

Universalist Anchor



January 2006

Third Wednesday Theology Discussion

Our regular Third Wednesday discussion will resume January 18, and will be led by frequent visitor and longtime friend of UNMC Kirk Perrow III. Kirk would like to have a freewheeling discussion on the 4th principle of 1899 which we currently use in our worship service "the just retribution for sin." Please consider attending even if you strongly agree or disagree with this statement. Kirk has let it be known that he strongly disagrees with the statement whereas regular facilitator Perry King is strangely attracted to this statement. Come and explore what place the concept of sin has in current Unitarian Universalist thinking. Can we improve on this 19th century statement by making a postmodern statement on the nature of sin? We will follow our regular format with each participant making an opening statement for a few minutes then following this with an ordered discussion. Reminder from our mission statement: "We respect individual beliefs as we grow together." Our goal is to listen and understand other perspectives, not to agree or disagree. For preparation, think about what place this statement has in your current thinking and come prepared to listen to a diversity of perspectives.

In Feb. our third Wed. discussion will be led by frequent new visitor, Catherine Bocskor, on Unitarianism in Transylvania. Come for coffee and fellowship at 7:00 and the discussion will start promptly at 7:30 and end at 9:00. If you would like to lead a future discussion or suggest a topic please contact Perry King.

January Worship & Activity Schedule at UNMC

Sunday, January 1

11 a.m. Worship: "The Virtues of Being Two-Faced", Deacon Dave Skidmore preaching.

Sunday, January 8 - Communion Sunday

11 a.m. Worship: "If This Were My Last Year", Jim Morgan, preaching.

Sunday, January 15

11a.m. Worship: "Seasons of the Soul", Jim Morgan preaching.

Wednesday, January 18

Third Wednesday Theological Discussion: "The Just Retribution for Sin".

Saturday afternoon, Jan 21

Leland Place dinners. Meet at 3:00 at UNMC and cook the dinner, then take it to Leland Place and eat with the residents.

Sunday, January 22

11 a.m. Worship: "The Yearning to be Known", Jim Morgan preaching.

Sunday, January 29

11 a.m. Worship: "Living the Questions", Jim Morgan preaching.

Chancel Flowers for January

Mary Simmons, Chair

January 15: Flowers are given in memory of loved ones by the Jones family: Tom, Julie, Tom Jr., Nok.

January 22: Flowers are given in loving memory of Jean Jacobs by her son, Jeff Jacobs.

January 29: Flowers are given in loving memory of Mary K. Graham by her daughter Sally and son-in-law Doug Simon.

Deacons Corner: Welcoming Visitors

As humans, we have a basic need to know and be known. The deacons, at their December 17 meeting, pondered this elemental truth in the context of discussion of how to welcome visitors to the church more effectively. It seemed to us that most visitors either lean toward the "to know" end of the spectrum or the "to be known" side. The key to welcoming visitors is recognizing which is which and figuring out whether, in your initial response, to be more of a "talker" or more of a "listener."

It is easiest to recognize and welcome the extroverts, call them the "to knows." They are full of questions about our church, our worship, our programs. All one needs to do is be a talker by responding in a friendly, helpful and informative way.

The introverts, the "to be knowns" can present more of a challenge. These are the folks who smile and nod pleasantly but don't seem to have much to say. But, like most of us, they are searching for community, a community of people who want to know them. They are looking for listeners. A few genuine, yet respectful questions may be all that is needed to draw them out and fill their need to be known.

Here are a few that might serve:

- What brought you here today?
- Are you new to Washington?
- What brought you to the area?
School? Work?
- What has your experience with churches been?

Once these visitors feel known they will naturally want to know more about us and we will be on the way to becoming part of our community. Even the question-full "to knows" once their thirst for knowledge is temporarily slaked, would probably appreciate a friendly expression of interest that shows we are interested in them, too.

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Connector Activity

The welcome and membership committee met recently and decided to implement regular connector activities. On the 1st. Sunday the W&M committee will meet at 12:30. Visitors and Newcomers are especially welcome to give feedback and plug into upcoming activities.

On the 2nd. Sunday at 12:30 we will hold a connector group for persons wanting more information about our church and perhaps looking for a deeper connection. Our first group in Dec. had four new persons sharing their faith journeys which led them to UNMC.

On the 3rd. Sunday we will have a connector lunch for members and visitors at a local restaurant on 17th St. Our first lunch was very enjoyable with six persons breaking bread together at Dupont Italian Kitchen. Great eggplant parmesan!

On the 4th Sunday we will hold a tour of UNMC including a visit to the top of our Owen Young Memorial Peace Tower.

Other suggestions have included a monthly visit to the residents of Thomas House, a nearby senior center.

Are you a connector? Think about how you can connect more deeply to UNMC or help someone else connect to our community. Suggest an activity or host a party.

Communion for Epiphany (and beyond)

On Sunday, January 8, we will celebrate the first communion service of 2006. In the church calendar, this Sunday may be variously observed as Epiphany Sunday - the feast celebrating the visit of the magi to Bethlehem - or the baptism of Jesus. At UNMC, we find it a fitting way to end the Christmas season and get the new year off to a good start.

For this service, the deacons will distribute the bread and "fruit of the vine" to the congregation seated in the pews, then everyone will partake each element together. While this is the way communion has traditionally been held at UNMC, it's not the only possible way. UNMC's bylaws state that communion shall be celebrated in our church, but they mandate no specific rite other than that "all present shall be invited to partake."

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From the Pastor's Desk

"O My, '05 Is Gone"

Ah, another year! The old one is gone and a new one has arrived. New Year's Day is pretty much like yesterday or tomorrow. It is only one ordinary, twenty-four hour period. Our calendar, however, has made this moment of time a special one. It establishes a brand new interval. It is the beginning of a fresh 365 day cycle.

We have used New Year's Day as a stepping-stone into a different future, as a new start towards a goal we would love to achieve. Most have used it as a "fantasy" goal to lose weight or begin some cardiovascular exercise which would trim them up. Rarely do we use New Year's Day to make decisions about our spiritual life or the development of a regimen which would deepen our relationship with God.

That is a possibility, however. The early church used the Second Coming of Jesus as an impetus for change, or the end of the world as a conflagration possibility which stirred evangelism. Those "tools" no longer work. (Even though books and films dealing with those images are legion.) A person can use any date, any time as a springboard into a brighter and more daring future. Whatever it takes to awaken us from our sleep and drive us toward "that for which we were created" is a New Year. We can stop pacing and start living. Instead, we can climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less. Live life as we go along. God has created us for such a destiny. It is the way we can love God and rejoice in God. Those are God's gifts.

Jim

Deacons Corner, cont.

The active deacons, Richard Hurst, Perry King, Clint McCully, Sue Mosher, Vicki Pepper, Jennifer Sandberg, and Dave Skidmore, meet monthly to discuss the well-being of the congregation. Deacons are available for one-on-one conversation. You can identify us at hospitality hour by our blue nametags.

Dave Skidmore, Head Deacon

Dining at Leland Place

A delectable beef stew, green beans and pumpkin cheese cake were the centerpieces of the menu for the December 17 Leland Place dinner. Thanks to Bill Baker, who planned and shopped for the meal, and to volunteer Catherine Bocskor.

The men of Leland, a halfway house on North Capitol Street for men recovering from homelessness and addiction, were away on our cooking day, attending a Christmas party at Leland's parent organization, S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat). But, everyone knows that stew is better on the second day so we delivered the meal on Sunday morning so the men could reheat it for their supper that evening.

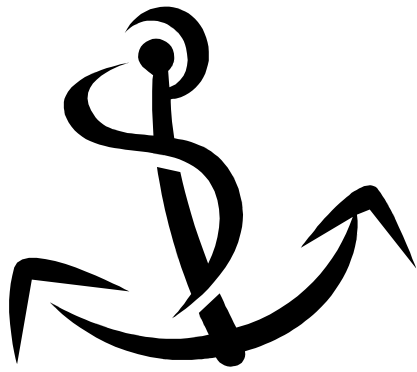
Our next dinner is scheduled for Saturday January 21. Please RSVP to the church office at 202-387-3411.

We meet at 3 p.m. in the church kitchen, eat at Leland at 5 p.m., returning to the church by 6 p.m.

Volunteers divide the cost of the meal, an amount that usually works out to about \$15 to \$25 per volunteer.

Communion for Epiphany, cont.

For our last communion service, we tried something different - inviting people to come to the front and partake in small groups. The deacons recognize that the process could have been smoother, but several people commented afterwards that they found in that communion ritual a stronger sense of community. At the same time, the deacons are concerned that people who find it difficult to walk to the front may miss out on that sense of community, even if the elements are brought to them in their seats, and that asking people to come to the front may deter some people from participating at all. Therefore, the deacons invite your feedback: Do you find it uplifting to share communion in a different way from time to time? What would make the communion ritual more meaningful to you? Head deacon Dave Skidmore, the other active deacons (Richard Hurst, Perry King, Clint McCully, Sue Mosher, Vicki Pepper, and Jennifer Sandberg), and Worship Committee Chair Rob Bertram look forward to hearing your ideas.



The *Universalist Anchor* is published monthly for the members and friends of the Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, DC.

1810 Sixteenth Street, NW • Washington, DC 20009
<http://www.universalist.org> • (202) 387-3411

Dr. James R. Morgan, Interim Minister

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Mr. Kirk Denton, Organist

Marguerite Bogle, Church Office
office@universalist.org

Our Mission (adopted May 2002)

We create a loving community
for worship and service
in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

We welcome all and respect individual
beliefs as we grow together.

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