

Order of Service
Abundant Spring
Sunday, April 5, 2009

Call to Worship and Chalice Lighting

Grateful that we are not told
How we are to behave and what we are to believe
As religious persons,
And thankful that we embrace a tradition of liberal
faith
That invites us to build our own house of meaning,
We gather here this morning
Not so much with like minds
As with like intention toward the sanctity of our
diversity.
And so, embracing our differences,
We worship together once again.

Meditation and Prayer

2

Can we really say a prayer about money?
I've heard of people praying to have more money,
But this isn't that prayer.
This is the prayer about finding our wise relationship
with money,
That puts our resources into the service of our highest
aspirations.

Money is like water. It can be a conduit for commitment,
a currency of love.

Money moving in the direction of our highest commitments
nourishes our world and ourselves.

What you appreciate most appreciates before your eyes.

When you make a difference with what you have, it
expands.

True abundance flows from enough; never from [the need
for] more.

Money carries our intention.

If we use it with integrity, then it carries integrity
forward.

Know the flow—take responsibility for the way your money
moves in the world.

Let your soul inform you money and your money express
your soul.

When we give away as much as we receive,

When gifts flow to us *from* our world

And *through* us back *into* our world,

Then only are we affluent---

Embraced by the interconnected flow of shared love.

Our abundance becomes all that we touch,

All that we serve, all that we cause to grow.

Now in silence...

Amen.

Reading from "The Soul of Money," by Lynne Twist

We each have the choice in any setting to step back and let go of the mind-set of scarcity. Once we let go of scarcity, we discover the surprising truth of sufficiency. ... It is an experience, a context we generate, a declaration, a knowing that there is enough, and that we are enough.

Sufficiency resides inside of each of us, and we can call it forward. It is a consciousness, an attention, an intentional choosing of the way we think about our circumstances. ... It is using money in a way that expresses our integrity; using it in a way that *expresses* value rather than *determines* value....

When we live in the context of sufficiency, we find a natural freedom and integrity. We engage in life from a sense of our own wholeness rather than a desperate longing to be complete. We feel naturally called to share the resources that flow through our lives—our time, our money, our wisdom, our energy, at whatever level those resources flow—to serve our highest commitments. In the context of sufficiency, and the flow of resources to and through and from us, our soul and money interests merge to create a rich, satisfying and meaningful life.

Sermon *Abundant Spring* Rev. Bruce Davis (1617) 15

I would like to talk about the pink cherry trees on my block with their abundant blossoms. I'd like to talk about the daffodils in the dooryard and the abundant perfume of the daphne odora by the back steps.

I'd like to talk about the way the sweet pea seeds that we plant in the spring rise to seven feet of pastel color, and the way the tomato seeds finally fill the freezer with gallons of sauce.

I'd like to use this metaphor of abundance as a way to invite our investment in this fellowship during our Stewardship Campaign this month. For Evergreen. Forever Green. Because what we share now will keep our boughs green into the future, becoming our abundant legacy. Because how we participate now will ensure our continuing vitality for those who will stand upon our shoulders.

But I think there's something more important to talk about this morning. There's something we must remember about *who we are* and *what we represent* as we contemplate our gifts of money and participation to this community in the year ahead.

In 1819 in Baltimore, William Ellery Channing collected the liberal religious wisdom of his time and made a bold statement that formed a new faith community on our American soil. Yes we are Unitarians, he asserted in his revolutionary voice, and it is right and good that we form communities in the name of this liberal faith.

For the two hundred years that followed the landing of the Pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, the dominant Puritan theocracy evolved into the conservative Congregational Standing Order in New England. Deviation from a restrictive Trinitarian ideology was not allowed. Those who strayed from the fundamentalist creeds and dared to build a more meaningful theology were shunned as heretics. Those who dared to advocate for the rights of women and African-American slaves were shunned as rebels.

Channing rightly deserves the designation as father of the Unitarian movement. It is not that he conceived the idea of a more liberal approach to religion, but it was his courage to continue to stand tall and speak his truth in the face of religious conservatism that makes him so essentially our forebear. Channing was the champion of liberal religion. This does not mean politically liberal. Rather it means living with a free mind, unwilling to be controlled by public opinion or old habits or governmental mandates that violate basic human values.

In the words of this great Unitarian saint:

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

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 whence-so-ever it may come;
Which receives new truth as an angel from heaven.

I call that mind free which is not passively framed
By outward circumstances,

And is 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 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 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.

Please understand how important Channing's assertion of liberal faith and religious freedom has been for our nation. In 1825 he started the American Unitarian Association, which is the foundation upon which our own Unitarian Universalist Association stands. Channing gathered to his ministry a community that would cherish and defend the values of free faith against the tyranny and oppression of those who would entrap the American culture in a uniform, conservative, and fundamentalist doctrine.

The pressure of the religious right and its integration with the conservative political movements of the American nation has grown in the two hundred years since Channing's time. Other men and women of courage have stood tall for liberal faith and have continued the important work tha Channing began.

The so-called McCarthy Era of the 1950's saw the tide of conservative thought grow to the proportions of a witch-hunt. Americans who expressed their minds and hearts and spirits freely and in many diverse ways were denounced by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Careers and lives were ruined for writers, teachers, artists, actors, politicians, and just plain good, thoughtful Americans like us. Free thought in the public sphere had to withdrew into hiding during the demagoguery of McCarthy and his henchmen.

Yet, by the end of that decade, leaders in the Unitarian and Universalist movements stepped forward once again. They felt that the time was right to join forces to create a larger and more visible free-faith community to stand against the oppressions of conservative thought. Thus, in 1961, the Unitarian Universalist Association was formed, committed to the free mind, the free heart, and free faith, forming under the banner of seven universal human values:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process

Within our congregations and in society at large.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Please also don't make the mistake that, just because my message this morning is historical, that it all happened a long time ago and far away. Nothing could be further than the truth. This movement of free faith is happening right here and right now, in the face of fundamentalist and restrictive ideologies that would happily see the Unitarian Universalist movement just go away.

By right here and right now, I mean here in Snohomish County in 2009. That this is a religiously conservative area of our state is well known, and we see the impact of this religious conservatism in our media and in our communities on a daily basis. It was in 1955, at the height of the restrictive McCarthy Era that a small group of Everett residents decided to make their own courageous stand in the name of the free mind, the free heart, and the free faith.

Our own Charlotte Beaman was one of those who felt that this conservative county needed a Beacon of liberal religious hope. Together with Edwin and Helen Parker, a group about the size of our Covenant Circles began to meet regularly as the Evergreen Unitarian Fellowship in their own free search for truth and meaning and with the common commitment to live out the core human values of liberal religion. The group began to meet at the YMCA in Everett as it grew in numbers, but their lease was terminated because, as a liberal faith community, they did not adequately adhere to conservative Christian creeds and dogmas. Do you see, that the suppression of our liberal religious message is something we face even now.

Yet a faith community cannot long survive without a home. First the group managed to buy a small church on Baker Street in Everett, and by the end of the 1980's it was able to purchase our current building, which had been a Methodist Church, to accommodate its growing membership.

Why does a liberal faith community grow? Beginning with a small group, how is it we have become a community of near 150 members? We grow because we serve the liberal religious needs of those who come here. But that's not all. We grow because, like those courageous leaders who have stood for free faith in the past, we

want to build a thriving community that shines like a Beacon in our corner of this sometimes frightening world.

Yes, we have grown in numbers over the last several years. Yes the vitality of this community is itself growing, with our Children's Religious Education Programs, our Covenant Circles, our Adult Programs, our Men's and Women's groups, and our thriving potluck discussions. But we must not rest on our laurels. Like those who have come before, each of us needs to do what we can to ensure the continuing life of this free faith.

I'm imagining a scene in the future. Our old building on Fourth Street became too small for all our members by 2020. Two hundred children participate in religious education, and three hundred folks join us for services on Sunday morning. Many visitors come to us on Sunday mornings because the liberal religious message is a refreshing change to the fundamentalist viewpoints that still seem to expand unabated in our county. People who attend Evergreen appreciate the intention to be a community that lives our seven principles. Even those who don't attend Evergreen regularly appreciate that a Beacon of free faith stands tall in this county, a Beacon of hope that persists in even in hard times. We find that we are serving not only our own membership but a wider community that appreciates our leadership, especially in causes of justice in our Snohomish County communities.

Is this vision real? Can we really become that Beacon of free faith, that Beacon of hope in Snohomish County? I hope so. The future of this place stands on our shoulders. The taller we stand in support of the values that we hold dear, the higher will be the reach of our children and our children's children in upholding the faith of the free.

Channing would be proud of what we have done. He would laud the way people share from their core resources to ensure that the voice of freedom spreads wide resonates for decades to come. He would praise our members for their gifts of participation, sharing time, energy, and talent to build the Beacon of free faith that is our Evergreen. But he would ask us this: have we done all we need to do here?

It's time once again to step up. It's time to plant the seed today that will be tomorrow's abundant voice of freedom.

Congregational Conversation

A Beacon of Hope

Rev. Bruce Davis

Every week I mention that we come together for the joy of fellowship and to live out our common purpose. One aspect of why we are all here is to stand tall for our liberal religious values and to build Evergreen as a Beacon of hope in our small corner of this hurting world. This is what our pledge drive is about. We are not primarily a "club" that puts its resources into its own recreation. We invest in our programs, in our children, and in each other in a way that helps our world.

Our Financial Health Jim Lehnus, Evergreen Treasurer

Sharing Our Wealth Marilyn Mallory, Stewardship Chair

My name is Marilyn Mallory and I am this year's Stewardship Chair. We have many people helping with this Stewardship campaign- hosts/hostess, potluck facilitators, visiting stewards. (Could you all stand) These are the people who will contact you about your pledge either at a potluck or they will call to make an appointment. I still remember the first Stewardship potluck that Mike and I went to, we were called Everett Fellowship then it was probably 1985 at Alice and Julian Dewell's home, longstanding members here. I didn't know what to expect but I remember that I had a great time and really appreciated the opportunity to talk and discuss important issues in that smaller intimate setting. We had our first two potlucks for this year on Friday and Saturday and they were great- as expected- great food, good conversation, meeting new people and connecting with others. Just what you would anticipate from Evergreen.

I was talking about our theme of "For Evergreen and Forever Green" at lunch at work and one woman said, "Your church is so different - you do things that make you good citizens like that dinner (she was talking about the Interfaith family shelter dinner when I had talked about peeling a lot of potatoes for mashed potatoes) and promoting and actually practicing green strategies-(which is one of the subjects at

the potlucks)”. Later I thought about what she said and it really hit home for me since I have been working on the Stewardship campaign. I realized that Evergreen has so many layers and meets so many needs.

For my personal needs, I belong to Choir because it gives me a time to stop thinking and just sing- and the sermons and covenant circle give me opportunities to develop my spiritual beliefs and practice. But I also need Evergreen because it does provide a place in this community for all of the ideals we share to be discussed and practiced. And I liked being associated with a place that acts upon its beliefs. And like anything important, there is a cost to keep Evergreen thriving and that is what the Stewardship campaign is all about.

I know that Bruce and others have told us that we support Evergreen. But I’m still not sure that everyone understands that all of us pay for the building, heat, supplies, staff, everything. There is no other financial help. We are all Evergreen’s Stewards and it is our job to educate ourselves about the needs – both financial and time- of our community, to recognize the value of Evergreen and its importance in our life and in the community and then make a commitment. It’s a very personal thing, each family has a different financial situation and we would not dictate what your commitment should be. But I do ask that you take some time to think about what is important to you and it can be helpful to discuss your feelings and beliefs and ask questions in these small groups. Please honor the time of all the Stewards when they ask for your pledge at one of the potlucks or when they call. Our goal is to have a strong financial base so that we can sustain our fellowship (that’s the For Evergreen part) and take steps to sustain our environment (that’s the Forever Green part).

Pledging to Participate Mile Mallory, Committee on Ministry

My name is Mike Mallory and I am a member of the Committee on the Ministry. This year we have initiated a project to identify volunteer interests and gather pledges of participation on this form (hold up form).

Evergreen is a busy place and not just on Sunday morning. Look at the calendar. There seems to be activities every day and they are often double or triple set. These events don’t happen on their own. Everything that happens here requires planning, preparation and leadership. We have professional staff: a minister, DRE, Music director and bookkeeper, but they are not doing all the work that needs to be done around here. Far from it.

Consider the Choir. There are about 25 volunteer members and Steven Greenebaum providing staff support. Steven cannot be the choir himself. He can sign a solo, but he cannot sing harmony. The choir relies upon Steven’s expertise for training and coordination, but all of us share a responsibility for the music.

Similarly, for each hour spent by staff there are at least 25 hours spent by volunteers. And, while the contribution of staff is critical to our success, we are all; each one of us is responsible for the ministry of this congregation.

One of the problems of an organization like ours is that 80% of the work ends up being done by 20% of the members. This can lead to burn-out and stagnation.

Attempting to be mindful of this process, the Committee on the Ministry is hopeful that the Participation Pledges will raise awareness of the need for volunteers, make volunteering easier and match volunteer needs with interests.

Increased participation generates a growing sense of ownership in the unfolding ministry here. Increased participation also leads to the joy of acting out of your dearest values.

You will be given an opportunity to complete this form during the stewardship potlucks. If you are not attending a potluck you can pick up the form downstairs during the coffee time.