

January 2004

Universalist National Memorial Church

An Exciting Opportunity for UNMC through its Music Ministry!!!

W. Kirk Denton, Organist

As many of you are aware, the Music Ministry of UNMC has been involved for several years identifying and offering solutions to address the chronic problems with our current Gottfried Organ. The general consensus of the several paid consultants, and the many independent organ maintenance and repair experts brought in to assess our situation has been, because of the limitations and compromises imposed during initial installation in 1929, that the organ as built harbors maintenance restrictions nearly impossible to rectify in a feasible and affordable manner.

After several years of searching for a desirable and affordable solution to rectify this problem, UNMC has recently been offered an exciting and unexpected solution to this problem that promises to be a potential boon, not only to our Music Ministry, but to the Church and the wider community as a whole.

After several months of researching creative solutions to our problem our current organ technician, David Storey, has found an historic organ in need of a new permanent home sitting literally in our own back yard. The organ, presently located in the McKim Mansion at 17th and R Streets, N.W. was built by the premier American organ builder of the 19th Century, Hook and Hastings of Boston. It was reportedly built as a gift to Mr. McKim's wife, a concert organist, as a wedding present in 1905 and is still located in the ballroom of the mansion for which it was designed.

The McKim Mansion is presently slated for complete renovation into condominiums and the owners have been searching for a local permanent home where the organ can be installed, completely restored, and used and enjoyed on a regular basis. After considering several proposals for its placement, including American University and Shennendoah University, we have suddenly found ourselves in the position of being a front runner for the donation of this important and historic instrument.

The E. and G.G. Hook and Hastings Company, Boston, MA was founded in 1831 and from its inception set out to build a truly American concert organ to rival those being built in Europe. They were responsible for building some of the most prestigious organs of the 19th Century in America, including the famous Mechanics Hall organ in Worcester, MA and the concert organ for the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. Tufts University installed a Hook and Hastings in Goddard Chapel in 1883. That organ underwent a complete restoration last year. Many Universalist and Unitarian churches throughout New England contracted Hook and Hastings to provide them with instruments they considered appropriate to their use well into the early 20th century. Hook and Hastings remained active until 1935, a victim, like so many other organ builders of the time, of the depression.

As organ building changed in style in the 20th century, nearly all of these organs were drastically altered from their original specifications to reflect contemporary tastes and fashion. The number of un-altered American instruments of the period are few. However, in recent years, the few remaining unaltered organs of this genre have been the subject of renewed interest and reverence by organ enthusiasts, clergy and laity alike. To sing a Lowell Mason hymn accompanied by an original American instrument of this era is to experience the sounds and emotional impact intended when this music was written.

The McKim Organ, which is 35 ranks over three manuals and pedal board, has never been tonally altered from its original specifications, and only the console has been changed in any way, by changing it from its original entirely pneumatic configuration to electro/magnetic configuration in 1925 by the local Washington organ builder, Lewis and Hitchcock. In organ circles, this fact alone makes this organ a truly unique and historic instrument worthy of high regard.

The freestanding organ with its paneled case of quarter sawn oak and fully speaking gilt façade pipes would, by necessity, need to be installed in the balcony of UNMC, providing an extraordinary physical complement to the Sanctuary as well as an impressive aural presence. The console case is also constructed of oak with intricate gothic carving. It has rosewood, maple and ivory draw knobs and tab stops engraved in script. This console would be restored using solid state technology and be located in the front on the Sanctuary floor making the organ extremely flexible for use in worship as well as perfectly situating it for concert use.

On December 31, Michael O'Brien, Donna Simonton, and I were invited to inspect the organ with David Storey to access the structural and logistical possibilities of obtaining the organ for our use. When our

delegation inspected the organ, the room was filled with representatives from the American Guild of Organists, The Organ Historical Society, as well as a former employee of Lewis and Hitchcock, who incidentally was personally involved in providing our present Gottfried Console in 1967. After retiring to UNMC and inspecting our physical accommodations, the entire delegation seemed wholeheartedly in support of helping us make this opportunity a reality.

Because of the severe time limitations presented by the construction schedule on the McKim Mansion, we would ask that the congregation be fully prepared to act quickly and decisively on the matter of whether or not we can accept this generous gift to our Church. David Storey is currently working on a proposal to advise us of the financial obligations we will incur in moving, storing, and reinstalling the organ in our Church. This would not be an inconsequential expense, but it would be far less than solving our current organ's problems by all accounts. It would also be a small investment relative to the value of the instrument when fully restored. In addition, we have been offered many unsolicited offers of assistance by members of the organ community to help defray expenses through volunteer labor, concert fund raising and the like.

The Music Ministry of this Church believes that this is an unprecedented opportunity for UNMC, which will not only enhance our ministry to the congregation, but will also allow an enormous opportunity for potential outreach and visibility to the community as a whole. If our efforts are successful, we will be mounting a major fund raising effort, both within and outside of our congregation, to solicit support for the installation of this instrument into our Sanctuary. It is our hope to be able to present this fully restored instrument to the public in time for its Centennial Anniversary in 2005.

We thank you for your interest and support of this opportunity, and look forward to the continuance of the long history of fine music provided by the Music Ministry of UNMC through enrichment by this extraordinary gift.

From the Board of Trustees

Special Congregational Meeting January 11

Pursuant to Article VI, Section 1, of the church bylaws, the UNMC Board of Trustees has called for a special legal meeting to take place on Sunday, January 11, from 12:45p.m. To 3:00 p.m. The board and Pastor Wells have entered into negotiations to conclude his ministry at UNMC. The purpose of this meeting is for the board to report to the congregation on the status of those negotiations and for the congregation to take whatever action(s) may be necessary to move the church's ministry forward. The

meeting will be facilitated by Jay Stearns, a professional facilitator who has been working with the Committee on Ministry and Pastor Wells. Pastor Wells has indicated that he plans to be present. The executive of our local Joseph Priestly District of the UUA, the Rev. Richard Speck, will also be on hand to answer questions.

The UNMC Board of Trustees held its regular monthly meeting Monday, Dec. 1, 2003, with board members and officers Rob Bertram, Clint McCully, Sue Mosher, Vicki Pepper, Brian Pepper, Greg Wigle, and Richard Zierdt present. Also in attendance were Pastor Wells, Committee on Ministry members Dave Skidmore and Jennifer Sandberg, and Jay Stearns, the professional facilitator who has been working with the Committee on Ministry and Pastor Wells. Moderator Greg Wigle opened the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Pastor Wells reported on plans for Advent and Christmas services.

Treasurer Brian Pepper reported that the church is currently low on cash and may have to sell stock held in the endowment or borrow on the margin account. The board approved a motion asking the treasurer to investigate cash options and report back to the board. Brian also reported that the treasurers are moving some bank accounts so that they will all be held at one branch, making management easier.

In the report on church administrator, Greg Wigle reported that a flower sign-up calendar would be available in the church office.

Greg relayed information from Jorn Dakin that the dumpster behind the church, the ownership of which was unknown, has been removed and that coffee hour hosts should take trash with them, since the weekly church cleaning now occurs on Saturday.

Greg announced that a new tenant has taken space on the second floor of the church under a one-year building use agreement whereby they will pay \$700 per month.

Greg reported that some pledge cards from the current pledge drive have been received and that a Christmas gift letter would be sent.

Registrar and Welcome & Membership chair Sue Mosher reported that new members now get a packet with a membership certificate and church by-laws and that cards would be sent to visitors and inactive members announcing the Advent and Christmas services.

Committee on Ministry chair Vicki Pepper reported on the meetings facilitated by Jay Stearns, examining the fit between the minister and the

congregation and recommended that that the ministerial relationship between the church and Pastor Wells be severed. Pastor Wells, who did not concur with the committee's recommendation, distributed his written response and explained his position. A lengthy discussion ensued.

The Board went into executive session, Pastor Wells, Dave Skidmore, Jennifer Sandberg, and Jay Stearns having departed. After lengthy discussion, the Board passed a resolution that the Board accepts the Committee on Ministry's conclusion that the relationship between Pastor Wells and the church is not a good fit; that the Board urges Pastor Wells to resign; that the moderator at his earliest time should contact absent board members Kathryn Desmond and Richard Hurst, bring them up to date, and ask for their vote on this resolution; and that the Board calls a special meeting of the congregation in January for the purpose of discussing the Church's ministry and taking whatever action is deemed appropriate.

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 p.m.

• **Growing in Service**

• **Leland Place**

Leland Place, a residential facility on North Capital Street for men in recovery from homelessness and addiction to alcohol and other drugs, needs your help this month. We are scheduled to cook and share dinner with the men of Leland Place on the first and third Saturday of the month — January 4 and 17. We meet in the church kitchen at 3:00 pm and serve the meal at Leland at 5:00 pm. Volunteers share the cost of the meal, usually \$10 to \$20. As always, we will be collecting groceries and men's toiletries on Sunday, January 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 (703) 237-2145 or dave_skidmore@mindspring.com. Leland Place is a program of So Others May Eat, Inc. (SOME), which is designate #8189 in the CFC/United Way

Around the Church

In the Interim

Richard Hurst and Rob Bertram are coordinating the schedule for guest preachers for the coming weeks.

If you find yourself in crisis or need the care and support of the church community, please contact Head Deacon Jennifer Sandberg or any other of the deacons listed in the church directory.

News and other information for the monthly Anchor and the church web site should be submitted to church administrator Kimberly Durham Bates.

This would be a good time to pick up an updated copy of the church directory. Copies are available during coffee hour, or you can contact the church office to obtain one.

UNMC will be publishing a new photo directory. On January 18, 25, and February 1, you and your family can have your picture taken for this directory after Sunday worship. Please try to drop by for a picture on one of these dates. Alternatively, you may wish to provide an existing photograph to be scanned or an existing digital photograph. You will also be receiving a short form for updating your directory information. For more information contact David Burton and leave a message at 202-387-3411 (church office) or by email office@universalist.org

UU World on Tape

Our denominational magazine, *UU World*, is now available on audio cassette at no charge to people who cannot read the printed magazine because of vision impairment. For more information, contact Devorah Greenstein at dgreenstein@uua.org or (617) 948-6451.

Winter Wonderland

Richard Hurst

Light grows dimmest the last weeks of December. I know this only too well, as I spent Christmas week in Oregon, hiking, cross-country skiing, and exchanging gifts with a new family. My significant other's parents live at the foot of Mt. Hood, just outside of the Mt. Hood Wilderness Area, where dad works for the Forest Service, and mom teaches. The 12,000 feet of the mountain seemed to block out the sun until nearly 9:30 in the morning, when the sky turned from black to merely ash gray. Christmas Eve at Atkinson Memorial Church (Unitarian Universalist) was no doubt much like it was here; a service of carols and lessons, and of prayer offered by a newly installed minister, with pieces from the Messiah by the choir, and a Sanctuary adorned with stained-glass windows of the Prince of Peace and the faint outline of a cross above the pulpit, in downtown Oregon City. It alternated between raining and, magically on Christmas morning, snowing.

But regardless of where we might be, we now watch as spring creeps slowly back into our lives. Oddly, the light grows even as colder weather still awaits us. Nature hardly seems fair. The lack of balance in climate and in the earth's movements is offset by hope, and that, ultimately, is what unites Christians and their Pagan ancestors. The wreaths made of branches that decorate our homes and churches, and sometimes even our cars, predate the Christian era. Their circular designs

were reminders to those of long ago that the sun would indeed return. Our hope as Christians, even as liberal Christians, we place in the hands of a God who sends us a child, whose light too we hope will increase amongst us in the months to come. One can only wonder what in the southern hemisphere is lost when the holidays of December have the imagery of light's diminishment and then gradual return thereafter taken away by the accident of geography. Perhaps other stories beyond our imaginations are refashioned and retold.

In the traditions of many countries, including many Spanish-speaking countries, the feast of the Magi in early January is the day of gift-exchange, the day that celebrates the arrival of the three wise ones at the creche of Jesus. In the early days of January, light begins to grow, so perhaps it seems only natural that a star that these three would follow, according to tradition, would also begin to burn more brightly at this time of year. Perhaps with the December holidays behind us, our hearts might begin to do the same. There is so much that Christmas and the like take from us-- the toll of the season on our hearts and on our expectations can be a burden like no other. When we fail to live up to our expectations of what the holidays should be, when others fail to live up to our expectations, and when we fail to feel an authentic holiday spirit well up within us, a hollowness might flood in where the spirit might have wished to reside. Our failures may feel the hardest when our hopes are at their zenith.

But January is a different beast entirely. The heavy agendas are gone, and we need not look to fulfill grand visions but merely earthly and wholly human ones. Small gifts of the spirit and of heart might make the biggest difference now, to ourselves, to others, to our own souls. And now, the light itself, indeed the sun itself, is tracing its long, slow path back into our lives. So too might we resolve again at the New Year to follow the path of Jesus and the simple message of the gospels, back again to the ordinary days of life, away from the lights and glitter of Christmas, and away from the heartbreak these sometimes may bring.

So take this moment to seek peace with all that is broken in your lives and in our world in the era of new beginnings and new resolve, working for change where you can, and living in harmony all the same where you cannot. May God bless you and yours. Happy New Year.

Successful Workshop Exploring Grief

David Burton

After worship December 7th, our member and seminarian Jim Estes, MA, NCC, offered the workshop "Grief and the Holidays" for the Deacons and

other interested parishioners. Eight parishioners joined Jim, who is a trained pastoral counselor with a background in grief and loss counseling, for this event. Jim led the discussion and also provided much useful information about the characteristics of grief and loss, what helps--and doesn't help--people experiencing the pain of loss, and the challenges of holiday grieving. This excellent workshop was neither a professional course nor a "grief group," although the group found its discussion enriched by the mutual sharing of experiences and insights. Many thanks to Jim for his efforts in helping our community better understand bereavement as a part of common human experience.

Religion Discussion Group

Sue Mosher recently sponsored a group to discuss the Center for Progressive Christianity. Out of that meeting grew the idea of having a regular discussion group on religion, theology and spirituality. David Burton was charged with developing a number of topics that the group might discuss. These are set forth below. If you have thoughts about whether you would like to participate, which topics you like to discuss, other topics to discuss and where and when the group should meet, please contact David Burton by leaving a message at (202) 387-3411 (church office) or by email office@universalist.org

A. Text Based Discussions:

1. Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes, Charles Hartshorne (University of Chicago, more or less Unitarian)

A relatively short book, it discusses "What Went Wrong in Classical Theism," "Two Meanings of All-Powerful," "Two Meanings of All-Knowing," "God's Love as Divine Sympathy, Feeling of Others' Feelings," "Two Meanings of Immortality," and "Revelation" among other things.

2. Philosophers Speak of God, Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, Editors

A large collection of dozens of representative theist writings, Christian and Non-Christian, organized according to their perspective on the major theological issues. Is God eternal or temporal, conscious and self-aware or not, omniscient or not, world inclusive or not? Authors include Hindu scriptures, Lao-Tse, Buddhist writings, the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Anselm, Maimonides, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Channing, Spinoza, Socinus, Schelling, Peirce, Whitehead, Schweitzer, Buber, James, Wieman, Hume, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, and quite a few others.

3. William Ellery Channing's Collected Works

The most prominent early exponent of American Unitarian Christianity. His works cover everything from God's attributes, to how to live a Christian life, to the Bible, to literary criticism, to Sunday School, etc. This book is not in print but widely available at used bookstore websites (e.g. abebooks.com, alibris.com, amazon.com). Many of the sermons are currently available at the American Unitarian Conference site. The rest will soon be available.

4. Searching for An Adequate God, A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists

John B. Cobb, Jr. (Claremont School of Theology, a Methodist) Clark H. Pinnock (McMaster Divinity School, Canada, an evangelical Wesleyan), Editors: A collection of essays describing and contrasting process and free will Christian theologies, both of which emphasize freedom.

James Freeman Clarke's Manual of Unitarian Belief available at:

<http://www.americanunitarian.org/docs/manualofunitarianbelief.html>

potentially in conjunction with David Miano's recent modernizing revision of this work "An Explanation of Unitarian Christianity" available at: <http://www.americanunitarian.org/docs/explunitchristnty.html> which are both detailed but short examinations of liberal Christian belief.

B. Potential Discussion Topics

(which could serve as discussion topics after a brief presentation by someone to get things going)

- Who was Jesus?
- What is the source of morality?
- What does religion tell us about how to lead our lives?
- How important is the Bible and why? How should we think about the Bible?
- Should religion and politics mix and if so when?
- Why is there suffering? How can a good God let suffering happen? The problem of evil.
- Is there free will?
- Can science and religion learn from each other?
- What should we teach our kids about values?
- What duty do we have towards others? Why?
- Does the Universalist position on salvation make sense? And what do

- we mean by salvation anyway?
- How do we best witness our faith?

Jacob Studley's Baptism

On Sunday, November 23, in the presence of his wife, Marci, and other members of his family, plus members and friends from UNMC, Jacob Studley was baptized by Pastor Wells. Many thanks to the First Baptist Church for allowing the event to take place in their chancel. Emily S. wrote this eyewitness account:

"A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of witnessing Jacob Studley's baptism. It was a full immersion baptism, so after saying a few words of support and what we believe in, he dressed in a white robe and was taken to a pool of water. Our minister, Scott Wells, dunked him under three times. Once for the father, the son, and the holy spirit. Then, wet and happy, Jacob was led to a room where he dressed back in his regular clothes. He came back out, and we all said more words about how we were behind him and supported him in his decision. Overall, for me, this ceremony was a moving experience as I'm sure it was for Jacob."

Chancel Flowers

January 4. Communion.

January 18. In loving memory of Jean Jacobs by her son, Jeff Jacobs.

January 25. In loving memory of Mary K. Graham by her daughter, Sally and son-in-law Douglas Simon.

Parish Notes

The McCully/Sandbergs traveled to Minnesota over the holidays to be with family for the memorial service for Jennifer's mother.

We welcomed to our Christmas Eve Service from Florida Vicki Pepper's parents, Bruce and Sue Partner.

The Peppers enjoyed the chance to visit with the Chapmans on Christmas and were impressed with the Riderwood facilities--thanks to Russell for the tour. Dorothy is settling in, and Russell would be pleased to hear from others from the Church.

We welcome Georgia McKenna back from a brief stay in the hospital over the holidays.

NURSERY REMINDER

Our recently redecorated, and relocated, Nursery is open for business. This warm and inviting room is next to the Children's classroom on the second floor. For more information, or to volunteer to help out with the new nursery, please contact Vicki Pepper through the church office at (202) 387-3411.