



Living Universalism: A Universalist Heritage Foundation Conference at Ferry Beach

August 6 - August 13, 2011

The Universalist Spirit that led Quillen Shin to found Ferry Beach is alive and well in modern Unitarian Universalism. It is there, still calling, still inspiring religious leaders to courageous acts of faith, hope, and love. It is there, inviting a deeper religious understanding among members of our congregations. It is there challenging you to preach and act and live in the light of immortal Love.

This is a conference intended for religious professionals and students interested in exploring the depth and the possibilities of the Living Universalist message in our movement today. Our theme speaker will enliven our week with inspirational, challenging, and thought-provoking theological reflection on 21st-century Universalism. We will share and collect and reflect on stories for the Universalist Heritage Foundation's "Love Saves" project. We will hone our skills and share our visions through preaching with and for one another in our customary forms and in the extemporaneous fashion of the early Universalists.

"Living Universalism" at Ferry Beach will invite you to continue building the beloved community on Earth by engaging with a friendly group of religious professionals in the seaside home that has been so meaningful for Universalists for more than a hundred years. This will be a week of reflection, enlivening conversation, and inspiration.

Watch our website or the Ferry Beach website for the names of our theme speaker and other leaders, as well as additional information!

Coordinator for the conference is the Rev. Paul S. Sawyer, minister of the First Universalist Society of Hartland, Vermont.

A limited number of partial scholarships will be available.

Summer Services

Again we look forward to a series of summer services at the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester. This summer the services will be held at 10:30 a.m. on six successive Sundays: July 10 through August 14. Guest speakers who have a passion for the Universalist message will preside and will be announced on the UHF website and in the UHF newsletter in the late spring.

Universalist Heritage Tour

Our first Universalist Heritage Tour, superbly managed by Joyce Gilbert, Liz Strong and Barbara Smith, was a rich experience for all those who participated. Guests came not only from the northeast, but from as far away as Ohio, Colorado and Florida for this event scheduled at the peak of the New England foliage season.

A photographic and a narrative view of the tour will appear soon on our website. Meanwhile, throughout this newsletter you will find several photos from the tour.

Another tour is already being planned for the fall of 2012, repeating the many successful stops of the 2010 tour, and expanding to visit more Universalist sites in Vermont.



Participants in the Universalist Heritage 2011 tour group are here gathered in the recently redesigned outdoor chapel at Ferry Beach Conference Center in Maine. From left to right, they are: Mark Weber, Mary Behee, Joyce Gilbert, Liz Strong, Judith Marks, Catherine Harris, and Barbara Smith. In back are: Richard Harris and Richard Gilbert.

***Announcing the Fourth 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 – This year we are asking that sermons address the theme of
“*Universalism as a Response to Fear*”

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 2011 at the Universalist Heritage Center in Winchester, New
Hampshire, site of the adoption of the historic Universalist Profession of
Faith in 1803. The award-winning sermon will be featured in the fall
2011 issue of the UHF Newsletter.

Eligibility – The sermon must have been delivered before a Unitarian
Universalist congregation or other gathering between January 1, 2010
and March 31, 2011. 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, 2011 to:

The Universalist Heritage Foundation, PO Box 1641, Nashua, NH 03061

Or they may be sent electronically as a Word or PDF 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 location in which the sermon
was presented.



Memorials to two Universalist principals: On the left is the gravemarker of the Reverend John Murray, the “Father” of Universalism. On the right is a memorial placed in North Cemetery, Oxford, Massachusetts, in honor of Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross.



Standing Free:

Preaching the Gospel of Love In the Universalist Style

*A Workshop on the Art of Preaching
Without Notes or Manuscript*

Saturday, March 26, 2011, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
in Winchester, New Hampshire

*Sponsored by The Universalist Heritage Foundation
and made possible in part by a grant from
the New York State Convention of Universalists*

The art of preaching in this style has all but disappeared from our congregations and with it rich opportunities for deepening ministry and connecting with the hearts and minds of our people. The workshop will incorporate short lectures, discussion, exercises and small group work. It is open to ministers and seminarians of all traditions and with any level of preaching experience.

Workshop Leaders: Rev. Stephen Shick and Rev. Dr. M'ellen Kennedy. Rev. Shick has practiced this style of preaching for over fifteen years and leads workshops and retreats for ministers on the subject. He is author of *Be the Change*, and *Consider the Lilies*, books of poems, meditations and prayers. Rev. Kennedy has been preaching extemporaneously for four years. She serves as consulting minister for the Washington Unitarian Universalist Church in Washington, Vermont and the Universalist Society of Strafford, Vermont.

The Universalist Heritage Foundation is located 12 miles south of Keene, New Hampshire on Route 10 in Winchester, New Hampshire, where the historic Winchester Profession of Belief was signed in 1803.

Registration: Please fill out one form for each person attending. Please send this completed form and your check by March 23rd to Rev. M'ellen Kennedy, 3764 Quaker St., Bristol, VT 05443. Contact info mellenken@aol.com 802-453-5469. Registration form also available at www.universalistheritage.org.

See next page for registration information.

REGISTRATION FORM

The Art of Preaching Without Notes Workshop

NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

CONGREGATION/SEMINARY: _____

FEE: The workshop fee, which includes an information packet, is \$40 for ministers and \$30 for seminarians. Please bring a sack lunch.

I enclose a check made payable to “Rev. M’ellen Kennedy” for this amount: (please check) Minister: ____ \$40 Seminarian: ____ \$30

Send to Rev. M’ellen Kennedy, 3764 Quaker St., Bristol, VT 05443.



The Universalist Church in Barnard, Vermont, one of four Vermont churches created through the inspiration and leadership of Rev. Hosea Ballou.

Decorations of Hope—A “Love Saves” Story

by *Rev. Paul S. Sawyer*

Some years ago I worked in Massachusetts at a small intensive day school for children and youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities. These were kids who had been bounced in and out of regular schools and programs, and some, even, who by middle school had already spent some time in jail.

These were tough kids with tough lives, and with some regularity, one or another of the students would lose control, and physically lash out at whatever and whomever was around. Part of my job was to help kids in such circumstances, to talk with them, and, when needed, to physically restrain them in order to protect their own, or others’ safety.



Now, the school building was a converted old majestic Victorian house, and right inside the front door was a nice entryway. Usually the entryway was pretty sparse, but when the holidays came around, the staff of the school decorated the space with lights and garlands and even a well-decorated artificial Christmas tree.

Every day during the first week that those decorations were up, at some point a student having a hard time would take her or his anger out on that holiday scene. The garlands would be torn off the wall, the decorations scattered and that tree left lying on its side, branches strewn about all over.

So it became part of our regular staff routine in the afternoon after the kids had gone home, to come together to put the entryway back in order. We would remove or fix anything broken, put things back where they went, and set that tree back up in its stand. If anything was too far gone to be saved, we would be sure to replace it by the next morning, so that the room looked festive again before the students came back.

At the end of that week, I asked the principal of the school why we didn’t just get rid of at least the decorations. Why spend all this time decorating a space so that the kids could tear it apart? It seemed we would all have an easier time of it if we just took them away.

It’s been many years since then, so I don’t remember her reply in anything like her exact words—but I’ll give you the gist of it: She said that it was of profound importance that we keep putting everything back—all the decorations, all the lights—and making the room celebratory and warm. She said that we might decide to change our decorations some day, but we would never do so because a child had destroyed something. To do that, she said, would be to send the mess-

age that we had given up on them, and that we didn't think they deserved a nice space, or a celebration for the holidays.

She also suggested that I be patient, because if we were doing our jobs well, over time, the room would get damaged less and less. But in the meantime, she said, we will buy decoration after decoration after decoration, and we will let them know that their actions won't change our resolve for a good life for them; that no matter what they do, they cannot diminish our sense of love for who they are, and hope for who they are learning to be.

Years later, I remain honored and proud that I got to work in a school that chooses love and hope every day for kids who, honestly, it would be much easier to give up on—kids who, in fact, were used to people, and unfortunately to whole schools, giving up on them. It was a small thing, that decorated room, but the kids noticed. I'm sure that those decorations, and many other little actions taken there every day made a difference. It certainly made a difference in me, and in my sense of the power of true tenacious love.

My principal was right, by the way. By the next week, though some kids still occasionally lost control, that room, and all the decorations, almost always made it through.



The preacher, Hosea Ballou. This imposing statue was placed near his grave in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

UHF Board Retreat

The annual retreat of the Universalist Heritage Foundation Board was held in mid-January, skillfully and fruitfully facilitated by Dick Gilbert, a member of our Advisory Board. As we approach the fifth anniversary of our founding, it was instructive to review and re-assess. We looked back at the highs and lows of the year past and at the present realities of the context in which we work as the basis for developing a revised vision for the next stretch of our journey.

Much conversation revolved around the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester, NH which was the impetus for the creation of this foundation whose work has become both broad and vital. We cherish this building both for its intrinsic beauty and for what it symbolizes of our heritage, but there was a consensus that it is under-utilized, and that increasingly our programming is broader than the building itself.

While we will continue to use the building for occasional programs promoting the Universalist message, and are happy that it continues to house the Winchester Learning Center and the Visiting Nurses Association, we also commit to exploring ways that its use in support of social services in the Winchester area could be extended. This is in keeping with the Universalist mission of service, using this resource to live our faith. A consultant is available to work with us on next steps to fulfill this emerging vision.



The "Mother Church" of Universalism, the Independent Christian Church, Unitarian Universalist, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was founded by Rev. John Murray in 1779, and is the first Universalist church in America.

Although the present building is not the original structure in which the Winchester Profession of Belief was adopted, the site itself is of historic significance because of that meeting. We determined that we would see that an historic marker is placed there marking the historic importance of that event, as well as markers in other Vermont locations which have significant historical importance for the Universalist movement. Steps have already been taken toward accomplishing this goal.

Other creative initiatives emerging from the retreat include taking steps toward establishing a lectureship on Universalism at the new theological seminary being formed in Newton, MA, and conversation about changing our name to reflect more accurately our growing emphasis on Living Universalism.