

Universalist Anchor

April 2006

Third Wednesday Theology Discussion

Our third Wednesday theology discussion will resume on Wednesday April 19 at 7:00 pm with the topic "Olympia Brown and Gender Issues in our Universalist Heritage: Yesterday and Today's Struggle." Come and learn more about this amazingly energetic and courageous woman whose memorial plaque is located in the sanctuary vestibule. Olympia Brown was the first woman to be ordained to the professional ministry in the U.S. and became a pioneer in the suffrage and other reform movements in the 19th century. For background you may read: "Who Was Afraid of Olympia Brown" found on the web at www.uua.org/uuhs/News/olympia.html and also available on the table in the parlor. Also think about our own current struggle around gender issues and language and how we can be informed by past Universalist struggles. Come for coffee and social gathering at 7:00. The discussion will start promptly at 7:30 pm.

Examining the Declaration of Faith

From the Worship Committee: We are currently about midway through an all-congregation study of the Declaration of Faith that we recite in worship each Sunday. This effort stems from last September's "quick start" meeting, at which the Worship Committee took away a charge to design and implement a process that would involve the entire congregation in an examination of the Declaration, such a process to result in either a conscious affirmation of UNMC's current practice or a our current practice and to be completed change in

April Worship & Activity Schedule at UNMC

Sunday, April 2nd

Daylight Savings Time Begins

10:00 a.m. Meditation/reflection on "The certainty of just retribution for sin"

11:00 a.m. Candidate for the Settled Minister, Preaching- Reverend Lillie Henley

Sermon: "Drink From The Cup"

12:30 p.m. Congregational Meeting

Special meeting to vote to call a settled minister

Wednesday, April 5th

7:00 p.m. Study: "The Other New Testament Books"

Sunday, April 9th – PALM SUNDAY

11:00 a.m. Sermon: "Is It Nothing To You?"

Jim Morgan- Preaching

Wednesday, April 12th

7:00 p.m. Study: "What About Revelation?"

Thursday, April 13th – MAUNDY THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. Communion and Potluck Meal

Friday, April 14th – GOOD FRIDAY

Noon – Service Luke 23:32-40

Sunday, April 16th – EASTER SUNDAY

11:00 a.m. Sermon: "Out Of the Ashes"

Jim Morgan- Preaching

Sunday, April 23rd

11:00 a.m. Sermon: "While The Clay Is Wet"

Jim Morgan- Preaching

Sunday, April 30th

11:00 a.m. Sermon: "Up Tight Or Hanging Loose"

Jim Morgan- Preaching

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Examining the Declaration of Faith

our current practice and to be completed in time to bring any necessary action to the congregation on or before the annual congregational meeting in May 2006.

The Process So Far

The Committee has been guided by the example set by All Souls Church (New York), which recently examined and updated its Bond of Union, and by the successful adoption of a congregational covenant last year at UNMC. We have also been ever mindful of these provisions in our congregational covenant that relate to changes in worship, sharing of our beliefs, and the decision-making process:

- We will embrace the differences of views inherent in our community, expressing our differences respectfully while listening to others—recognizing difference is a strength, offering opportunities for learning and growing together.
- We will create opportunities to share beliefs.
- We will promote respect and acceptance of differences in our beliefs through purposeful activities that will educate us to the range of Christian and other theologies.
- We will uphold a meaningful, consistent approach to worship that adheres to our core liberal Christian and Universalist traditions, while remaining open as a community to consider change.
- We will strive for inclusiveness in our worship by avoiding unexplained religious jargon and unnecessary gender-specific language, as well as by recognizing the diversity in the spiritual paths we travel.
- We will create clear and open processes to enhance opportunities for participation in decision-making.

The process began with the distribution of a background paper, written by Jim Estes, that reviewed the role that creeds and affirmations have played in Christianity in general and among Universalists in particular. The Committee then held a congregational discussion

session Feb. 26 to share members and friends personal responses to the Declaration and to talk about the roles that affirmations play or can play in our worship life. Those personal responses were assembled into a handout available at the church; this document also includes a short summary of the affirmation roles and actions discussed at the Feb. 26 meeting.

We are currently holding a five-week series of meditation/reflection and discussion sessions, each week focusing on one of the five principles in the Declaration. These small group meetings, which continue through April 9 (see Worship & Activities Schedule on Page 1) are intended to delve deeper into the meaning that these principles have for us. As additional background, we have reprinted and made available at the church Dr. Bill Fox's 1997 sermon "What We Say Here," in which he examines each principle for its contemporary relevance.

What Happens Next

We anticipate holding at least one more all-congregation discussion session on a Sunday afternoon before making a decision. We also will undertake as many one-on-one conversations with individual members as are necessary to ensure that all members feel like their voices have been heard.

After due deliberation, the Committee will forward its recommendation to the Board for inclusion in the annual meeting agenda. The Board will, of course, have a number of options at that point - ranging from endorsing the Committee's recommendation to abandoning the entire process, with no resulting outcome.

It is also possible that the Committee will find itself unable to complete its task in time for the annual meeting and will ask the Board to call a special congregational meeting at a later date. We feel that completing the process with time for ample member input is more important than meeting a specific deadline for action.

Possible Outcomes

From the Feb. 26 congregational meeting, we learned that the congregation takes the matter of the Declaration of Faith very seriously and that each principle is deeply cherished by at least some people. We also inferred that there is a sixth principle -- as deeply held but not recited in worship -- that we enjoy great

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The Pastor's Ponderings

Ah, Easter. It's not far away. This festival is the lynchpin of the Christian faith and deserves the place it holds in our calendar year and in our hearts.

While Christmas is numerically the first festival of the Christian year, it would have little substantive impact if it were not under girded and supported by the Easter Event. Paul writes in Romans I that Jesus "was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." Paul writes nothing about the Virgin Birth, but is adamant and dogmatic about the resurrection. He has thought it through.

Christmas in our culture has surpassed Easter in economic and social impact. Many who are not Christian celebrate the story and exchange gifts and party out of care for each other. But it is Easter that carries the Family happening. It is Easter that legitimizes Christmas and encourages us to believe the event and many of the historical metaphors which follow.

The theme of death and resurrection is nearly universal in world religion circles. The old must die before the new can be born. That's the way it is in nature. It appears to be part of God's grand design for a Universe that has God's undeniable mark on it.

As we journey towards April 16th, we have the privilege of following Jesus in his last meal with his friends, his betrayal at the hands of Judas, his facetious trial before Pilate, his cruel death through crucifixion and finally his mighty resurrection. We can follow him through identification with our own betrayals, our own trials, our own little deaths and finally our own resurrection. God is walking with us.

Jim Morgan

I want to welcome Quawanna Thomas, our new administrator. Quawanna will be here from 9:00am-12:00pm, Monday through Friday. I will be around a little but she won't need me much longer. Good luck to the church in this new chapter in your history.
Marguerite

Outreach Opportunity

On Sunday, April 30 we will begin collecting books for summer reading for students at Occoquan Elementary School. Although the school is located a long ways from our church, it is in our wider community and it is where I teach. The school has a large population of children who get free or reduced lunch. It is majority Hispanic, though there are other ethnic groups represented. Most of the students do not have books at home or access to a library on a regular basis. We will be collecting books for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The Sunday before we begin collecting, I will have samples of books on display that would be appropriate for the different reading levels in those grades. Either new or gently used books are welcome.

Please consider a generous donation. Jennifer Sandberg.

Chancel Flowers for April

Mary Simmons, Chair

April 2: Flowers are given in memory of Norman G. and Martha S. Brace By Douglas, Julius and Marcia Brace and Steven and Carol Brace Shaw.

April 9: Palms are given in memory of Mary K and H. Jerome Graham by Sally and Douglas Simon.

April 16: Easter flowers are given by Arthur G. and Jean Wiley in memory of there Family members. Also given by Amy T. Tipton in memory of Corinne H. and Seth R. Brooks. Also given in memory of Walter H. Wood by his family.

April 23: Flowers are given by Mae Combs in memory of the Ecclesia, the women of the Parish who did so much for our church.

April 30: Open

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freedom as individuals to make our own interpretations of the statements in the Declaration of Faith. As an element of our liturgy, members said the Declaration defines us as a community, sets the tone for worship, and provides comfort and continuity. At the same time, though, concerns were raised that when it comes to the Declaration's role in presenting to newcomers a snapshot of our spiritual community, some of the specific language in the Declaration of Faith may provide an inaccurate picture of who is "in" and who is "out," despite our sincere and heartfelt explanations that the Declaration is a product of the linguistic conventions of a century ago and that it does not function for us as a creedal test for membership.

While the Worship Committee has emphasized repeatedly that no particular proposal is currently on the table and that a change in our usage of the Declaration is not inevitable, we cannot deny that some possible outcomes seem more likely than others. From the Feb. 26 meeting, we took away a strong sense that the congregation wishes to continue to have a faith statement in the liturgy - and that this should be a theological statement (in contrast to an organizational statement) that is true to the meaning of the Five Principles of 1899 (which itself is a reflection of the Winchester Profession of 1803). Thus, neither completely removing the Declaration from our liturgy nor drafting a completely new liturgical statement of our faith, separate from these historic Universalist affirmations, seems a probable result of this process.

At this point in time, with the small group discussions having just begun, the Committee feels that two possible outcomes seem the most likely. One possibility is to augment the existing Declaration of Faith and revise its accompanying explanatory statement in the worship bulletin in order to celebrate the freedom of individual interpretation that we enjoy. Another potential result is that we would draw from the shared meaning that we find behind the Declaration to form a new expression of our faith that

were the outcome, we would envision that the Five Principles of 1899 would continue to have a place in our worship at special services, such as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday, just as we have for several years been using two other historic Universalist faith statements, the 1803 Winchester Profession and 1935 Washington Avowal, occasionally in such services. Regardless of what the congregation decides to do regarding the use of a specific affirmation in our liturgy, the 1899 Five Principles will remain a cherished part of our tradition.

The Worship Committee looks forward to these small group meetings and hopes that everyone will participate as fully as they are able we pray for God's inspiration during this period of discernment for our community.

Spooky Action Theater

Contact: Richard Henrich, Director
202-248-0647 rhenrich@spookyaction.org

New Ticket Price - Free

Why free theater? We ask our actors to put themselves out there and push the limits like aerialists working without a net. The result can be thrilling and dangerous. We do it because we want to connect with our audience. Spooky Action now matches the risk its actors take, trusting in the value of our work and the kindness of strangers.

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Rameau's Nephew adapted from Denis Diderot by Shelly Berc and Andrei Belgrader, The Enlightenment in Handsprings, March 8 - April 2, 2006

The Mead Theatre Lab at Flashpoint
916 G St NW, Washington, DC 20001

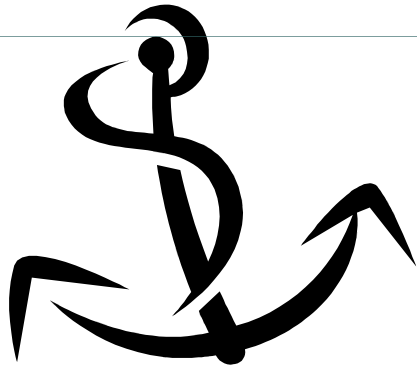
Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown.

Performances Wed, Thu & Sun at 7:30 PM, Sun matinees at 2 PM

For reservations, call 202-248-0647 or e-mail:
info@spookyaction.org

Reservations will be released to standbys at the box office 15 minutes before curtain.

www.spookyaction.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.

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

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