



Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

Second Thoughts

February, 2014

Join Us This Sunday!

Worship Services
9:30 and 11:30 a.m.

**Fellowship and
Refreshments**
10:30 - 11:15 a.m.

***Sing for Your
Supper***
Saturday,
February 1, 6 p.m.
(see page 4)



**Stewardship
Commitment**
Sunday
March 2, 10:30 a.m.
(see page 7)

February 2

Rev. Sarah Voss

A Bridge to Trust

We start our February theme of **Religious Authority** with a sermon whose authority stems from a non-traditional religious source. In it, we take a look at unexpected connections and how they can inspire us to cultivate a more creative spiritual life. Rev. Scott says, “Rev. Sarah’s presence, wit, and charm create a phenomenal worship experience. Hopefully, you’ll connect with her during Coffee Hour, as she’s a delight.”

February 9

Rev. Scott McNeill

The Cost of Love and Relationships – It Ain’t Cheap!

Did The Beatles get it right when they sang, “Can’t Buy Me Love”? Love and relationships are critical to humanity, but often they come at quite the cost (not always monetary). Before Valentine’s Day arrives, and everyone rushes out to infuse Hallmark and Godiva with cash, we reflect on how to care for ourselves and others even though the cost can be hard to bear.

February 16

Rev. Scott McNeill

Anarchy and Authority

The February theme is **Religious Authority**, pretty close to being a UU boogey-person. How do we make sense of power without it being universal? How do we create community if we distrust leaders? We’ll explore authority in religious and spiritual contexts, encouraging us to embrace and use it wisely, resisting any authority that attempts to impede justice.

February 23

Rev. Scott McNeill

Follow Your Arrow

Kacey Musgraves’ newest song is “Follow Your Arrow.” It encourages people to “*say what you think, love who you love, ‘cause you just get so many trips ‘round the sun. ... Follow your arrow wherever it points.*” Could our mission statement (Authentic. Compassionate. Transformative.) have a theme song? We’ll wrestle with how to balance individual needs and identities with those of the communities to which we belong.

Second Thoughts is a publication of Second Unitarian Church of Omaha.

Please send articles and submissions to info@2Uomaha.org.

Deadline is the fifteenth of each month.



Minister's Musings

By Rev. Scott McNeill

*“As for the truth it seems like we just pick a theory
the one that justifies our daily lives”*

(from Deconstruction written by Emily Saliers,
performed by the Indigo Girls)

The worship theme **Religious Authority** has me wrestling with where I (or any of us) find wisdom and truth. For much of the world, religious authority primarily resides in a book or a person. For others of us, truth/Truth can be found anywhere and everywhere, though it might take a little digging to find something worth holding onto.

The song Deconstruction paints an image of a couple staying up all night fighting – even staying awake until they hear the trash trucks drive through the neighborhood, taking the thrown-out from house to house after people decided what was and was not any good.

Soon after this, comes the line I quoted above – and for some reason I've been unable to look at the world the same way since I heard those words. A key component of my religious journey is disagreement with the idea that we were all meant to have the same experience. Given the diversity of all of human life, let alone all animals or all living things, how could the world be boiled down to just one idea (that you and I share, not *those people* over there!)?

Anne Lamott better articulated the idea when she wrote, *“You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”*

Back to the song, it goes on to mention something that happened in the backyard of the fighting couple, with the main character noting, “I looked in a book to see what this could possibly mean – cause there is fate in the breeze and signs in the trees, possible tragic events.” The song paints an image of a person wondering what sense to make of life, when anything and everything could carry significant meaning.

Herein lies the beauty of the song, Deconstruction. It's both a deeply *personal* song and a deeply *philosophical* one. When looking at truth, whether lowercase or the big-T Truth, we often see what we want to see, fitting our situation into a narrative that makes sense to us. Many researchers have documented “confirmation bias,” the inability for people to see truth residing outside of what they already believe. And you know how I know that “confirmation bias” is real? Because I already believe people work that way! I didn't look up information to rebut it – because it fits the theory that justifies how I live life.

Deconstruction is more than a beautifully haunting song; over the past fifty years, academics, philosophers, ministers, and more have used it as a tool to make sense of life understood in the context of those living it. It can be a scary idea – that much of our lives are relative to how we live them. But we'll never know, will we? We can never really know if truth is absolute or relative; we can only believe.

For Unitarian Universalists, the goal is not to negate all religious authority, thereby creating religious anarchism. Instead, we seek to explore the context of our individual lives and the beliefs that are tested through the fire of thought *and* experience – and then to bring them together to understand more about the world than we alone can comprehend.

Our religious authority is found in the creation of the world each and every moment by those who inhabit the world (past, present, and future). Perhaps the goal is not to find *the* Holy, *the* Sacred, *the* Divine – but to create Holy, Sacred, Divine out of the human, the secular, the daily living of our lives.

In faith,
Rev. Scott



Planks and Slivers from the Board

By JoAnne Draper, Chair, Board of Trustees



2014, the Year of Transformation...

...and did we start off this year with an epic event, the Social Justice Summit! Jacqui Williams, our facilitator, worked with about fifty of us. We looked at what was going on at the Unitarian Universalist Association, at our history, and Jacqui asked thought provoking questions.

A special thanks goes to Pat Caffrey, Vicki Pratt, Clyde Anderson, Carol Johnson, and Tammy Hunter for putting on this meaningful event. This, of course, was done with Rev Scott's guidance and connections. Social Justice is the core of who we are.

After 18 months, countless hours, research, reading books, and gathering input, the Strategic Plan will be rolling out. This is a very special team of Carol Johnson, Steve Abraham, Rich McArdle, Stephanie Peterson, Craig Piquette, and Rev Scott. When you see them, please let them know how much we appreciate their commitment.

The Treasurer position is being reinvented to reflect these changing times. Pat Caffrey, our dedicated Treasurer, will be "retiring" from this position. The scope of work for the newly revised Treasurer role will be more oversight in nature because we will be bringing on a part-time bookkeeper to handle our financial needs. Gary Emenitove, our outstanding Office Administrator, performs much of this work and will continue to do.

What a transformational journey we are on, just like the Monarch Butterfly.

It is truly an honor to serve such a blessed Church Community.

JoAnne



Share the Plate for February: The Siena/Francis House

One half of Second Unitarian's offering received in February will go to the Siena/Francis House.

The Siena/Francis House is the region's largest shelter, providing food, shelter, clothing, and hope for homeless men, women, and children.

Since 1975, the Siena/Francis House has provided emergency overnight shelter to men, women, and women with children, food to the homeless, clothing, case management outreach services, and a residential addiction recovery program.

(Although we did Share the Plate with Siena/Francis House in February, 2012, given the recent extreme weather conditions in Omaha, we felt it necessary and appropriate to Share The Plate again this February.)

To nominate an organization for our Share the Plate program, visit the church website or contact the Social Justice Coordinating Council or Rev. Scott.



Treasurer's Report

By Pat Caffrey, Treasurer

Second Unitarian Church
Treasurer's Report
Month End for December 31, 2013

YTD New Pledge Income/Current Year: \$4,301.00
reflects 47.26% \$9,100.00 (7) New Pledges for 2013-14.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	<u>December</u>	<u>Year-To-Date</u>
Income	\$23,015.92	\$127,557.64
Expenses	-\$14,723.10	-\$ 93,708.40
Net Over/Short	<u>\$ 8,292.82</u>	<u>\$ 33,849.24</u>

Contribution Statements for Tax Year 2013 will be emailed or mailed if email not available during January, 2014.

If you would like more detailed financial statements, please contact me.

Thank you!
Treasurer
Pat Caffrey

YTD Pledge Income/Current Year: \$104,823.10
reflects 57.65% of \$181,841.00 Total Pledged for 2013-14.

Sing for Your Supper!
Saturday, February 1, 6 p.m.

It's time to chase away those winter blues!

All talented Second Unitarian Church members, affiliates, and visitors: polish your musical talents (singing, dancing, instrumental), poetry writing, recitation, and dramatic or humorous readings, or whatever you do.

This is your opportunity to perform at Second Unitarian's annual **SING FOR YOUR SUPPER, this year on Saturday, February 1.**

An audience is a must, so please come even if you are not performing - we need everyone! Fellowship will furnish bread and beverages - please bring soup or dessert to share.

The meal will start at 6:00 p.m. with entertainment to follow.

Children are welcome to eat at 6:00 with families, then go downstairs for child care from 7:00 to 9:00.



OTOC Issues Conference: Help Make Omaha a Better Place to Live

By Vicki Pratt

OTOC (Omaha Together One Community) is a coalition of congregations and organizations that share a commitment to improve life in Omaha. To accomplish this goal OTOC gathers issues by talking with individuals and groups, engages Action Teams to research and propose solutions, and organizes public action to stimulate change in public policy.

Now is the time to determine issues for 2014. Make your voice known by participating in the OTOC Issues Conference, Saturday, February 22, 8:30 a.m. to noon, at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Ave, Omaha.

The conference begins with a summary of OTOC's role, an overview of proposed changes to Nebraska's system of taxation, and introduction of possible issues identified in house meetings hosted by area congregations:

- Lack of mental health services
- Needs Assessment Study conducted by Omaha Public Schools
- Environmental sustainability

For information contact Vicki Pratt.

OTOC Spring Fundraiser: Food, Art, and Music at Hot Shops

By Vicki Pratt

You are invited to Omaha Together One Community's (OTOC) annual Spring Fundraiser at Hot Shops Art Center, 1301 Nicholas Street, Omaha, on Saturday, March 29, from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m.

The fun evening features tasty appetizers, a variety of yummy gelato, soft drinks (cash bar for wine and beer), live music and entertainment, a wide variety of silent auction items, plus an opportunity to get acquainted with members of congregations throughout Omaha.

As a bonus, many of the artists will have their shops open for browsing.

Tickets will be on sale during coffee hour between services: \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door.

More info about Hot Shops: www.hotshopsartcenter.com

Second Unitarian Church of Omaha is a founding member of OTOC.

Shop at Amazon.com and Help Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

Your online purchases can help the church!
Visit the church website at www.2Uomaha.org,
under **Quick Links** click on **Books**,
and then click on the link for **Amazon.com**.
A percentage of your purchase will be donated to the church!



2014 Community Garden Plots Now Available

By Marco Ballarin

The Community Garden committee is kicking off the 2014 growing season by soliciting applications for the garden plots located north of the church.

The size of the plots are the same as last year: 8 feet by 8 feet, approximately.

The expectations from growers are also the same:

1. All crops are to be grown organically
2. There is a \$10 fee associated with each plot to reimburse the church for watering costs
3. Growers must be willing to share watering and other gardening responsibilities
4. Growers must sign a liability waiver and two gardening agreements to have access to the plots.

There are a total of 14 plots available and there is a limit of 2 plots per grower. Contact Marco Ballarin to receive an application as well as the other forms.

Any plots not assigned to the members of our congregation by March 31 will be made available to the wider Omaha community.

Second Circle Teen Movie

By Anita Meyer

The Second Circle Teen Movie Night will be held Sunday, February 16, at 4:30 in the church sanctuary.

Please join Omaha World-Herald movie critic Bob Fischbach for viewing and discussion of "Good Will Hunting." This was Matt Damon's debut performance and won him and Ben Affleck an Oscar for best screenplay.

Movie synopsis: Will Hunting, a janitor at M.I.T., has a gift for mathematics, but needs help from a psychologist to find direction in his life.

A free will donation will be taken for pizza.

February Service Learning Project

By Pam Curtiss-Smith

Our February Service Learning Project focuses on helping homeless veterans.

Together with the Ladies Auxiliary of VFW 2503, the Religious Growth and Learning Committee and participants in Religious Education will collect plastic bags and household items during February. The household items will be donated to The Victory Apartments, which provides temporary or permanent affordable housing for veterans at 825 Dorcas St. in Omaha.

Then, on **Sunday, February 23, starting at 10 a.m.**, please be a part of the February project in the downstairs worship area at church. Help prepare the plastic and learn to weave it into sleeping mats. The Ladies Auxiliary works on these mats weekly, making them for homeless veterans and other Omaha residents who find themselves without a bed. It is a multistep process and help is always needed to meet the demand.

Look for collection boxes and weekly information for needed items to donate.



Connecting Our Congregation to Our Larger Faith

by Vicki Pratt, Denominational Connections Chair

Congregational Life Consultant Nancy Heege says: "I firmly believe the world would be a better place if we had more UUs in it." Many people say, "I've always been a UU; I just didn't know it."

So what can **you** do to help make Unitarian Universalist congregations more visible in communities?

1. *Answer the Chalice Lighters' call.* Chalice Lighters voluntarily fund the specific need of a specific congregation in our MidAmerica Region. Three times a year, you will be notified of the congregation selected by a vetting committee and asked to donate at least \$20. For example, January's call was to pay off the balance of the loan to install a disability lift at the First Unitarian Church in Sioux City, Iowa.

Details and sign up are at: <http://www.midamericauua.org/programs/chalice-lighters>

2. *Be a Friend.* Friends of MidAmerica fund leadership training, advice for congregation growth, and promotion of interconnectedness between UU congregations and allied organizations. The key word for both is fund. Funding is voluntary from individuals to supplement the dues that congregations pay for their members. Any amount is appreciated. Details: <http://www.midamericauua.org/programs/friends-of-midamerica>

Friends have traditionally been invited to a reception. If that tradition continues, the next one will be at the **Regional Assembly** in Topeka, Kansas, April 11-13. Only three hours from Omaha, you can meet other UUs, attend workshops, worship, and tour of the Brown vs Board of Education National Historic Site. We'll set up carpools. Details: <http://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly/topeka>



Special Joint Sunday Service

10:30 a.m. on March 2

Stewardship Commitment Sunday

**Beveridge Middle School, 120th & Shirley
(between Center & Pacific).**

Special Guest Speaker is The Rev. John T. Crestwell, Jr.,
Assoc. Minister of Outreach, Leadership, and Evangelism
at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, MD.

This special service is in lieu of a pledge drive
and will be followed by a potluck.

You will be called and invited to this special Sunday.

Watch for the call and please say "YES!" to attending.



Building & Grounds Committee Meeting/Cleanup

By Clyde Anderson, Co-Chair – Building & Grounds

Our first Building & Grounds Committee meeting for 2014 will be at **10:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 22**. As is our custom, our meeting will begin with a physical inspection of our Church property – both the building and the yard.

New members and visitors are always welcome at our meetings. We also welcome your comments and suggestions about our church facilities.

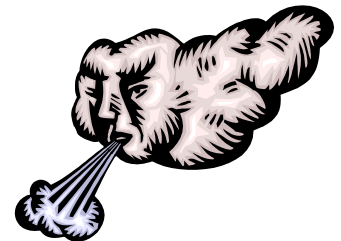
Our **Spring Church Cleanup** is scheduled for **Saturday, April 26, from 8:00 a.m. to noon**. There will be plenty of tasks for everyone! One of our tasks February 22 is listing and prioritizing the Spring Cleanup tasks.

Please contact the B&G Co-Chairs, Clyde Anderson or Tom Rundquist for more information or to report problems with the Church building and grounds.

Weather-Related Cancellations

If weather or road conditions cause services or a major church event to be cancelled, we will notify you by:

1. Placing a message on the church phone (402-334-0537),
2. Sending a message to the weekly email list,
3. Sending a message on Facebook, and
4. Placing a message on the church website (www.2Uomaha.org).



In case of a Service cancellation, we will also contact local media with our information.

If you arrive at church and experience patches of ice on the walks and parking lot, deicer and sand are located in the foyer under the coat rack. Feel free to use them or alert a member of Building & Grounds to treat the ice. A shovel and broom are also available for snow.

Writing for Spiritual Growth is a great opportunity to express your creative side in a safe and nurturing environment. No special skills are required, just a desire to put pen to paper and explore.

Part of Spiritual Growth is asking questions; writing is a great way to go deeper into those questions and to share them with others. Writing can reveal things that we weren't consciously aware of, or give us perspective on difficult life situations.

Not that we need to be terribly serious about it all! Playfulness and humor are sometimes the best way to get past our fears and doubts. We'll be writing poems, essays, and stories. There will be writing games and opportunities to let the stream of consciousness flow freely. Sometimes we'll really challenge ourselves, and sometimes we'll just share humorous personal experiences.

Please join us on the second Saturday of each month from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. We meet downstairs. Please see Pete Miller if you have any questions.



Lifespan Religious Growth & Learning

By Molly Kliment-Jenkins, Interim Director of Religious Education

February is a Feast for Our Third Principle



Our last two Service Learning Projects were devoted to making Project Harmony blankets. We made nearly twenty fleece blankets to help provide comfort for a child going through the child protection process. Project Harmony protects children by providing “community-based, comprehensive, integrated and coordinated child abuse assessments and investigations in a centralized location.” This helps reduce the number of times a child victim must tell his/her story to reduce trauma. The triage center is welcoming and child-friendly, providing refuge and resources as needed. Our blankets will provide those children something warm and fuzzy to hold on to... perhaps a symbol of the change of course of their lives once they make it to Project Harmony.

Pre-K spent January learning about God as Light and Dark. They played with flashlights, planted seeds in the dark, heard a version of the big-bang theory and saw how light is broken up into rainbows with prisms.

The Elementary children tackled New Year’s resolutions, Maulid al-Nabi (Mohammad’s birthday) and celebrated the Chinese New Year, experiencing how different cultures celebrate this time of the year.

Amazing Grace, our middle school curriculum, is guiding our Faithful Penguins to think about issues of social justice.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) started in January. The focus is on the middle school curriculum (targeted at grades 7-9). Shari Busse and Joe White are the facilitators. We are hoping to provide a training for OWL facilitators later this summer, so start thinking about that!

If you’re wondering about Adult Religious Education opportunities, our first workshop this year was in January about Music Therapy, sponsored by the Caring Committee. There are good results for patients recovering from strokes, injury, or disease. We are hoping to hold more R.E. for adults. Ideas? Please contact me at dre@2uomaha.org or 402-334-0537 ext. 112.

Molly



Amazing Grace class making birdhouses!





Retirees' Group

By Carol Johnson

Organ donations save lives! One organ donor could save eight lives.

Join us Tuesday, February 11, at 1:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Tom Neal, Public Relation Coordinator for Nebraska Organ Recovery, will be presenting information about organ donation.

There will be time for conversation and questions after the presentation. All are welcome!

Meditation Reincarnated

By Kevin Dunlop

Meditation Reincarnated will meet Thursday, February 27, at 7:45 p.m. downstairs at church. At this time, we will conclude our study of the book Savor by Buddhist monk and author Thich Nhat Hanh. We will also choose our next book to read and discuss.

Meditation Reincarnated meets on the fourth Thursday of each month to learn about and practice meditation. Both the book and our meditation practice are designed for everyone, whether monk or beginner. No previous meditation experience is necessary, and we invite you to come and check us out. Even if you haven't read any or all of the book, please feel free to come to our meeting, as there are plenty of beneficial things to discuss and learn.

YRUU Wants Your Stuff!

By Ben Wallace and Shawne Johnson-Coonfare

Are you gearing up for some spring cleaning? Please save your donation items and books for the YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists)! The youth are planning a Garage Sale and Book Sale on Saturday, May 3, and would appreciate any and all donated items.

Proceeds will assist greatly in funding a YRUU trip to Colorado where they will commune with nature and participate in a Social Action project. More details will follow about the trip and dates to drop off your items.

Questions? Please phone Shawne Johnson-Coonfare and Ben Wallace at omahayruu@gmail.com which reaches both Shawne and Ben.

PRIVACY POLICY FOR CHURCH PUBLICATIONS

As stated in church policies: *Respect for the privacy of members, friends, and visitors is a primary consideration. When newsletter submissions contain personal information (phone number, street address, email address, etc.), it is the author's responsibility to get the subject's permission to publish this information.* Since many of our communications are transmitted electronically and information therein may more easily be re-transmitted, it's essential that any personal information be approved for inclusion.

In general, it's preferable to omit personal information, but in those cases where it's necessary (such as a location for an offsite meeting), those who submit articles should ask for permission to publish the personal information. An alternative is "Please call or email the church office for contact information." Contact the Office Administrator for more information.

Regarding published photographs: If you do not want your photo published (including in the newsletter or on the website), please inform the Office Administrator in writing. Thanks!



Staff

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Second Thoughts Staff: Rev. Scott McNeill,

Nancy Amsler, Richard Koelling, Betty Segell,
Tom Peterson, Gary Emenitove

<i>Attendance</i>				
Date	Adults in Worship	Adults in R.E.	Children in R.E.	Service Learning
12/29	49	—	—	8
1/5	51	6	16	—
1/12	72	8	19	—
1/19	70	6	11	—

Second Unitarian Church of Omaha
3012 South 119th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68144
402-334-0537
www.2Uomaha.org

CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

Adopted May 23, 2010

To strengthen the bond of peace within and beyond the Second Unitarian Church of Omaha: We pledge

- to create a religious community where we freely explore our values and honor our diversity as a source of communal strength.
- to build healthy relationships by respecting our differences and assuming good intentions.
- to listen appreciatively and endeavor to speak directly, honestly, and compassionately, particularly when we are in conflict.
- to do our best to forgive if we hurt one another, to make amends and to reconnect in a spirit of gratitude and generosity.
- to abide by this covenant in celebration of the common purpose that unites us.

Faithfully done, our work carries forward the ministry of this church to create loving community and supports our mission to grow as a beacon of hope—sharing a vision of a world community that embraces diversity, justice, and respectful stewardship within the interdependent web of existence.

Second Unitarian Church

3012 S. 119th Street

Omaha, NE 68144

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**MISSION STATEMENT
SECOND UNITARIAN CHURCH OF OMAHA**

“Our Mission is to be Authentic, Compassionate, and Transformative in our lives, in our faith, and in the world.”

Adopted May 20, 2012