

Universalist Anchor

Newsletter of the Universalist National Memorial Church

May 2003 · www.universalist.org · 1810 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009



May at UNMC

Bold events occur on Sundays. Sunday worship services begin at 11:00 a.m.

3 May. Saturday. 3:00 p.m. *Dinner with Leland Place.*

4 May. ***Once Thirsty, Still Hungry.*** Jesus' after-Easter appearance, as told in the Gospel of Luke, gives hope to the believers and the doubters alike.

Jennifer Sandberg's class on Moses and the Exodus begins after worship. See page three.

5 May. Monday. 7:30- 9:30 p.m. *Board of Trustees Meeting.* All are welcome.

7 May. Wednesday. *Worship Roundtable.* Come share your ideas about worship from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

11 May. ***Known by God.*** Through our reading in the Gospel of John, we have another way of understanding Jesus' leadership (including an unexpected Mothers' Day tie-in.)

17 May. Saturday. 3:00 p.m. *Dinner with Leland Place.*

18 May. ***The Bible Is a Wilderness Road.*** When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch, they learned what it means for scripture to be a "revelation from God."

Annual Congregational Meeting follows worship.

Light luncheon, but no coffee hour this Sunday. Leland Place food and goods collection.

25 May. ***The Victory that Conquers the World.*** Memorial Day reminds us of the sacrifices others have made in the field of battle. But what do we make of the "conquest of faith," where the battlefield is our own soul?

First Universalist Convention begins this day in Philadelphia, 1790.

Minister's Moment

Making Right Speech

When a "elder statesman" minister I admire told an off color joke in my presence, I blushed. Not that I had not heard the words before — all of the Anglo-Saxon variety — and not that I have used these words myself, a fact of which I am not proud. But there was something about this man telling a salty joke that struck, and strikes, me badly.

I should note that the joke teller did not use a single epithet that reflected on anyone's race, sex, religion, or ethnicity. He spoke no words in anger. There were no children present. Since I never before heard him say anything like this, I assume he has standards regarding his speech. In short, he was simply telling a joke to illustrate a point in the conversation, and to amuse his adult house guests.

I am sure there are those who think I am being a prude, because such language is common, and is being used, with "viewer discretion advised" on broadcast television, itself something of a bellwether of what is decent speech. Common vulgarity is not the problem, even if it is not pleasant. The bigger issue is understanding the power of words. Despite the school yard rhyme, words can hurt.

Not long ago, I was speaking to a "younger stateswoman" colleague who was advising me on a matter related to the church. In my telling of the episode, to fish for advice, I used a few choice words to describe the situation. Amid the helpful reflections and feedback she said, in so many words: "watch your tongue." There were three reasons. First, if overheard, it would reflect badly on me and the church. (Fair enough: my feelings notwithstanding, I do love and care for the church.) Second, if overheard, these words might hurt the feelings and very people I have pledged to pastor. (True, too.) But the third reason, because it requires nobody else to overhear, and was based on pure principle, was the most far-reaching.

"I know this might be bit Buddhist for you, but you really need to practice right speech." My friend was referring to the Buddhist practice of *samma vaca*, which also includes a prohibition on lying, condemnation, and gossip. It is one of a complex of

Concluded on page six

From the Trustees

April Meetings: The Board of Trustees met on April 7 and April 21. Among the actions taken and matters discussed were the following:

Budget. The Trustees continued work on preparation of a budget for the 2003- 2004 church fiscal year, for presentation at the Annual Meeting on May 18. It was noted that income for the 2003 -2004 year realistically may total \$113,000, which compares unfavorably to the \$193,000 in budgeted expenditures for the current 2002- 2003 church fiscal year. The Board is working on assembling a package of cuts to narrow this gap.

Proposed Agreement with Pastor Wells. Pastor Wells has volunteered to go to $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The Board met in executive session to consider this proposal, and made progress developing a draft agreement and draft set of evaluation criteria, for use in working out a written agreement with Pastor Wells for the coming year.

Building & Grounds Committee Charter. Kathryn Desmond presented a draft committee charter developed by the committee composed of herself, Jorn Dakin, Kirk Palmatier, and Al Templeton. The charter envisions the committee taking ownership for building maintenance matters, and leaves building usage matters for a separate committee on building usage.

Relationship with the UUA. The Board approved a resolution (discussed elsewhere in this issue of the *Anchor*) introduced by Vicki Pepper, reaffirming UNMC's membership in the UUA and our interest in developing stronger relations with the UUA.

Modifications to UNMC's Bylaws. Vicki Pepper has

drafted a set of revisions to the UNMC bylaws. Many of these proposed changes deal with the membership of the Board, and UNMC's committee structure. The plan is to seek the congregation's approval of these amendments at the Annual Meeting.

Building Usage/Eritreans. Concern has been expressed over the disruption to UNMC's Easter services by the Eritreans' Palm Sunday service. It was decided that Paul Hannah and Ms. Durham Bates would initiate a dialogue with representatives from the Eritrean congregation, as a first step in working out current sources of friction.

Upcoming May Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will take place on Monday, May 5, at 7:30 p.m. in the Romaine- Van Schaick room. All members and friends of the church are welcome to attend. Copies of the meeting agenda will be available during coffee hour on May 4, or may be obtained electronically by emailing Paul Hannah at [deleted for web edition; contact church office.]

The Trustees anticipate putting the finishing touches on budget recommendations for the 2003-2004 UNMC fiscal year, and finalizing preparations for the Annual Meeting. In addition, it is expected that the Board will approve the charter for the building and grounds committee, and will in endorse proposed changes to the bylaws.

Questions, Comments, Suggestions? Please contact any of the members of the Board of Trustees,

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 (July and August are combined) for the members and friends of the Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, D.C.

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The Rev. Scott Wells, Minister (wells@universalist.org)
The Rev. Dr. William L. Fox, Minister Emeritus
Mr. Paul Hannah, Moderator
Board of Trustees: Kathryn Desmond, Jim Estes, David Hooker, Richard Hurst, Sue Mosher, and Vicki Pepper
Dr. Michael O'Brien, Music Director
Mr. Kirk Denton, Visiting Organist
Ms. Kimberly Durham Bates, Church Administrator

UNMC Annual Parish Meeting

Please make plans to attend the Annual Parish Meeting which will be held on Sunday, May 18, 2002 in the Romaine- van Schaick room after services.

Although only UNMC Members and Associate Members may vote at the meeting, all Members, Associate Members, and Friends of UNMC are welcome to attend. A light lunch will be served.

The agenda will include the following items:

Election of Church Officers

Pursuant to Art. III, Section 6 of the UNMC bylaws, church officers and trustees will be elected.

Delegate to the UUA General Assembly

Delegates to the UUA General Assembly will be elected, pursuant to Art. III, Section 6 of the UNMC's bylaws.

Election of Deacons

Pursuant to Art. III, Section 1 of the UNMC bylaws, the congregation will consider the nomination by Pastor Wells of individuals to serve as Deacons of the church.

Registrar's Report

Sue Mosher the UNMC Registrar will make a report.

Changes to UNMC's bylaws.

Vicki Pepper will present proposed changes to the bylaws dealing with UNMC's committee structure, and other matters.

Consideration of Budget for 2003- 2004

The Board of Trustees will submit for approval a budget for the 2003- 2004 church fiscal year, which begins on May 1, 2003 and ends on April 30, 2004.

Mission Statement/Strategic Planning Matters

Sue Mosher will report on the congregations' process over the past year in implementing the strategic plan, which the congregation approved at last year's annual meeting.

Around the Church

UNMC Board Affirms UUA Relationship

On April 7, the UNMC Board of Trustees adopted the following resolution:

Whereas, the Universalist National Memorial Church (UNMC) has been a member of the Unitarian

Universalist Association (UUA) since its origin in 1961;

Whereas, that affiliation is acknowledged in the Preamble to the Bylaws of UNMC and cannot be dissolved without the concurrence of the Board of Trustees of the UUA;

Whereas, UNMC is charged in Article I of its Bylaws to represent the denomination in the spirit of its administration, and to set an example of well-ordered worship, effective preaching, rational and devout religious education, missionary zeal, and devotion to good works;

Whereas, the recent Revival 2003 hosted by UNMC evidences that the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship is a growing movement within the UUA;

Whereas, additional indications suggest that many UUA members are interested in and are exploring the UUA's Universalist as well as its Unitarian heritage and history as offering potential sources of spiritual nourishment;

Whereas, recent UNMC interactions with the UUA and member churches, primarily through conferences sponsored by the UUA's Joseph Priestly District, have been positive and beneficial to UNMC;

Therefore, be it hereby resolved that, remaining true to its liberal Christian, Universalist heritage and consistent with its Bylaws charge, the Universalist National Memorial Church shall embrace and seek additional ways to explore and strengthen its affiliation with the UUA, toward the mutual benefit of the Church and the UUA.

Inquirers' Class to Meet

Recent attempts to convene an Inquirers' Class have met with little success, so Pastor Wells is going to take a different tact. He will be contact relative newcomers and will try to set up a time in late May or early June that is convenient to as many interested persons as possible.

Since the Inquirers' Class is also suitable for long- standing visitors — "Friends of the church" — and members, please call or email the church office if you would like to take the class, so you can be consulted for planning.

Minister's Moment, *from page one.*

practices that leads to the release from all attachment, and thus the end of all suffering. Again, words matter, and they affect the self and one's environs. Here, with Christianity, is an affirmation of mutuality and relationship between one's actions and the world. Words can hurt.

I suppose a fully enlightened Buddhist might reach a level of impassivity where the vulgar language — and the obscenity of evil in the world — would have no hurt influence, the self-giving of compassion continuing as ever. It would be nice, but there is something here other than simple hurt feelings or embarrassment, and this has to do with the Christian witness about language, and with participation in this world.

Compassion wells up, and is given, because one is effected by the influences of the world, good and bad. We draw this from God: who in some basic way is responsible for the creation of the world we live in, and who sent a human Christ to bridge heaven and earth. Christian maturation, apart from any benefit to the individual, is a process to know how to bear a human-sized portion of the suffering of the world, and to know how to entrust the rest with God. Christian life, then, is not impassive, but deeply passionate and responsive to external forces. This passionate life demands disciplines to protect the self and others. The debate about just-war theory before the conflict with Iraq is a public example of this discipline. Continuing concerns about what is fair or right also are. Take, for example, the Lenten vegetarianism of some of the church's youth, or the church having a coffee supplier that allows the bean growers a living income. What is true of what goes *into* our mouths should be true of what comes out of them. Violent, rough, and even unkind words are more than a matter of manners. They speak to our ability to unbuild the very things we desire; indeed, they can undo our part of God's creation. Now, allow me an escape clause: there is a time and a place for (almost) everything. Perhaps that includes a few words, chosen for effect, to tell a joke which carries a lesson. But for the other 99% of our lives, wouldn't it be better to say what we mean, and say it as we would want to hear it? Let our way be peace, our path be truth, and let our "mouths," dear God, "shew forth thy praise."

Leland Place

We are scheduled to cook and share dinner with the men of Leland Place on the first and third Saturday of the month — May 3 and 17. We meet in the church kitchen at 3:00 p.m. and serve the meal at Leland at 5:00 p.m. Volunteers share the cost of the meal, usually \$10 to \$20. As always, we will be collecting groceries and men's toiletries on Sunday, May 18, so bring your groceries to the church kitchen and place them on the counter by the microwave. To sign up, in advance of the scheduled events, please contact Dave Skidmore at [deleted for web edition] or leland@universalist.org. Leland Place, a residential facility on North Capital Street for men in recovery from homelessness and addiction.

Deadlines for Anchor

The deadline for submissions for the May *Anchor* is noon, Monday, May 19. Submissions may be received by email or in writing, sent to the church office.

And Good News from New Jersey . . .

We got good news from church members Susanna Montezemolo and Mark Kugler. Susanna will soon finish her degree at Princeton, and she writes:

I've accepted a job with HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, so Mark and I will be moving back to DC. We are looking forward to being regular church members again!

And we're all looking forward to your return!

Hungry for a Faithful Response

The UNMC Youth Group capped their Lenten vegetarian commitment with a festive brunch, parents included. Everyone agreed that the "fruit pizza" was definitely worth repeating.

During the month of May, the youth will complete their study of "Food and Faith" with a look at issues related to hunger and how we might respond to it as a spiritual community and as individuals.

Sue Mosher

Putting First Things First

The Board of Trustees would like to thank the many members and friends who participated in the strategy discussions held in March, sharing their joy in our strengths and their concern about our survival. A report on those meetings has gone out via email and via postal mail to those without email addresses, suggesting steps to be taken to organize groups to work on adult spiritual development, membership, and getting our message out. If you did not receive a copy, please contact the church administrator. To provide feedback on the report or get involved in any of the groups, please contact any member of the Board of Trustees.

Welcome Special Visitors

The "Affirming Our Faith" youth class from River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, visited UNMC at our Easter service. Another very special Easter visitor was Eddilera Kinzer, who drove down from Philadelphia to rejoice with us, having attended Revival here in February.

On Maundy Thursday, we shared communion and a fellowship dinner with Danielle Marx, Shawn Conwell, and their son Jared, all from Cleveland; Shawn is temporarily assigned to Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Buildings & Grounds Needs You ... or "I Fought the Lawn and the Lawn Won."

Spring - that beautiful time of year - cherry blossoms, tulips, and grass growing. Before you know it, it's knee-high and still growing. The newly revitalized Buildings & Grounds Committee would like to recruit volunteers from the congregation to tend our lawn once a week during the coming growing season. We realize how limited everyone's time is, but we also recognize the limits of our budget and the importance of putting our money where it will do the most good. And lawn cutting now costs us \$80 per visit. Help us to save a substantial sum over the spring, summer, and fall by signing up to cut the grass with a church-supplied lawnmower. We'd like to see the grass in the front and side yards cut once a week, preferably on

Kathryn Desmond

Friday or Saturday so it will look nice for Sunday morning. There are twenty-two weekends between May 1 and October 1. Surely, you can devote a few hours during one of those weekends. If twenty-two people come forward, that's just a few hours each. If eleven people volunteer, that's a commitment to cut the grass just two weekends out of the whole long summer. There will be a sign-up sheet prominently displayed in the parlor during Coffee Hour, and you also can sign up by e-mailing Church Administrator Kimberly Durham Bates at office@universalist.org who will help you make the arrangements for the time and for entry into the church. So please lend a hand, get some exercise, and make a volunteer contribution that will help our 16th & S Street corner to look welcoming and well-tended. You'll be glad you did.

Chancel Flowers

May 4. In memory of Marcus W. Lewis by friends and members of his family.

May 11. In loving memory of Janice W., Andre and Irene S. Bodor by friends of the Universalist National Memorial Church.

May 18. In memory of her parents by Mary Simmons.

May 25. In memory of their parents, Sally Tesoriero and John Bertram by Tom Tesoriero and Rob Bertram

In Memoriam: Jean Jacobs

At press time, we learn that Jean Jacobs, mother of church member Jeff Jacobs, died Friday, April 25. Apart from him, she is survived by her husband Carl Jacobs, a daughter, Caryl Kuchman, and Jeff's children, Catherine and Brian. A memorial service has been scheduled to take place at the Interfaith Chapel at Leisure World, May 2, where the elder Jacobs attended worship after they moved there. Let us pray for and with them all.

My sense of thrift (and church history background) keeps me from not using this last, unused page. These words were from the May 25-June 8, 1790 Universalist Convention in Philadelphia, the first attempt for Universalists to organize on anything like a national basis. This "recommendation" shows that Universalists — admittedly showing a Quaker influence — carried a concern about the use of language. Lawyers and others in the church may be interested to know that professed Universalists did not have a right testify in court due to English common law, leading to nineteenth-century controversies and legal rehabilitation in at least two states. Words, indeed, have power. See the whole document on the Web at www.universalistchurch.net/polity/plan1790.html

Scott Wells

Sect. 4. Of Oaths

We recommend it to all the members of our Churches to enquire, whether Oaths do not lessen the frequency of truth in common life — whether they do not encrease [*sic*] profane swearing — whether they are not contrary to the commands of our Saviour, and the apostle James; and lastly, whether they do not lessen the dignity of the Christian name, by obliging the professors of Christianity to yield to a suspicion of being capable of declaring a falsehood. And as we are indulged by the Laws of all our States, with the privilege of giving testimony by simple affirmation, we submit it to the consciences of our members, whether that mode of declaring the truth, should not be preferred to any other.

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