

Universalist Anchor

Newsletter of the Universalist National Memorial Church

February 2004 www.universalist.org

1810 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009



February Worship and Activity Schedule at UNMC

February 1. The Rev. Susan Starr, preaching, sermon title, "What Would Jesus Do?"

Monday, February 2. Board of Trustees meeting at 7:30 pm in the Romaine-van Schaick room. All are welcome.

Saturday, February 7. Leland House Dinner. Volunteers meet in the kitchen at 3:00p.m.

February 8. Mr. Richard Hurst, preaching, sermon title, "The Cost of Whiteness."

Photo directory pictures taken after service today. See David Burton.

Installation of Rev. Shana Goodwin, All Souls Church, Unitarian (16th & Harvard Streets, NW, WDC) at 4:00 p.m. a reception to follow.

February 15. Mr. Perry King, preaching, sermon title, "Joyful Faith in a Postmodern World."

Monday, February 16. The Welcome & Membership Committee will meet at 11:30 a.m. to discuss plans for Inquirers classes and also to evaluate current activities offered at UNMC. All are welcome to attend.

Saturday, February 21. Leland House Dinner. Volunteers meet in the kitchen at 3:00p.m.

February 22. Rev. Mark Schaefer, preaching, Chaplain, American University, sermon title to be announced.

Leland Place collections. Please leave your donations downstairs in the kitchen on the counter next to the microwave.

Inquirers Class will meet in the library (go through the double doors to your right, first door to your left) at 9:30-10:45 a.m.

3rd Annual Pancake Brunch hosted by members of the Über Fellowship of Light Youth Group after worship in Perkins Hall (downstairs).

Wednesday, February 25. Ash Wednesday Service at noon.

February 29. Rev. Don Lowe, preaching, sermon title to be announced. (the 29th is the first Sunday of Lent)

The Darkest Hour?

Richard Hurst

Thousands were dead in this city on the Eastern seaboard of the North American continent, early reports thought at least three or four thousand lives lost, possibly more, hundreds of businesses destroyed, the devastation more than any would have ever expected or imagined to have seen in their life times. Weren't we safe here, on the other side of "The Pond," all thought, away from the troubles in other quarters, where the forces of freedom and tyranny did battle? If that weren't enough, we recall scenes of a spectacular blowup, with more fire fighters dead in one place at one time than at any other moment in the history of the country. And we recall a deadly virus that circulated in our midst, killing not only millions of our own citizens, but nearly 100 million worldwide, more than any other virus since the deadly pestilence of the Black Plague.

Surely you think I speak of our beknighted generation, with our peculiarly bedeviling problems, on a scale unlike the world has ever seen. Surely we stand, bravely, at a crossroads in time, when our civilization itself is at risk; indeed the very concept of civilization stands on preciously short, borrowed time. Such a hoary conceit that these are unique to

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us and our times. The city of which I speak is Halifax, Nova Scotia, the year is December 1917, the city not New York, the explosion caused by munitions as they were moved in and out of the city, an event little remembered either in the United States or up north. The Big Blowup of which I speak occurred during the "Year of the Fires," in 1910 in Idaho, in which the largest number firemen died during a twenty-four hour period in the 20th century, detailed by Steven Pyne in a book by the same name. The virus is not AIDS, but the flu, which in 1917 killed millions more Americans than AIDS has yet or is likely to any time soon. The battle to contain the fast-moving menace is told by John Barry in his new book *The Great Influenza*.

Why do I speak of dead firemen, destroyed buildings, and deadly influenza? Ash Wednesday approaches, that time in the Christian calendar when we attempt to do that which comes quite unnaturally to 21st century Americans, which is to contemplate our own immortality. Indeed when death does come, we find it so extraordinary, so beyond the pale of normal human events, that we accord it a status nearly outside of history. The attacks of Al-Qaeda on targets of American power and prestige are reduced to mere symbols; we refer to these not by the names of cities or places or people, but by number: 9/11. God forbid we dwell for too long on the fact that death occurred, lest we realize that death did occur, does occur, and will continue to occur. These are facts too horrible for us to contemplate for long, and are facts that our society everywhere is designed for us not to confront at their core. The reactions of our society to death seem to border on the comical when they do not border on the absurd. We respond to death so often not with sadness, not with mourning, not with anything that fronts life's and death's essential facts, but with spectacle, with mind-numbing television coverage, and with the inevitable lawsuits, government compensation schemes, Rose Garden monologues, and House and Senate hearings, all matters at the periphery, as if any of these would ever assuage one's soul. Likewise we are inclined to contort great tragedies into events that seem outside the bounds of human experience. Frequently we adjudge ourselves both extraordinarily cursed and, at the same time, extraordinarily blessed as we confront the evil that gave rise to such events.

However right or righteous that struggle may be at any given moment, we provide ourselves cold (and ultimately false) comfort when we reduce the risk of dying today or tomorrow to the happy illusion of a tightly controlled scheme of soothing colors like swatches on a designer's palette, a veritable weather forecast of deadly highs and lows. Skimming the surface, deeper meaning eludes us.

The meaning that Ash Wednesday would have us confront is that tragedy and death are in fact part and parcel of the human experience, and that the finitude of life is what makes each moment miraculous, precious, indeed sacred. Each of us is marked with ashes of our death imposed upon our foreheads, and great wisdom, and great insight, might be learned by going through life with awareness of this inescapable fact. Jesus died on the cross, and as Christians, we are told that we too are to follow his "bloody feet up to Calvary," to quote the words of the hymn. Perhaps this is not a place many of us wish to go. But each of us will at some moment travel into death's dateless night. Ash Wednesday is a reminder of this universal truth. Make of it what you will, and learn what you will from its coming. Many say: *Carpe diem*. I say: The future is now.

This is the time to settle in silence with the spirit and find peace with the sadnesses, angers and fears of your heart and soul. This is the time to live with the questions that have no answers, to make time in our frenetic lives to ask the unanswerable to the Soul of Life. May you find peace, or at least begin to find it. May the spirit come to you; indeed, may the spirit come to all of us.

The Board of Trustees report usually featured will return in next month's edition. Included will be a report on January's congregational meeting as well as reports on January & February's board meetings.

Around Our Church

Awakening to Buddhism

The Über Fellowship of Light youth group is continuing their study of other faiths with a look at Buddhism during February. They are learning about the life of Siddhartha Gautama and his teachings,

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experiencing Buddhist-style meditation, and planning a visit to a Buddhist temple.

In March, the youth will study fundamentalist Christianity and pay a visit to a Nazarene church.

3rd Annual Pancake Brunch February 22

The Über Fellowship of Light youth group hosts its third annual Pancake Brunch on Sunday, Feb. 22, after the worship service. Pancakes have traditionally been served in the days leading up to Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 25, in order to use up the eggs and butter that some Christians shun as part of an austere Lenten observance. Expect a feast with many different kinds of pancakes, plus coffee, tea, juice, and fruit. Plan to stay after church to enjoy this wonderful fellowship opportunity, which will take place in Perkins Hall downstairs.

If you can help set up or clean up, please contact any member of the youth group or Sue Mosher at sue@turtleflock.com or (703) 241-9828.

New Greeter Schedule

Every Sunday, someone from the congregation stands ready at the front door to welcome members, friends, and guests to our worship service. The work of these "greeters" is critical to fulfilling our mission to "welcome all and respect our individual beliefs as we grow together." Greeters also make sure that nametags and information about church activities are available in the vestibule and during social hour, and they follow up with visitors during the week to share their enthusiasm about the church and encourage our guests to come back again. They can also offer tours of the sanctuary during social hour.

The greeter schedule through May is as follows:

1st Sunday Mary Simmons

2nd Sunday Erin Fox

3rd Sunday Sue Mosher

4th Sunday Perry King

5th Sunday and substitutes – Mary Templeton
& Rob Bertram

More greeters are always welcome, as are ushers to extend this "ministry of hospitality" to the entrance to the sanctuary. Contact Sue Mosher at sue@turtleflock.com or (703) 241-9828 if you're interested.

Sunday Social Hour Host Signup

Interested in hosting Sunday Social Hour? The following Sundays are available next month: March 7, & 21. The signup sheet is located on the black music stand in the Romaine- van Schaick room. If you have questions, please see Sue Mosher Sunday after worship service or contact her at sue@turtleflock.com or (703) 241-9828.

Inquiring Minds Want to Know!

Find out more about the Universalist National Memorial Church, its history, organization, mission, and faith at an upcoming series of Inquirers Classes. The classes will include time to enjoy bagels and coffee or tea and get acquainted. The class will meet in the church library/study on the first floor 9:30 – 10:45 a.m. on three Sundays – February 22, March 7, and March 14 and will have something to offer for everyone from newcomers to longtime members. Ask class leaders Jennifer Sandberg, Dave Skidmore, and Vicki Pepper for more information. Contact any of the leaders or the church office to sign up for the classes.

Ash Wednesday Service

Take time out from your busy day on Wednesday, February 25, to mark the beginning of Lent with a brief service in the side chapel at noon, following by a simple lunch of soup and sandwiches. If you plan to attend and would like to do one of the readings or bring sandwiches, please contact Sue Mosher at sue@turtleflock.com or (703) 241-9828.

SUNDAY, MARCH 14 CONGREGATIONAL OPEN FORUM AND LUNCH

How are you feeling about our church? Are we doing what needs doing? We will have the opportunity to discuss such questions, and anything else, in this open forum. Some may have unresolved feelings from our January 11 congregational meeting. Others, priorities for moving forward. The purpose is to keep us focused on what's important in church life -- particularly in this period without a

minister. The purpose is also to hold us in community with each other. Please plan to come; and come prepared to talk about what's important to you and to hear what's important to others. Al Templeton will facilitate. Mindful that Sundays are a valuable time, we will follow a special schedule:

11:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Devotional service in the sanctuary
11:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Fill a lunch plate and be seated, RVS Parlor
11:45 AM - 1:30 PM	Eat and open forum discussion
1:30 PM	Adjourn

Buildings and Grounds Report

Jorn Dakin

Several items deserve mention. The first is snow removal: in particular, the sidewalks and the front steps of the church and the sidewalks on the adjacent parts of "S" and Sixteenth Streets. Snow removal consists of having equipment such as one or more good snow shovels, and the human muscle-power to clear the snow and put "ice melt" chemical on the concrete as needed. The church has one fairly decrepit snow shovel, and a reasonable supply of "ice melt" chemical. If someone is looking for a tax deduction, a donation in-kind of a newish snow shovel [perhaps one with the ergonomic handle] would be welcome. As to the human muscle, the church can contract with someone to do snow removal, or rely upon volunteers from the church community. A difficulty inherent with volunteers is that the geographically-scattered nature of the congregation makes it most difficult for people to get to the church when snow is most likely to be a problem. In the end, it seems that the best the church can do is to rely upon an outside contractor for snow removal, but hope that on particular occasions it may be possible for volunteers from the church community to do snow removal and thereby save the church some money.

Another item worthy of mention is rodent control in the church building. Traps and poison have been put out, and the problem seems to be more under control than it was last summer.

Trash disposal continues as a problem for the church inasmuch as unknown outside people seem

still to be dumping trash in the alley in back of the church, either on the ground or in the church's garbage cans. We're in the process of getting signs addressed to these people, but it's not clear whether these are likely to be much use.

I want to thank Perry King for volunteering to be the "first-line" person to unlock and lock the gate to the parking lot behind the Masonic Temple on Sundays. We very much need others to serve as alternative people when Perry is not available.

Finally, progress is being made on collecting and spreading useful knowledge of the church building's heating, cooling and electrical systems, so that we are better able to handle situations such as light bulbs that appear to be burnt-out, but in fact are not working because of things like circuit-breakers being "flipped." In this regard, I want particularly to mention the contributions of Al Templeton and Russell Chapman who devoted much time and energy to developing and recording information about the church's electrical wiring.

Interested In Starting A Visiting Music Ministry?

Perry King

Some members and friends of the church have expressed an interest in starting a singing/music/visiting ministry which would visit places such as children's programs, homeless shelters, senior residences, hospices, etc. To "make a joyful noise" and to serve our community. We would like to hold our first meeting after the pancake brunch on February 22, (1:00 p.m.), some ideas are to go to Christ House or Joseph's house in the Adams Morgan area. We have also contacted "Little Friends for Peace" which teaches conflict resolution to young children in the inner city about singing and visiting with children's groups. So if you play an instrument or sing or just want to visit and bring joy to our community (anyone can play cymbals!) please join us on February 22. Perhaps you'll be leading inner city children in doing the Hokey Pokey. As Richard Hurst said at a recent children's sermon: "That's what it's all about!" Contact: Perry King at perking@yahoo.com or Norma Fleischman at fleischmann@nea.gov for details.

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Chancel Flowers

February 1. In memory of Frances A. Ambursen.

February 8. In memory of her parents James L. and Frances Benson and her brother James L. Benson, Jr., by Frances Benson Pearce.

February 15. In memory of her brother, Ben Hanford Thompson by Amy Thompson Tipton.

February 22. In memory of his grandmother, Emma Bosworth Skidmore by David Skidmore.

February 29. In memory of his grandparents, Paul J. Hannah, Jr., Elizabeth J. Hannah, and Reverend Floyd J. Taylor by Paul Hannah.

Remembering Frances A. Ambursen

Mary Simmons

Frances A. Ambursen "Sunny" as she was known to all was a life-long Universalist dating back to her childhood in upstate New York. She became an active member of this church when she moved to Washington to work for the government in the Department of Labor. One year the Washington Post recognized her work and named her as one of the 10 outstanding women in government

She played an active role in the life and administration of our church until illness prevented her attendance several years before her death in July of 2003. She was a charter member of the Ecclesia, a young women's church service organization; she was moderator of the Board of Trustees, registrar of the church, and held several offices in the women's association after her retirement Sunny maintained a keen interest in the church up until her death.

It was a blessing to know her.

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 — February 7 and 21. 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, February 22, 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 Campaign.

Recipe Corner

Mary Simmons

Lemon Cake (Super Moist)

1 package of Duncan Hines Lemon Supreme Cake mix
 1 3 oz. Package of lemon jello
 ¾ cup vegetable oil
 4 eggs
 1 ½ tablespoon lemon extract
 1 lemon

Lemon Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar
 4 tablespoons lemon juice

Preheat oven at 350°. Add a cup of boiling water to jello mix and freeze for 15 minutes. Beat cake mix, oil and lemon extract. Add eggs one at a time. Add cooled jello. Pour into two 9x5x2 bundt pans. Bake 35-45 minutes (until toothpick comes out clean). Take out of pans, pierce hot cake with fork and drizzle with lemon glaze.

Beware: This cake has the reputation of disappearing in a blink.

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Joseph Priestley District's Annual Meeting

Bending Towards Justice

Our local Joseph Priestley District of the Unitarian Universalist Association will hold its annual meeting and spring conference Friday night and Saturday, March 19-20, in Wilmington, Delaware, with a theme of "Bending toward Justice: Building a Multicultural World." The program consists of worship, workshops, the district's annual business meeting and a keynote address by UUA President the Rev. William Sinkford. Many of the workshops will focus on social justice issues. Also on the schedule are workshops on a growth strategy for the Baltimore/Washington and Philadelphia areas, lay leadership development, and fundraising.

Registration costs \$75 (or \$85 after Feb. 27). For young adults age 18-35, registration is \$55 (or \$65 after Feb. 27). More details and a registration form are available at the district's web site at <http://jpd.uua.org/sprcon.htm>.

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 for the members and friends of the Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, D.C.

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The Rev. Dr. William L. Fox, Minister Emeritus
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Mr. Kirk Denton, Visiting Organist
Ms. Kimberly Durham Bates, Church Administrator
Hours: MWF 8:30am-1:30pm

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