

Second Thoughts

The Newsletter of Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

3012 South 119th Street
Omaha, NE 68144
Office: (402) 334-0537
Minister: (402) 697-3873

E-Mail: secuuch@radiks.net

Web Page:
www.secondunitarianomaha.org

May 2002

Sunday Worship - 10:30 a.m.

First Hour - 9:15 a.m.

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

May 5

First Hour: "Humor and Health" Juliann Scholl

Family Worship: "Islam; Then and Now" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

May 12

First Hour: "What is High School Really Like Today?" Youth Group

Worship: "The Choices We Make" Annual Youth Service

May 19

First Hour: "Study Action Proposals" Denominational Affairs

Worship: "Faith, Hope, and Love" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

May 26

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

Worship: "Flower Communion" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

June 2

First Hour: TBA

Worship: "Stumbling Toward Utopia" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

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

Josh's Journal

Ah, the Annual Congregational Meeting. It is a tradition that dates back to our New England heritage, if not further than that. For Unitarian Universalists, the Congregational meeting is the ultimate authority on all matters. Not even the President of the UUA can go against the official ruling of the smallest UU fellowship. This is congregational polity in all of its glory.

Now I know "congregational polity" is a term that inspires boredom and drowsiness for most people. It is however a very important concept, because it is the way we run and organize our Church. One of my mentors in seminary would often refer to Unitarian Universalism as the "Democratic Faith." This means that the values of democracy correspond to the religious values of our tradition. We too believe that all people are equal; that they are free to seek out and develop their own religious understandings, and that we are all called to form a covenant together as a religious community. Congregational polity is the institutional structure that holds these values in place.

So please join us on May 19 for the Congregational meeting. There are important Church matters to take care of such as our budget, the annual reports, and voting for our new Board members. These things will shape our Church, and our religious future, in the year ahead. It is our faith in action.

May You Always Be Blessed,

Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

Planks and Slivers From the Board

The mission of the Second Unitarian Church is to provide an inclusive, nurturing religious community that promotes the search for truth, a spiritual grounding in life and a challenge to act.

As the French philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin said, "The point is not to do remarkable things, but to do ordinary things with the conviction of their immense importance." There has been much written and talked about the impact of September 11 followed by the down-turn in the economy. This congregation truly responded to supporting our church community and "Fulfilling Our Promise." On behalf of the board, minister, staff and congregation a huge thanks goes to our fine Finance Committee headed by Richard Koelling.

Richard presented statistics from this year's pledge drive. Pledges came in at \$89,566, not quite the goal of \$97,175 but the statistics paint a very positive picture. Highlights include an average pledge per unit of \$1,337 and an increase in pledges of \$10,712. Of the 77 pledges solicited, 67 pledges were received, of which 79% were increases. Ninety-nine members and friends pledged.

Richard presented the proposed 2002-2003 budget developed by the Finance Committee. The Board expressed concern at the budget's proposed use of the all of the remaining ministerial fund (\$15,000). It was feared that this would require an unrealistically high pledge goal during next year's pledge drive, requiring a \$19,000 increase just to stay even. The Board decided to reduce the proposed expenses so that only \$7,500 would be used from the Ministerial Fund. It also set the constraint that it would do this without cutting the requested pay raises for staff. The UUA General Assembly not only passed a resolution in 1995 concerning church staff pay but openly discussed this as a social justice issue. Therefore, the Board decided the bulk of the budget cuts would have to come from the Building and Grounds Improvement line item which was for resurfacing the parking lot and installation of a ramp. It is anticipated there will be some money left in the Building Fund at the end of this fiscal year in case an emergency building expense arises during the next fiscal year. After deciding on the budget cuts, the Board approved a revised proposed budget of \$110,345, which is about \$4,200 less than the current year's budget.

There will be a Town Hall Meeting on May 5 to allow

people an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues to be voted on at the Annual Meeting, May 19. To vote at the Annual Meeting a member must have signed the book no later than March 19, and have contributed financially to the church. Members who know in advance that they will not be able to attend the Annual Meeting may obtain an absentee ballot from Kathy Bell, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. There will be written reports from the Board and Committees and no proposals for changing by-laws. The agenda will include the minister's report, treasurer's report, adoption of the annual budget, recognition of volunteers, nominations and elections for delegates to UUA General Assembly to be held in Quebec City on June 20-24, presentation of the slate of Board of Trustees candidates selected by the nominating committee. The candidates are Craig Piquette, Steve Brown and Clyde Anderson. Thanks goes to the Nominating Committee of Rick Bell and Betty Allen for this fine slate of candidates. The proposed Nominating Committee is Sue Aschinger and Betty Segell. Candidates may of course be nominated from the floor. Please contact Suzanne Baker at least 1 week prior if you need childcare for either of these meetings.

From the Calling Committee, Heather Lipsey reported that the small group meetings are going as planned. She estimated that about 90 percent of the congregation has signed up to attend a meeting. The committee will now start to prepare for the June 9 congregation meeting in which we will decide to Call Rev. Josh Snyder as a permanent Minister.

Heather and Rev. Snyder reported that both Membership and Growth committees wish to merge into one committee. The Board voted to combine the membership and growth committees into one committee, named the Membership Committee. Josh passed out a draft of the Church Service Cancellation policy which will be discussed at the next meeting. Ruthann reported that she sold 32 HyVee grocery coupon books last Sunday. She plans to sell them every Sunday during the remainder of this month and then possibly sell them once a month thereafter as a Church fund-raiser.

Thank you all for supporting this very special congregation in so many ways, we are truly blessed.

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

Offerings From the Minister

by Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

New Comer Session. We will be having our monthly Newcomer Session on May 12 at 12:00 p.m. in the minister's office. This is a good opportunity for newcomers and visitors to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and Second Unitarian Church in general. These sessions are open to everyone, and no reservation is needed, just come on the second Sunday of the month and let Rev. Snyder know that you want to attend. Lunch and childcare provided.

Meditation Group. The Meditation group meets on the fourth Thursday of the month (May 23) at 7:00 p.m. in the back of the sanctuary. This group is intended for anyone interested in meditation, from beginner to advanced. This is also a good opportunity to discuss and share your spiritual practice with others. Childcare provided upon request.

Men's Group. The Men's Group will meet on Wednesday May 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the RE Office. This group is open to all of the men who are members and friends of the Second Unitarian community. This is an open group, and newcomers are always welcomed. Please join us.

Ethics Class. The Ethics Class will meet on Monday May 6 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Hour area. This month we will be discussing the role of intentions in moral decisions. This class is always open to new participants; just contact Rev. Snyder for the next sessions reading. Childcare is available upon request.

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

May 5: "Humor and Health," Juliann Scholl - This First Hour discussion will focus on humor as a tool for therapy within the medical setting.

May 12: High School youth from different schools will be on hand to field questions on what high school is really like these days.

May 19: Seven new Study/Action issues have been selected by the UUA Commission on Social

Witness from proposals certified by congregations or districts: Civil Liberties, Indigenous Peoples, Modern Slavery, Peace & Terrorism, Police Brutality, Prison Reform, and U.S. Foreign Aid. Votes from congregations will narrow this list to five for presentation to the General Assembly in June. Our Denominational Affairs Committee will lead a discussion of the issues and participants will pick the one our delegates to General Assembly should support.

May 26: This month we will look at Buddhism in America. In America all of the different forms of Buddhism have come together in one place for the first time in history. Is there such a thing as "American Buddhism" or is it merely the sum of its parts? Come join us and find out!

June 2: TBA

Service Information for May

Annual Youth Service: "The Choices We Make" May 12. Three seniors from the First & Second Church youth group will present their thoughts on how "the choices we make determine who we are." This service will be conducted entirely by members of the youth group. Fifth and sixth graders are invited to attend.

May 26 is our annual Flower Communion. This event dates back to the 1930s and is a Unitarian Universalist ritual to celebrate Spring. It also marks the end of the Religious Education year. We invite you to bring a flower from your garden, or the florist, to share with the congregation at the May 26 worship service. Thank you.

Building & Grounds

by Rick Bell, chair

Please pardon our mess!

Sara Seaman jump-started our sprucing up of the women's bathroom by stripping the existing wallpaper and donating paper for a new border. Dan Roth has been busy dealing with the carpentry issues, while I tend to painting.

We are just now sketching out how we might change the men's bathroom into a unisex bathroom accessible to those in wheelchairs.

Religious Education

by Barb Roth, DRE

One reason our family joined Second Unitarian was because of the great religious education program. From the moment we arrived, we were warmly welcomed and our children really liked coming to Sunday school. We liked the fact that our children would be learning about many different religions and we liked what Unitarian Universalism stands for.

When I was asked to take over as the Director of Religious Education (DRE) this past year, I was very anxious and uncertain. Not only was I a new member, but I was also new to Unitarian Universalism. I knew that it was a large responsibility and that my predecessors had been fantastic in this role.

One reason why I accepted the role of DRE was that I knew that whatever difficulty or obstacle I might encounter, there would always be a support system to help me through it. The religious education committee is vital to our program and continuously strives to improve and give vision to our program. They are a dedicated group from whom I have learned a great deal. In addition, the support of the congregation is witnessed by the number of volunteers who give their time and talents as teachers and helpers in our classes and special services.

Speaking of volunteers, I have really enjoyed getting to know this fun group of people. We are truly blessed with the most superb volunteers. We achieve success because we all have a common goal: to help our children grow spiritually, explore ideas, and become empowered with the gifts of knowledge and compassion.

My decision to become DRE also was influenced by the fact that my own children witness the role I play in the church. Children learn by example and what better example could I provide than by showing my support for the church that I believe in. Our children need to see us participating. I remember when one of our preschool teachers, Alison Maheux, let her son, Robert (a second grader), help her teach a class because he earned this privilege at home. I expect he learned a great deal that day and will remember times like that when he is older. If we wish to raise socially active children, actions do speak louder than words.

I have discovered that the choice to become DRE may be one of the best decisions I have made at this point in my life. I need it. It is difficult to put into words, but I

like dealing with the scheduling, planning and training that goes on (even if I don't always get it right). Perhaps it is due to the fact that with my work as a home daycare provider, I rarely receive feedback on how I am doing my job and so it can seem rather routine and insignificant. As DRE, through my involvement with the congregation, RE committee, Reverend Snyder, and the children I obtain that sense of significance. It all sounds quite selfish as I write it out, but I hope I am contributing as much to the program as I am getting out of it.

I have learned a great deal this past year and look forward to next year.

Thank You To All Our Religious Education Volunteers!

I would like to recognize all the teachers that have contributed so much to our religious education program this year. Thank you to: Janet Nichols, Alison Maheux, Julia MacMillan, Ronni Kahn, Kathie Haskins, Norma Hansen, MaryAnn Powell, Melissa Konecky, Karen Snyder, Tricia Genereux, Erika Jeck, Dan Roth, Roxanne Redd, Mo McAndrews, Gerhard Krabbe, Joel Haskins, Sue Aschinger, Jim Decoster, Kathy Bell and Tammy Hunter.

Also, many of our youth help out in the younger classes and deserve recognition for their hard work this year. Thank you to: Lauren Hunter, Mindy Bilderback, Laura Weiss, Chris Alberts, Chris Dilly, Bailey Snyder, Alex Bartlett and Angela Witte.

Way to go! You are all wonderful and I thank you for your dedication.

Want To Make A Difference In The Life Of A Child?

If you are interested in becoming a Sunday school teacher for this coming fall, please send me an e-mail or sign up during our teacher recruitment coming soon. If there is a special age that you would like to teach, we can usually accommodate that. As a teacher, you are on a team of 3 or 4 people per class who take turns teaching about once a month. There is a curriculum and orientation provided. As we grow as a congregation, we require more volunteers. Please consider being part of our team. You will get to know the other part of the congregation--the children, and you will grow in smiles.

Serving Our Community
Monthly Report of the Social Justice Committee
by Clyde Anderson

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) – This summer Social Justice will offer UUJEC’s Economic Justice Curriculum in six sessions. Why is economic justice important? Increasing disparity between the wealthy and the poor, and the political domination by wealthy individuals and corporations put democracy at risk. This has resulted in declining spending for social programs, increased incarceration, reduced access to legal recourse, massive numbers of homeless and impoverished people, erosion of worker rights, lack of adequate health care, and increasing environmental degradation. We are considering holding the sessions on Sunday mornings beginning about July 14, or on weekday evenings. If you are interested in participating in these study sessions, please contact Clyde Anderson and indicate your time preference.

“The World of Development” – OTOC’s Metro Area Development Committee has been studying the problem of uncontrolled development and sprawl in the Omaha metro area since last summer. Now we are ready to share our knowledge with members of our congregations to build a constituency that will support sound development and speak out against projects that aren’t consistent with Omaha’s Master Plan. The workshop will be held on Thursday, May 23, 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Ada Mead Hall, First United Methodist Church, 70th & Cass. You’ll have a chance to meet city planners from Omaha, Bellevue and Papillion, plus representatives from two development companies. Pizza and drinks will be available. Problems from urban sprawl, such as traffic congestion and high taxes, were discussed at several of our house meetings last year. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about this complex problem. Please contact Clyde Anderson for more information.

Fundraiser for Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty (NADP) – On Mothers’ Day, May 12, Social Justice will take a special collection for

NADP. If you wish to contribute, you can either make your check out to NADP or Second Unitarian Church with a notation the money goes to NADP. Cash contributions will also be accepted. For more information, contact Russ Alberts

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, May 12, at 11:45 a.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.

Book Club
by Gwen Eurich

For the May discussion, members are reading *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen. Please join us on Tuesday, May 28, 7:30 p.m., at the home of Alice Blackstone. For more information about our book club, contact Gwen Eurich

Macyl Boruff Library
by Gwen Eurich

Watch for new books being added to our church library as this newsletter goes to press. Our own Milton Forbes has written a new book and has generously donated several copies to the library. We have several new books to be added to the shelves as well as books from an anonymous donor that look like excellent additions! Thank you Milton and Mr., Ms. Mrs. Anonymous!

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.

Caring Committee
by Monica Swihart

The Caring Committee is still soliciting volunteers to help drive members who are in need of transportation to Sunday services and major fellowship events. We hope to come up with a calendar of main drivers and back-up drivers that would be listed in the newsletter every month. This transportation service would not apply to committee meetings and small group meetings (women/men's group, meditation, ethics). Hopefully these groups can organize transportation for members that do not drive at night or are otherwise in need of transportation. Please contact Monica Swihart or if you can help out. Thanks!

Micro Skills Workshop

Jill Archer is planning a micro-skills workshop on the fine art of listening at church on Saturday, May 11, from 9:30-12:00 p.m. The intent would be to give members skills that could help them support others during times of grief, as well as with cocktail party/coffee hour conversation, career skills, etc. UNO counseling students will be teaching the workshop. Please contact Jill for details.

Prairie Star District Annual Meeting

Rev. Snyder, Cheri Cody, Marcia Forbes and JoAnne Draper trekked over to Ames the first weekend of April to attend the PSD Annual meeting, for a time of workshops, worship and fellowship. Cheri served on the District Nominating Committee. Re-elected for two more years are Pres. of the Board of Directors is Carol Jean Larsen, from Bismarck, N.D., and Secretary is John Blevins from All Souls Church in Kansas City. Directors are Rev. Nancy Haley from Iowa City, along with Kathleen Johnson from Lincoln, NE. The Prairie Star District, one of 21 Districts of the UUA, serves 58 congregations in eight states in the Midwest. The District has looked long and hard for a new position, a Lifespan Coordinator, Philip Lund, who will focus on all aspects of religious education. Rev. Snyder was part of a 7 year task force and their task was to evaluate the future needs of the district. In conclusion, Nancy Heege was asked to stay another term as the District Executive of the Prairie Star District. Congratulations Nancy!

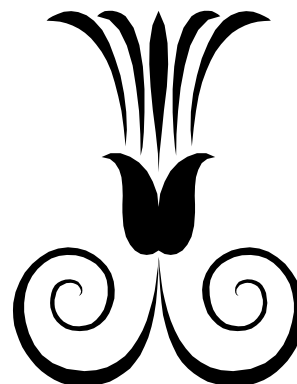
A note from the Religious Education Committee

Because our teachers spend extra time after classes picking up their classrooms, it is very important that parents be prompt at gathering their children at 11:45am when Sunday School ends. Children remaining after that time will be escorted upstairs by their teacher. Note: children 1st grade and above will be allowed to go upstairs on their own.

It has also come to our attention there has been incidences in the bathroom area and areas of the church grounds (rock walls) that have been left in disorder. We feel the need to remind parents of their responsibility to supervise children after 11:45am.

Thank you,
cooperation is
appreciated.

your
greatly



Nominating Committee
by Rick Bell, chair



Call Committee

by Cheri Cody

We have completed the small group meetings with the members and friends of Second Unitarian Church. The facilitators of the small groups reported much enthusiasm and energy at the meetings. The Call Committee will use your reactions, comments and suggestions to create a summary report to present to the Board of Trustees and Rev. Josh Snyder. We will use this report in the recommendation on ministry that will be presented at the congregational meeting on June 9.

The congregational meeting will be held on June 9, 2002, 12:00 p.m., after church services. All members who have been members for at least 60 days prior to the meeting will be entitled to vote.

On April 7, Rev. Charlotte Shivvers presented the sermon on the Call and challenged us with the covenant we must make with our minister. In return, the minister makes a covenant with us. Rev. Shivvers' sermon is available in the church foyer and will be an excellent reference as we go through our church life.

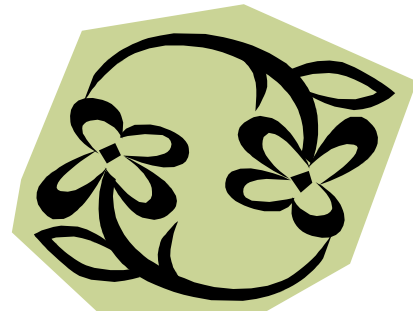
Once we have completed the Call process and the vote, the Long Range Planning Committee will use the information gathered as it begins the process of making plans for the next 3-5 years. You will be asked in varied ways during the next 18 months for your input as the planning process is carried out.

We have such an exciting future ahead. When people return to our church, they comment on how the energy in the church is so wonderful, particularly when they can see how far we have already come. The Call and Long Range Planning processes will only add to that energy.

Shalom.

New Member Profile

by Lorraine Duggin





May Flowers!

Second Unitarian Church
3012 S. 119th Street
Omaha, NE 68144
(402) 334-0537

NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
OMAHA NE
PERMIT NO. 993

Address Service Requested