



Second Unitarian Church of Omaha

Second Thoughts

December, 2014

Join Us This Sunday!

Worship Services
9:30 and 11:30 a.m.
*(December 28,
10:30 a.m. only)*

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

Leadership 101
Friday, Dec. 5 and
Saturday, Dec. 6
(see page 4)

**Loss at the
Holidays**
Monday, Dec. 8,
7 pm
(see page 7)

**Conversation
about Growth**
Sunday, Dec. 14,
12:30 p.m.
(see page 3)

- December 7 Rev. Frieda Gillespie
What Do You Mean by God?
What do UUs think about God? A wide variety of things. Consider some of the ways we conceive of a God or no God. To understand each other we must ask what we each mean when we say, "God." I may not believe in the God you say you don't believe in. You may have a unique perspective I'd like to hear.
- December 14 Rev. Frieda Gillespie
The Widow's Oil
Bible stories can be challenging, confusing, confounding when we look at them from a literal point of view. However, there are other ways of looking at them that can open up their hidden wisdom. The Widow's Oil is a Hebrew Bible story that has more to it than meets the eye.
- December 21 Rev. Frieda Gillespie & Molly Kliment-Jenkins, DRE
Winter Solstice Service
This is an Intergenerational celebration anticipating the return of the light as days begin to lengthen again after the longest night. We'll share stories, songs and poetry from Pagan and Judeo-Christian traditions.
- December 24 Rev. Frieda Gillespie
Christmas Eve Services
4:00 p.m. Family Service: Come and sing your favorite carols
6:00 p.m. Candlelight Service: Share the beauty of the season and prayers for peace.
Collections for these services to the Minister's Discretionary Fund for the benefit of members and friends in need.
- December 28 ***This Sunday - one service only at 10:30 a.m.***
Music & Worship
Practicing Peace
In a world on the brink of waging war, how do we practice peace in our lives and in our communities? As we look back on the year past and toward the year ahead, we will consider in reflection, meditation, and conversation what it means to practice peace.

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.



In the Interim

By Rev. Frieda Gillespie



As the holiday season deepens, many people enter a time of intense activity around preparing for family visits, gifts, and decorations. It can be distracting and exhausting. Those of you who have simplified your holiday celebrations and eliminated a lot of crazy gift giving have given yourself the gift of time and space to reflect and really enjoy the beauty of the holidays.

It can also be a time when grief is especially rekindled as we remember many holidays with loved ones that have died. The loss of family members and friends can change where we go and what we do for the holidays. It can also be an opportunity to gather with those family members who can reminisce about those departed and help you recall the best times you shared with them.

Being alone in the holidays can be especially lonely. Make plans with friends or family you might not have seen very often. Try something new and build a new tradition for yourself. Take every opportunity to be with others who are joyful and uplifting. Sing carols. Bringing good cheer to others is a great way to lift your own spirits. Let others offer you joy and love.

We will have plenty of chances to do that with Second Unitarian folks during the holiday gatherings. There you will find substance, compassion, humor, and hope. Let's celebrate the return of the light and renew our faith in the future together.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Solstice, Milad un Nabi, or any other joyful traditions you may celebrate.

On Christmas Eve we will be taking up a collection to add to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. I want to take this opportunity to remind you that this fund is there for any members or friends that might need some financial assistance to pay a bill or to do something for you or your children that might otherwise be out of reach. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have such a need. Your request will be kept confidential.

In faith,
Frieda



Share the Plate for December: North Omaha Health (NOAH) Clinic and the Minister's Discretionary Fund

One half of Second Unitarian's offering received on Sundays in December will go to the North Omaha Area Health (NOAH) Clinic. The NOAH clinic provides care to patients regardless of ability to pay, including helping find sources to fund their care. Services include healthy living and cooking information, health screening, exercise, massage therapy, counseling, and support groups. Visit <http://www.noahclinic.org/>

One half of Second Unitarian's offering received on Christmas Eve will go to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. The Fund assists people in need and purchases unbudgeted items for the church's needs. Historically, the Fund has been used primarily to pay for utility bills, groceries, rent, and medical needs for those connected to our congregation. Some generous members of Second Unitarian Church support the Fund throughout the year through regular giving.

To nominate an organization for our Share the Plate program, [visit the church website](#) or contact the Social Justice Committee.



Planks and Slivers from the Board

By Craig Piquette, Chair, Board of Trustees



The question has been asked, “What is the real work of our church?” It is a question all of us must answer but each person may come up with a different response. One of the tasks that we, the congregation, must attend to during the transition from one settled minister to the next, is to reexamine our identity as a religious institution. You may not agree with the statement that we are defined by the work we do, but it is often how others define us. Many have said that we are the social justice work that we do, and others have stated that we are the connections we build with others in our liberal religious community. Second Unitarian, in fact, has many identities and through the work each of us does on behalf of our community, we create a mosaic image of our church. Our recognition that Second Unitarian is a mosaic may not be readily apparent to new visitors, however. They may be attracted for one reason, but become members for another.

I came to Second Unitarian in the Fall of 1999 on the advice of my wife. I had been unchurched, a so-called None (as in religious affiliation) since 1973, and did not feel a need to join a religious community. I recognized that it was important for my young sons to receive some form of religious education, however, and I came to church to see if I could stomach the religious ritual. At that time, Second was a lay-led congregation with members and visiting clergy sharing the pulpit. On my first visit I heard a sermon that changed my view of religion. It was a rational, scientific look at the spirituality of being in nature and thinking those eternal questions, *where did we come from* and *why are we here?* I had wrestled with those questions myself, and as an agnostic felt that the answers were unknowable. What I learned is that we must continue to ask those questions and in doing so will be transformed. I want to share that experience with as many searchers as I can.

If the real work of the church is to make connections between all members of the community and to grow in spirituality as we explore the answers to those questions, we will need to expend some time and effort. We will not be able to grow our community if we are not willing to reach out and encourage others to share in the journey. Making those connections takes energy and maintaining them requires constant care. I have an intense passion to help Second Unitarian grow, but that means I must maintain old connections while I build new ones. We must all do the same and we must be intentional about it. Coming to Sunday worship occasionally won't do it alone. We must engage in covenant groups and strive to further our religious education. We need worship and religious education and social justice action and fellowship to build a strong, growing community, and through that work we build connections.

Craig

Second Unitarian: How Do We Grow? A Conversation with the Congregation

Presented by Your Board of Trustees
12:30 p.m., Sunday, December 14, after the second service



Treasurer's Report

By Vicki Pratt, Treasurer

October Income and Expenses

This month our income almost matched expenses.

	October, 2014	Year To Date
Income	\$16,303.47	\$85,527.59 (36% of budget)
Expense	16,328.56	76,275.77 (33% of budget)
Net Over/Short	- 25.09	+ 9,251.82

Income came from Stewardship Campaign Pledges (\$14,597); Fundraising (\$374.47 – book sale and purchases from Amazon.com through church website plus \$575 that will be forwarded to KIOS); Offering (\$757). No income or pledges have been received toward the \$8,000 budgeted for New Pledges from New Members; no income this month toward the \$2,000 budgets for new pledges from current members.

If you would like to see more detailed financial reports, you can join the Finance Committee, contact me at treasurer@2uomaha.org.

From the Finance Committee: The deadline for submitting donations to the Church to be recorded for the 2014 Tax Year is Sunday, December 28. By the end of January, the Treasurer will send a statement summarizing contributions to members and affiliates who have made a recorded financial contribution to the Church. Please save this statement for your tax records.

Nominations & Leadership Development

By Carol Johnson, Chair

Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, in coordination with a training team from the Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence, KS, presents “Leadership 101” to be presented to leaders and potential leaders at Second Unitarian on **Friday, December 5, 5:45 to 9 p.m., and Saturday, December 6, 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m..** Outcomes of the training are to: 1. Be connected to other leaders in the congregation, 2. Develop transferable leadership skills, 3. Build confidence for leadership, and 4. Identify resources available to us. All teens, affiliates, and members are welcome to attend. To register or for childcare, RSVP to leadership@2uomaha.org.

Retirees' Group

By Carol Johnson

To celebrate the holidays, Retirees' Group will meet **Tuesday, December 9, at Table Grace, 1611 1/2 Farnam**, for relaxed conversation, good food, and demonstration of values espoused by Second Unitarian.

Our reservation is for 12:30. Because parking is limited and on-street, we will car pool from the church parking lot, **leaving no later than 12:05.** Please email Carol Johnson your intention to attend so that we are sure there's transportation for all participants as well as adequate table space.

The goal of Table Grace is that everyone, regardless of economic status, deserves the chance to eat wonderful food while being treated with respect and dignity. The menu will include different varieties of gourmet pizza, soup, and salad. Food is prepared daily from fresh and organic ingredients when available. There is no set price for your lunch; the cash register is replaced by a box for your donation. Table Grace was the recipient of Second Unitarian's Share the Plate program this last spring.



Online Shopping Tips for Keeping Secure

From Carla/Bill Kuhn, Technology Committee

The following is excerpted from the Center for Internet Security Bulletin

You're bombarded with ads for discounted merchandise, free shipping, and other special deals during the holiday season. Last year, more than \$1.7 billion was spent online on Cyber Monday, making it the highest volume day in history for online sales. How can you maximize your transaction security?

If the offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Don't get blindsided by the lure of great discounts – the security of your information is what's most important. If you aren't cautious, you could become the next cyber crime victim. When purchasing online keep these tips in mind to help minimize your risk:

- **Secure your mobile device and computer.** Keep the operating system and application software updated on all of your computers and mobile devices. Check that your anti-virus/anti-spyware software is running and receiving automatic updates. Confirm that your firewall is enabled. Smart phones have the ability to store card information and be used as a payment instrument, and there is a potential for information to be compromised, without someone else having to physically access the device.
- **Use passwords.** It's one of the simplest and most important steps to take in securing your devices, computers, and accounts. When you create an account with the merchant, use a strong password. Always use more than ten characters, with numbers, special characters, and upper and lower case letters. Use a unique password for every unique site. If creating and remembering strong passwords is a challenge, consider a password manager.
- **Do not use public computers or public wireless for your online shopping.** Public computers may contain malicious software that steals your credit card information when you place your order. Additionally, criminals may intercept traffic on public wireless networks to steal credit card numbers and other confidential information.
- **Pay by credit card, not debit card.** A safer way to shop on the Internet is to pay with a credit rather than debit card. Debit cards do not have the same consumer protections. Credit cards are protected by the Fair Credit Billing Act and may limit your liability if your information was used improperly. Check your statements regularly.
- **Know your online shopping merchants.** Limit online shopping to merchants you know and trust. If you have questions about a merchant, check with the Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission. Confirm the online seller's physical address, where available, and phone number in case you have questions or problems.
- **Look for "https" when making an online purchase.** The "s" in "https" stands for "secure" and indicates that communication with the webpage is encrypted.
- **Use common sense to avoid scams.** Don't ever give your financial information or personal information via email or text. Information on many current scams can be found on the website of the Internet Crime Complaint Center: <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>.



Religious Growth & Learning

By Molly Kliment-Jenkins, Director of Religious Education



Can you believe 2014 is rapidly coming to a close already? It seemed just yesterday we started Sunday church school, welcomed Rev. Frieda, said goodbye to Rev. Scott, and were basking in the warm October we were so lucky to have.

I'm writing this as Thanksgiving comes around. Here's something that I'm thankful for: *our remarkable community*. We've had fun, successful Service Learning Projects so far this year, and I wanted to share with you all the great work our congregants have been doing.

This September we participated in the *We Are the Power of O.N.E.*, a fundraiser and awareness-raising event for the Food Bank for the Heartland. Our volunteers helped out at the Omaha South High location. Although the event itself was poorly attended, our congregation stepped up and helped staff a site that was in need of help going into the event.

In October at Potter's Field, we connected to Omaha's past. Stu Burns shared some of the history buried there, including the story of Will Brown, his lynching, and the national repercussions. But he went a step further and also taught us how to properly care for lichen-covered limestone headstones. Remember, folks, it's water and a soft brush! We then got our hands dirty as we dove into the overgrown areas of landscaping. Bulbs and seeds were spread out. Grass and dandelions were pulled up. Leaves were raked. Sidewalks were cleaned of grass and dirt. Trees and bushes were trimmed. And that all happened in about an hour! Many folks are looking forward to returning in the spring and watch our hard work take root and bloom.

This November we gave back to a population that has historically stood at the center of the Thanksgiving feast: the Native Americans. Our congregation took our Share the Plate as well as our Service Learning Project to help the same population, this time the residents of Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. One of the poorest counties in the nation, this community has many challenges, including being in a food desert. We hope that our way of saying "thanks" helps them out.

In Joy for our Shared Journey,
Molly

December Service Learning Project

As December's various holidays come and go, our congregation is continuing its giving tradition. In December, we will provide gifts to the **elders at Pine Ridge Reservation** through the **Oyate Teca Project**.

They are looking for similar items as the *100 Item Challenge* we did in November, but include gifts **seniors** might enjoy: warm socks, underwear (for men and women), gloves, bar soaps, packs of hot chocolate, travel size lotions and toiletries, scarves, etc., as well as clothing, bedding, slippers, tools, paperback books, craft and sewing supplies (yarn, needles, threads, glues, materials, etc.) word search and crossword puzzle books (large print books welcome), reading glasses, etc. **Please bring items by Sunday, December 14.**

We also would like any **holiday stockings** (you know, the red kind) to send along with the items above. It's part of their delivery tradition! Thank you!





Loss at the Holidays

From the Caring Committee



On Monday, December 8, at 7 p.m., Rev. Frieda Gillespie will be leading the Pastoral Care Program, "Loss at the Holidays."

This program covers all types of losses, including death of a family member or friend, loss of job, loss of pet, relocation, and general "holiday blues."

Please join us in the Second Unitarian Sanctuary in this time of meaningful reflection.

Women's Alliance

By Kathi Oliver

Members of First and Second Unitarian are invited to attend the December Women's Alliance Holiday Get-Together on **Monday, December 8**. The evening will begin with socializing and beverages at 6:30 p.m. At 7, we will enjoy "heavy" appetizers and desserts. Our annual "white elephant" gift exchange will be at 8.

Please bring an appetizer or dessert and a wrapped gift. Re-gifting is strongly encouraged. Alliance asks for a donation of \$12 which goes into the Alliance's Scholarship Education Fund. (First time attenders will be the guests of the Alliance.)

The Alliance will be collecting gloves, mittens, scarves, hats, and socks for the annual mitten tree at First Unitarian. We will present them to First Unitarian before the second service on Sunday, December 14.

Please RSVP by December 6 at wa@firstuomaha.org, or Janet West. When making your reservation indicate whether you will be bringing appetizer (A) or a dessert (D).

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!



Regional Assembly to Explore New Era of UUism

From the MidAmerica Region



Join fellow UUs the weekend of April 17-19, 2015, in Naperville, Illinois (a western suburb of Chicago) for **Regional Assembly 2015**.

It will be a great chance to be together as one region to explore The New in a New Era of Unitarian Universalism with presentations by two major speakers: the Reverend Rosemary Bray McNatt and the Reverend Dr. Marlin Lavanhar.

You can benefit from workshops designed to strengthen your congregation, deepen your social justice work, and enrich you on a personal level. Come and experience the Regional Business Meeting, good food, and time for meeting new friends and old from congregations across our great Region, culminating with the joy of shared worship and musical celebration on Sunday morning.

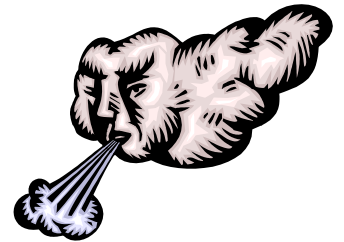
Visit <http://www.midamericauua.org/events/regional-assembly>.

MidAmerica Region is building a new era in Unitarian Universalism, where UUs visibly live our faith, create connections, grow our membership, and welcome all persons who share our UU values.

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 in the foyer. 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, with more shovels and brooms in the furnace room.



Membership Journeys

By Kathy Bell, Chair, Membership Committee

We hope you have enjoyed finding out about our committees and small-group activities at the "Get Connected" table, staffed on Sunday mornings throughout the fall. Please let us know if this was helpful. If you are interested in or have questions about a committee, small-group activity, or membership, please contact Katie Tessin at membership@2uomaha.org or talk with our Welcome Desk staffers on Sunday mornings in the foyer. We will help you connect!

Reconnect During the Holidays

If there is someone you have not seen at church in a while, take a moment to call them or send a note during this holiday season. A simple phone call or message can warm a cold December day.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS to all members, affiliates, and guests of Second Unitarian Church!

Spirit Circle Yule Gathering

By Ryan Cook

Spirit Circle is an earth-based worship group at **First** Unitarian Church. You are invited to attend the Yule gathering, Sunday, December 7, at **First** Unitarian, 3114 Harney St., for an early holiday celebration. Social hour at 6 p.m., start the Yule ceremony at 7 p.m., and a potluck is after the ceremony. We are a family-friendly worship group, but those under 18 should be accompanied by an adult.

Attendance

Date	Adults in Worship	Adults in R.E.	Children in R.E.	Service Learning
10/26	65	—	—	16
11/2	81	7	16	—
11/9	71	6	10	—
11/16	56			—
11/23	74	<i>Intergenerational</i>		

Staff

Rev. Frieda Gillespie, *Interim Minister*

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Katie Tessin, *Volunteer Connections Coordinator*

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Pam Curtiss-Smith, *Nursery Supervisor*

Second Thoughts Staff: Rev. Frieda Gillespie,
Nancy Amsler, Richard Koelling, Betty Segell,
Tom Peterson, Gary Emenitove

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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