

## **WELCOME TO THIS FRIENDLY CHURCH**

**October 10, 2010**

**Our mission, as we live our historic, liberal faith, is to nurture spiritual growth, honor diversity, and offer service with love.**

“In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create but by what we refuse to destroy.” John Sawhill

**PRELUDE(s) Heather**

### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **OPENING WORDS**

**# 539**

**Carefully  
the leaves of autumn  
sprinkle down with the tinny  
sound of little dyings.**

**And skies sated  
of ruddy sunsets  
of roseate dawns**

**roil ceaselessly in  
cobweb grays and turn  
to black  
for comfort.**

**Only lovers  
see the fall  
a signal end to endings**

**a gruffish gesture alerting  
those who will not be alarmed  
that we begin to stop  
in order simply  
to begin  
again.**

**Maya Angelou**

**INTROIT Heather and the Choir**

**CHALICE LIGHTING WORDS**

**# 538**

**Autumn, we know,  
Is life en route to death.  
The asters are but harbingers of frost.  
The trees, flaunting their colors at the sky,  
In other times will follow where the leaves have fallen,  
And so shall we.  
Yet other lives will come.  
So may we know, accept, embrace,  
The mystery of life we hold awhile  
Nor mourn that it outgrows each separate self,  
    but still rejoice that we may have our day.  
Lift high our colors to the sky! And give  
In our time, fresh glory to the earth.**

**Robert Terry Weston**

**COVENANT**

*Love is the spirit of this church. These are our goals.  
To worship God in Freedom,  
To affirm the dignity of all people,  
To dwell together in peace,  
To serve one another,  
And to seek the truth in love.*

**HYMN**

In Sweet Fields of Autumn

**# 52**

**RESPONSIVE READING(s) “Connections Are Made Slowly”**

**# 568**

**Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.  
*You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.*  
More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.  
*Penetrate quietly as the earth worm that blows no trumpet.*  
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.**

*Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.  
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.  
Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.  
Live a life you can endure: make love that is loving.  
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in, a thicket and bramble  
wilderness to the outside but to us interconnected with rabbit runs and  
burrows and lairs,  
Live as if you like yourself, and it may happen:  
Reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.  
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,  
For every gardener knows that after the digging, after the planting, after  
the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.*

**Marge Piercy**

## **CANDLES OF JOY and CONCERN**

### **OFFERING, OFFERTORY, and Sung Response**

*From you I receive, to you I give  
Together we share, and from this we live.*

### **ANTHEM Heather and the Choir**

### **SPOKEN and SILENT**

### **PRAYER, MEDITATION, REFLECTION**

**In the holy quiet ... of our meeting together now in prayer,  
meditation or reflection ... may our hearts and our consciences turn  
toward the healing of our brokenness, to the unease and dis-ease which  
burden and afflict us. For however healthy we feel, in fact are, there are  
conditions and circumstances which surround us that are neither  
wholesome nor good. Our times are troubled. Our world is fractured.  
Too much is disparate. Too much is alienating. There seems too often  
too little hope.**

**Yet there are good people. There are good things that happen.**

**There is great beauty. There are people and things we care about. We know we are cared for. We know healing and health are available.**

**We know that though the balance may tip, there is in fact a balance, and that balance can be achieved. We can do so.**

**We can love and be loved. We can be thankful for the blessings which are given to us and we see given to others. We in turn can give our share of kindness to the world around us and the world that's distant. We can create hope where hope is lacking.**

**May we do so, and in doing so ... create peace.**

**SILENCE**

**Blessed be. Amen.**

**READING (s)                      “Sustainability”                      from Wikipedia**

**Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In ecology the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time. Long-lived and healthy wetlands and forests are examples of sustainable biological systems. For humans, sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of well being, which has environmental, economic, and social dimensions.**

**Since the 1980s sustainability has been used more in the sense of human sustainability on planet Earth and this has resulted in the most widely quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” But sustainability is also a call to action, a task in progress or “journey” and therefore a political process, so some definitions set out common goals and values. The Earth Charter speaks of “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.”**

**The Western industrial revolution of the 17th to 19th centuries tapped into the vast growth potential of the energy in fossil fuels. Coal**

was used to power ever more efficient engines and later to generate electricity. Modern sanitation systems and advances in medicine protected large populations from disease. In the mid-20th century, a gathering environmental movement pointed out that there were environmental costs associated with the many material benefits that were now being enjoyed. In the late 20th century, environmental problems became global in scale. The 1973 and 1979 energy crises demonstrated the extent to which the global community had become dependent on non-renewable energy resources. In the 21st century, there is increasing global awareness of the threat posed by the human-induced enhanced greenhouse effect, produced largely by forest clearing and the burning of fossil fuels.

**Population:** The world's population is projected to reach 7 billion early in 2012, to exceed 9 billion people by 2050. Most of the increase will be in developing countries. It is the combination of population increase in the developing world and unsustainable consumption levels in the developed world that poses a stark challenge to sustainability.

More and more data are indicating that humans are not living within the carrying capacity of the planet. The Ecological footprint measures human consumption in terms of the biologically productive land needed to provide the resources, and absorb the wastes of the average global citizen. The [current] ecological deficit must be met from unsustainable extra sources and these are obtained in three ways: embedded in the goods and services of world trade; taken from the past (e.g. fossil fuels); or borrowed from the future as unsustainable resource usage (e.g. by over exploiting forests and fisheries).

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is an international synthesis by over 1000 of the world's leading biological scientists that analyses the state of the Earth's ecosystems and provides summaries and guidelines for decision-makers. It concludes that human activity is having a significant and escalating impact on the biodiversity of world ecosystems, reducing both their resilience and biocapacity. The report

refers to natural systems as humanity's "life-support system." The assessment measures 24 ecosystem services concluding that only four have shown improvement over the last 50 years, 15 are in serious decline, and five are in a precarious condition.[54]

In March 2009 at a meeting of the Copenhagen Climate Council, 2,500 climate experts from 80 countries issued a keynote statement that there is now "no excuse" for failing to act on global warming and that without strong carbon reduction targets "abrupt or irreversible" shifts in climate may occur that "will be very difficult for contemporary societies to cope with."

The underlying driver of direct human impacts on the environment is human consumption. This impact is reduced by not only consuming less but by also making the full cycle of production, use and disposal more sustainable.

**HYMN**     Now Light Is Less

**# 326**

**SERMON**                    "Sustainable Times and Seasons" Mr. Beal

I am going to begin my remarks today with a poem by Wendell Berry, from his collection of "Sabbath Poems, 1979-1997."

Even while I dreamed I prayed that what I saw was only fear  
and no foretelling,  
for I saw the last known landscape destroyed for the sake  
of the objective, the soil bulldozed, the rock blasted.  
Those who had wanted to go home would never get there now.

I visited the offices where for the sake of the objective the  
planners planned  
at blank desks set in rows. I visited the loud factories  
where the machines were made that would drive ever forward

**toward the objective. I saw the forest reduced to stumps and gullies;  
I saw the poisoned river, the mountain cast into the valley;  
I came to the city that nobody recognized because it looked like every  
other city.**

**I saw the passages worn by the unnumbered footfalls of those whose  
eyes were fixed upon the objective.**

**Their passing had obliterated the graves and the monuments  
of those who died in pursuit of the objective and who had long ago  
been forgotten, according to the inevitable rule that those who have  
forgotten forget that they have forgotten.**

**Men, women and children now pursued the objective as if nobody ever  
pursued it before.**

**The races and the sexes now intermingled perfectly in pursuit of the  
objective.**

**The once-enslaved, the once-oppressed were now free to sell themselves  
to the highest bidder and to enter the best-paying prisons in pursuit  
of the objective, which was the destruction of all enemies,  
which was the destruction of all obstacles, which was the destruction of  
all objects, which was to clear the way to victory, which was to clear the  
way to promotion, to salvation, to progress, to the completed sale, to the  
signature on the contract, which was to clear the way to self-realization,  
to self-creation, from which nobody who ever wanted to go home would  
ever get there now, for every remembered place had been displaced; the  
signposts had been bent over and covered over.**

**Every place had been displaced, every love unloved, every vow unsworn,  
every word unmeant  
to make way for the passage of the crowd  
of the individuated, the autonomous, the self-actuated, the homeless  
with their many eyes opened only toward the objective**

**which they did not yet perceive in the far distance,  
having never known where they were going,  
having never known where they came from.**

**I was wakened from my dream of the ruined world by the sound  
of rain falling slowly onto the dry earth of my place in time.  
On the parched garden, the cracked-open pastures, the dusty grape  
leaves, the brittle grass, the drooping foliage of the woods,  
fell still the quiet rain.**

**This reading is a jeremiad, by Wendell Berry being as much the  
prophet as the poet. “Woe is Israel.” Jeremiah cried. Woe is America,  
I say, which does not know its beauty ... which is not in communion with  
its own better nature or the earth’s ... but whose after idols, the idols of  
gold and self and silver ... that objectifies the spirit and denies  
its soul in doing so. If you remember, no one in Jerusalem really wanted  
to listen to Jeremiah, much less believe his warnings. And many of us  
are not unlike those ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem, believing in the  
jobs and benefits un-regulated development would bring, not wanting to  
pay taxes, and why should we, when the click of the dice, the pull on  
lever, the spin of the wheel and the drop of the little steel ball into the  
winning cup will provide all the needs we may not really need at all. We  
have so impoverished the savings of those who dutifully saved, and  
foreclosed on so many who believed their future was invested in their  
homes, and made jobless those who put their faith in honest labor, that  
those in whose education we did not sufficiently invest now not only  
drink, but many may vote for the purveyors of, that un-patented**

**medicine: Cecil's Remarkable Elixir of Tea, good for all that ails you, and not forbidden by the Food and Drugists Administration.**

**What's left of our world is still so beautiful. Look only as far as the tree in your yard, or to the massed colors of the trees arrayed thickly on the hillsides above our lakes and streams. What possible political potage could be worth their loveliness? Observe the faces of the children raking the leaves into piles and jumping into them. What future will it be without the joyfulness evident in their faces, without the health that animates so many of their as yet unaffected bodies, what could possibly be worth the continued injection of poisons into our food and air and water? Why should we accept, without countering with the voices of prophets like Wendell Berry and Bill McKibben, the ceaseless insinuations and perverse propaganda of the far right and the self-interested oligarchs who fund them. Why gamble on or with their disinterestedness?**

**Just because this is a country founded on a dream, a dream of a life to be lived in freedom from an aristocracy of the privileged, of a democratic republic based on the rights and responsibilities of the common person does not necessarily mean Thomas Jefferson was right to believe in the necessity of a continuing revolution to preserve the freedoms too easily squandered by the inattentive mass of citizens too preoccupied with the struggles of maintaining life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, too preoccupied to prevent the usurpation of the freedom of the commons by the accumulation of wealth and power in the**

hands of those whose interest is primarily self-interest rather than the commonwealth of all.

But I don't believe so. If in wilderness is the preservation of the world, then in the extinction of species, the elimination of wetlands, the deforestation and desertification of wide areas of our planet, and the aggregation of greater and greater wealth in fewer and fewer hands, lies the destruction of the world. At least of the world as we have known it and as our children and grandchildren may never know it.

We are mostly fortunate here in the Oxford Hills, for we have an environment not yet spoiled. Affected by the human presence it has been, but the effects brought to bear upon it have been relatively benign and, where despoiling mills and factories did their worst, and mining and logging took their toll on the landscape, time has largely healed the scars which were left. Now we face new kinds of despoilation in taking the chance that gambling will do no more harm than clog our roads, rob the earnings of those vulnerable enough to risk the little that they have in hopes of winning against the odds stacked against them, and change the character of the communities in which we live. The "take charge" people cite uncertain numbers of how many jobs will be created if voters okay the creation of a casino in this area, and say they can't be certain of how many gamblers will come from away versus those who will be local, who may be inflating the amount of money that will come from increased taxes and then be passed on to our county's schools. The "No on 1" people, for their part, speak instead of their preference for "sustainable"

**jobs and the sustainable incomes and taxes that would by definition come from them.**

**A presentation sponsored by the Advertiser Democrat and the Maine Public Broadcasting Network will be held at the high school on the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> of this month, in which the claims of the Yes on #1 and the No on #1 proponents can be assessed, if those advocating a “yes” vote agree to participate. And if this takes place I think the kind of society each side envisions will be as informative as the specific facts and figures each presents. I hope as many of you as possibly can will attend, because for me the nature and quality of life sought here is the true issue, and in terms of the specific question before us we are a microcosm of issues facing our country as a whole. What values will we choose when actually able to make a choice? What kinds of lives do we truly want to live? I’m personally not neutral on these questions. I hope I will always choose the natural over the honky-tonk, the substance before the glitz.**

**For I am, as a Unitarian Universalist, inevitably something of an Emersonian. In Blessed Unrest Paul Hawken wrote that Emerson “imagined religion, science, and nature as one field of thought ... Like William James, Emerson was less interested in religion per se than in the religious experience. The human mind came to represent for Emerson the possibility and magnificence of nature, and nature in turn encompassed all human activity. He anticipated modern neuroscience in seeing the human mind was not some tabula rasa on which we inscribe our culture, but a magnificent, pattern-seeking, complex living system**

whose structures are not fixed. [PP] Almost as a testimony to his discovery of interdependence, Emerson planted seeds that would develop into what were, and continue to be, two disparate concepts that animate our daily existence: how we treat nature and how we treat one another – concepts at the foundation of environmental and social justice. In school we are taught the Yankee Emerson, the stalwart clergyman who is the author of essays on character, prudence, and self-reliance. It's as if Calvinist America had cherry-picked his writings so as to exclude the Unitarian dreamer. In fact, his thinking is steeped in a universality that eludes formal categories ... The morality he proposed came from perceiving and receiving nature, not from established codes or judgements. “I have confidence [he wrote] in laws of morals as of botany. I have planted corn in my field every June for seventeen years, and I never knew it to come up strychnine. My parsley, beet, turnip, carrot, buck-thorn, chestnut, acorn, are as sure. I believe that justice produces justice, and injustice ... injustice.”

Later Hawken speaks of Emerson's insistence, in Nature, that the individual, in searching for a reliable ethical standpoint, for the answer to the question of how one should live one's life, had to turn not to God, not the polis or state, and not to society, but to nature for a useable answer.

At this particular season, during this magnificence of autumnal color and the extravagance of nature's readying for winter, sustainability takes on a special relevance. Last night on the BBC a report dealt with

**the changing composition and taste of the wines of Southern France, which are changing as the climate there gradually warms. The wines of the northern chateau country are now beginning to taste like the wines of the south previously did, and vintners in England are planting new vineyards as their hillsides become newly adapted for an increased yield of grapes.**

**Perhaps the seasons themselves will not change, but the seasons as we have known them in this clime well may, along with the flowers, the trees, the birds, animals and crops we have long grown here. Change as the oceans and our weather are changing.**

**It may be that, even if not in our lifetime, the questions as to what we will choose to sustain will change as our world changes. In order to prepare for such a time, perhaps we would do well to focus on sustaining what ethics and values, what means of living together in peace and harmony we can bring to bear on what faces us now and perhaps will face our children and grandchildren more sharply in the coming times and seasons.**

**HYMN     Seek Not Afar For Beauty**

**# 77**

**CLOSING WORDS**

**from F. Church**

**“Let us here today and in our daily lives all be prepared to love and care about each other, to let our differences strengthen rather than diminish us. Let us give up fear of each other and change it into belief in ourselves and our ability to add healing in this often-injured world.” As we leave this building, let us not leave behind us the faith this building houses and shelters, but take with us the vision of a divinity too encompassing to be limited by any kind of narrowness ,and of a liberal religious spirit too compassionate to**

give up on or turn away from any individual, group, time or season in need of something we can give.

**PARTING CIRCLE**

*“Carry the flame of peace and love until we meet again.”*

**POSTLUDE(s)**

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“And now this leaf lies brightly on the ground.” Wendell Berry

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Attendance last week: 38

Loose Offering: \$82.00