



Second Thoughts

The Newsletter of Second Unitarian Church of Omaha



March 2005

Annual Pledge Drive Kick-Off

by Craig A. Piquette

Finance is getting ready to kick up its heels and let down its hair (some of us anyway)! This month marks the start of the annual pledge drive and there are a number of social events planned. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, there will be a number of house parties this month to give members a chance to get together and talk about what the church means to its members and friends. All are welcome to attend so sign up and meet some new friends or talk with long-time comrades. We hope that you will pick a meeting convenient for you.

Also this month, the Pledge Kick-Off Dinner will be held on Saturday, March 12 starting at 6 pm. Following up on last years success, we will have a free spaghetti dinner with wine and garlic bread (to enhance communication) followed by a stirring series of bingo games with fabulous (well, maybe not fabulous but pretty nice) prizes. This is a family event so bring the kids, bring the parents but leave the pets at home. We hope to have a great time so please make plans to join us for a rollicking Saturday evening, March 12.

Covenant Groups: Try it for a Night

by Rev. Josh Snyder

You have heard me talk over the past couple of months about Covenant Groups and the impact they can have on people's lives and on our Church community as a whole. Now it is your turn to get a taste of them for yourself! On Tuesday March 29th at 7 PM the Covenant Group Pilot Program will sponsor an event open to everyone interested in, curious of, or skeptical about Covenant Groups. We call it "Try it for a Night!" This is a chance to get a small taste of what it is like to participate in the conversations that go on at covenant groups, to gain some first-hand experience of listening to the stories of others, and to see if this is something to your liking. The best part is that there is no expectation or commitment involved at this point. So if your curiosity is getting the better of you, and you are not quiet sure that it is your thing, then come along! This is an experience open to everyone. We will give some instruction and have a time for listening to feedback. If you are interested, give Rev. Josh a call or just come and try it for a night!

Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

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First Hour 9:15 a.m.

Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.

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

Nursery care 10:30 a.m.

NURSERY CARE NOTE: If you need childcare during Sunday service or a church event, please contact Alison Maheux at 955-2746 at least two weeks in advance to make childcare arrangements.

Staff

Minister: Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

Office hours:

M, W 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

T, Th 12:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Director of Religious Education: Rose Joshi

Office hours for August-May:

T, W, Th 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

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Board of Trustees

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Second Thoughts is published monthly. Items for publication may be submitted to the church office-email address:
info@secondunitarianomaha.org

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month

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Josh's Journal

This year our Religious Education program has been studying the religions of the world. Many of our children, and our parents, have commented on the quality of the teaching and especially the learning that is going on down stairs on Sunday morning. This is not surprising to me. Not because we have such a wonderful array of talent in our congregation that gets to be displayed each and every week (I already knew that!), but also because of the topic itself.

UUs have been interested in world religions for a long time now. Perhaps the first turn to the East in American religion was when the Transcendentalist magazine The Dial published one of the first translations of a Buddhist sutra into English. Emerson wrote a poem entitle "Brahma" and Thoreau took with him a copy of the Hindu text Bhagavad-Gita into Walden Pond. Unitarians, such as Lydia Maria Child and James Freeman Clarke, also wrote early some of the attempts in this country to systematize and understand world religions.

But the people most interested in world religions from a religious, as opposed to an academic

perspective, were the Universalists of the early twentieth century. The Universalists of that time began to understand their faith beyond the Christian tradition with which it had so long been associated. Universalism had always meant the universal salvation of all humankind by an all-loving God. But some Universalist theologians began to speculate that if this was the case then everyone in the entire world, regardless of their religious faith, was saved. If God looked upon the Hindu, the Muslim, the Buddhist, and the Native American as worthy of going to heaven, then perhaps we too should take seriously the faith claims of other religions. Clarence Skinner and Kenneth Patton began talking about these religions in Universalist worship services and in the context of Universalist theology as early as the thirties and forties. When the Unitarians and the Universalists merged, it was the Universalists who brought their openness to world religions to the party.

Of course, as with most things in our faith, we cannot forget to use reason and our own sense of authenticity when talking about world religions in Unitarian Universalism. We should have no illusions that we have fully and completely understood every element of these world religions. In many cases we skim only the surface. But it is enough to get a little understanding of these religions so that our children are aware of the basic beliefs of cultures and traditions that they might not otherwise be exposed to. The idea being not that they will convert to anything, but that they will take them seriously and perhaps even be inspired by something taught in these religions. In this way their own religious selves are awakened. May it be so with all of us.

May You Be Blessed Always,

Rev. Josh Snyder



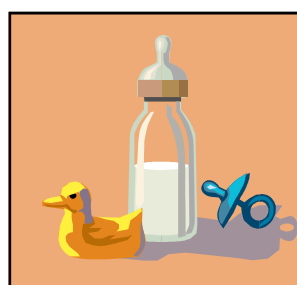
Child Care Task Force Forming

by Steve Powell, Board Vice President

We have been fortunate to have Alison Maheux as our very dedicated volunteer childcare coordinator, but she will be moving out of the area in the spring with the completion of her graduate program and the beginning of a new career. At the same time, many of our most reliable teens have given up childcare duties for paying part-time jobs. At our committee on committees meeting Saturday, February 19, the subject of childcare at church was discussed.

The bottom line: our system needs an overhaul. It's not clear exactly who will do what when it comes to providing childcare services in the future. (See the Second Unitarian Leadership Handbook pp.23-24 concerning childcare guidelines.)

Clearly, the present system needs the thoughtful attention of all concerned church



members and stakeholders.

We want to re-evaluate this matter from the ground up and we invite every parent with children and all interested people to get involved in a Childcare

Task Force. We invite you to attend a meeting to re-design our childcare program on Saturday, March 19, 2005 from 9:00 am to Noon. If you need childcare at church to attend this meeting please call Alison Maheux to request it by March 2.

We will develop our new program and present our recommendations to the board and congregation after this meeting. We have included a childcare survey in this newsletter and request that you **drop it off at church by March 5**. We need to hear from all interested parties to make this great!

OTOC Presents Academies on Public Participation and the Common Good:

By Rachel Yamamoto

What is the Common Good? Who should decide what is “good”? Educating children, finding good jobs, paying for health care, security for families, fairness in taxation, making rules that govern our businesses and our lives - these are all issues that must be dealt with as a community. There are four Academies organized by Omaha Together One Community this spring which will provide instruction and practical experience needed to bring people to common judgment and action. These Academies are being held in February, March, and April.

The West Omaha Academy will be held on **April 23rd from 9am – 3pm at St. Wenceslaus, 15353 Pacific Street.** This Academy will focus on the issues of health care coverage for all families. It is our goal to have five to ten members of our church attend this Academy to bring us closer to our goal as a beacon of social liberalism for West Omaha. There are sign-up sheets on the bulletin board.

There will also be three other Academies held at Benson High School, St. Cecilia’s Cathedral, and Temple Israel. These Academies will focus on issues such as auto insurance, the uninsured, and school funding. All Academies are open to the public so feel free to sign up for one of these Academies.

Habitat for Humanity

Multi-Faith Coalition

The new year is in full swing and plans are already being made for summer activities. Habitat for Humanity’s Multi-Faith Coalition had its first planning meeting in February, but there is still a lot to do to get ready for the build season. Committees

are being formed and money is being raised. The lot is located at 44th & Ellison. The family that will be living in the house includes a couple with six children. The husband is almost blind, so they all depend on one income to survive. Building will start in late May after the concrete foundation is poured. More details to come!



Do you want to help with Habitat for Humanity but you’re afraid that picking up a hammer would put everyone around you in danger?

There are plenty of other ways to help besides construction.

The Multi-Faith Coalition needs volunteers to help with publicity, money, worship, food, and organizing the other volunteers.

The Coalition is also trying to raise \$50,000 to fund the unavoidable expenses that go with building a house, such as materials and professional services that cannot be done by lay-person volunteers. Monetary donations will help us make this project happen.

If you would be interested in helping in any of these power-tool-free ways, please contact Rachel Yamamoto



February Workshop Rotation:

Taoism

by Rose Joshi, DRE

Taoism is based on the teachings of a famous teacher from China named Lao-Tzu, who was born over 2,500 years ago. Legend has it that when he was an old man and was leaving his city, the gatekeeper demanded that he leave the people some words of wisdom. Lao-Tzu agreed and created a collection of meditations in a book called the

Tao Te Ching. Seven hundred years after Lao-Tzu died, a group named him their leader, and Taoism began.

The way of Taoism is the way of “*no action*”, which means not forcing things, to be one with the flow of nature. For example, when you first learn the proper technique for shooting a basketball, there are many things to think about: how to hold the ball, how to use your legs, how to aim, how to release the ball, how to follow through. It feels awkward and forced at first, but with continued practice, you get to a point where shooting feels natural. You don’t have to think about all the components of good form. It just happens. There is no separate or forced action: just you, the ball, and smooth motion, united in one simple flow. This is Wu-Wei.

Downstairs, Mary Ann Chisholm led a discussion about yin/yang, the symbol of Taoism, in the Art Studio: yin represents the feminine, darkness, earth, moon, passivity, and yang represents the masculine, light, sun, heaven, activity; and how these complementary opposites work together for harmony. Kids then put the concepts of yin and yang into practice by making the symbol out of clay: yang was represented by the action of molding and yin by the receptive nature of the clay being shaped by hands. They also discussed complementary colors, which are opposite each other in the color wheel.

Dan Roth created a unique game show called “Who Wants to Be A Millionaire, Taoist Style” for the Drama Club. In his words: Rather than compete for fabulous prizes or cold hard cash, the contestants battled for Inner Peace and Serenity. They learned about the concepts of ‘wu wei’ (doing without doing), ‘pu’ (the uncarved block), and how to balance yin and yang qualities. They had charade and drawing challenges, a wet soap relay race, and trivia questions. Kids received a Chinese finger-pull puzzle and metal link puzzles (which can only be

solved with gentle cleverness, not force) as concrete examples of wu wei.

In the Mind, Body, and Spirit Workshop, the kids learned about and practiced Tai Chi with Alison Maheux, a martial arts enthusiast. Tai Chi, invented by a Taoist, is a set of very controlled, slow-moving exercises that discipline the body and the mind. It is both a form of physical exercise and a kind of meditation. After learning about the history and principles of Tai Chi, everyone cleared away the cushions and got ready for focused action: a few moments of quiet, meditative breathing, then slow imitation of the movements of one of eight different animals, as depicted in the book *Tai Chi for Kids: Move with the Animals*.

Group Guides were Haley Brown, Betty Segell, and Pam Curtiss-Smith. Thank you to all our volunteers!

RE ANNOUNCEMENTS

One Workshop Rotation Teacher Needed

Heard about all the fun we’re having downstairs in Children’s RE with the new workshop rotation model? It’s not too late to join us this year!

There is one teaching position open in May for the Unitarian Universalism rotation, in the Mind, Body, Spirit workshop. (May 1, 8, 15). Contact Rose Joshi

if interested.

Chalice Children Teacher Needed in May

A volunteer teacher is needed to teach lessons in the preschool classroom, for one or more of the following Sundays:

May 1 - "People Love Me"

May 15 - "People Teach Me"

May 22 - "I Can Celebrate"

Contact Rose Joshi if interested. Thank you.

RE CALENDAR

Feb 27: Faith in Action Sunday, Taoism Closure

Mar 6: FAMILY SUNDAY: Kick-off for
Hinduism Rotation

Mar 6-20: Hinduism Workshops

Mar 27: Faith in Action Sunday, Hinduism
Closure

Apr 3: FAMILY SUNDAY: Kick-off for Earth
Religions

UU and You

by Judy Maniscalco

Denominational Connections Committee

Some events occur and leave such an indelible mark that we remember where we were when we learned about them. The shuttle Columbia disaster on February 1, 2003 was such an event for many of us.

After a 16 day flight dedicated to science and research, Columbia abruptly disintegrated during re-entry over the west coast of the United States, immediately killing all seven crew members aboard. In news reports that followed we learned how remarkable each member of the crew had been. Also remarkable was the diverse makeup of the crew. Each was from a different faith tradition—Hindu, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Episcopalian, Baptist, Charismatic and Unitarian Universalist.

Columbia crewmember Laurel Clark grew up a UU in Racine, Wisconsin. Although she lived in many cities across the country, she always considered Racine her hometown and the Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church her home church. She not only returned to the church for her wedding ceremony in 1991, but frequently returned to Racine to speak to schoolchildren or church groups whenever asked. Rev. Dr. Tony Larsen, Minister of Olympia Brown, expressed his pride in Laurel. "I have to say I am proud that the vision she

carried had some roots in her Unitarian Universalist upbringing," he said.

Laurel was only 41 when she died, but she managed to pack a wide variety of accomplishments and adventures into her short life. She enjoyed scuba diving, skydiving, mountain hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, canoeing and exploring volcanoes. She majored in zoology in college and then went to medical school and studied pediatrics. She joined the Navy initially to help pay her bills, but later chose a military career for the challenges and opportunities it offered.

Laurel sometimes felt stifled by Navy protocol and once complained to her father that she had to salute 30 times between the parking lot and her office. Looking for something more exciting and less ceremonial, she turned to the special medical needs of submarine crews. Her interest in undersea medicine led her to become a specialist in the medical issues of diving crews and she made several dives with Navy SEALs in Scotland. During her time with the SEALs, she met her husband, John Clark.

After returning home, Laurel turned her attention from the seas to the skies and later to space. She earned her flight surgeon's wings and served as a squadron medical officer, before she became interested in the space program. Laurel explained her career path in a pre-flight interview for the Columbia mission. "It was really just sort of a natural progression when I learned about NASA and what astronauts do, and...I thought about the things I had done so far," she said.


Turned down the first time she applied to NASA, Laurel was accepted into the astronaut program on her second interview even though she was pregnant with her son Iain. "I tell my son all the time that my most important job is being his mother," Laurel told interviewers.

When not in uniform, Laurel often dressed in such bright colored clothes that friends called her "Floral Laurel." She was an enthusiastic, passionate

person, excited by challenges and happy setting goals and single-mindedly achieving them. Laurel was delighted with the wonder of life and referred to space as "just an incredibly magical place." With all the wonders of the universe around her, she was inspired by a silkworm cocoon she had seen hatch in orbit as part of an experiment. "There was a moth in there, and it still had its wings crumpled up, and it was just starting to pump its wings up," she said. "Life continues in lots of places and life is a magical thing."

In one of the several memorials held in her honor, Rev. Dr. Tony Larsen remarked on the diverse makeup of the Columbia crew. "I think Laurel and her companions have a message for this warring earth," he said. "These seven people who died—these seven astronauts—were from different cultures and different religions. One was from India, one from Israel, black and white, male and female, so different from each other in many ways—and yet they loved each other—with all their differences, they knew how to get along."

Shalom,
Judy



**Prairie Star District
Annual Conference**
Unity in Diversity
**Source of Hope and
Courage**
April 8–10, 2005
Hosted by
Unity Church–Unitarian
St. Paul, Minnesota

As Unitarian Universalists, we are committed to embracing the diversity in our membership. This means that our annual district conferences are a source of clear-headed conversation and lively debate among people committed to fostering peace, justice, and equality around the world. The members of Unity Church–Unitarian invite you to come for an exciting week-end of workshops, music, food and fun. This year's conference will be held in the historic capital city of St. Paul at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel on the banks of the Mississippi River. Early registration with reduced pricing is due March 11, 2005. See <http://psduua.org/conf> for further information or speak with a member of the Denominational Connections Committee: Cheri Cody, Gene Kopecky, Josh Snyder, Nancy Amsler or Judy Maniscalco. Carpooling may also be arranged.

The Future of First Hour

by Tammy Hunter

Adult Spiritual Education Committee

The Adult Spiritual Education Committee (ASEC) is soliciting input from the congregation about our First Hour forum. We are concerned about the small number of people attending these sessions relative to the great amount of preparation time that is invested by presenters. Also, there are frequent space issues due to various music rehearsals that need to occur prior to Sunday services. We want your feedback regarding whether or not it is worthwhile to continue offering First Hour programs. Please let us know how you feel about this! Talk to either Betty Segell or Tammy Hunter, ASEC co-chairs.

The Spirituality of Hospitality!

by Tammy Hunter

There is still time to register for the Adult Retreat!

If you have not yet registered for the Adult Retreat coming up on Saturday, March 5th, from 5-10 p.m., we would love to have you join us! Please contact Betty Segell or Tammy Hunter (Adult Spiritual Education Co-Chairs) as soon as possible for all the details.

Treasurer's Gems

by JoAnne Draper

INCOME:

Budgeted Pledge Income: \$113,696 so we need to be taking in \$9,475 per month.

Here is monthly actual year to date:

July: \$6,407 + \$7,600 in prepaid pledges or \$14,007

Aug: \$6,636

Sept: \$5,719

Oct: \$15,372

Nov: \$7,335

Dec: \$7,395

Jan: \$14,084

TOTAL: \$70,548



In January we took in \$14,084. Yippee! So far we are averaging \$10,078 which is ahead of the \$9,475 we need to take in per month. Go Second Unitarian!

I upgraded to the newest version of Power church, the software I use. They have been developing this for 2 years and this allowed me to email most of the contribution reports. I ran these from Jan. 1, 2004 until Dec. 31, 2004 for tax purposes. Much thanks to Bill MacMillan and Clyde Anderson for assisting me in setting this up. For people who do not have email, they went out via snail mail. If anyone did not receive theirs or has questions, please contact me at jooxley@aol.com or 553-8117. Offering is running ahead of budget by \$937..

OVERALL

For Jan. we had more income than expenses than by \$6,181.41. Since July 1st we are ahead by \$1,146.05.

FUNDRAISER

The Silent Auction had a profit of \$2,523.00. To those that participated in making this a great success, much thanks. Please note, the monies for this will not be reflected on contribution reports as

goods or services were received. If I did that, it could jeopardize the tax exemption status of the church. The other \$80 is this account came from coffee mugs and t-shirt sales. Thanks goes to Richard Koelling and Cheri Cody.

“Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generation.”

-- George Bernard Shaw

This is JoAnne “Cash Register” Draper saying “Ka-ching, ching, ching!”

Green Sanctuary

by Vicki Pratt

During the First Hour discussion on February 6 we learned about how organizations such as City Sprouts provide organic and nutritious vegetables to people in homeless shelters or to low income people who have to make decisions about food purchases in relation to paying for rent and medicines. This type of common gardening also fosters a spirit of community.

We took the opportunity to discuss the possibility of starting a small raised-bed vegetable garden on our church grounds. The benefits of raised-beds include easier weeding, less chance of losing plants to hungry rabbits, reduced volume of water needed, and more vegetables can be grown per square foot. If you have concerns about a garden on our property, or are eagerly awaiting your chance to play in the dirt, please let me know. This will take a commitment of time and sweat but many people will celebrate and benefit from our harvest.

And speaking of gardening, where does your table and yard waste go? Rather than putting it in the landfill, consider composting. Leftovers, leaves, and paper naturally break down into

nutrient-rich mulch to mix with soil to plant vegetables, flowers, herbs and house plants. If you don't want to take the time to turn over the compost, there are compost tumblers on rollers that let you easily spin the contents to mix in oxygen to speed decomposition. There are even indoor compost bins for coffee grounds, vegetable peels, and paper scraps – all without fear of bugs or odors. More information is available from websites such as www.howtocompost.org.

Offerings From the Minister

Newcomer Session

Are you new to Second Unitarian Church and/or Universalism? Then you are cordially invited to the monthly newcomer session. Our meeting this month will be on **March 13th** and continuing on every second Sunday of the month. This is a good way to learn more about Unitarian Universalism, Second Unitarian Church, to ask questions, and how to become a member. *Please note: these sessions are also open to all current members of the Church who would like to meet all the new faces you see on Sunday morning!* The sessions begin at 12 PM after coffee hour in the minister's office. No reservations are needed, and the Membership Committee provides childcare and lunch. Call Rev. Snyder for more information.

Meditation

The Meditation Group will be meeting twice this month. We will be in the sanctuary on **March 3rd and 17th at 7 PM** for our regular meditation practice on the first and third Thursdays of the month. In addition to our half hour of meditation practice, we also have a discussion of our spiritual practice, and share ideas and insights on a whole host of spiritual topics. Everyone is welcome regardless of experience or meditation tradition, and newcomers are especially welcomed! This is an



excellent way to begin a spiritual practice or nurture a fledgling one. Feel free to bring your own cushion and/or mat if you have one.

Second Unitarian Twenties and Thirties (2UT2)—Cookies and Conversation

Are you in your twenties or thirties? Then you are cordially invited to participate in the Second Unitarian Twenties and Thirties group. The purpose of the group is to get to know other members and friends of Second Unitarian Church and to create bonds of friendship and spiritual communion. We will be meeting **Tuesday March 15nd** to have cookies and share our spiritual insights and journeys with each other. If you have questions or want to be on our e-mail list, contact



Rev. Josh

Thank You

for reading our newsletter

Don't forget to check out our frequently updated online calendar. Just click on "Calendar of Events" on the homepage at www.secondunitarianomaha.org



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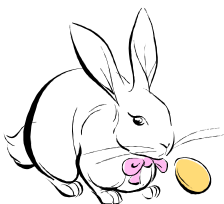
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Annual Easter Brunch

*By Ronni Kahn
Fellowship Committee*

Sunday, March 27, is the annual Spring brunch. The Fellowship Committee will provide ham and beverages. Please bring a sidedish to serve 12 to share. We know it will be a gastronomic wonder because Second UU has the best cooks in the world. The cost will be \$4 per adult and \$2 per child with a maximum cost of \$10 per family. And, as always, if you have special dietary needs and are planning to attend, please let someone on the Fellowship Committee know and we will do our best to accommodate.

Please join us!



ANNUAL RE EASTER EGG HUNT

March 27th, 2005
(after the brunch)

Toddlers - 6th graders



Bags for egg collecting will
be provided

