

# Universalist Anchor

Newsletter of the Universalist National Memorial Church

April 2004 [www.universalist.org](http://www.universalist.org)

1810 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009



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## April Worship and Activity Schedule at UNMC

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### **Bold events occur on Sunday.**

Saturday, April 3. Leland House dinner. Volunteers meet in the church's kitchen at 3:00 p.m. (For further details, please see page six.)

**April 4. Palm Sunday, Mr. Ben Van Dyne preaching. Liturgist: Mr. Richard E. Hurst, texts Philippians 2:5-11, Psalm 19. Music to include: "The Palms" by Jean Batiste Fauré: Children's activity: Palm cross making.**

Monday, April 5. The Board of Trustees will meet at 7:30 p.m., in the Romaine-van Schaick room. All are welcome.

Thursday, April 8, 7:00 p.m., A family-friendly Maundy Thursday Communion joint service with All Souls Church, Unitarian at UNMC followed by a potluck dinner. Rev. Rob Hardies and UNMC Head Deacon, Jennifer Sandberg, presiding.

Friday, April 9, Good Friday service, noon, at UNMC. 7:30 p.m., Tenebrae with Communion at All Souls Church, Unitarian (16<sup>th</sup> & Harvard St., NW).

**April 11. Easter, Rev. Jay Stearns preaching, "On Being a Work in Progress." Music: Beethoven - "Hallelujah Chorus", Handel - "The Trumpet Shall Sound" from Messiah. Children's activity: Easter egg hunt.**

Saturday, April 17. Leland House dinner. Volunteers meet in the church kitchen at 3:00 p.m.

**April 18. Mr. Richard E. Hurst preaching, "Seeing is Believing?" Core text is from chapter 20 of the Gospel of Saint John; Service to include the love**

poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi.  
Leland House donations collected. Drop off is downstairs in the kitchen on the counter next to the microwave.

Monday, April 19. Anchor submissions deadline.

**April 25. Mr. Dave Skidmore preaching, sermon title, "Necessary and Unnecessary Suffering."**

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## Let Everyone Who Is Thirsty Come

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Sue Mosher

Tucked among the processions of Palm Sunday, the solemnity of Good Friday, and the joy of Easter morning, Maundy Thursday may be the least widely observed of the days of Holy Week. Yet, it may be the one day of the Christian cycle when we can come closest to understanding the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed and experiencing that message as the disciples themselves might have heard it.

That message, I believe, was one of inclusion, something that resonates with all of us who have been exposed to the Universalist hope for the "final harmony of all souls with God." Sharing a meal, often with outcasts, was one of the great distinguishing activities of Jesus' ministry. As Marcus Borg explains in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, "the meals of Jesus embodied his alternative vision of an inclusive community." Sitting down with "tax collectors and sinners" -- not to mention women -- was a radical act, challenging the Jewish purity system and proclaiming a higher "ethos of compassion," as Borg puts it. These meals might have invoked the great messianic banquet of Isaiah 25:6, when, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wine strained clear."

*Continued on page two.*

For me, there is no greater embodiment of our Universalist heritage and hope than the invitation that all are welcome to participate in communion. When we say “all,” we really mean “all.” It is God’s table that we set, not a table devised by human hands. We lay the table and extend the invitation, but God writes the guest list. You don’t have to be a member of our church to partake of communion. You don’t have to consider yourself a Christian. You don’t need a certain set of beliefs about God or Jesus or the grape juice (occasionally wine) and bread that we share. Just participate – as you are – accepting the hospitality given in the spirit of Revelation 22:17:

The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’  
And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’  
And let everyone who is thirsty come.  
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life  
as a gift.

Two things make Maundy Thursday different in our church from the other three or four communion services during the year: We act out the story in some way, and we share a substantial potluck meal afterwards.

Traditionally, the Last Supper has been visualized as a Passover seder, a meal of great significance in Jesus’ Jewish culture, although that isn’t the only interpretation. One school of thought suggests that the event sequence in John’s gospel makes more sense if the meal occurred just before Passover. In fact, I know of one church that celebrates “Maundy Tuesday” instead of Maundy Thursday. Regardless, the Passover commemoration of the liberation of the Jewish people from bondage certainly would have been on everyone’s mind, and yet it was also a meal shared by friends from a variety of backgrounds who had been through some amazing experiences together. Over the years, we’ve told that story in various ways in our Maundy Thursday services, and it always seems to clarify the amazing experiences that we share as a spiritual community. Having my feet washed one year was unforgettable and unsettling, knowing that the same Peter whose feet Jesus washed would turn his back and deny his friend and teacher before the cock crowed.

Eating together after the communion service makes it easy to reflect on what it must have been like to sit at table – or, more likely, recline banquet-style – as Jesus patiently explained in parables how it was possible to experience the “kingdom of God,” a relationship beyond earthly ties. We feast as friends, with open hearts.

Something else that makes Maundy Thursday special is that we usually have children present as full participants, acting out various parts of the story. Our observance is intentionally “family-friendly” and so presents an ideal opportunity for a child to take part in communion for the first time. After hearing the story at home, the youngster can be “in the story” at church.

You can step into the story as an adult as well. If you want to taste the bread and the “fruit of the vine” for the first time, just take it when it’s offered. You don’t have to tell anyone in advance – or afterward. How you experience communion is a private matter between you and God (or whatever you choose to call that which draws you beyond yourself and into our spiritual community). You can tell others about the experience or contemplate it privately in your heart.

Regardless of where you see yourself in this tale of Jesus’ journey to the cross, I offer the invitation again: Let anyone who wishes take of the bread and wine, whether for the first time or the thousandth. Let everyone who is thirsty come.

### **Apologies of an Appropriationist**

Richard E. Hurst

*The son of Mary, Jesus, hurries up a slope  
as though a wild animal were chasing him ...*

*"I say the Great Name over the deaf and the blind,  
they are healed. Over a stony mountainside,  
and it tears its mantle down to the navel.  
Over non-existence, it comes into existence.  
But when I speak lovingly for hours, for days  
with those who take human warmth  
and mock it, when I say the Name to them, nothing  
happens. They remain rock, or turn to sand,*

*Continued on page three.*

*where no plants can grow. Other diseases are ways for mercy to enter, but this non-responding breeds violence and coldness toward God. I am fleeing from that. As little by little air steals water, so praise dries up and evaporates with foolish people who refuse to change. Like cold stone you sit on a cynic who steals body heat. He doesn't feel the sun."*

*Jesus wasn't running from actual people. He was teaching in a new way.*

Jalal al-Din Rumi, 13th century Muslim Mystic from his poem "What Jesus Runs Away From."

I do not pretend to know much about Islam, or the Koran, but I do know when I like a piece of poetry or other writing. I do not suppose that I would need to know that in the Koran, Jesus is called a Prophet, Messiah, the son of Mary, Spirit of Truth, and unique among Koranic prophets, he is regarded as still being alive (although I cannot tell you precisely what that means, except to say that I presume it bestows some amount of prestige upon him) to make use of such writings. It strikes me as no small irony that there are likely Unitarian and Universalist Christians whose Christology does not rise to the Koranic view of Jesus. I have this dim idea about Islam that Muslims believe, at a minimum, that their God is the God of Abraham, and that monotheism is what Jews, Muslims and Christians share, amongst an assortment of overlapping prophets.

So when I stumbled upon Rumi, a 13th century Sufi poet, part of the contemplative tradition in Islam, born in what is now Afghanistan, writing originally in Persian, I could not help myself but "borrow" from him for our worship services. At first I borrowed from him without mentioning it in our services. Then I incorporated references in some way, either in the announcements, or prior to reading his works (although these have never been proper "readings" as such, only opening sentences, invocations, and the like). I figured the congregation deserved to know whence came these materials. There have been folks who have asked about his poetry, given its beauty, but there have no

complaints, so my presumption is that no one has been particularly offended by it. In fact, the following piece from Rumi began the Ash Wednesday service, duly noted in the Order of Worship:

*Beware! Beware!  
Do not mistake me for this human form.  
The soul is not obscured by forms.  
Even if it were wrapped in a hundred folds of felt  
the rays of the soul's light  
would still shine through.*

Nonetheless, to use a less friendly word for what I have been doing, I have been "appropriating" from Rumi and his tradition. Now in UU circles, particularly in UU Christian circles, the idea of "appropriation" has taken on a nasty tone. It has become a battering ram against our more pluralist brethren, those who seek to turn Sundays into a festival of world religions, with prayers and readings from around the globe and many faiths, addressed to gods and goddesses of many lands. The Rev. Thomas D. Wintle, in the most recent edition of the Unitarian Universalist Christian, (Vol. 58, 2003), writes that there is danger in our arrogance of taking "the best" of different religions while we skim the surface of the world's faiths. At worst we will "mix-and-match" to create a pseudo-faith to suit our needs of the moment, paying little heed to the sensibilities of those from whom we borrow, and paying little heed to our own history. In doing so, we trivialize our own traditions and those from whom we borrow when we engage in such practices, he argues. In his article, entitled "World Religion and Us," he rightly points out that there is a difference between learning about our traditions and learning other traditions (as if these were our own).

I am mindful that I am a liturgist in a Universalist Christian church, and when I am writing and composing liturgical elements for worship on Sunday and special services, it is with both the Christian and Universalist elements firmly in mind. If a piece in the liturgy does not further "Christian" worship in some way-- that is, if it is not compatible with monotheist worship of the God of Abraham-- it probably ought not be in the service in my view. That having been said, Christian worship has been

from its first moment an exercise in appropriation, borrowing from those around the early members of the Jesus movement. This meant primarily, but not exclusively, borrowing Jewish forms of worship. Indeed the Hebrew Bible to this day remains a vital fixture in Christian churches, precisely because it furthers worship of the monotheistic God of Abraham.

But as the works of Rumi show, the God of Abraham, indeed the Jesus of Christianity, we might find as objects of praise outside both the Christian and the Jewish traditions. The Rev. Wintle may be right to suggest that reckless appropriation is sometimes inappropriate. But when non-Christian, non-Jewish sources are still in some broad way part of the general Abrahamic tradition, or otherwise touch on subjects, personages and topics that are more than a bit familiar, such sources often can be "fair game" for a Christian worship service. As the first Rumi example above betrays, "What Jesus Runs Away From," with its breathtaking reexamination of the healing work Jesus performed, I would feel not ill at ease using this in a service at Universalist National Memorial Church. In fact, I would expect to hear it soon in a worship service. As a liturgist, I am not seeking to instruct us on Islam or Sufism by using such a work from beyond the Christian tradition any more than I would be seeking to teach the congregation about Judaism when using the Psalms for a responsive reading.

I will admit that I am much more reticent about using actual material from the Koran itself, a book about which I know very little, and have done so only sparingly, at the absolute margins of our services. But recently, in Jennifer Sandberg's service about the DaVinci Code and the Feminine Divine, I found myself thinking about classic male/female images-- the sun and moon. I stumbled across something from the Koran on the Internet quite by accident that seemed oddly appropriate in evoking those ancient images of divinity, now replaced by our monotheistic God. It seemed so lovely that I thought no one could object to these words finding their way into an invocation, based on Surah 71:15-18:

*O God we see the seven heavens one above the other, and we see the moon you made therein a light, and*

*the sun therein a lamp. You have made us grow out of your earth and you will return us to it; then you will bring forth a new bringing forth.*

I can but hope none of the Peoples of the Book are offended when I seek to share the words the Prophet sought to record.

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## Around Our Church

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### Welcome Team

Each week, someone from the congregation stands ready at the front door to welcome members, friends, and guests to our worship service, while someone else is busy in the parlor preparing refreshments to accompany conversation after the service.

Here's the welcome team schedule for April:

April 4 - Palm Sunday  
Greeter: Mary Simmons  
Refreshments: Perry King

April 11 - Easter  
Greeters: Erin Fox, Mary Templeton  
Refreshments: Hilda Amacker

April 18  
Greeter: Sue Mosher  
Refreshments: OPEN

April 25  
Greeter: Perry King  
Refreshments: OPEN

Both jobs are easy and rewarding. Sign up to help with refreshments on the list in the parlor, or contact Sue Mosher at [sue@turtleflock.com](mailto:sue@turtleflock.com) or (703) 241-9828 if you're interested in greeting.

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## News from the Building and Grounds Front

Jorn Dakin

The major item on the past month's B&G front was the March 20<sup>th</sup> "work holiday" at the church. A good turnout of willing and reasonably enthusiastic workers enabled several goals to be achieved. In particular, a good start has been made on getting the nooks and crannies about the church cleared of a fair amount of no-longer-useful stuff that has been accumulating over the years. An example would be a couple of fairly broken down chairs of no certain ancestry that turned up out of the space at the "back" of Perkins Hall that has historically been used as a projection room when movies were shown in Perkins. Another example would be a piece of electronic equipment that appeared to my untrained eye to be at least twenty years old, and perhaps even older. Items generally of this sort have been gathered up and put in the unused men's chorus room in the basement, pending disposal which we hope will occur soon. Accompanying a very crowded "dead storage" room are several spacious and uncluttered to downright empty rooms from which stuff and dust have been removed as a result of the field day. The Eritrean Church has requested UNMC to make available additional storage space, and it is the cleared-out projection room off Perkins Hall. Thanks go out to Hilda Amacker, Tom Curteman, Paul Hannah, Perry King, Shanon Loring, Clint McCully, Linnea McCully, Sue Mosher, Mary Simmons, Donna Simonton, Dave Skidmore, and Al Templeton.

In addition to the clearing out and cleaning of rooms in the basement, good progress was made on clearing out weeds and yard trash and pruning and clipping in the church yard adjacent to the church. We anticipate further work on the yard as the spring progresses, with plans for fertilizing and pruning and clipping in the front and side yards as well. The time will come surprisingly quickly when we will need to start cutting the grass on a regular basis. In the meantime, there is much scope for work by those inclined toward gardening and generally taking care of the church's lawns and plants.

On the inside of the building, good work was achieved on cleaning and polishing the brass utensils that serve in various parts of the church's services. Furthermore, a number of light bulbs have been replaced, as well as notes taken on a survey of various electrical repairs needed by the church building.

One final item of note is with regard to the question of making sure that the parking lot behind the Masonic Temple is locked at the end of each Sunday afternoon. Perry King has been serving very kindly as a volunteer performing the opening and closing of the parking lot on Sundays, but his changing schedule in the not-too-distant future makes it necessary for a second person to be prepared to take Perry's place on occasion. We have had a number of promising suggestions as to ways to handle the providing of such a "lock-up" service, and while these may ultimately work out, it would be extremely useful in the nearer term to have the names of several volunteers to take Perry's place on occasion.

## The Pastoral Discretionary Fund

The Pastoral Discretionary Fund, or PDF, is a source of money raised within the parish for friends and parishioners of UNMC who need a quick infusion of funds for needs such as paying a bill, health insurance or rent when out of work or disabled. Requests for funds are considered on a case-by-case basis. The Deacons are responsible for administration of the Fund. Treasurer Brian Pepper keeps Head Deacon, Jennifer Sandberg, apprised of the size of the fund on a monthly basis. The Fund is currently very low. If you wish to donate to the PDF, please see one of our Treasurers in the office after church. If more information is needed before you contribute, please contact Jennifer Sandberg by email: [gaelviking@aol.com](mailto:gaelviking@aol.com) or phone: (703) 938-0247.

## Singing Visiting Ministry News

Our committee to start our singing/visiting ministry met on February 22. We plan to do one activity per month involving musical outreach to the community. For our first activity we will lead a gospel sing-along at the annual Walker Jones Clinic

Health and Wellness Expo, which will take place on Saturday, April 17th at 10:30-3:30 pm. At 1100 First St., N.W. This is in the Sursum Corda neighborhood which was in the news recently when a 14 year old girl was killed because she was witness to a murder. This neighborhood is also well known as one of the toughest and poorest neighborhoods in D.C. Some may remember that Rev. Starr mentioned this neighborhood and murder in her sermon in January. The event will be held in the daytime and will be well policed, so there should be minimal safety concerns. We will be singing from a stage with a PA system to members of the community (including lots of children!) as well as representatives from community organizations promoting health and wellness. I will also be working at the fair helping to organize Karaoke singing. Our singing group will go on at approximately 1:00 pm. If you are interested in participating please contact Perry King (Home: 202-667-0376), (Work: 202-354-1137) or [perikine@yahoo.com](mailto:perikine@yahoo.com). I would like to schedule a rehearsal soon. I will also place this message in the All Souls newsletter. Join us as we make a joyful noise at Sursum Corda. (Which means in Latin: "Lift up your hearts")

## Über Update

In March, the Über Fellowship of Light youth group studied fundamentalist Christianity and other fundamentalist movements and attended a Nazarene church youth group meeting. They'll be helping the younger kids make palm crosses on Palm Sunday and then will take up the study of paganism/Wicca and Islam as the final units in their year-long study of other faiths.

## Lunch Bunch

After worship on Sunday May 2, we will be holding a "lunch bunch" get together. We will provide soup (veggie and non-veggie) and beverages. Seating will be arranged in "spring quartet style" with tables of four persons. Each table will have a hot topic for discussion on a religious education theme. First time visitors and newcomers are especially invited. Join us after worship for hot topics and hot soups. To contribute food (optional), please contact Donna Simonton [dsimonton@nih.gov](mailto:dsimonton@nih.gov).

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## Chancel Flowers

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April 4. Palm Sunday.

Palms are given in memory of:

Mary K. and H. Jerome Graham by their daughter Sally and son-in-law Doug Simon.

Norman G. and Martha S. Brace by Douglas, Juliet and Marcia Brace and Steven and Carol Brace Shaw.

April 11. Easter. Flowers are given in memory of their family by Arthur Wiley, Jr.

Corinne and Seth R. Brooks by Amy Thompson Tipton.

April 18. Flowers are given in memory of their parents by Dorothy and Russell Chapman.

April 25. Flowers are given in memory of Walter H. Wood, Sr. by his family.

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## Growing in Service

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### 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 — April 3 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, April 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](mailto: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.

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## Rev. Bill Fox Inaugurated As President of College in Missouri

Rev. William L. Fox, minister-emeritus of Universalist National Memorial Church, was inaugurated on Saturday March 27 as the 24th president of Culver-Stockton College outside Canton, Missouri.

Bill, who served UNMC from 1978-88 and 93-98, was named president of Culver-Stockton in April, just a month before a tornado, on May 10, swept through the 140-acre campus, which sits on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. He has spent the months since overseeing the rebuilding of the campus and helping heal the emotional wounds of the students, faculty and staff.

U.S. Sen. Susan M. Collins of Maine, a longtime friend of Bill's, provided the inaugural address. She shared memories about their undergraduate days at St. Lawrence University, a Universalist institution in Canton, N.Y., and spoke about his qualifications for the role of college president.

"His dual careers in academia and ministry meshes perfectly with Culver-Stockton College's mission and traditions," she said.

Prior to his call to Culver-Stockton, Rev. Fox served as a senior administrator at Goucher College in Baltimore. In his speech, he drew from the theme, "A New Day, A New Vision," and shared his expectations in the years to come.

The ceremony was attended by Bill's wife, Lynn; daughter, Hallie, 16; and UNMC Head Usher David Fox, his brother.

Culver-Stockton, founded in 1853, is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has an enrollment of about 830 students. Rev. Fox said that one of his goals is to increase enrollment by 25 percent within five years.

Links to a Culver-Stockton press release and accounts in local papers can be found at UNMC's web site, [www.universalist.org](http://www.universalist.org).

## Our Church Affiliations

The sign out front and the announcements during the worship service tell everyone that UNMC is a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association (<http://www.uua.org>). But do you know the other organizations that UNMC is affiliated with?

Within the UUA, the church is part of the Joseph Priestly District (<http://jpd.uua.org>), which comprises 65 congregations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and northern Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia. District executive Rev. Richard Speck preached at UNMC January 11, 2004, and has been helping the board of trustees get ready to search for an interim minister. UNMC is also a member of the Council of Christian Churches within the UUA.

UNMC has been an honorary, non-voting member of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (<http://www.naccc.org>) since 1984 and has used NACCC resources in previous ministerial searches.

In the past few months, the church has affiliated with two other organizations that can help us spread the word about the liberal religious experience found at UNMC. The American Unitarian Conference (<http://www.americanunitarian.org>), established in 2000, is dedicated to a renewal of the historic Unitarian faith. Our own David Burton is the president and a founder of this organization. UNMC is affiliated as an "Open Door" congregation, welcoming AUC members to worship with us in a way that is consistent with their beliefs.

The church is also now affiliated with The Center for Progressive Christianity (<http://www.tcpc.org>), whose "8 Points" form a working definition for "Progressive Christianity" as a specific way of welcoming people into a religious community that fits well with the mission statement adopted by UNMC in May 2002. The president of TCPC is Rev. James R. Adams, former pastor of St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill and author of *So You Can't Stand Evangelism? A Thinking Person's Guide to the Church*, a book that UNMC's Welcome & Membership Committee has found useful in guiding

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its work. Honorary advisors to TCPC include such well known authors as Karen Armstrong, Marcus Borg, and Bishop John Shelby Spong.

### **Congregational Open Forum; Interim Minister**

The Board of Trustees would like to thank the congregation for the terrific open forum on Sunday, March 14th, and especially Al Templeton for his facilitation of the discussion. (Thanks also to the Templetons and Esther Fogwell for lunch!) This well-attended forum ended up focusing largely on the pastorate and the ministerial search process. The discussion provided detailed input, and reflected a clear mandate from the congregation to seek an accredited interim minister and offer a competitive salary and that the congregation will support this effort financially. Next steps are for us to submit an application seeking an interim minister to the UUA and to organize a committee to conduct the search for the interim, evaluate candidates, and make a recommendation to the Board. If you'd like to know more about this effort, please contact Moderator Greg Wigle or Vice Moderator/CoM Chair Vicki Pepper. [Breaking News: Board submits application to UUA and appoints Vicki Interim Search Committee Chair; see ISC Charter at [www.universalist.org/interim\\_charter.htm](http://www.universalist.org/interim_charter.htm). More information on the Interim Search Process coming in the May *Anchor*.]

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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office@universalist.org · (202) 387-3411

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

#### **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.

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