

Universalist Anchor

Newsletter of the Universalist National Memorial Church

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1810 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009

202-387-3411



December Worship and Activity Schedule at UNMC

Bold events occur on Sunday.

Worship service begins at 11:00 a.m.

December, 3. First Friday. Healing Service, Potluck Supper, and Caroling. All are Welcome!

First Friday Potluck

This month, our First Friday potluck will feature a trip to Thomas House for some caroling. Please join us between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the church so that we can travel together to Thomas House. After caroling, we will come back to the church for potluck supper. Please bring a dish to share.

December 5. "The Quietness of this Waiting Moment." Second Sunday in Advent. One minister has written: "The quality of our lives depend on the spiritual mood in which we wait." We will explore the possibility of deep and expectant waiting for this season of Advent. *Remember to bring items for Beacon House teenagers.

December 12. "The Darkness and the Light." Third Sunday of Advent. We usually refer to this season in the Christian year as a time of Light. It is important, though, not to overlook the power of darkness for the depth and the growth it fosters. We will join people of many faiths exploring the power of dark and light in our lives. *Remember to bring items for Beacon House teenagers.

****After service on the 12th, we will be hanging the greens to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas.**

December 19. "Traditions of Christmas." Fourth Sunday in Advent. The youth of our church will present a Christmas service exploring the meanings of the season. *Remember to bring items for Beacon House teenagers.

December 24. 8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service. Join us for the familiar sounds of Christmas and the comfort of our warm sanctuary as we anticipate the coming celebration of the birth of Jesus.

December 25. Christmas Day Service. Led by Mr. Richard E. Hurst.

December 26. Family Christmas at UNMC. Our informal Sunday after Christmas service will follow the tradition of readings and carols. If you have a special reading or story you'd like to share, please bring it.

Musings from Rev. Mary Katherine Morn

This past month has been a good month at Universalist National. I've felt a shifting in our energy. The board, the Deacons, and the committees of the church seem to be clarifying the work that needs to be done and seem ready to do it. And having visitors come on Sunday mornings and express their interest has been a real boost.

The next few months will be full with visioning and planning. If you are not already involved in a committee or project and would like to be, I encourage you to talk with me, Greg Wigle (moderator), or Sue Mosher (chair of the nominating committee). More hands and hearts are needed for the work ahead.

For now, though, I'm thinking about this season of Christmas. We embrace Jesus as our teacher,

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exemplar of life lived well in response to God's love. During this season of the celebration of his birth, I'm hoping we might use some of our good energy to share the joy of living our faith with others.

I spoke with the Rev. Don Robinson this week and he asked me if we might be able to help with some of the teenagers served by the Beacon House Ministry. He told me how easy it is for them to lose touch with the teenagers-and how important it is for the teens to be acknowledged and supported. Even in small ways. Rev. Robinson asks that we bring new items of clothing for the teens. Sweatshirts, t-shirts, socks, and underwear are needed.

I hope that many of us might be able to shop for these teenagers and bring these items during the first three Sundays in December. I'm planning to make a trip to the store with Caleb, so he can help me pick some things out. Then we will bring at least one item each of those Sundays. There will be a place to put the gifts you bring outside the sanctuary.

May your holiday be blessed with love given and love received.

Mary Katherine

Rev Morn's office hours:

Rev. Morn spends time at the church office at least three days a week. Typical office hours are Mondays 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Wednesdays 10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Thursdays 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Please call before coming by to make sure she is in. You may leave a message on the church answering service at any time. Rev. Morn checks for messages several times a day.

From the Board of Trustees

At its November 11 meeting, the UNMC Board of Trustees heard a financial report detailing the church's \$39,000 deficit for the first half of the current fiscal year and an update on the next steps to be taken toward the restoration of the McKim

organ. The Board also elected Perry King to fill the board seat being vacated by Vicki Pepper and approved the charter and membership of the Nominating Committee.

Assistant Treasurer Clint McCully reported that the deficit for the first half of the church's fiscal year is nearly \$39,000, well above the expected deficit of about \$21,000. He attributed the shortfall largely to these factors:

- A shortfall in pledge income of about \$4,500, compared to the budgeted amount
- Housing allowance payments for Rev. Morn that have not been offset by the expected rental income from the parsonage
- Payments into the pension fund for former minister Scott Wells
- About \$3,000 in fix-up expenses for the parsonage, to make it rentable
- Higher insurance costs for the church building and parsonage, which will come down about \$4,000 per year in the future, thanks to the effort by Brian Pepper to locate an alternative carrier
- Increased custodial expenses directly related to weddings
- One-time charges to establish a DSL connection for the church and extend it to the minister's office

Clint reported that the church used its brokerage margin account to meet immediate cash flow needs, especially for a large insurance payment, and has since sold about \$30,000 in securities to pay off the margin loan. The net effect on the endowment is negligible because of appreciation in the church's holdings during the same time period. Clint agreed to break out custodial expenses for weddings and other rental events separately on future reports so that they can be compared with income from those events.

The board discussed the McKim Organ restoration proposal submitted by organ builder David Storey, along with an update from organist Kirk Denton concerning next steps to be taken and the interest shown by another church in purchasing our Gottfried organ. The total amount of the restoration

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contract is \$320,000 with the first \$10,000 due by January 1, 2005 (or upon contract signing, but no later than January 31, 2005) and an additional \$110,000 due by April 1, 2005. As the next steps, Greg Wigle said he would recruit an organ fundraising committee chair and submit the committee charter to the board for approval at its December meeting. The committee's first task will be to try to answer the key question that Kirk posed, "Are we in a position and/or do we have the desire to go forward with this project?"

The board elected Perry King to fill the board seat that Vicki Pepper is vacating, due to her resignation, at the close of the semi-annual meeting November 14. He will serve in that capacity until the next annual meeting.

The board elected Richard Hurst as vice moderator, to take effect at the close of the semi-annual meeting November 14.

The board approved a charter for the Nominating Committee and appointed Lynn Cook and Richard Hurst as the other members of the Committee, joining chair Sue Mosher.

In attendance were Moderator Greg Wigle, Vice Moderator Vicki Pepper, Assistant Treasurer Clint McCully, and board members Kathryn Desmond and Sue Mosher, along with Rev. Morn.

Semi-Annual Meeting Held

At the November 14 semi-annual meeting, the congregation elected Perry King as a new deacon and authorized the Board of Trustees to develop a specific plan for church growth, possibly to involve funds from the endowment or the sale of the parsonage, to be in place by March 2005. The congregation also heard about the timetable for calling a new settled minister by April 2006.

Rev. Morn proposed and the congregation approved that Perry King be elected deacon. Moderator Greg Wigle also announced that Perry would be replacing Vicki Pepper on the Board, following her resignation,

and presented Vicki with a planter arrangement as a token of appreciation.

Rev. Morn shared her thoughts on the three goals set at the "quick start" meeting in September - increased worship attendance, better building utilization, and a greater sense of peace and joy at church, reminding everyone that the first Friday evening of each month is set aside for healing and breaking of bread together.

Assistant Treasurer Clint McCully gave the financial report for the first half of the fiscal year, which shows income of \$56,100 and expenses of \$94,900, for a deficit of \$38,800, well over the budgeted deficit of \$21,400 for the first six months of the fiscal year. (See *From the Board of Trustees* on page 2 for more details on the church's finances.) The church sold \$30,000 in securities from the endowment to make up the deficit, but the endowment has appreciated, so it is actually worth more now than in April 2004 -- \$475,000.

It was reported that efforts continue to try to rent the parsonage for about \$2,500 per month. Jeff Jacobs said that he believes the church is grandfathered so that it would not have to pay the cooperative the usual rental penalty of a percentage of the monthly co-op fee.

In response to a question on building usage, Al Templeton said that the Eritrean congregation that meets in Perkins Hall on Sunday mornings will leave some time after the first of the year when their church building renovation is complete.

Moderator Greg Wigle reported that the pledge drive had so far pulled in six pledges for a total of \$25,600, more than one-third toward the goal of \$75,000.

To open a discussion of the church's vision, Rev. Morn read the children's book *Mr. Plum's Paradise*. Greg Wigle read a summary of an assessment of the church conducted by organizational development consultant Denise Byrne (available from the church office), which asked two key questions, "What do we need to do right now to overcome our current problems and survive in the short term" and "Are we

committed to do what it takes to grow the church now?" During the discussion, David Burton said the church needs a better "product," that is, better programs, and then should go out and "sell" it, especially to local people. Jennifer Sandberg said she thinks our church needs to face its problems squarely and take risks. She disagreed with two of the "opportunities" listed in Ms. Byrne's report, saying that she does not think we have a high-quality liturgy because it contains too much gender-specific language and that UNMC is not a draw for liberal religion because people do not know about us. Darrold Hunt, the founder and music director of the Urban Philharmonic Society, thanked UNMC for hosting UPS' vocal competition and said his organization is looking to build a relationship with a church to reach out to the variety of the people in the community. Sue Mosher said that the Board wanted the congregation to understand that it may be necessary to dip substantially into the endowment or sell the parsonage in order to move the church forward and needed the assurance that the congregation trusted the Board to take whatever actions might be necessary. The congregation authorized the Board to develop a specific plan for program development, building renovation, and sales and marketing to be in place by March 1, 2005. Al Templeton added that the church needs a more organized way to keep the congregation informed as such plans are made.

Sue Mosher presented a timeline for calling a new settled minister by April 2006:

October 2004 – February 2005

Groundwork leading up to congregational election of search committee members in February.

March– September 2005

Search Committee does research and prepares congregational profile for submission by Oct. 1, 2005

October– December 2005

Search Committee prepares for interviews and evaluates candidates.

January – February 2006

Search Committee conducts pre-candidating visits
March 2006

Search Committee selects top candidate and issues an invitation to the candiidating week March 25-April 2, 2006.

April 2006

April 2 - Congregation votes on candidate. Board negotiates agreement and exact salary/benefits with new minister for inclusion in 2006-7 budget to be voted on in May.

She cited two potential stumbling blocks to the process – the possible need to call a second interim minister to succeed Rev. Morn at the same time that the church is working on a settled minister search and the possibility that the Nominating Committee will not be able to find at least five people to serve on the search committee. She urged all members to study the timeline and consider making a commitment to serve on the search committee.

Around Our Church

Sunday Morning Welcome Team

Each week, someone from the congregation stands ready at the front door to welcome members, friends, and guests to our worship service, while someone else is busy in the parlor preparing refreshments to accompany conversation after the service. We're also reintroducing the idea of having an usher at the sanctuary door to provide an additional welcome and distribute the order of worship. Interested in serving as a greeter, usher or hospitality host, please contact Perry King at perikine@yahoo.com or sign up during a hospitality hour after worship service.

Chancel Flowers

Mary Simmons, Chair

December 5. Flowers are given by Rev. Mary Katherine Morn in loving memory of her mother Jean Thompson on the first anniversary of her death.

The sanctuary will be decorated with evergreens,

candles, and poinsettias in memory of many loved ones and to celebrate Christmas.

Families remembering loved ones this month:

Kevin Joseph McNamara by his daughter Jillian McNamara, David Byron, and Averell Gatton;
Mary K. and H. Jerome Graham by their daughter and son-in-law Doug Simon;
Sandy and Marcia Sandberg by their daughter Jennifer Sandberg, son-in-law Clint McCully, and grandchildren, Linnea, Ian, and Brett;
Walter H. Wood by his family;
Sunny Ambursen and Kay Cronister by Mary Simmons.

Parish Notes

We've been glad to see Dick Seiden at church recently and congratulate him on his retirement.

At our Christmas Eve service, the collection will benefit the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Please consider making a generous gift to the Fund to help our Pastor support members and neighbors in need throughout the year.

We are currently trying to find a worker for our nursery on Sunday morning. If you know of someone who might be interested, please let Jeff Jacobs or Mary Katherine know.

Denominational Affairs

Revival 4 Impressions

by Sue Mosher

Richard Hurst, Dave Skidmore, and I were warmly welcomed along with more than 100 other attendees to the fourth Revival organized by the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship. It took place at First Unitarian Church in Worcester, MA (<http://www.firstunitarian.com/>), a 200-year-old downtown congregation that survived both a devastating hurricane in the 1938 and a fire in 2000 that caused \$4 million in damage. Yes, their

sanctuary has been rebuilt not once but twice!

We all participated actively in the program - Dave and Richard led small groups, and I presented a workshop on "Jesus and Hospitality" that will be refined into a sermon on "Holy Hospitality" for January 9 - and made many new friends. Many people were aware that we've been through a tough year and genuinely wanted to know how things were going.

Highlights:

- As requested by Worship Committee chair Rob Bertram, we hit up everyone for their thoughts on hymnals and got an earful to report back to our Worship Committee.
- Together with Peg Bartel from the Mt. Vernon church and the 3-person delegation from the Charlottesville UU church, we decided to try to stage a regional UUCF event for people in the Joseph Priestly and Thomas Jefferson districts. This event will tentatively take place on Saturday, May 14, 10-4 p.m. at the UU church in Charlottesville. Plans so far include registration/check-in, labyrinth walking, brief worship, lunch, a business meeting to plan future events, some kind of program on spirituality or theology, with a communion service concluding that day. Home hospitality will be available if a few people want to stay over on Saturday night. The Rev. Danny Reed of Norfolk UU, and Rev. Barry Whittemore (Johnson City, TN - Holston Valley UU church) enthusiastically indicated their interest in attending, which is one reason why we chose a date so far in the future - so they can work their preaching schedule around it.
- Individually, we had chats with many ministers and seminarians who wanted to know about our plans for calling a settled minister. We also heard some dynamite preaching. I have no doubt now that, when we submit our packet, we'll have a number of excellent qualified applicants.

- We learned that the Rev. Dr. Barbara Merritt, senior minister in Worcester, is largely responsible for that church's turnaround. It had 30-40 in worship when she arrived there about 20 years ago and was very much in decline. Today, the congregation seems thriving, with vibrant music and RE programs. We wondered if we might invite her to come preach to us and lead a workshop sharing what she's learned in Worcester that could help us.
- The UUCF conducted a giveaway of 60 years of materials, so they don't have to be discarded or shipped to the UUCF's new office in Oklahoma. We shipped back a box of pristine Hymns of the Spirit and a couple of pamphlets in sufficient quantities (10-20) to be useful for adult RE classes. We'll lodge those in the library on the 2nd floor.
- Dave and I spent 2 hours Saturday afternoon drumming - what bliss!

If you want to mark your calendars, the next Revival will take place November 2-5, 2005 at First Jefferson UU Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Our Mission

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.

Our Goals

We want to grow as a spiritual community, both in numbers and in the depth of our faith experience.

We want to revitalize our building to make it a welcoming house of worship, study, fellowship, and service with the potential to contribute financially to the long-term viability of this congregation.

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

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The Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, Interim Minister
 The Rev. Dr. William L. Fox, Minister Emeritus
 Board of Trustees: Rob Bertram, Kathryn Desmond,
 Richard Hurst (Vice Moderator), Perry King, Clint
 McCully (Assistant Treasurer), Sue Mosher, Brian
 Pepper (Treasurer), Greg Wigle (Moderator)

Mr. David Skidmore, Head Deacon
 Dr. Michael O'Brien, Music Director
 Mr. Kirk Denton, Organist
 Ms. Kimberly Durham Bates, Church Administrator

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