

Sunday, June 20, 2010 (Nottingham)

Music for gathering - Valerie & Gary
Greetings/Announcements - Jill

Welcome and Chalice Lighting – Betsy

My thought this morning is to lift up our esteemed elders—people in our lives who have lived a long time, who know things younger folks don't know, who have a certain wisdom that comes with years of living, and who—like every one of *us*—long to feel that they matter in this world.

But first, it's Fathers' Day. Let's take a moment to appreciate fathers the world over: Our own fathers who gave us the gift of life and who, like the rest of us, did the best they could with what they were given. Let's appreciate their fathers and their fathers before them. While we picture the world they lived in as so different from what we know today, our dreams and longings, our journeys, are probably not so very different from theirs'. Even across generations, what we have in common with one another is so much more than what separates us. Lastly, let's hold in our hearts single mothers who every day have to find it within themselves to be both mother *and* father to their children. Happy Father's Day.

Happy eve of the Summer Solstice, as well! May we mindfully make the most of these two longest days of 2010 and find ways to delight in their 15 hours of daylight!

The chalice is the most recognizable symbol of Unitarian Universalism. As you look at the flame, take a moment to let the movement of the flame, its color, its shape and its energy...quiet your thoughts and open your heart and mind to all that is here, now.

And now please rise as you are able to sing our first hymn,
Music # 295 *Sing Out Praises for the Journey*

Unison Affirmation

Love is the doctrine of this church
The quest for truth is its sacrament

And service is its prayer.
 To dwell together in peace
 To seek knowledge in freedom
 To serve human need
 To the end that all souls
 Shall grow in harmony with the Divine
 Thus do we covenant with each other and God

Candles of Community

I learned from an unlikely source, a friend of my son Max, that his UU church sings both “Spirit of Life” and the hymn “Find the Stillness” every Sunday. I wish we did! We now enter into a spirit of prayer with this beloved UU anthem.

Spirit of Life by Carolyn McDade

Spirit of Life, come unto me
 Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion
 Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
 Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice
 Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
 Spirit of Life, come to me
 Come to me

Readings

“...Everything changes. It seems at times (only for a moment) that your wife, the woman you love, might actually be your first wife in another form. It's a thought not to be pursued...Nothing is the same as it used to be. Except you, of course, you haven't changed...well, slowed down a bit, perhaps. It's more difficult nowadays to deal with

the speed of change, disturbing to suddenly find
 yourself brushing your teeth with what appears
 to be a flashlight. But essentially you are the
 same as ever, constant in your instability.”¹

From *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout: Olive, an elderly, challenging mother, has been invited to visit her estranged son who lives far from home with a new wife:

“And then as the little plane climbed higher and Olive saw spread out below them fields of bright and tender green in this morning sun, farther out the coastline, the ocean shiny and almost flat, tiny white wakes behind a few lobster boats—then Olive felt something she had not expected to feel again: a sudden surging greediness for life. She leaned forward, peering out the window: sweet pale clouds, the sky as blue as your hat, the new green of the fields, the broad expanse of water—seen from up here it all appeared wondrous, amazing. She remembered what hope was, and this was it. That inner churning that moves you forward, plows you through life the way the boats below plowed the shiny water, the way the plane was plowing forward to a place new, and where SHE was needed. She had been asked to be part of her son’s life.”²

In another scene, Olive, a large woman, pointedly addresses Nina, a disturbingly thin teenager:

Olive finished the doughnut, wiped the sugar from her fingers, sat back, and said, “You’re starving.”

The girl didn’t move, only said, “Uh—duh.”

“I’m starving, too,” Olive said. The girl looked over at her. “I am,” Olive said. “Why do you think I eat every doughnut in sight?”

“You’re not starving,” ...[the girl] said with disgust.

“Sure I am. We all are.”³

¹ "Change" by Louis Jenkins, from *Before You Know It: Prose Poems 1970-2005*. © Will o' Wisp Books, 2009. Reprinted with permission.

² Elizabeth Strout, *Olive Kitteridge*. New York: Random House, 2008, 202.

³ *Ibid.*, 95.

Prayer

In the words of Rev. Forrest Church, “God is not God’s name. God is our name for what is greater than all, yet present in each.” Please join me in some moments of prayer and reflection:

Spirit of what is greater than all, yet present in each of us,

We give thanks these longest of summer days for the warm breeze on our skin, for the refreshing promise of our cool lakes and rivers and waves. Let us be mindful to take time, as we can, to embrace the pace and the glide that summer offers.

We hold in our hearts friends and family members going through difficult transitions, dealing with illness and loneliness and loss. We also open our hearts to fathers and mothers, to children of all ages, in all corners of the earth, who suffer with the worries and hardships, the uncertainties of life.

We are grateful for the capacity to find meaning. May we listen and allow wisdom to be heard. May we learn from those who’ve gone before us.

We pray for perspective, that a long view of our common joys and concerns will inform the way we react to one another—whether in our homes, our neighborhoods, our activities out in the world or our politics.

We pray for insight, that we might see more clearly what really matters to us. May our words and actions reflect what matters most deeply to us.

As we let our minds rest in these moments of silence and let our hearts find a sense of direct knowing what is here now...we pray for what is possible for us and for our world. We pray that our yearnings join with the hopes and dreams of one other and that they spill out beyond the containers of our hearts and of this church into the world that so needs them.

Musical Meditation

Sermon Living Into Wisdom

Closing Song #322 Thanks Be For These

Closing Words

Postlude