



Summer Services in Winchester

The sanctuary at the Universalist Church in Winchester this past summer rang proudly with songs, stories and sermons proclaiming the power of the Universalist faith, both as it has nurtured people in the past and as its core message still resonates in the human journey today. Five services were held in July and August. They were well attended, both by members of the United Church of Winchester and by guests who had come specifically to hear the Universalist message and to celebrate this first phase of programming since the building was purchased last fall by the Universalist Heritage Foundation.

Following are excerpts from the sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong at one of the services:

“Faith, hope, love abide, these three. But the greatest of these is love.” This message from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is the message that stands at the core of Universalism’s faith, and that we have inherited as Unitarian Universalists. I remember as a child seeing these words upon the walls of many Universalist churches. They expressed for all to see that a belief in the power of love was what held us together as a religious body, and which grounded our actions in the world and was the reason behind our ethical mandate, as my colleague Richard Gilbert used to say, “to be good for nothing.” The reward for our goodness was the knowledge that that is what we were created to be. These understandings are as important to my religious journey now as they were then.

I always believed that if I was created by a good and loving God, then I was obligated to behave in a manner that upheld the integrity of that creation. -- Rev. Elizabeth Strong

The grounding of universal salvation was ethical as well as theological. At first glance it does sound like we are off the hook for our behavior.

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But in reality, it puts us on a very demanding hook. As Edward Frost says: “God is the demand to love.” I always believed that if I was created by a good and loving God, then I was obligated to behave in a manner that upheld the integrity of that creation. I did not question my responsibility in that equation. I always believed that the moral and ethical demand was much heavier than it was given credit for by the detractors of our liberal faith.

Back when I was a young girl my friends would ask me what my church believed and what I believed. I told them that my Sunday school taught, and I believed, that God is love, Jesus is a teacher and a friend, that people are inherently good, that there is truth we know and more that we will know, that service is required of us to live our faith, and in the end all shall be well.



I know that I will always hold as central an idea of a force of Love in the universe, the world, and in my life, that clearly emerged from the Universalist God who loved me, then became an eternal and all-conquering love, to what I now identify as the transformative power of love....

What is it that gets us through the crises in our lives? What is the core of faith that holds us secure in the faces of terror, uncertainty, pain or death?

For some, this core faith is a sense of being connected to a power greater than one individual, and for others, it is a tapping of their inner well-spring of courage and strength. I know I drew upon that core of faith I had in my own power, and the power I have experienced that is greater than any one individual. I learned that the word faith, like the word God, points to a reality, however vague or ambivalent in conception it might be. It enabled me to understand that I was not alone in my struggle and that if I stayed open to the possibilities of healing and wholeness I could come through. I learned that faith is a way of believing in and responding to the world, and to the people who surround me. It gave me hope that “in the end all would be well.” And if I could not come through, as will someday happen, I know now that that hope will guide me into whatever awaits at the end of this life, and that in the end all will be well with my soul.

DVD Presenting The Universalist Heritage Foundation Soon To Be Available

A twenty-minute DVD will be available early in 2008 presenting the context in which the Universalist Profession of Belief was adopted, some

of the evolution of the Universalist faith, and the energy driving the present effort to make real the vision of the Universalist Heritage Foundation. Images of the video feature the present Universalist Church in Winchester, as well as significant people and scenes from Universalist history.



You can order a copy of the DVD from the Foundation by writing to: UHF, PO Box 6441, Nashua, NH 03063-6441, or by email to

Many thanks to Richard Trudeau for writing the very thoughtful script, to Craig Cleaveland and Diana Sargent for their creative work in producing the video, to Olav Nieuwejaar for photography and other assistance with the visuals, and to Joyce and Richard Gilbert for their narration.

UHF Workshop at General Assembly

The Universalist Heritage Foundation presented a workshop at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, last June, titled “Are You A Universalist And Don’t Know It?” John Sanders and Liz Strong, president and vice-president of the board, created and led the workshop and report that most of the approximately one hundred participants had little knowledge of Universalism before attending the program. At the end of the workshop participants were invited to note the Universalist ideas that, as a result of this program, now held meaning for them. Here are some of their comments:

I am grateful for this day, for it has reinforced my conscious, and unconscious, knowledge of my own Universalist heritage – that I am more OK than I could have known.

Make love the way you live your life.

Celebrating Generosity

Even as we first began to dream of the possibility of purchasing the Universalist Church in Winchester, NH and establishing there a Universalist Heritage Center, there was a surge of enthusiasm and of generosity. When this dream was just a twinkle in our eyes, a donor, Anonymous, on first hearing of the opportunity, instantly said that she wished to make an extraordinarily generous lead gift that would enable the purchase of the property. And why did she and her husband make such a gift? Here's what they say:



“As Unitarian Universalists, we often forget about our second name -- Universalism. Sure it’s a mouthful, but it’s important to remember both sides of our heritage. When we heard that the Winchester church was for sale, and at such a reasonable price, we were moved to ‘buy’ it. It’s more than historic preservation -- it’s religious celebra-

tion. Our Universalist forebears have much to teach us about bringing our faith to the farmers, to the working class, to the townspeople all over this country. We were honored to be able to support the birth of such a wonderful idea as the Universalist Heritage Foundation.”

Since that first contribution, dozens of others have followed. Blessings on all of the generous donors who have supported our journey.

*Anonymous
Thomas and Carolyn Antrim
Edwin and Harriet Armbruster
Francis S. Bancroft III
Dorothy Bauer
Richard Beal
Rev Jeanne M. Bell
William and Josephine Bero
Joy and Paul Blanchette
Rev Janet Bowering
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 Rev Dr Elizabeth Strong
 Rev Carol Taylor
 Christine Terry and Robert P. Hancock
 Rev Richard Trudeau
 Universalist Convocations
 Doris M. Whitcomb
 Alma Woods
 Joan Woosnam



Introducing our Advisory Board

As we proceed with development of the Universalist Heritage Foundation and the Universalist Heritage Center, we are very grateful to have the wisdom of these folks to guide us:

Rev. Dr. Ernest Cassara, Professor of Church History

Rev. Dr. Raymond Hopkins, first Executive Vice-President, Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Dr. Charles Howe, Emeritus Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Wilmington, North Carolina

Rev. Dr. Rosemary Bray McNatt, Minister, Fourth Universalist Church, New York City

Rev. Dr. William Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Dr. Christine Wetzel, Minister Emerita, Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, New York



Photographs on pages 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 are of the Universalist Heritage Center (Universalist Memorial Church), Winchester, New Hampshire

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By practicing unconditional love for everyone, we touch the divine, find the divine in ourselves and everyone we encounter.

This workshop has filled my heart with hope and my mind with an understanding of Universalism that I was never quite sure I would have ... I already feel my Universalist faith sprouting.

Now I see why I was so comforted from a young age about my place in the world.

This session crystallized for me why I go to the small Universalist church (started in 1850 by the circuit riders) instead of the larger UU church in my area.

Meaning comes from the simple notion of unconditional love and how deeply I need to hear and be touched by this precept.

Universalism appeals to me because it resonates with my propensity to keep hope alive even in today's fairly hopeless-seeming world.

(Universalism gives me) a place to put Jesus that makes sense. Jesus is a teacher and a friend.

“Eternal expectation of the dawn.”

This workshop has taken me back to my true roots. Thank you.

One thing that affected me was the idea that service is a requirement to live one's Universalist faith.

Universalist perspectives seem to fit very well with how I've always thought.

Universalism ... leaves the latchstring out until the last of us is home, asks of us to serve, and fills that hole which reason cannot reach. All I need is love.

The statement by Rev. Douglas Taylor that he feels fully loved by a God he half believes in touched me. It's how I feel and shows me again that this is a path, a journey.

Universal salvation is very much in keeping with my Buddhist practice which emphasizes the original pure nature of all sentient beings.

Faith, hope and love for all – it seems a wonderful place to be.

Newsletter Delivery

We are sending this newsletter by land and email. For its economy we prefer the latter, but we know that others prefer paper in hand. Let us know if you would like to change. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, send us a note or reply to the email with “Remove” in the subject box - or email to uhfmail@malpeque.org. Thank you all!

Announcing the First Annual Universalist Heritage Sermon Award

To encourage deeper study of Universalist history and spirituality and the sharing of the Good News of this faith with ever wider audiences, we joyfully announce this award program.

Theme – Sermon entries should bring to life the essence of the Mission of the Universalist Heritage Foundation:

To celebrate and preserve the rich legacy of the Universalist faith, to educate future generations in the Universalist tradition, and to continue to put forth the Universalist message as an agent of hope for a fractured world.

We are especially interested in sermons which lift up in a compelling fashion the contemporary power and relevance of the Universalist message.

Award -- \$500, and the opportunity to present your sermon in the summer of 2008 at the Universalist Heritage Center in Winchester, New Hampshire, site of the adoption of the historic Universalist Profession of Faith in 1803. The winner will be announced at the UHF Workshop at General Assembly and will be featured in the Autumn 2008 issue of the UHF newsletter.



Eligibility – The sermon must have been delivered before a Unitarian Universalist Congregation or at a seminary chapel service between January 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. Theme talks at summer conference centers, District meetings, etc. will also be considered. Both ordained clergy and lay preachers are eligible for this award. We especially encourage seminarians to send us their sermons.

Submissions – Sermons should be sent by April 1, 2008 to: The Universalist Heritage Foundation, PO Box 6441, Nashua, NH 03063-6441, or may be sent electronically as a PDF or a Word attachment to:

UniversalistHeritageFoundation@gmail.com

As much identifying information as possible should be removed from the body of the sermon. Attach a cover sheet with your name and contact information, as well as the date and the congregation in which the sermon was presented.