

Second Thoughts

The Newsletter of Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

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October 2002

Sunday Worship - 10:30 a.m.

First Hour - 9:15 a.m.

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

October 6

First Hour: "Pilgrim and Tinker Creek"

Jodi Jones

Worship: "How to Have Faith Without Supernatural Belief" Clay Naff

October 13

First Hour: "UU Theology" Rev. Dr.

Joshua Snyder

Worship: "Mind the Gap Sunday" Rev. Dr.

Joshua Snyder

October 20

First Hour: "What We Know and How We Know It" Russ Alberts

Worship: "What has Athens to do with Springfield? Religion and Pop Culture"

Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

October 27

First Hour: "The Common Elements of Oppression" Ruthann Irby

Worship: "Lincoln and the Democratic Faith" Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder

November 3

First Hour: "Pilgrim and Tinker Creek"

Jodi Jones

Worship: "How to Choose What's Important" Rev. Fritz Hudson

Information on First Hour programming can be found on Page 4 of this newsletter.

Josh's Journal

As many of you know, I moved recently from one part of town to another. We decided to rent a moving truck, and do the job ourselves, with a little help from our friends. Now that it is over, I have a newfound respect for both movers and truck drivers! Neither of which are easy jobs, nor I don't think that I could do them myself. How different from my college days when my Dad and I could load all of my belongings in this world into the back of his minivan.

Moving is such a liminal experience. Your life is packed up in boxes and trucks and transported to a foreign location that does not feel like home, but must be made into a home. From the time we began packing up the house until we have completely unpacked every box (which is not yet done) could be a span of a month or two. That is a long time to be without the things in life that give us our bearings, and provide comfort and support.

When I was studying Anthropology in college, I learned of the aborigines in Australia. One Anthropologist tells story of driving in a car with a native man in the passenger side, who kept mumbling something in a very distinct cadence. When asked about it, he said that there are songs his tribe associates with each place. As they would walk by hills and deserts they would sing songs about the tales of the ancestors and the events that occurred on that mountain and that river. The songs, which were what the man in the car had been singing, orientate them. They are a part of the furniture. One cannot move through the land without singing these songs, making all of nature a sacred space.

I know the feeling. My apartment does not feel the same until my favorite chair, my books, the items in the kitchen, and my music is in

the right place. It isn't even that I need to have more of these things to make me happy, just having the ones I already have, and knowing they are there, gives me a sense of being home. These things create my sacred space. May we all have that feeling at one time or another. Now I have to go; there are more boxes to unpack!

May You Be Blessed Always,

Rev. Dr. Josh Snyder

Planks and Slivers

by Marcia Forbes, Board President

As I write this, the church is winding back up to full speed. We've shared water from our summer trips or back yards, the choir has had their first rehearsal for the new year, Josh is back in the pulpit. The summer was a really great one, lots of interesting speakers, special music, opportunities for sharing and lots of new faces.

Financially, we are in the black again. The end of the church year is always a cliff hanger. The church budget is a very public document in this church so you know that we vote for a budget that balances what we are promised in pledges, and some other items such as rent and the collection plate. Ideally the two figures agree on June 30. July 1 is the beginning of our new church year. However, realistically, sometimes people move who have pledged, some pledges come in after salaries and other bills are due. Tom the Treasurer's Report addresses this much more completely; this is just a board perspective.

Al Harrison has agreed to become the chair of our new Fund Raising Committee. Al is not only one of our longest tenured members but he also has a long track record of leadership and other positions in this church. He's watched and participated in years of fund raising projects. We've also been given, and have passed on to him, some very exciting ideas for new and different fund raisers.

Half of our congregation is aware of all of the changes that have taken place in the women's rest room. Rick Bell has done most of that renovation, with the help of his wife Kathy, Sara Seaman and other members of the Building and Grounds

Committee. The last major decision in the women's rest room will be about flooring. For the other half of the congregation, as both Rick and I have mentioned before in this newsletter, the men's rest room will become a handicapped accessible unisex rest room. That's the next major church project.

Board members for this church year are: JoAnne Oxley (secretary), Norma Hansen, Clyde Anderson (vice president), Steve Brown and Craig Piquette and Marcia Forbes.

Board meetings are held on the first Thursdays of the month in the children's worship area. They are open and members are always welcome to attend.

Someone e-mailed me 35 ideas for slow down therapy. One of my favorites is: "Direct your life with purposeful choices, not with speed and efficiency. The best musician is one who plays with expression and meaning, not the one who finishes first."

Music & Worship

Our speaker on October 6 is Clay Naff. Naff is executive director of the Center for the Advancement of Rational Solutions, or CARS, which seeks to promote the rational reconciliation of religions with science and with each other. He is also a columnist for the Metanexus Institute for religion and science, which funds CARS, and author of the 1994 book, *About Face: How I Stumbled Onto Japan's Social Revolution*. He lives in Lincoln.



Religious Education

by Barb Roth

The other day one of my 4-year-olds in my day care was messing around on his chair at lunch and the chair folded up on him. He was ok, no tears or anything. Letting out a sigh and rolling my eyes I said to him, "If you weren't messing around, that wouldn't have happened." Tyler, a 4-year-old boy sitting next to him said, "Did that chair fall back on you, I bet that was scary." I remember Tyler's exact words because I wish I would have said that. Thanks to Tyler, I have a better chance of remembering the gift of compassion next time. Children can teach us many lessons if we take the time to listen to them. That's why I love to read Steven Vannoy's book, *The Greatest Gifts Our Children Give to Us*.

"Children, whether our own or those we encounter along our way, create an exhilarating new opportunity for our own transformation and growth. They offer us the chance to learn the lessons we missed before: of how to live, love, play and forgive."

Steven Vannoy

The gift of presence isn't easy for us adults. It is easy to always be thinking ahead to our schedules and due dates or thinking about our past and missed due dates. Focusing on the here and now and really paying attention to the present moment seems to be instinctive for a child. They see all the butterflies, hear every airplane, garbage truck and siren, notice the feeling of sand between their toes, point out ants crossing the sidewalk...You get the picture. They pay attention. They are enjoying the important stuff.

I think another gift children seem to excel at is the gift of forgiveness. I forgot to give my son, Jordan, his best friend's birthday party invitation until it was too late. I apologized profusely and felt terrible about it. Jordan let out a sigh and an "oh mom" and then told me he wished he had gone, but not to worry, he still loved me. He didn't carry on. He dropped the subject and hasn't mentioned it since.

UNICEF Sunday, October 27

UNICEF is mandated to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF now works in 161 countries, areas, and territories. October 27 will not only be a day when the children explore the importance of UNICEF, but also a day when the whole church community can participate. We are planning a multicultural celebration. Please bring an international dish to the Sunday, October 27 coffee hour. You may also dress in something from a different culture or bring an artifact from another country to share and decorate our table.

Library Committee

by Melissa Konecky

Do you have any books you've been waiting for an excuse (opportunity) to get rid of? The Library Committee is having a book sale the first three Sundays in October. If you have any books you want us to take off your hands, bring them to the library and leave them in the donation box (or on a shelf). Then, come and browse. The books will cost no more than you want to give (a free-will donation). If you have any questions, you can call or e-mail Melissa Konecky,

Or you can call or e-mail any member of the Library Committee.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee welcomes new members Melissa Konecky, Linda Trone, and Tom Seaman to our church. We are delighted that they have chosen to join our church community.

Church visitors wishing to learn more about Second Unitarian and Unitarian Universalism in general are welcome to attend a Newcomer Session. Newcomer Sessions are held at noon the second Sunday of each month in Rev. Snyder's office. Child care is provided. If you have any questions, please call Chris or Matt Jorgensen

Finally, anyone interested in Membership activities

First Hours for October

October 6: The first in a series reading Annie Dillard's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Pilgrim and Tinker Creek*. Please read chapters 1 or 2, or just come to hear about what everyone else read. The book focuses on topics related to nature, philosophy, and religion. We will use our reading as a springboard for group discussion. Jodi Jones leading.

October 13: This month's installment of the UU Theology course will continue with an examination of Liberal Christianity. William Ellery Channing, the Father of American Unitarianism, will be our central figure for this theological position. These classes are self-contained, and open to everyone even if you have not been to the previous ones. Please join us.

October 20: Welcoming Congregation Workshop "What We Know and How We Know It" Russ Alberts will lead this workshop that explores when, what and how we first learned about gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgendered.

October 27: Welcoming Congregation- "The Common Elements of Oppression" Come explore the elements of oppression from stereotyping, blaming the victim, the myth of scarcity. Ruthann Irby leads the discussion.

November 3: *Pilgrim and Tinker Creek* discussion, Jodi Jones leads.

Caring Committee

by Monica Swihart

The following individuals have offered to provide transportation to members for Sunday Services and major fellowship events:

Clyde Anderson

Denny Burnside

Darrel & JoAnne Draper

Sherri and Kip Folsom

Mo McAndrews

Vicki Pratt

Monica Swihart & Jim DeCoster

Richard Koelling has offered to help transport members to doctor's appointments and daytime church events and Al Harrison has also offered to provide day-time transportation.

Please let Monica Swihart know if any additions or changes need to be made to this list. Thank you.

Writer's Group

Do you like to write? A monthly writer's group is open to new members. We start with a few short "warm-up" exercises and finish with a 45 minute "write." This is an informal group. We provide an opportunity for people to share their writing if they wish. Contact Jodi Jones for more information



Serving Our Community

Monthly Report of the Social Justice Committee

by Vicki Pratt and Vicki Grunwald, Co-Chairs

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC): Our final House Meeting is on October 9 at the home of Bill Hay and Louisa Foster. Come and discuss how to make Omaha a good place to visit and a better place to live. To attend contact Vicki Pratt at 334-0678 or vlpratt@aol.com.

Feedback from house meetings will culminate in the Fall Accountability Session on Sunday, October 20, at 2:30 at the TAC auditorium, 30th and Cuming. Governor Johanns and candidate Stormy Dean are scheduled as special guests. Everyone is invited to attend.

OTOC's Police and Community Relations group recently received kudos from Mayor Fahey on work to revise the citizens complaint system. Each of their recommendations was accepted: removal of language that threatened complainants with prosecution for making false allegations; printing the form in Spanish and making it available via the internet; clearer follow up on complaints; a friend or relative may accompany the complainant to the interview; and inclusion of a way to make a commendation as well as a complaint.

Paint-A-Thon: Thanks to everyone who helped make this year's Brush Up Nebraska Paint-A-Thon such a success! The homeowner was very pleased with the painting, refurbished shutters and house numbers, new light fixture over the garage, new storm door, new window well covers, and sealing the gap between the foundation and the entry sidewalk. Our joint First and Second Churches work crew also appreciated the food supplied by Doris Wallace and Sue Aschinger.

Welcoming Congregation: The Welcoming Congregation workshop series is under way. Consider attending one of the monthly First Hours on this topic. Remember that Welcoming Congregation is your program. Please bring any suggestions, comments on ways to improve, things you would like to see in the future or any other issues to the WC Committee members, Vicki Grunwald, RuthAnn Irby, JoAnne Draper, Russ

Alberts or Gail Harrison.

Stop The Hate Vigil: The State of Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission has invited the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in a "Stop the Hate Vigil" scheduled for October 3, from 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Heartland of America Park. Information booths, speakers, musical and theatrical programs will present the message that hate crimes based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability status will not be tolerated in Nebraska. The program will culminate in a candle light vigil from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. This event is part of a nation-wide effort sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and The Interfaith Alliance. Those interested in participating, please mark your calendars. We are investigating the possibility of involving a speaker from our church and sponsoring a literature booth, as well as encouraging participation in the candlelight vigil. More information will be forthcoming as details are finalized.

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 (with soup or quick lunch) on Sunday, October 13, immediately following choir rehearsal. 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.

Building and Grounds

by Rick Bell

Our fall outdoor cleanup day is tentatively set for 8:30 until noon on October 12. Please join us for a relaxed morning as we tend to a few tasks that need attention. A full list of those items is posted on the church bulletin board.

If you on occasion are responsible for locking up the church, please give a light tug on the front door handle after locking the door. This will alert you if the latch has not properly engaged, or if the other half of the double door is unpinned from the door frame.

Offerings from the Minister

Men's Group. The Second Unitarian Men's group will begin its meetings once again. We meet downstairs in the RE office at 7:00 p.m. and are open to all men of the Second Unitarian community. This group is a good way to get to know other men at the Church and deepen ourselves spiritually as we relate to each other as brothers. This year we will be working with Rev. Tom Owen-Towle's book *New Men, Deeper Hungers*. We will meet on the second Thursday of the month on October the 10.

Newcomer Session. This month's Newcomer Sessions will be on October 13 and continue on the second Sunday of the month throughout the year. This is a good way to learn more about Unitarian Universalism, Second Unitarian Church, and how to become a member. The sessions begin at noon after coffee hour and are held 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 begin meeting on Thursday October 24 at 7:00 p.m. in the back of the sanctuary. 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 practice. Feel free to bring your own cushion and/or mat if you like.

Second Unitarian Twenties and Thirties (2UT2). There is a new group starting at Second Unitarian! The Twenties and Thirties group is a social group for all young adults of the Second Unitarian community. We will have our inaugural meeting on Thursday October 17 at 7:00 p.m. and every third Thursday of the month. At our monthly meetings we will share pizza and have a time to get to know each other. At our monthly meetings we will plan social events for the coming months, so bring ideas. If you are interested but can't make the meeting, please call Rev. Josh at 697-3873.

Fellowship Committee

by Karin Brown

The Fellowship Committee would like to thank the following people for their generosity in providing refreshments for coffee hour over the summer months. Without your willingness to provide great tasting treats, coffee hour would be just that – coffee hour.

Thank you!

Joanne and Daryl Draper
Anita Meyer and Gary Toth
Gail and Al Harrison
Mary Anne Chisholm
Colleen Sylvester
Vicki Pratt
Norma Koelling and Lisa
Ronni Kahn and Jim Daniels
Betty and Barry Segell
Nancy Vandersluis and Craig Piquette
Suzanne Baker and Gerhard Krabbe
Paula Beebe

News Items

by Alice Blackstone

Thanks to all members and friends of my church family for helping light candles to celebrate my 90th birthday. You've made me feel so special, I'm going to have to buy some bigger hats this fall. Once again, thank you!

The Blackstone Book Club will meet Tuesday, October 28 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Alice Blackstone to discuss *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. All booklovers are welcome. Questions, call Alice

The Macyl Boruff Library is open to all members and friends of Second Unitarian Church to borrow books that are chosen to provide information of particular interest about Unitarianism and other religions, inspirational material, and more. Please, if you have borrowed and forgotten to return books, do so promptly so we don't have to add them to our growing list labeled "lost."

Library Committee Report

by Lorraine Duggin

Jim Daniels, a member of our congregation, recently donated a copy of his poetry chapbook, *Bare-Belly Bongo and Other Tales of Guydom*, to the Macyl Boruff Memorial Library. We took this opportunity to interview Jim about his book, which we hope you will check out and read, about his poetry.

LD: How would you characterize the poetry in your chapbook?

JD: I have some things in there, a couple of tributes to art, one to art in general, and because I've sampled all different types of art, I consider myself an artist with poetry as my dominant art form. I used to be into visual arts, and I intend to go back with that. I have a tribute to my hero, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a poet I've followed for years.

LD: I saw Ferlinghetti's influence in your poetry, particularly in the forms you use, and also in some of the attitudes expressed.

JD: I'm particularly pleased to hear you say that. He's the first poet I wanted to straight-off learn from. I've read the Romantic poets and have many favorites among them, and there are a couple of Irish authors, James Joyce and William Butler Yeats, of whom I'm very fond. And Robert Burns, I'm very fond of, and a lot of my attitudes derive from his. He's very playful with language and yet had a social conscience. I see all of that in Ferlinghetti as well and the Beats in general.

LD: Can you say something about your recent experience in Taos, New Mexico where you attended a poetry workshop?

JD: It was actually Mexican Bob's Poetry Circus and Performance Camp. I learned a lot there. For one thing, my poetry is pretty much not "slam" poetry.

LD: You will perhaps need to explain that term, as we know you've been very successful at slams.

JD: I have received some notoriety, but to be very successful is overstating it. I have become well known because much of my poetry has humor, flirtatiousness, and a real willingness to make an ass of myself in order to entertain. I have never won a slam. I placed once, and that was my very first slam, but I think I am viewed in the local poetry community with a certain affection and that is good enough. Unfortunately, a couple of the people's favorite poems have been poems I wrote to

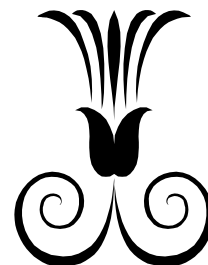
tease my wife. There are a couple of them she outright dislikes, but it will come out in a future chapbook or CD, as one is actually a song. To explain about slams, slam is poetry done for competition and it generally has high social and political content, and face it, it gets kind of shrill sometimes. That's the best slam poetry, very shrill, very into movement. In fact, slam poetry is every bit about the performance as it is about the content of the poem. I might also make an aside. I will write social and political poetry, but I have to be very careful that it doesn't come off sounding preachy. I do not want to be preaching. I've actually had people walk out on my reading when I've been too preachy.

LD: Your wife, Ronni Kahn, has been encouraging your artistry. Can you say in what ways?

JD: Well, one big thing that I didn't see at the time was when she moved me out of her sewing room and gave me the whole upstairs, the attic of our house as Guyville (Guyville is Ronni's name for my area which she seldom trespasses upon, unless I repeatedly invite her.) She also threw in her computer systems, which is mine to take with me now, when she got a new system. This replaces my old system of writing everything in fat little notebooks I had all over the place and was my chief method of writing poetry. She also has reminded me repeatedly of poetry gatherings in town. If I choose to attend, though, is up to me. But one of the biggest things she's done is having served as a muse, so I can write embarrassing poems to her. This has been a great help to my career.

LD: Has being a Unitarian influenced your artistry?

JD: I think everyone's belief system influences how they express themselves. I think your religious and philosophical views are at the basis of all your art. As a UU, I feel the freedom to say certain things I wouldn't otherwise have the freedom to say and feel that what I said, coming from me, wouldn't be misunderstood in spirit by those who knew me, especially fellow UUs. So people may be right that this is a Unitarian poetry book, though I've denied it. If it comes from me, then it is.



Women's Group

by Linda Trone

The Second Unitarian Women's Group meets on the 2nd Tuesday evening of each month from 7 - 9 p.m. in the back of the sanctuary (the First Hour area.)

Thanks to Gail Harrison who facilitated the September meeting using the book, *The Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy*. We enjoyed reading a discussing a bit of wisdom for each letter of the alphabet. The evening closed with a candlelight ritual which at once honored those who lost their lives on 9/11, and the ongoing life which is carried forward by those who remain.

The next meeting, on October 8, will be facilitated by Linda Trone. All women are invited to join us for a celebration of autumn. We will "harvest" our experiences from the past year and reflect on the place of autumn in the cycle of seasons. Please bring something to share - an object, story, picture, poem, song, what else? - that represents a special aspect of autumn.

Mind the Gap Sunday

October 13 is "Mind the Gap Sunday." This is a special fundraiser for youth and young adult ministries that is going on throughout the entire UUA. We will be having a special Young Adult service followed by an offering to support Young Adult ministries. Young Adults are under-represented among UUA demographics. The programs and ministries designed for them are crucial for the health and vitality of our movement. The Fund for Unitarian Universalism will be matching all of the money raised here and elsewhere. Please come to church on October 13th and bring your checkbook and enthusiasm.

Committee on Committees Report

by Marcia Forbes

At the Committee on Committees Meeting on Saturday, September 21, the board and committee chairs discussed, among other things, space issues. One of the scarce areas mentioned were parking spaces in the parking lot. While, in some ways, it's nice we have an overflow parking problem, it's still

a concern.

The group reached consensus on the idea that if a family drives two cars to church, it would be a nice gesture if only one of them were parked in the parking lot and the other one parked in the street parking area.

From the Office Administrator

by Tricia Genereux

I have taken a full time position during the days, and that is going to require me to work at the church during the evening and weekends. After discussing this at length with Josh, we have decided to try running the church office in this manner, but we do appreciate feedback, positive or negative, from you. This change to my office hours will in no way affect the level of service I have always provided to the congregation of Second Unitarian Church, but it will change the time of day I provide that service to you. I plan to check messages frequently and will respond within a reasonable amount of time to them. It has always been my goal to respond to your requests within 24 hours, and that standard will remain. Please if you have any questions or concerns regarding these changes, let me know immediately.

I will be performing some of my job responsibilities from my home computer, and have decided to add on an e-mail address there for you to get me directly. That e-mail will be a permanent change to our current e-mail address, so make a note of it. This way I can respond more promptly to your needs, and help you out right away. The new e-mail is listed on the front of this newsletter, and will be listed on all church communications. It is secuuch@cox.net.

In addition, some of you will be receiving a phone call from me over the coming weeks regarding your entry in the church directory. Please respond to my phone call promptly as any delay may result in the church directory listing incorrect information for you and your family. Thanks so much for all of your help!

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Happy Halloween!