

**WELCOME TO OUR VISITOR'S SUNDAY
AND THIS FRIENDLY CHURCH
October 17, 2010**

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

PRELUDE(s) Heather

OPENING SONG

Spirit of Life # 123

by Carolyn McDade contemporary UU songwriter

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING WORDS

“It Matters What We Believe” # 657

by Sophia Lyons Fahs, UU religious educator

Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness, and the feeling of being especially privileged.

Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are like shadows, clouding children's days with fears of unknown calamities.

Other beliefs are like sunshine, blessing children with the warmth of happiness.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies.

Other beliefs are bonds in a world community, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.

Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction.

Other beliefs are like gateways opening wide vistas for exploration.

Some beliefs weaken a person's selfhood. They blight the growth of resourcefulness.

Other beliefs mature self-confidence and enrich the feeling of personal

worth.

**Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world.
Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing with the upward
thrust of life.**

INTROIT Heather and the Choir

CHALICE LIGHTING

“Strange and Foolish Walls” # 662

[The flaming chalice is the unofficial symbol of the Unitarian Universalist faith, used in almost all of our churches. It's comes from World War II, when members of the Unitarian Service Comm. used it as a secret symbol to identify its members who were helping to smuggle Jews out of Nazi-occupied areas of Europe.]

The years of all of us are short, our lives precarious.

*Our days and nights go hurrying on and there is scarcely time to do the
little that we might.*

Yet we find time for bitterness, for petty treason and evasion.

What can we do to stretch our hearts enough to lose their littleness?

**Here we are – all of us – all upon this planet, bound together in a common
destiny,**

Living our lives between the briefness of the daylight and the dark.

**Kindred in this, each lighted by the same precarious, flickering flame of life,
how does it happen that we are not kindred in all things else?**

How strange and foolish are these walls of separation that divide us.

by UU minister A. Powell Davies

[May we light our Chalice this morning in a prayerful hope that the
walls which divide us from others be thrown down by a gentle courage in
which we help replace them with bonds of caring.]

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 Morning Has Broken # 38

[Our hymn book contains a mixture of new, old, and international hymns and songs from many traditions - some in their original language. The back of the hymnal contains a variety of readings from similar sources for use in services. You might be interested in looking through them and the hymn index for ideas as to some of our worship sources.]

RESPONSIVE READING

“I Call That Mind Free” # 592

by William Ellery Channing, the greatest of our 19th century ministers and the author of “Unitarian Christianity,” the most widely read and most frequently published sermon of his time.

I call that mind free which masters the senses, and which recognizes its own reality and greatness:

*Which passes life, not in asking what it shall eat or drink, but in
hungering, thirsting, and seeking after righteousness.*

I call that mind free which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith.

*Which opens itself to light whencesoever it come; which receives new
truth as an angel from heaven.*

I call that mind free which is not passively framed by outward circumstances, and not the creature of accidental impulse.

*Which discovers everywhere the radiant signatures of the infinite spirit,
and in them finds help to its own spiritual enlargement.*

I call that mind free which protects itself against the usurpations of society, and which does not cower to human opinion.

*Which refuses to be the slave or tool of the many or of the few, and
guards its empire over itself as nobler than the empire of the world.*

I call that mind free which resists the bondage of habit, which does not mechanically copy the past, nor live on its old virtues;

*But which listens for the new and higher monitions of conscience, and
rejoices to pour itself forth in fresh and higher exertions.*

I call that mind free which sets no bounds to its love, which, wherever they are seen, delights in virtue and sympathizes with suffering;

Which recognizes in all human beings the image of God and the rights of God's children, and offers itself up a willing sacrifice to the cause of humankind.

I call that mind free which has cast off all fear but that of wrongdoing, and which no menace or peril can enthrall;

Which is calm in the midst of tumults, and possesses itself, though all else be lost.

CANDLES OF JOY and CONCERN

[Each Sunday we share those joys and concerns which are in our hearts and on our minds with other members of this church family. We light a candle for what is of most import for us.]

OFFERING, OFFERTORY, and Sung Response

[On the 4th Sunday of each month the loose offerings in our collection boxes go to a local charity or cause chosen by the church's Social Justice Comm.]

*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

[Our spoken words are sometimes cast as a prayer, a meditation, or a reflection. In the silence following, each of us uses whichever of these reflect our own approach to addressing what is of ultimate meaning for us.]

Chilly, even indoors in the cold of autumn's approach to winter, we light the wood stoves or turn up the heat in the morning, and do so especially when, dark and dismal in the windswept rain, as it was when the Noreaster came our way this week and leaves and limbs

were blown from the trees and frost from the remnants of the harvest dormant in the garden, while the ruffled waves beneath the scudding clouds were a steely blue, there is a want for warmth within ourselves as well as in the homes in which we live.

So we kindle other kinds of fire to bring other kinds of warmth into the inner hearths of heart and spirit and soul. We reach toward them to warm our hopes and illuminate with the red and yellow, gold and orange flames the flames which share the colors of our autumns here, the subtle colors which blend into the colors of our imaginings and dreams, those brighter colors which reflect the brighter gleam of the things which we would have ourselves and the worlds we touch become.

There can be glowing sparks in us when we share ourselves in community with others.

When we apply ourselves to the things in which we believe.

When we nourish and grow the faith that sustains us.

When we reach out to those in need even though we're not sure what exactly it is we can offer.

When we create what we previously thought was beyond our capacities.

And when we acknowledge our limitations so we can focus more clearly on our strengths.

There is a warmth and light in friendship, companionship, partnering, loving and sharing and giving without stint. May we, as the chill deepens and the winter comes closer, move toward the warmth and light which is available to us all and blesses us first when we discover it within us and then again when we give our thanks for it.

SILENCE

So may it be. Blessed be. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

Heather and the Choir

READING (s)

[Our readings come from a wide variety of sources. They are sometimes

Biblical, sometimes from others of the world's scriptures, from traditional or contemporary literature and poetry, sometimes from a current magazine or newspaper article. It's our belief that "revelation is not sealed" and it is not per se the source but the way we choose to listen to it and apply it as best we can to our own lives that makes it sacred or spiritual.]

The Unitarian Universalist Association's website is a resource not only for people discovering us for the first time but for many of us who were born and brought up in UU churches. For a reading today I've chosen a short question and answer from the website that gives an idea of how it deals with subject matter, but gives no idea at all of the wealth of material that can be found on it. It can be accessed at uua.org, and I invite you to take a look at it.

What is the role of social justice in Unitarian Universalism?

Our strong commitment to social justice is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist history, our seven principles, and in contemporary Unitarian Universalist congregational life.

The first principle that UUA congregations affirm and promote is the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Our congregations strive to welcome all people. The seven principles also call UUA congregations to work for justice, equity and compassion in human relations, the democratic process, the goal of world community, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

Our Unitarian Universalist commitment to social justice fuels our advocacy for comprehensive sexuality education; economic justice; environmental justice; equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender (BGLT) people and their families; gender equality; immigrant rights; and other important causes which Unitarian Universalists and UUA congregations support.

HYMN All the Colors (De Colores) # 305

SERMON "Unitarian Universalists in America" __Mr. Beal

I took the title for these remarks today, "Unitarian Universalists in America" from watching

the short PBS series that played for three evenings this past week, “God in America.” I found the series less than satisfactory, not just because there seemed to be a bias toward evangelical churches and their history, but because it entirely left out whole religious movements of real importance in the development of America’s religious identity. There was no mention of utopian religious communities, among which the Shakers could have been included. Mormons were barely mentioned. Universalism mentioned only once, though at one time it’s estimated we were the sixth largest denomination in this country and vastly influential in the awakening of a liberal religious sensibility in the mainline churches. Both Unitarians and Universalists were leaders in the Social Gospel movement and a wide variety of reform efforts. Transcendentalism, a major influence in American Religion, and largely Unitarian, was not mentioned at all. Darwin and the challenge his work presented to orthodox literalism was stressed, but the fact he was a Unitarian left out. Biblical criticism, pioneered in this country by Unitarians and Universalist scholars was ascribed solely to a radical Presbyterian. The family that took the school prayer case to the Supreme Court, and won, mentioned the mother in the family was a humanist. But the family was not identified as Unitarian and humanism, still with many adherents and still influential, received no other treatment than the one word.

So I was disappointed that what could, and I think should, have been an educated examination of the idea of “God” in America, was inadequate and misleading because of truly serious omissions. In discussing African American religion and African American leadership for example, the

significant support Frederick Douglas received from Unitarians in Boston and Martin Luther King's interest in Unitarianism when he studied at Boston University went past without any comment.

I won't pursue this personal sense of disappointment any further, though I assure you there is a good deal that could be said about Unitarian Universalism's place in American religious history that you'd never suspect from this PBS presentation.

But history, however important it is in understanding from where our churches come, is not as necessary in a service such as today's as a treatment, however brief, of our faith and practice today.

Perhaps the two most salient points are 1) that we are a non-creedal religion, in other words there is no belief or belief system that any individual in our movement has to profess or claim to profess, and 2) in effect a corollary to non-creedalism, is the resulting diversity in belief and opinion that lies at the heart of our religious faith and practice. For we are a democratic church in both governance and theology. More democratic in that respect than any other American church. Each of our churches, like this one, while associated with other Unitarian Universalist churches, is entirely independent and subject to no authority beyond that of its members. There are no bishops, no denominational councils, no presbyteries, nor the vote of churches gathered in General Assembly that has any authority over an individual congregation. Authority comes, therefore, from dialogue, from the free exchange of beliefs and ideas. Each church owns and administers its own property, raises its own funds, hires and fires its own ministers, and establishes its own policies to insure the

good order and integrity of its affairs and its relationships both within and outside its meetinghouse. While deeply held, this does not make ours an easy faith to grasp and hold to or an easy religious institution to create and maintain.

We place the responsibility for faith, morals, ethics, religious belief and practice, intellectual and spiritual behavior, and response to personal and social questions, squarely on the individual while offering as best we can a community of support and care in the struggle.

We do not say, nor I think do we often think even to ourselves, that we are the only correct approach to religion, nor do we have the only correct approach to the practice of faith. Instead we claim only that what we have found in Unitarian Universalism is what is what to us is good, is what nourishes and sustains us. Others will, as they have every right to do, find what satisfies their spirit and meets their needs. If we can help in that discovery we're inspired to do so. If we find our own needs and beliefs changing then we're free to continue the journeys we're on, and believe we will be blessed upon our way by those we have been journeying with, whether we head deeper into, or toward another, or away from religion entirely.

The Universalists were second only to the Quakers in establishing a peace society in this country. We were the first, as a denomination, to ordain women to the ministry. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Josiah Quincy, Ethan Allen: Unitarian and Universalist figures who were essential to the direction in which this country began and subsequently moved. It was Unitarians and

Universalists who spearheaded reform of prisons and institutions for the mentally ill, who began the public schools, who, largely in control of the Maine legislature ended capitol punishment in this state. We were the first denomination to establish an office for Gay and Lesbian rights; have from the beginning of the movement for gender and sexual equality ordained bisexual, lesbian, gay and transsexual ministers, and voted again and again at our General Assemblies in favor of marriage equality.

Why these public stands, this public witness, when the causes we have advocated were not popular and have time and again cost us membership and financial support? For the simple reason that to deny the implications of the teachings of the world's great religious seers and prophets would be to deny the promise and possibility of being fully human and humane. The religions of the world teach us to treat others as we would have them treat us, and they give no lists of races, creeds, colors, ethnicities or any other human conditions which are exceptions to that golden rule. To fail to protect and care for every member of the human family is to fail ourselves, is to fail however we envision whatever is for us God, or Goddess, higher power, the Sacred, the holy. Salvation, or in our understanding "wholeness," is not a matter of what is easy or convenient, but what is inescapable if we would be true to the values we espouse and the principles we embrace. And when we fail, as we do, we know ourselves blessed when we forgive ourselves, and each other, and find the strength to try again.

This but skims the surface. I invite you to acquaint, or re-acquaint yourselves with this church and this approach to faith, and if I can be

helpful in your doing so, whether to recommend things to read or to meet with you individually or in a group, I'll be more than happy to do so. I also invite you to speak to the other ministers of this church, aka as "members."

HYMN Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing # 126

CLOSING WORDS slightly adapted from Robert F. Kaufmann

We have come together to share our deepest concerns, speaking and singing words of inspiration and hope. We have committed ourselves to do what we can to ease the burdens of those who suffer, to stand for decency and compassion. We have pledged to work for a more wholesome environment for us and for all the generations that will follow. But these are just words. The hymns we sing just songs. All our reflections may just be idle thoughts. When we convert them all into loving and responsible action throughout the week, then and only then will this morning become what we want it to have been -- a time of worship.

PARTING CIRCLE

"Carry the flame of peace and love until we meet again."

POSTLUDE(s)

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No one service can answer every question, or meet every need, or reveal the fullness of life that's here for the choosing. We invite you consider what you have heard and felt, and if you would like to journey with us long enough to discover more, then to visit with us again. We're pleased you are here with us today and will be happy to welcome you as often as you feel you'd like to come.

Please join us downstairs for refreshments and conversation.

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Mindful of truth ever exceeding our knowledge
and community ever exceeding our practice,
reverently we covenant together,
beginning with ourselves as we are,
to share the strength of integrity and the heritage of the spirit
in the unending quest for wisdom and love.

Walter Royal Jones, Jr.

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Last week's attendance **36** loose offering **\$ 91.00**