

# Universalist Anchor



## *From the heart...*

Most of our Sunday guests find us on the web. They may have seen our new colorful banners and gone to the internet or they may have started with an internet search and found us that way. Some guests are invited by members or friends, and others have simply walked by and dropped in; but the majority of our guests find us on the web.

We have a significant number of guests every week, and it is a joy to welcome them to our church each Sunday.

From 2006 to 2008 we have had a 34% increase in Sunday worship attendance. That is a significant increase.

However, our membership numbers are not significantly higher. And, it is membership growth that will keep our Universalist presence in this region alive and well. If we don't increase our numbers, there is a risk that Universalist Christianity will die in this region.

We need to ask ourselves, "Why is it important that this church survive?" And, "What are the challenges we face in keeping it alive in an age where fewer and fewer people are going to church?"

A good portion of my non-spiritual reading is on "church growth," and I can tell you with reasoned discovery that church growth is a complex issue. When you include the challenges of an urban church, as well as the *Universalist* factor—universal salvation—it becomes even more complex.

We cannot begin to address all of the complexities of church growth in this column, but we can embrace these simple, yet dynamic guidelines that will make a difference. In order to achieve a significant increase in church membership, I sincerely believe that we need at least the following:

- a dynamic music ministry program with a breadth of repertoire, **and** more volunteers in the choir;
- an intentional welcoming presence each and every Sunday; and
- a path to membership that is visible and consistent for newcomers.

This year we had an outstanding interim music director, Joseph Lawson, who has accepted a position as *Assistant to the Choral Master* at The Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Congratulations to Joe! His last Sunday with us will be June 29th.

Joe's contributions this year have been wonderful, and he has contributed to a greater breadth of musical repertoire for UNMC. The Board of Trustees and I are work-

ing to find another interim music director, keeping in mind that we may have to have several interims before the church finds someone who will make the music program here a true music ministry. When we do have a **musical ministry** with a broad repertoire, we will witness church growth regardless of the growing trends of religious indifference in the United States. The Board and I are committed to finding a music director who will keep us on the path that Joe has begun this year.

We also need more volunteers in the choir. You don't have to be perfect singer. If you love to sing, come and stand by a strong section leader—you will sound great! If you can't sing, invite your friends and neighbors who enjoy singing to visit us for a Sunday service. Perhaps while they are here, they will feel a call to share the blessings of their talent. Anyone who has any kind of musical talent can contribute to the music ministry of UNMC.

Research shows that an **intentional welcoming effort** makes churches grow.

A group of dedicated volunteers needs to answer a call to the ministry of intentional welcoming. Each Sunday these welcoming ministers make guests and newcomers feel welcomed and included. They remember those who have been guests before, make introductions, and help newcomers find ways to be included in the life and ministries of the church. Under the leadership of **Ron Eanes**, the Welcome & Membership Committee has undertaken a number of significant initiatives this year. Is this a ministry to which more of you can open your hearts?

Research shows that having a **visible and consistent path to membership** makes churches grown. Newcomers, especially those who are unfamiliar with church life, always want to know more about us. When someone knows the responsibilities of being part of a church, they feel more comfortable in committing to the ministry of the church. Newcomers want to know Unitarian Universalist history, our local church history, and all about the ministries, activities and programs of the church. We need to have regular newcomer classes scheduled, which means we need more volunteers on the Welcome & Membership Committee.

If you have been wondering what you could do, please let me or Ron Eanes know you feel called to help.

And last, but by no means "least," we all need to recognize that Universalist Christianity and UNMC are about "all of us." It is about sharing God's word with the world. It is coming to church on Sundays to connect to the greater community so that together we can work toward creating God's kingdom here on earth.

Yes, we are nourished spiritually when we come to

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Sunday services, and it makes a difference in our lives, yet, as our congregation grows and becomes more diverse, we need to recognize that different spiritual offerings need to be created within the framework of our traditional, Christian service. We may not have a responsive reading from Psalms every Sunday, but we will have responsive readings from Psalms throughout the church year. We may not hear our favorite hymns every Sunday, but we will hear them from time to time. We may not have a processional every Sunday, but during Advent and Lent and on other occasions we will have processions. And the members of the choir may not robe every Sunday, but they will robe for special occasions and wear stoles at different times throughout the year.

There is a saying that is used in football vernacular that illustrates this concept—“**on any given Sunday**”—meaning that on any given Sunday any team could win—despite expectations, despite the odds, despite the injuries. With worship, on any given Sunday someone’s needs are met, and someone else may have to wait until next week. Know that the minister and the worship committee are doing their best to meet as many spiritual needs as possible, while offering a diverse worship service in praise and joy to God and to each other.

There are many, many Christian services in this region, but ours is the only Universalist Christian church that welcomes everyone to Jesus’ table of inclusiveness. Can we risk the loss of a Universalist presence in the nation’s capital? Can we grow to become the vibrant, joyful, loving church God would have us be?

Have a blessed spring,

Pastor Lillie

### **SUNDAY SERVICES**

**Sunday, May 4 11:00 a.m.** “Justice in Our Time” One of our deacons, Jennifer Sandberg, is preaching the sermon. She will explore justice in our world today and the possibilities for us to act as a congregation and as individuals.

**Sunday, May 11 11:00 a.m.** “Mother Always Says” is a Mother’s Day sermon by Rev. Henley. She will explore the wisdom that most mothers have, although she has yet to find a *school for motherhood!* We will have a chocolate candy communion with Russell Stover Chocolate because Mother Gump always said, “Life is like a box of chocolates, Forrest.”

**Sunday, May 18 11:00 a.m.** “Let the Little Children Come,” an exploration of Jesus’ exhortation to include the children; thereby making them a part of the community, which was unheard of in those days. The question is, was he talking only of “children,” or is there more to this than the obvious? Luke 18:15-17

**Sunday, May 25 11:00 a.m.** “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” Rev. Henley preaching. Jesus tells us not be anxious about our lives. God feeds us; God takes care of us as; we are assured of God’s love and care. Matthew 6:25-34

### **FROM THE MODERATOR**

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to extend an invitation for all members and friends to attend and participate in our upcoming Annual Congregational Meeting after Church on Sunday May 4, 2008.

During the meeting we will hold elections and adopt a budget for the upcoming year—May 1, 2008—April 30, 2009. We will hear from Committee chairs on the great work that our committees are doing for the Church. And we will discuss some updated and new initiatives that we hope to accomplish over the coming year.

As a gentle reminder, if you have not already made your pledge for the coming year, we encourage you to do so to support the growing and exciting work of this congregation.

I know that each and every one of you are greatly committed to the life of our congregation. I also know that “annual meetings” are not always how you imagine spending your Sunday afternoon. With that in mind and as your moderator, I promise to make our congregational meeting as productive as possible so that we all can enjoy the remainder of the weekend with family and friends. My goal is to begin by 12:30 p.m. and adjourn by 2:00 p.m. A light lunch will be provided.

I look forward to seeing you on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Dave Gatton

### **Children/Youth Religious Education**

In Sunday morning RE we have continued study of Old Testament stories. We have also gotten outdoors to look for new places to plant flowers and discuss how to spiff up the courtyard and playground areas in fun, attractive ways.

**YOUTH GROUP** (7th grade and above) Meetings are at 7 p.m. Sunday evening at the McCully/Sandberg house in Oakton, VA. Discussion about big issues in the lives of teens and cookies always served! The Youth Group gathered at the McCully/Sandberg house on Saturday evening April 12th to cook, bake and mix for the Hospitality Hour they hosted Sunday, April 13th. After completing all of the jobs to get the food ready, they enjoyed homemade pizza. **Their last meeting until next September will be Sunday evening, May 4th.**

### **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 May, the recipient will be KEEN. Started in DC in 1992, KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now) is a national, nonprofit, volunteer-led organization that provides one-to-one recreational opportunities for children and young adults with development and physical disabilities at no cost to their families or caregivers. KEEN’s mission is to foster the self-esteem, confidence, skills and talents of its athletes through non-competitive activities, allowing young people facing even the most significant challenges to meet their individual goals.

**SECOND 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  
*Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* by  
Edward F. Kelly, Emily Williams Kelly, Adam Crabtree, Alan  
Gauld, Michael Grosso, Bruce Greyson

*Irreducible Mind* is an 800-page product of three psychologists, a psychiatrist, a psychotherapist, and a philosopher. Three of the authors are affiliated with the University of Virginia Medical School's Division of Perceptual Studies which is the premier organization researching life after death. While most research into the mystical and paranormal take their starting point as William James' *Variety of Religious Experience*, the authors of *Irreducible Mind* add a second and primary reference point: F. W. H. Myers' *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*. The primary objective of this book is to present evidence that the current materialist view of the mind-body problem is inadequate. Simply put, the brain does not completely explain or account for the mind.

The authors begin with the state of contemporary debate about consciousness. Next, they look at F. W. H. Myers and his theoretical debate about the mind-body problem. The core of the book is its exhaustive documentation of the past 100+ years of research into anomalous experience that cannot be explained by the materialist/reductionist model. These anomalous experiences include research into psychosomatic medicine, psychoneuroimmunology, placebo and nocebo effects, hypnosis, reincarnation, near-death experiences, automatism, vertical out-of-body experiences, apparitions, mediumship, and mystical experiences.

In the concluding chapter, the authors offer several alternatives to the materialist model. For researchers of anomalous experience and for anyone who doesn't buy into the materialists' "reductio ad absurdum," this book is a must.



**Chancel Flowers**

**Mary Templeton, Coordinator**

**4 May**--Chancel flowers are given "in remembrance of our beloved uncle and brother-in-law, Tom Bliss, and in celebration of Jennifer and Clint's 26th wedding anniversary," by the McCully/Sandberg family.

**11 May**--Chancel flowers are given in memory of Gladys M. Skidmore by her son, David W. Skidmore, and granddaughter, Emily S. Skidmore.

**18 May**--Chancel flowers are given in memory of their parents, Sally Tesoriero and John Bertram, by Tom Tesoriero and Rob Bertram.

**25 May**--Chancel flowers are given in loving memory of her brother, Karl F. Thompson, by Amy Thompson Tip-ton.

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

**Adult Religious Education in May**

**Sunday, May 4, 9:30 a.m.** Universalist history with Eric Stetson. Focus will be on universalism in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is a multi-part course which will be offered over the next several months. You do not have to come to all of them to participate. Second floor study.

**Sunday, May 11, 9:30 a.m.** A *Christian Course in Miracles* taught by William Spruiell. Study, second floor.

**Sunday, May 18, 12:30 p.m.** After hospitality there will be a second chance to participate in the May class on "Universalist history with Eric Stetson. Part 1: Universalism in the Hebrew Scriptures." Second floor study.

**Sunday, May 25, 9:30 a.m.** Prayer study group discusses the Lord's Prayer today in the second floor study.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Saturday, May 3: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** UNMC hosts the **Greater Washington Area Partner Church Committee** at its Quarterly Meeting. UNMC members and friends are invited to attend. See article on page 4.

**Sunday, May 4: 9:30 a.m.** Universalist history with Eric Stetson in 2nd floor study. Focus will be on universalism in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is a multi-part course which will be offered over the next several months. You do not have to come to all of them to participate. Eric's new book, *Christian Universalism: God's Good News for All People*, is available on Amazon.com.

**12:30** Congregational meeting

**7:00 p.m. Youth Group** (7th grade and above) at the McCully/Sandberg home, their last meeting until next September

**Monday, May 5, 7:00 p.m.** Board Meeting in Parlor

**Wednesday, May 7, 6:00 p.m.** "Pray for Peace" Deacon Marti Martinson will begin his first Wednesday of the month prayer service.

**Sunday, May 11, 9:30 a.m.** A *Christian Course in Miracles* taught by William Spruiell. Study, 2nd floor.

**Tuesday May 13, 7:00 p.m.** UNMC will host Dr. Alice Rothchild, author of *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: The Stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience*. See article on page 4.

**Saturday, May 17, 2:30 p.m.** Church kitchen: **Leland Place** ministry

**Sunday, May 18, 12:30 p.m.** After hospitality there will be a second chance to participate in the May class on "Universalist history with Eric Stetson. Part 1: Universalism in the Hebrew Scriptures." Second floor study.

**Sunday, May 25, 9:30 a.m.** Prayer study group discusses the Lord's Prayer today in the second floor study.

**Saturday, May 3, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** UNMC members and friends are invited to join the **Greater Washington Area Partner Church Committee** at its Quarterly Meeting at UNMC on The featured speaker will be Janice Brunson speaking on Unitarian Universalists in Africa.

Our UU African heritage varies, from Nigeria where Unitarianism took root 90 years ago and a church built 70 years ago, to the UU Fellowship founded in 2001, to the nearly 30 congregations in Kenya, nearly all of which are new. Ms. Brunson will share her experiences with UUs in the African countries of Nigeria, Kenya and Burundi where she spent three months last year, as well as in Congo and Uganda which she plans to visit next January. She was the first American UU to ever visit these groups, staying in their homes in the cities, towns and rural villages to better experience their lives. Through marathon conversations, our African UUs talked about their faith and identified numerous economic projects they could start and grow with a bit of start-up capital. So far there are a half dozen projects underway, including processing dates into cooking oil, farming fish, and providing van services and a tour business for western UUs to visit UUs in Africa. Contact the office for more information: 202-387-3411 or email office@universalist.org.

### **LELAND PLACE**

Spring Weather --- and Food --- At Leland in April

The men of Leland Place and volunteers from our church enjoyed a sunshine-filled spring day --- and a menu to go with it --- on Saturday April 19. We served baked chicken breasts (breaded with mustard), homemade biscuits, vanilla ice cream and fresh strawberries, and lots of salad --- a green salad and a black bean/corn/tomatoes salad. A full house of appreciative men enjoyed the repast.

Thanks to volunteers Mike and Alex Dillon, Catherine Bocskor, Judy Burns, Pastor Lillie, and Dave Skidmore.

Leland, a facility of S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat) on North Capitol Street is a halfway house for men recovering from homelessness and addiction. Our next dinner is scheduled for **Saturday, May 17**. Volunteers gather in the church kitchen at 2:30 p.m. , carpool to Leland and share the meal with the men at around 5 p.m. Please RSVP to the office at 202-387-3411 or email office@universalist.org.

Volunteers divide the cost of the meal, usually \$15 to \$25 per volunteer. Those who would like to donate time, but not money, may do so by contacting Pastor Lillie or Dave Skidmore. If you are short of time, but less short of money, you can donate to the Leland program by using one of the specially marked envelopes in the pews.

### **PRAY FOR PEACE**

**Wednesday, May 7, 6:00 p.m.** "Pray for Peace" Deacon Marti Martinson will begin his first Wednesday of the month prayer service. Come after work and participate in prayer from many religious traditions. This prayer service will be every month on the first Wednesday of the month.

### **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 Palestinian 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

### **BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

Perhaps the most notable recent development on the buildings and grounds [B&G] front at UNMC is the onset of recycling service. The church now has an additional large bin, blue plastic, in the back yard and a receptacle for the parlor that is labeled for recyclables.

The church has bottled water available in the closet on the left hand side of the narthex. Remember, put the bottles in the recycling bin.

Speaking to the exterior of the church, I want to express my thanks to Mike Dillon for leading an effort to remove several of the center shrubs in the yard on the left-hand side of the front door. Pastor Lillie has some ideas about using the marquee board that is behind the shrubs. Mike is also the one responsible for planting rose bushes in the side yard, for which we are very grateful. Likewise, I want to thank Sally Segal for her work on the guard fences along the street sides of the church and Brian Pepper and the Sunday Schoolers for the flowers that are in the process of being planted at various points in the side yard.

### **DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO...**

**BE A GREETER/USHER** on Sundays. Call Ron Eanes.

**PROVIDE HOSPITALITY** after church, call Jennifer Sandberg.

**GIVE CHANCEL FLOWERS** in memory or in honor of someone? Call Mary Templeton, our flower coordinator.

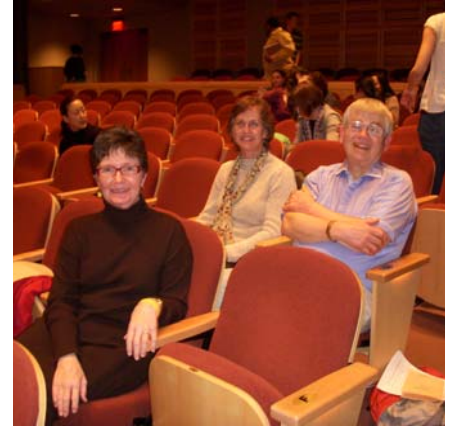
**JOIN THE CHURCH**, or participate in a "Newcomer Class," or attend a *Fireside Chat*, talk to or email Rev. Henley.

All contact information is in the UNMC membership directory. Call the church office for contact information and/or a directory.



Rev. Henley presents UNMC's "Sharing Our Plate" check to RAINN, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. The staff members who accepted the check and provided an orientation are Jen Wilson, Shaqueta Pierre, and Penelope Hughes.

Members who attended and thoroughly enjoyed Ilya Sinaisky's doctoral recital at the University of Maryland, from left to right: Mary Templeton, our Chancel Flower coordinator; Sue Mosher, UNMC Registrar; and Jorn Dakin, chair of the building and grounds committee.



Our beloved Rose Dennis smiles her regards to the UNMC community. She is doing well in her 97<sup>th</sup> year. Deacon Perry King promised her that a group would visit from UNMC and sing to her some of her favorite hymns.



Alex Dillon passed his final test on Saturday, April 5 and has earned his Second Dan (Second Degree) Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. Pictured here is his "Jump Front Kick", and that blur by his foot is a board breaking.