

# Universalist Anchor



Words by Rev Lillie

In Toni Morrison's book *Sula*, two young girls grow up together, closely sharing the drama and joy of childhood. Their lives change and they do not see each other for many years. Morrison describes what the loss of that friendship looked like to one of the women.

There was something just to the right of her, in the air, just out of view. She could not see it, but she knew exactly what it looked like. A gray ball hovering just there. Just there. To the right.

Change can be joyous or tragic, wanted or resisted. But, no matter what, it carries with it that "gray ball" that hovers just outside our consciousness reminding us that we are rooted in something that goes with us forward into the change.

It is that way with individuals and with churches. Our response to change depends upon our willingness to embrace the mystery of what might happen as a consequence of the change.

UNMC is changing. What we need to keep in mind is that everyone who comes here and participates in any of UNMC's ministries is here because s/he has a need to be here. And that need is as varied as the individuals.

The need can be described metaphorically. One of my seminary professors said,

We are born with a God-shaped hole in our soul, and it has to be filled. Of course, God wants us to fill it with God's love, but we have free will and can fill it with whatever we want.

When we walk through the doors we are seeking to fill our God-shaped holes. It could be God in community, God in friendship, God in service, God in spirit, God in prayer, God in music, or God in any number of ways.

As more and more of us come seeking to fill our God-shaped holes, we need to embrace the resulting changes as a *calling*. A calling to live out God's love.

We need to **affirm** the gray ball hovering just outside our consciousness reminding us that we are

rooted in something meaningful. And, we need to **embrace**, in love, all the mysteries of growing a congregation for worship and service in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

See you in church,  
Pastor Lillie

## SUNDAY SERVICES

**Saturday, April 5 5:30 p.m. Vespers** Contemplative Vespers Service in Chapel

**Sunday, April 6 11:00 a.m.** "Anything Can Happen on the Road to Where We're Going" A sermon by Rev. Henley about Jesus' appearance on the Road to Emmaus. He walked with two disciples and they did not recognize him. How often in our lives have we walked along the road and did not recognize or appreciate the blessings Life gives us? Luke 24:13-35

**Sunday, April 13 11:00 a.m.** "Building Community, Building Ministries," is Rev. Henley's sermon on the challenges and the joys of working together to build the Kingdom. Where do we start, and how do we begin. Love is known, not through our words, but through our actions.

**Sunday, April 20 11:00 a.m.** Perry King LICSW and UNMC Deacon will preach on: "Overcoming trauma in Revelation," a psychological interpretation of the book of Revelations.

**Sunday, April 27 11:00 a.m.** "Americans Calling It Quits," a sermon by Rev. Henley. In today's American culture, more than 53% of adults have either left the faith in which they grew up or they are "calling it quits" altogether with religion. We will explore this phenomenon and see where God fits in all this!

Reverend Henley's Office Hours  
Tuesday and Thursday Noon-6:00p.m.  
All other times by appointment  
301-655-3798

Notice Reverend Henley's new office hours.

## Children/Youth Religious Education

In Sunday morning RE we have covered the origin of the Hebrew celebration of Passover - the holiday Jesus returned to Jerusalem to celebrate on Holy Thursday. We learned how this was the final event which led to the release of the Jews from captivity.

The week of Easter is special at UNMC. RE children were asked to hand out palms for the Palm Sunday service. On Easter Sunday, Pastor Lillie gave out her delicious homemade traditional Easter cookies after the Story for All Ages. Munching on the cookies, the RE class discussed both the religious and secular reasons for Easter celebration. There was also distribution of 16 Easter "buckets" of goodies lined with "edible grass." Easter is a joyous time at UNMC!

**YOUTH GROUP** (7th grade and above) Meetings are at 7 p.m. Sunday evening at the McCully/Sandberg house. Discussion about big issues in the lives of teens and cookies always served! The Youth Group will be hosts for **coffee hour on April 13th**. The day before, **Saturday, April 12**, we will meet at the McCully/Sandberg house around 5:00 to prepare items for the coffee hour. **Also will welcome those who will be joining the Youth Group next fall.** If your child would like to prepare something in particular, let Jennifer Sandberg know. They will bake, mix and cook what they want to have for coffee hour, then eat pizza and just have some fun. Because of this fun time, there will be **NO MEETING: Sunday, April 13**. Hopefully some of the children who normally can't come, would be able to make it on Sat. April 12th. Our last Sunday to meet will be May 4th. Questions? Email [office@universalist.org](mailto:office@universalist.org) or call 202-387-3411.

### SUCCESSFUL "FROM G ST TO GAZA" AT THE CHURCH

On March 8 We raised \$1400 at our event "From G. St to Gaza" with the proceeds split between our food bank, Food for All, and the United Palestinian Appeal.

Highlights of the program included UNMC member Marti Martinson sharing his personal experience of sponsoring a child in Gaza, Palestine. Marti read a letter from the child about his life in Gaza thanking him and asking Marti to come and visit. We hope you'll be able to go sometime, Marti, and that things will get better for the people of Gaza. We also heard a wonderful set by Fuad Foty playing the Oud, a Palestinian lute. Special thanks to Sue Mosher and Bob Segal for working the doors full time and for all who supported this effort.



### Chancel Flowers

Mary Templeton, Coordinator

**April 6:** Chancel flowers are given in memory of our beloved uncle and brother-in-law, Tom Bliss by the McCully/Sandberg Family.

**April 13:** Chancel flowers are given in loving memory of Bobbie Birchard by Mike, Brendan, and Alex Dillon.

**April 20:** Chancel flowers are given in memory of Corinne H. and Seth R. Brooks by Amy T. Tipton.

**April 27:** Chancel flowers are given in honor of Mary Simmons by Mae Combs.

If you would like to donate flowers for Sunday morning's service, please call the office at 202-387-3411 or email [office@universalist.org](mailto:office@universalist.org).

### ***BROKEN PROMISES, BROKEN DREAMS***

**Tuesday May 13**, UNMC will host Dr. Alice Rothchild, author of *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: The Stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience*. Dr. Rothchild brings a healing perspective to the conflict as her Jewish Family is grounded in the Holocaust experience, yet she reaches out to validate the Palestian narrative in a very personal and emotional plea for justice and peace. Dr. Rothchild "probes beyond the geopolitical realities confronting Israelis and Palestinians. It is a soul searching, painfully honest examination of ordinary people bonded in a tragic embrace. Ultimately this powerful book is about healing festering wounds and narrowing irreconcilable differences...." - *Bernard Lown, MD, Professor emeritus Harvard School of Public Health, Co-recipient Nobel Peace Prize*  
For more information on Dr. Rothchild and her book go to [alicerothchild.com](http://alicerothchild.com)

**7:00 p.m.** light meal of middle eastern food

**7:30 p.m.** book discussion with Dr. Rothchild

## WELCOME & MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Welcome and Membership Committee hosted two newcomers meetings after church services in March.

Our new tri-fold welcome brochure has been distributed to many businesses and bulletin boards in the Dupont Circle neighborhood. We're in the process of getting estimates for outdoor light pole banners. Press releases were sent to the Intowner, Washington Post and Craig's List advertising Holy Week services. The next Welcome & Membership meeting will be on March 30 after our newcomers meeting and lunch.

## Parish Notes

Michael Relland became the newest UNMC member when he signed the membership book on Palm Sunday. Michael is a candidate for the UU ministry, studying at Wesley Theological Seminary, and preached a musical sermon at UNMC last year. He is also the father of Ayla, Briana, Celia, and Denton.

Scott Robertson sends his greetings. Having moved from Washington to San Diego, he has asked to be taken off the membership roll.

## LELAND PLACE

Mardi Gras in March at Leland Place

It was Mardi Gras in March (a month late) as the men of Leland Place and UNMC volunteers enjoyed jambalaya for dinner on Saturday the 15th. Angela Khaminwa, Nick Bowden, Catherine Robbins, Marti Martinson, Dave Skidmore and Pastor Lillie cooked the Louisiana specialty, which was followed by hot cherry clafouti (not unlike cherry cobbler) and vanilla ice cream.

Interested in sampling such savory fare, along with the fellowship at Leland, a halfway house for men recovering from homelessness and addiction run by SOME (So Others Might Eat)? Join us for our next meal on **Saturday April 19**. RSVP to office@universalist.org or call 202-387-3411.

We gather in the church kitchen at 2:30 p.m. and aim to serve the meal at Leland, on North Capitol Street, around 5 p.m. Volunteers share the cost of the meal, usually between \$15 and \$25 each. If you'd like to volunteer your time, but not a monetary contribution, see Pastor Lillie or Dave Skidmore. Those wishing to support the Leland program with a donation can use one of the marked envelopes in the pews.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Sunday, April 6

**9:30 a.m.** 2nd floor Study, UNMC member William Spruiell will introduce "A Course in Miracles" as an adult religious education course.

**12:30** after hospitality, **Universalist History**, a preview of a Universalist history course which Eric Stetson will offer the congregation in the spring. Eric is a newcomer to UNMC and is the founder of the international Christian Universalist Association. His new book, *Christian Universalism: God's Good News for All People*, will be available soon on Amazon.com.

**7:00 p.m. Youth Group** (7th grade and above) at the McCully/Sandberg home.

**Monday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.** Board Meeting in Parlor

**Wednesday, April 9, 5:30 p.m.** Ilya Sinaisky, our pianist, will present a Chamber Music Recital in Gilderhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performance Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

**Saturday, April 12, 7:00 p.m. Youth Group** (7th grade and above) at the McCully/Sandberg home for pizza.

**Saturday, April 19, 2:30 p.m.** Church kitchen: **Leland Place** ministry—Meet at the church and cook a meal for those living at Leland Place, transport it and serve it.

### Sunday, April 20

**12:15 Fireside Chat** with Pastor Henley in the library on the second floor. All are welcome, newcomers, friends, and members. Discussions have ranged from Universalism to God to "how does UNMC work?"

**7:00 p.m. Youth Group** (7th grade and above) at the McCully/Sandberg home.

### Sunday, April 27

**9:30 a.m.** Covenant Group meets in the 2nd floor study.

**7:00 p.m. Youth Group** (7th grade and above) at the McCully/Sandberg home.

### SHARING OUR PLATE

Each month we share 10% of our free-will plate collection with a non-profit organization that works in our neighborhood and gives to those in need. For April, the recipient will be Hope and a Home. Hope and a Home offers low income families proven and manageable ways to make lasting changes in their lives. Using Hope and a Home's one-on-one coaching and peer support, our parents and children build on their aspirations and strengths to achieve permanent housing, higher education, rewarding work, and valuable connections to their community. Children are Hope and a Home's priority. To nurture each child's potential, we foster healthy, loving families; we train parents to be the primary educators of their children; and we advocate for excellent educational resources for each child. We operate and promote affordable housing because a stable home is essential to each child's -- and each family's -- success. Our **Transitional Housing Program** rents 18 apartments to families with incomes at 30% or below of the area median income (\$26,800 for a family of four). We mentor parents and children in their journey from homelessness to permanent housing, from educational failure to success in school, and from instability to stable and nurturing family life. Our **Stay and Thrive Program** organizes the neighborhood of 14th and R Street and 350 residents living in 164 Section 8 apartments in support of the tenants' desire to stay in their homes and thrive as positive changes come to their community.

### UNIVERSALIST CONVOCATION AT CLARA BARTON CAMP

The 2008 Universalist Convocation will be held May 2-4 in Oxford, MA, just outside Boston, at the Barton Center for Diabetes Education (<http://www.bartoncenter.org/>), long known to UNMC as the "Clara Barton Camp." This facility was established in 1921 by the Women's National Missionary Association of the Universalist Church and was long supported by an annual collection at UNMC, even after the camp passed out of Universalist hands. The property also houses the Clara Barton birthplace museum. With its theme of "Being of Service: Path to Fulfillment," the convocation will draw Universalists from across the country to sessions on the distinctively Universalist notion that doing good is the key to a fulfilling life and the career of Clara Barton. For details and registration, visit <http://nmuc.org/Convo/2008Convo.htm>.

### ONE OF A SERIES OF "MUST-READS" ON RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Reviewed by Dr. Ken R. Vincent, AHS member

originally published in DE NUMINE (official publication of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Religious Experience), Vol. 44, 2008

### *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul* by Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary

*The Spiritual Brain* is the brilliant brainchild of a neuro-psychologist and a journalist. In this book, the authors present data to counter the claims of the materialist/atheist/reductionist theories. Beauregard and O'Leary begin by de-bunking the "God gene," the theory that God is "inside the temporal lobe," and the attempt to explain religious experience as some ill-defined form of sub-clinical temporal lobe epilepsy. They emphasize that Religious, Spiritual, Mystical Experiences (RSME's) are rather common with 20-49% of individuals in the U.S., Britain, and Australia having had one or more. This figure increases to over 60% when experiencers are interviewed rather than surveyed by questionnaire. Pioneering neurotheologian Michael Persinger's "God helmet" is confronted with its primary deficiency — the failure to replicate in a well-designed double-blind experiment. Beauregard and O'Leary point out that, to date, none of the attempts by neurotheologians have yielded anything but "bits and pieces" of the whole experience. Also, none of these attempts have resulted in lasting spiritual transformations which are the hallmark of genuine RSME's.

So is "God" located in the brain? Or in the words of the mystic William Blake, do spiritually transformative experiences truly "cleanse the doors of perception"? This book investigates the placebo effect and its negative counterpart, the nocebo effect as evidence for the mind's effect on the body. Next, near-death experiences are covered as evidence that the mind (spirit) exists separate from the body. What follows is an overview of research into RSME's, beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with William James and Evelyn Underhill. For modern data, they turn to Sir Alister Hardy's Religious Experience Research Centre (formerly at Oxford) at the University of Wales Lampeter — home to over 6,000 cases of RSME's and the world's leading research organization into RSME's.

The relationship of religion to health is discussed, followed by the strong data that RSME's change lives for the better. Finally, Beauregard's own research into brain activity of Carmelite nuns during the contemplative prayer is reviewed. His research indicates that RSME's are not located exclusively in the temporal lobe and that, "Although one can never prove it from one side only, the data are consistent with an experience in which the experiencer contacts a Spiritual Reality outside their own minds." All serious students of spiritually transformative experiences should have this book in their libraries.

# Easter Sunday Hospitality in van Schaick Parlor



*Above* are Caroline and Mark McNabb and the newest member of their family!  
  
*Below* are Jan-Christine Johnson and Joe Lawson, our music director.



*Above* A rare Sunday... long-time friends who have grown up at UNMC share news of their latest adventures. Ian and Bret McCully, Emily Skidmore and Linnea McCully. Linnea will graduate in the spring.  
  
*Below right* the McCully guys good-naturedly smile for Pastor Lillie!!  
  
*Below left* Catherine Bocskor, UNMC liturgist, visits with our tenor José Sanchez.



*Below right* are long-time UNMC members Jill and Dave Gatton, our moderator, welcoming newcomer Lauren Weeth, center.  
  
*Below left* are Bob Segal and Alex Dillon, both always ready to share a smile with our “photographer” Pastor Lillie!





### Easter Hospitality, continued...

Beginning at upper left and moving clockwise Jennifer Sandberg welcoming our latest baby; newcomer Jeff Kellum; Richard Russo and Ron Eanes, welcome and membership chair; Keith Maly and Mike Dillon; one of the children, who has God-questions for Rev. Henley; and a friendly family who were Easter guests!

### From G Street to GAZA



Deacons Marti Martinson, above, and Perry King, not pictured, sponsored the G Street to Gaza and Food For All fund raiser at UNMC.

Excerpt from the United Palestinian Appeal website:

Marti Martinson, a member of the church, told how he was driven by a sense of moral responsibility to help the Palestinians, and then described how sponsoring a child in Gaza through UPA had changed his life.

The audience did come together, and "dared to care" about Palestine, with one student pulling his last 35 cents out of his pockets for Gaza, and a disabled woman standing up to ask how she could help despite relying on SSI for her income. In all, they gave over \$2,000 in a show of solidarity, with many committing to volunteer time in the future.



### On Sunday, April 6

Eric Stetson, left, will be teaching early Universalist history at 12:30 after hospitality. William Spruiell, will be introducing a Christian Course in Miracles before church at 9:30 in the library.