



# MERE LYS

## November 2017 Newsletter

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

### Services

Coffee 10:00 am

Worship 10:30 am

*Please note the time  
change!*



November 5

**“Why All Souls?”**

*Ofrenda/altares de muertos*

November 12

**“Dwelling There”**

November 19

**“Counting Blessings,  
Being Blessing”**

November 26

**TBD**

*Program Committee*



### A View From the Hill

I can't remember. I could look it up, but I can't easily recall which natural disasters and human tragedies have destroyed lives and livelihoods, broken our hearts, and shattered our trust in institutions, since I last wrote a newsletter column a month ago, and which ones fall just outside that four week mark. It's been that kind of fall, that kind of year, it seems. Floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, bombings, shootings, assaults, and the politicization of all.

I should have something to say about it. A soul-sick lament. Prophetic anger. A theological question. But it's all been said. Earlier today. Last week. Sixty years ago. Two thousand years ago.

*Can't we all just get along?*

*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.*

*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.*

*#metoo*

*None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.*

*I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.*

*We're destroying our home.*

*We all do better when we all do better.*

I have nothing to add except my witness: the sun still rises. And my faith: as long as we can imagine a different way, all is not yet lost.

*-Lisa*

### *Prayer*

Eternal love, give us courage and strength to carry out this hard, messy work of multiculturalism so that we may expand the circle of love and solidarity beyond our family, friends, tribe, nationality and race.

# Thank You!

## From the board...

- ...to the Smorg workers.
- ...to the funeral workers.
- ...to Darrell Hinsman for taking down the big tree.

## Board Meeting

Nora Church Board will meet again Sunday, November 12, following the service.

## Art with Attitude

Art with Attitude will meet November 3 and 17. We are going to make no-sew fleece scarves on the 3rd—if you are interested let Nancy know so we have enough fleece. Bring a sharp scissor that will cut fleece.

If you aren't interested in the project, join us for coffee and a chat! Sometimes we even have goodies to go with the coffee. Or simply bring a neglected project you would like to finish.

*As always everyone is welcome. Join us for coffee and good conversation.*

## Lunch Bunch

Time to catch the Lunch Bunch train at 11:30 a.m., Thursday, Nov. 9, at the Railway "station", (AKA "bar and grill") 300 1st Ave. N., Sleepy Eye. All aboard for a fun ride..

*Lunch Bunch is a monthly, social lunch gathering, open to any Nora members, friends or visitors.*

## Ofrenda/Day of the Dead Altar

On Sunday, November 5, we'll celebrate our continuing relationship with loved ones who have died. Please bring a photograph, favorite food item or other memento to place on the ofrenda, in remembrance of your deceased family members and friends. Here is a link to site with pictures, explanations and ideas about what you might bring. <http://www.mexican-folk-art-guide.com/day-of-the-dead-altars.html#.WfNn3WhSyM8>. (Our altar will be both family-friendly and church-friendly.)

## Lisa on the Loose

Lisa will hold "office hours" at area coffee houses. Join her for drop-in conversations in New Ulm, Mankato and Windom.

Please watch weekly Orders of Service and the Grapevine for November dates, times, and places.

River City Eatery, Windom Tuesday, November 14 11:00-12:30.



## Christmas Elves Needed

On Wednesday, November 30, all elves available will help to decorate the church for Christmas. Lots of hands make the work go quicker. We'll set up the tree but leave ornaments for the kiddos to put on during Sunday potluck. Please come for any time you are available; we'll start at 1:00 p.m.

## To ♥ Keep In Touch

If you know of anyone needing our assistance or attention, please call one of the **Caring Committee** members:

Georgine Tepley (chair): 359-3060 (weekdays after 5 pm)

Shirley Olson: 354-1866

Carol Chambard: 354-2242

## In Memoriam

**Ardelle Lenore Becken**

Apr. 23, 1923 — Sept. 27, 2017

## A Note From the Treasurer September Income and Expenses

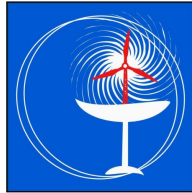
<b>Income:</b>	\$5,119.86
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$16,162.46
Includes \$4,579 for new sound system.	

**Most of Nora Church's annual income comes in the form of pledge payments from members and friends.**

*Income and expenses are listed for the full month prior to the publication of the newsletter, not including special collections or memorial gifts.*

### **Pastor Lisa's Schedule**

Pastor Lisa has Mondays off.  
Friday is sermon writing day.  
She can be reached on her cell  
when not in the office:  
507-766-7822.



Lisa (and Lucia) will spend a few days each week in the Cities from mid-November through early December. They will be at church most Sundays, and Lisa will continue to be available for meetings, a reduced Lisa on the Loose schedule, and pastoral care as needed.

### **The Science Behind Gratitude (and How It Can Change Your Life)**

By Derrick Carpenter, MAPP

The benefits of practicing gratitude are nearly endless. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. And gratitude doesn't need to be reserved only for momentous occasions: Sure, you might express gratitude after receiving a promotion at work, but you can also be thankful for something as simple as a delicious piece of pie. Research by UC Davis psychologist Robert Emmons, author of *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, shows that simply keeping a gratitude journal—regularly writing brief reflections on moments for which we're thankful—can significantly increase well-being and life satisfaction.

You'd think that just one of these findings is compelling enough to motivate an ingrate into action. But if you're anything like me, this motivation lasts about three days until writing in my gratitude journal every evening loses out to watching stand-up comics on Netflix.

Here are a few keys I've discovered—and research supports—that help not only to start a gratitude practice, but to maintain it for the long haul.

#### **Freshen Up Your Thanks**

The best way to reap the benefits of gratitude is to notice new things you're grateful for every day. Gratitude journaling works because it slowly changes the way we perceive situations by adjusting what we focus on. While you might always be thankful for your great family, just writing "I'm grateful for my family" week after week doesn't keep your brain on alert for fresh grateful moments. Get specific by writing "Today my husband gave me a shoulder rub when he knew I was really stressed" or "My sister invited me over for dinner so I

didn't have to cook after a long day." And be sure to stretch yourself beyond the great stuff right in front of you. Opening your eyes to more of the world around you can deeply enhance your gratitude practice. Make a game out of noticing new things each day.

#### **Get Real About Your Gratitude Practice**

Being excited about the benefits of gratitude can be a great thing because it gives us the kick we need to start making changes. But if our excitement about sleeping better because of our newfound gratitude keeps us from anticipating how tired we'll be tomorrow night when we attempt to journal, we're likely to fumble and lose momentum. When we want to achieve a goal, using the technique of mental contrasting—being optimistic about the benefits of a new habit while also being realistic about how difficult building the habit may be—leads us to exert more effort. Recognize and plan for the obstacles that may get in the way. For instance, if you tend to be exhausted at night, accept that it might not be the best time to focus for a few extra minutes and schedule your gratitude in the morning instead.

#### **Make Thankfulness Fun By Mixing It Up**

University of Rochester partners in crime Edward Deci and Richard Ryan study intrinsic motivation, which is the deep desire from within to persist on a task. One of the biggest determinants is autonomy, the ability to do things the way we want. So don't limit yourself—if journaling is feeling stale, try out new and creative ways to track your grateful moments. (Happify offers an endless variety of gratitude activities to choose from.) My fiancée Michaela decided to create a gratitude jar this year. Any time she experiences a poignant moment of gratitude, she writes it on a piece of paper and puts it in a jar. On New Year's Eve, she'll empty the jar and review everything she wrote. When a good thing happens, she now exclaims, "That's one for the gratitude jar!" It immediately makes the moment more meaningful and keeps us on the lookout for more.

#### **Be Social About Your Gratitude Practice**

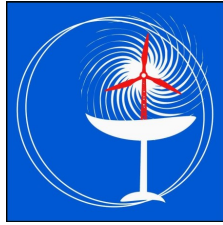
Our relationships with others are the greatest determinant of our happiness. So it makes sense to think of other people as we build our gratitude. Robert Emmons suggests that focusing our gratitude on people for whom we're thankful rather than circumstances or material items will enhance the benefits we experience. And while you're at it, why not include others directly into your expression of gratitude? One Happify activity involves writing a gratitude letter to someone who had an impact on you whom you've never properly thanked. You could also share the day's grateful moments around the dinner table. The conversations that follow may give you even more reasons to give thanks.

Source: [www.happify.com](http://www.happify.com)

## Nora Unitarian Universalist Church

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NoraChurchUU](http://www.facebook.com/NoraChurchUU)

### Making Space for Our Doubts

"Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace."

—Howard Thurman, in *Meditations of the Heart*

**The Christmas Eve pageant had been beautiful and sweet, but as a stressed out director of religious education, I will admit that the best part about it was that it was *over*.** I sat myself down at the community potluck with my hot cocoa and relaxed for what felt like the first time in a month. That's when seven-year-old Gabe (not his real name) appeared with a solemn expression.

"Ms. Becky, If I ask you a question, do you promise to tell me the truth?"

For future reference, if a child under ten asks you this question at Christmas time, EVADE. The question I had so naively walked right into was "Do you believe there's a Santa Claus?"

I am certain that all the color drained immediately from my face. Despite being close with Gabe's family, I had absolutely no idea what his parents or siblings had told him, what hard-won magic I might unravel with my answer.

I stalled, sipping my cocoa casually, hoping I looked thoughtful and not panicked. I dodged the question: "I don't know. What do you think?"

He paused and sighed, and then said sadly, "I don't think he exists."

Gabe explained that he was skeptical about the physics of Santa Claus being everywhere around the world simultaneously. I assured him that was a reasonable doubt to have. "I wonder, though," I

said, "What if Santa can be everywhere at once because he's magic?"

Gabe considered that. He wasn't sure he believed in magic. But he also wasn't sure he didn't believe in magic.

If there was no Santa, I asked, then who brings the presents? Gabe suspected his parents did. At this point I felt sure all was lost. I was watching a rock-slide along the edge of his childhood as reason and logic stormed through his mind. But then Gabe had a new thought: What if Santa is real, but his work happens through parents? So parents, he said, are like helpers who make sure all the presents get put out because Santa can't be everywhere at once.

"Like God," he said.

His words hung there between us, a sparkling guiding star. We talked about Santa and God and magic and the meaning of truth for almost thirty minutes. He left our conversation with as much doubt and as much belief as he had entered it with. I left with a treasured glimpse of grace. This was our gift to each other: companionship through a moment of sacred struggle, where the holy imagination built us a way.

### Prayer

Fellow beings in the struggle of understanding our purpose, may we remember and make space for our doubts. In molding the clay of our lives, may our toolboxes be filled with everything we need, from skepticism to magic to vulnerable questing and questioning. May our wonderings be a gift to each other.

Becky Brooks, Braver/Wiser October 18, 2017

### Notes from the Nora Office...

#### Order Of Service ~ content due Thursdays

Please send content of any kind, for the newsletter or order of service to the Nora email. Announcements generally run for two weeks.

#### December Mere Lys ~ content due

#### Monday, November 20

Church Email: [norachurch@sleepyeyetel.net](mailto:norachurch@sleepyeyetel.net)

Phone: 507.439.6240

*Brooke Knisley, Office Assistant*  
*In the office Tuesdays and Fridays.*