

Universalist Heritage

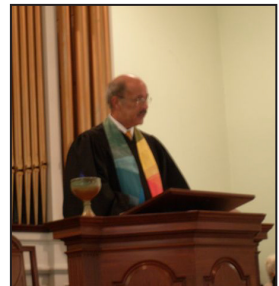
Winter 2008-2009

An occasional newsletter of the Universalist Heritage Foundation

The Rededication of the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester, New Hampshire

The skies were clear on Sunday, October 5, and the rafters of the Universalist Memorial Church rang with song and echoed with good will as well over a hundred people shared in a Service of Rededication, affirming the surge of energy that surrounds the promise of a Universalist Heritage Center on that site. People came from all over New England and New York. Harry and Mary Shuemaker drove all the way from Wheaton, Illinois just to attend this service!

Rev. William Sinkford, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (and UHF Advisory Board member), preached on *“Faith Matters,”* tracing the deep significance of the 1803 Winchester Profession of Faith as the foundation of the Universalist faith for generations to follow – and for generations yet to come.



President Sinkford

Charles Butterfield, music director of All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist in Brattleboro, Vermont, arranged music for the event, which included a choir of more than thirty voices as well as flute, violin, piano and organ. The service was arranged and led by Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar, Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Milford, New Hampshire, with participation also from John Sanders of Nashua, President of the UHF Board of Directors. Mary Heafy, President of the Keene, New Hampshire Unitarian Universalist Church, coordinated a generous reception on the lawn of the church following the service.

The closing hymn, *“Prayer for This House,”* includes the phrases, “By faith made strong, the rafters will withstand the battering of the storm,” and may the walls “be strong to keep hate out and hold love in.” May it be so! *(More pictures inside.)*

Summer Services

In the summer of 2008, as in July and August of 2007, the Universalist Heritage Foundation held five Sunday services at the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester. The services drew folks from surrounding Unitarian Universalist churches, as well as many who traveled great distances to share in worship grounded in the Universalist faith and tradition. The services were also well attended by members of the United Church of Winchester, who held services on the alternating Sundays.

Special thanks to our summer preachers: Rev. Windy Fitting of the Independent Christian Church in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Rev. David Horst of the First Parish in Malden, Massachusetts, Universalist, Rev. Douglas Taylor of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Binghamton, New York, Rev. Richard Gilbert, Minister Emeritus of First Unitarian Church, Rochester, New York, and Hilary Mullins of Bethel, Vermont, winner of the First Annual Universalist Heritage Sermon Award. Excerpts from Hillary's sermon follow. The text of the entire sermon may be found on our website.



Edith Thomas, conductor, rehearses with a multi-church choir and accompanists prior to the Rededication Service on October 5, 2008. The scene is the sanctuary of the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester, New Hampshire. (All photos of the service in this newsletter were taken by Nancy Butterfield.)

Announcing the Second 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.

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

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

We are especially interested in sermons that 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 2009 at the Universalist Heritage Center in Winchester, New Hampshire, site of the adoption of the historic Universalist Profession of Belief in 1803. The award-winning sermon will be featured in the Fall 2009 issue of the UHF newsletter.

Eligibility – The sermon must have been delivered before a Unitarian Universalist Congregation between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009. 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, 2009 to:

Universalist Heritage Foundation
PO Box 1641
Nashua, NH 03061

or may be sent electronically as 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 to which the sermon was presented.

“Gather in Love”

by Hilary Mullins

Excerpts from the First UHF Award-Winning Sermon

I found out that for six years, between 1803 and 1809, (Hosea) Ballou rode circuit ... traveling on horseback between Barnard, Bethel, Bridgewater, Hartland and Woodstock (VT). ... Because the Universalists in Bethel didn't have a meeting house at this point in time ... when Ballou was in Bethel, he preached in one of two places: the schoolhouse and the old Colonel Marsh House. I knew that that schoolhouse was long gone. But the Colonel Marsh house still existed. In fact, the Colonel Marsh house is the oldest house in town ... it's my mother's house!



Hilary Mullins

Today Ballou is best remembered for his thorough-going Universalism. I don't know, but I wonder if by identifying him so completely with universal salvation, we might be focusing on a corollary of his, thereby missing his original proposition – his primary inspiration.

That is, it seems to me that to understand Ballou we must understand (the) powerful sense of God he had from a very young age -- one he could not shake. Though pushed by his father, his church community and the larger culture to see God as a being filled with rage and lacking in mercy, Ballou had an entirely different perception. This young man in the last decade of the 18th century simply experienced God as love.

“To describe this God, Ballou later used words like, ‘All-gracious,’ and ‘Merciful,’ ... ‘all lovely, without exception, and loving, without partiality.’

“Yes, Ballou's God was quite different than Calvin's God.

“And so of course, the conclusions about God that he came to were quite different also. For how could a God like this not love ALL his creatures? And if indeed he loved all of them, how is it he would damn a single one?

“... like Ballou, we still wrestle with our faith. And though some of his specific beliefs may no longer serve, his original insight and underlying proposition still can: God is love.

“To me, the working definition of loving someone means to know that person deeply – to see in them their strengths and weaknesses – and to love them still, holding her or him for the amazing preciousness they are, in all their strivings and in all their flaws.

“Perhaps this is how Hosea Ballou thought of God – as that something or someone who knows us best, who knows how hard we try and how many times we fail – and yet who knows too just how precious we are. ...

“Hosea Ballou’s God ... not only loves us but compels us to love one another.

“Hosea Ballou was not a naïve man. But he did not, as many of his contemporaries did, feel that preaching the theology of an angry God was necessary to keep people from behaving in evil ways. On the contrary, he said, if people experienced God as the limitless source of love and goodness God truly is, being filled with God’s grace would inspire them to be good and loving. And you could either live in the good arms of that love, or you could live in the misery of sin. That is, Hosea Ballou felt that sin created its own misery for the sinner.

“Now we may not much like that old-fashioned word, sin, but it isn’t so much the word that matters but the reality it points to.

“So, if you would, think about it a moment: think about wrongdoing and its results inside us. When we tell a lie, when we go behind someone’s back, when we harbor ill feelings against someone in our community, or when we take advantage of someone else’s disadvantage – the result is a kind of corrosion from the inside, an erosion of our sense of self and our merit, our basic sense of worth.

“On the other hand, when we stretch ourselves to do something that’s good we inspire ourselves and other people around us. Something shifts, something opens. Good does create good. And, just as importantly, it makes us feel good. And when we feel good about ourselves, it helps us get into a deeper connection with – what shall we call it? God? Transcending mystery and wonder? ...



Hosea Ballou

“From all accounts, Hosea Ballou was a compelling preacher, a charismatic man who moved many who heard and read his words. I love to think of him standing in the snug living room of my mother’s house: Hosea Ballou, six feet tall, his eyes a sharp blue, his face ruddy and animated but calm, -- a self-possessed but manifestly kind man preaching with no text, his vivid engagement with God inspiring the congregation before him.

“And I imagine the source of Hosea’s power sprang in no small part from the way his faith enabled him to resonate with love. He knew his followers weren’t perfect. He knew that he himself wasn’t perfect. But he had faith God loved them all. And so did he.”

Give Voice to Your Faith -- Become a Member of the Universalist Heritage Foundation!

Individuals, Congregations, Universalist Conventions and other institutions - we invite you to help strengthen and share the voice of Universalism by becoming a charter member of the Universalist Heritage Foundation.

Join with other Unitarian Universalists in helping to promote our Mission:

- ☞ To put forth the Universalist message as an agent of hope for a fractured world
- ☞ To educate future generations in the Universalist Tradition
- ☞ To celebrate and preserve the rich legacy of the Universalist faith.

Your membership supports our mission financially, but also lets us begin to join together as individuals and institutions in our faith community who believe that the Universalist voice of faith, hope, and love helps to deepen our beloved Unitarian Universalist tradition, and helps us share a needed, prophetic, healing message with the wider world.

We invite you to join us at whatever level of membership support is appropriate for you:

	Regular	Sustaining
Individuals	\$25.00	\$50.00
Institutions	\$50.00	\$100.00
Students	\$15.00	
Individual Life Member	\$500.00	

With your membership, you will receive our newsletter, copies of DVDs and other materials created by the Universalist Heritage Foundation as they become available. But most importantly, as a member, you will help support the ongoing work of the Foundation in strengthening, preserving, and proclaiming the Universalist message.

Annual Memberships are renewable each year on July 1 (so you can renew at GA!). Life membership offers you all the benefits of membership without the need to renew, for your whole life. This year's annual

Our Address Has Changed!

The Nashua, New Hampshire branch post office, where we kept our mailbox for a few years, has closed operations. We moved the box to another Nashua post office. Here is that new address:

Universalist Heritage Foundation
P. O. Box 1641
Nashua, NH 03061

Newsletter Delivery

This newsletter has been sent via land mail or electronic mail. We prefer to do the latter, since it greatly reduces the cost. If you send us your e-mail address, we will send the newsletter in that format, but if you prefer the paper edition, we will be glad to send it that way.

Our Website

Visit our website from time to time at www.universalistheritage.org. There you will find archived newsletters, sermons, and other information about Universalism and the Universalist Heritage Foundation.



Organist and music director Charles Butterfield performs with flutist Thomas Baehr and violinist Robert Hancock at the Rededication Service.