

Universalist Anchor

February 2006

Update from the Ministerial Search Committee

The search for a settled minister for UNMC is in high gear. The Search Committee has received more than 25 applications or expressions of interest from a diverse group of applicants, both through the UUA settlement process and via direct contacts. From this group, the committee has identified roughly eight individuals who look particularly promising. Each of them has been sent a packet describing our church and community; we drew on many of the points that emerged from the surveys and other consultations in describing our congregation and its hopes for the future.

Several important steps lie ahead, and our time frame is tight. The Search Committee is now in the process of conducting telephone interviews with each of the eight applicants. These allow time for in-depth discussion of key questions, as well as the opportunity for the interested ministers to pose their questions to the committee. Three finalists will be selected, each of whom will be invited to visit Washington for a pre-candidating weekend, during which time the Search Committee hears them preach and holds in-depth discussions, answering questions for each other and getting to know each other better. Our plan is to have these visits completed by mid-March.

Following visits from the three finalists, the Search Committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to invite an individual to come to UNMC as a candidate for settled minister. A series of opportunities will be arranged, probably in a late March-early April time frame, during which our members and friends can get to know the candidate, hear 2 sermons and otherwise have an opportunity to arrive at their own conclusions concerning this most important decision for our community.

Continued on page 4

February Worship & Activity Schedule at UNMC

Sunday, February 5

11 a.m. Worship: "What Do You Say After You Say Hello?", Genesis 18:1-8, Jim Morgan preaching.

Sunday, February 12

11 a.m. Worship: "What Do You Hear?", Psalm 29, Jim Morgan preaching.

Wednesday, February 15

7:00 p.m. coffee, 7:30 discussion: Third Wednesday Theological Discussion: "Unitarianism in Transylvania and the origins of liberal Christianity in 16th century Transylvania"

Saturday afternoon, February 18

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, February 19

11 a.m. Worship: "What Does God Hear?", Psalm 51, Jim Morgan preaching.

Sunday, February 26

11 a.m. Worship: "Jeremiah, Who?", Jeremiah, chapter 1, Jim Morgan preaching.

12:30 p.m.- Lunch and a conversation around the Declaration of Faith that we recite during worship. See "What We Say Here" on page 4.

Future Events

Wednesday, March 1

12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Services at UNMC.

March 31- April 1

JPD Spring Conference, Arlington VA

Deacons Corner:

Connections, both old and new, was the theme running through the deacons' discussion at their last meeting on January 21. They discussed, with Dr. Morgan, plans to reach out to neighbors and both past and prospective members during Lent.

Tentatively, Dr. Morgan is planning two services on Ash Wednesday, March 1 – the traditional noon service and a second one, at 7 p.m., to accommodate members who cannot leave work at midday and, we hope, to attract nearby residents just home from work.

The first Sunday in Lent, March 5, will mark a homecoming for Minister Emeritus Dr. Bill Fox, and, it is hoped, for "alumni" of Bill's pastorship in the 1980s and tenure as part-time senior minister in the mid-1990s. Dr. Fox, president of Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, will preach and we'll have special festivities during hospitality hour to mark the impending departure, in April, of Verger David Fox, Bill's brother.

On Wednesday March 8, Dr. Morgan hopes to begin a series of weekly classes and continue through Lent.

The deacons are planning communion on the second Sunday Lent - March 12 – and are looking toward the usual 7 p.m. service on Maundy Thursday, April 13, and the noon service on Good Friday, April 14.

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.

Parish Note: Deacon emeritus Jules MacKallor was warmly welcomed back to church on Sunday January 22 after an absence of some years. Jules' wife, Carol, passed away in September after a long illness.

Dave Skidmore, Head Deacon

Third Wednesday Theology Discussion

Our regular Third Wednesday Theology Discussion in Jan. saw six persons in attendance with a spirited discussion on "The Certainty of just retribution for Sin." from our declaration of faith statement. A wide diversity of opinions were displayed, but the most consistently raised point which often comes up in any discussion of sin, justice, and universal salvation was how a certain historical figure named Adolf Hitler would fare when and if justice is meted out. Some persons feel that Hitler got his punishment for sin in this life while others feel that justice is a continuing and eternal process leading to the final reconciliation of all souls with the divine. Some interesting comments on the idea of retribution for sin were as follows: "Retribution means accountability. If God is in the space between you and me and I wrong you then I am accountable." "Sin was originally a violation of the covenant in the Old Testament and implies separation and that which caused pain." "Sin is a construct made by men to oppress women." "There is payback for sin and that is comforting as justice is an all important ideal." "Just retribution for sin is a carrot and stick religion. I don't believe in punishing God." "Unitarians have not focused on sin traditionally because of their overly rosy view of the world derived from their class position." We concluded with an agreement to honor and affirm the tremendous diversity reflected in our congregation.

For our next third Wednesday discussion, frequent new visitor and member of Paint Branch UU church Catherine Bocskor will lead a discussion on Unitarianism in Transylvania. Come hear about and discuss the origins of liberal Christianity in 16th century Transylvania. We will focus on the foundation of Reformation Unitarianism and the early site for religious freedom. How are we living out this heritage today in Hungary, Romania, and the US?

Next discussion: Wednesday, Feb. 15. 7:00-coffee and fellowship 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.

From the Pastor's Desk

February is the month for lovers. Valentine's Day is the Fourteenth and everyone is supposed to get a card or gift on that particular day from the one they love. Sometimes, however, we must feel like Charlie Brown, waiting in front of his mailbox, to learn if he has received a card or letter from the Red Headed Girl with whom he is secretly in love - and he waits in vain.

I remember in fourth grade making Valentines and giving them to someone in class. The big problem was that I never received one from the one person in the class from whom I would have been delighted to have received one. We are often disappointed in love. There are folks around us who happily love us, but we are often seeking it from sources where it is not available. So, we are disappointed and sometimes depressed. Most of us have probably been dependent over a non-requested love.

To tell someone, "It's all right at least God loves you," doesn't seem to help. God feels very remote, and God's arms are not very reassuring. God is unavailable and the person is not interested at that time to be loved by some phantom lover.

To say to the person though, "I love you," in a convincing and warm way may make all the difference. I am sure that many of us do not say those words often enough to our family members who need to hear them and to our friends who might be surprised to hear them, or to an acquaintance who would be bowled over to hear them. There are a number of reasons we do not do that, but a poignant one is that it would obligate us. We remember John saying, "Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." I believe that "showing and telling" are both important.

Jim

Dining at Leland Place

Bill Baker planned another wonderful meal, served to the men of Leland Place on Jan. 21: meatloaf, scalloped potatoes, green beans and salad. Thanks to Bill and Marti Martinson and Jim Morgan, his able assistants.

Leland Place, a halfway house on North Capitol Street for men recovering from homelessness and addiction, is facility of S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat).

Our next dinner is scheduled for Saturday Feb. 18. Please RSVP to the office at 202-387-3411 or office@universalist.org if you can help. We meet at 3 p.m. in the church kitchen, eat at Leland at 5 p.m., and return to the church by 6 p.m. Volunteers divide the cost of the meal, an amount that usually works out to \$15 to \$25 per volunteer.

Ash Wednesday Service

There will be two Ash Wednesday Services, March 1st, here at the church. One will be at 12:00 noon for those who work nearby and the other at 7:00 p.m. for those who cannot make the 12:00 noon service.

A time of silence for introspection will be offered — to identify those things in our lives which need to be cleansed for our Lenten journey. There will also be the imposition of ashes for those who would like them. A short homily on the disciplines for Lent will be part of the worship. A meal of soup and beverage will be provided after the 12:00 noon service. This is an excellent way to begin the celebration of the entire Lenten experience, which will end with Easter on April 16th. Join us in this festival.

Watch for the Lenten brochure which will be sent to you in February.

Chancel Flowers for February

Mary Simmons, Chair

February 5: Flowers given by Dave Skidmore in honor of his mother, Gladys Mae Focht Skidmore, in honor of her 89th birthday.

February 12: Flowers are given in loving memory of her parents, James L. Benson and Frances Benson and her brother James L. Benson, Jr. by Frances Benson Pearce.

February 19: Open

February 26: Open

What We Say Here

Each Sunday morning, the worship liturgy that gathers us together includes the voluntary recitation of what we've come to know as the Declaration of Faith, an affirmation adopted by Universalists in 1899 and so sometimes known also as the "Five Principles of 1899." Last fall, the Worship Committee took on the task of shepherding a process to involve the entire congregation in an examination of the Declaration of Faith. The Third Wednesday theology group already has had some good discussions, which have revealed a wide range of opinions and attitudes.

The next step in the process is to meet as a congregation, over lunch, on February 26, and explore two key questions together:

. What meaning does the Declaration of Faith that we recite in worship have for you personally?

. What role does an affirmation such as the Declaration of Faith play in our worship today, and what role should it play?

This will be a fun occasion to learn more about each others' beliefs (and incidentally, to mark the last Sunday before Lent begins). A highlight will be the opportunity to see what many other churches are using in their worship services to affirm their faith and mission. Newcomers, as well as long-time members and friends, are especially welcome to participate.

Following this program, the next part of the process will be for a small task force to take the information gathered and work on recommendations to be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting in May. There will be additional opportunities for feedback during that part of the process, so that everyone can be assured that their input will be heard, but the Worship Committee urges everyone to attend this luncheon in order to share as many different views as possible from the outset.

The Worship Committee wants to emphasize that no specific change in our current practice is currently on the table. The ultimate goal is to clarify our understanding of this portion of our liturgy, so that we can truly appreciate "what we say here" and why we say it.

Joseph Priestly District 2006 Spring Conference

This year's conference theme is "Spirituality of Generosity" Programming provided for all ages. Families are encouraged to attend.

March 31st to April 1st, 2006
Doubletree Hotel -Crystal City
300 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

ONLINE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE AT:

www.jpduua.org

Conference Highlights

Keynote Address by Gini Courter, Moderator of the UUA

Soulful Sundown Service

Friday Night Banner Parade and Opening Worship Celebration Service, including Bridging Ceremony & Award Presentations

Intergenerational Programming Throughout the Entire Conference

Annual Anti-Racism Service

Annual Meeting

Breakthrough Congregation Presentations from Annapolis & All Souls

Endowment Kick-Off

Update from the Ministerial Search Committee

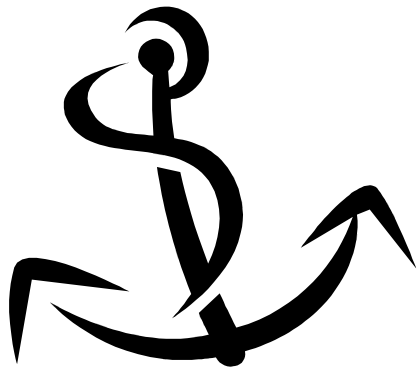
Continued from page 1

Following the second Sunday service with our candidate, the congregation would meet to discuss and decide whether to call the individual as our settled minister. If the call is made and accepted, the settled ministry would begin in August, 2006.

Please feel free to contact any of us with your questions or comments: Rob Bertram, Liz Crawford (Chair), Clint McCully and Donna Simonton.

Chancel Flowers needed for several Sundays

Please contact the office at 202-387-3411 to donate flowers in honor or remembrance of someone or to celebrate an anniversary.



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

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Dr. James R. Morgan, Interim Minister

The Rev. Dr. William L. Fox, Minister Emeritus

Board of Trustees: Rob Bertram, David Burton, Richard Hurst, Perry King, Clint McCully (Assistant Treasurer), Mark McNabb (Secretary), Brian Pepper (Treasurer), Jennifer Sandberg, Greg Wigle (Moderator)

Mr. David Skidmore, Head Deacon

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Marguerite Bogle, Church Office
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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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