & Special Funds) shows a balance of \$14,222.57. The Dodge Fund balance was \$15,313.09.

The fiscal year through January 31, 2002, shows an Operating Fund income over budget by \$5,294.22 and Building Fund income under budget by \$969.00. Total income, affected by lost rental income and low fundraiser income, is \$524.25 over budget. Total expenses were under budget by \$8,512.50. Net Income is \$9,036.75 over budget.

New Member Profile

by Lorraine Duggin

Book Club

by Gwen Eurich

Book club members will meet Tuesday, March 26, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Alice Blackstone to discuss *The Franchise Affair* by Josephine Tey. This is a mystery for readers who hate mysteries! Come enjoy our discussion.



Happy Spring!

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