



*"I don't belong to an organized religion.
My religious beliefs
are way too disorganized."*

The C-Word

A Worship Service by the

Rev. JEFF BRIERE

*Unitarian Universalist
Church of Chattanooga*

April 1, 2007

HYMN 21, For the Beauty of the Earth

WELCOME

Good morning. Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Rich Dwyer and I serve on the Board of Trustees. Thanks so much for joining us in worship today. We hope you find the service rewarding and that you leave here inspired and uplifted. Please note the emergency exit over here to my right; childcare for the young and the restless is available downstairs in the nursery and the arm chairs here in the Sanctuary are for those who need a little support when standing. After the service please join us for coffee and conversation in the fellowship area behind you.

Today the Rev. Jeff Briere leads the service and his topic is religion and spirituality and how they can get all mixed up. For music, Linda begins our service with a traditional tune that you'll probably recognize.

PRELUDE: Amazing Grace [Trad., Arr Lorie Line]

KINDLING THE CHALICE

Finding words to open a service on spirituality and religion proved difficult, but these lines from *Twelve Moons*, by Mary Oliver seemed to strike an interesting note.

I thought the earth remembered me,
she took me back so tenderly,
arranging her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds.

I slept as never before,
a stone on the riverbed,

nothing between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts,

and they floated light as moths
among the branches of the perfect trees.

All night I heard the small kingdoms breathing around me,
the insects, and the birds who do their work in the darkness.

All night I rose and fell, as if in water,
grappling with a luminous doom.

By morning I had vanished at least a dozen times
into something better.

STORY: Too-Too-Moo & Mother Moo, Too

Narrator. Once in a land far away from here there was a little girl named Moo. And her first name was Too-Too. Too-Too Moo. She lived with her mother in a one-room house in a forest. They were very poor but, like all poor people in fairy tales, they were happy.

Or they would have been happy, if not for a terrible giant who came every day to their door and demanded a bowl of stew.

Each morning, when Too-Too Moo woke up, she fastened her hair in a knot with her long hairpin. Too-Too Moo had long hair. Very long hair. It was sooooo long that she could sit on it. And to keep it out of her way, she rolled it up and stuck a hairpin in it to hold it.

After pinning up her hair, she hurried into the woods to help her mother gather firewood and flowers and herbs to sell at the market.

When that was done, Mother Moo cooked a small pot of rice and she and Too-Too Moo had that for breakfast. She also made a huge pot of very yummy stew. She made it from chicken broth, beans, rice, onions, cabbage, carrots and potatoes.

But not even one spoonful of the stew was for Too-Too Moo and her mother. It was all for the giant. Mother Moo knew, if the giant came and did not find a pot of stew, he would eat Too-Too Moo instead!

After breakfast, Mother Moo left for the market, while Too-Too Moo did the housework. She dusted the furniture, watered the houseplants, weeded the garden, painted the basement, cleaned out the garage, mended her socks, washed all the clothes, made the beds, repaired the sidewalk, answered her e-mail, vacuumed the entire house and loaded the dishwasher. In between, she read the paper and watched Oprah. Then she went outside to play.

But pretty soon, she heard the giant's footsteps.

Giant. Boom! Boom! Boom!

Narrator. And she smelled the giant's stink.

Too-Too. Peeeee-Uuuuuuuuu!

Narrator. Too-Too Moo ran into the house, picked up the pot of stew, placed it outside on the doorstep, and shut and locked the door. Then she held her nose and relaxed in her chair.

The giant stomped up to the house. With one huge finger, he knocked on the door—

Giant. Knock! Knock! Knock! Too-Too Moo! Where are you?

Too-Too. [*Pinched, nasal*] In the house. [*Aside, bored.*] Where I always am.

Giant. And where is Mother Moo?

Too-Too. [*Pinched, nasal*] At the market. [*Aside, bored.*] Where she always is.

Giant. And where is my stew?

Too-Too. [*Pinched, nasal*] In the pot! [*Aside, bored.*] Where it always is.

Narrator. The giant took off the cover, picked up the pot, and swallowed the stew in one big gulp. Then he threw down the pot and stomped back into the forest.

This happened every day.

When Mother Moo returned in the evening, she brought food that she had bought with the money earned at the market. But since they had to feed the giant, there was never enough for themselves.

One day, Mother Moo did not sell as much as usual. When she came home, she had only enough food for the giant. She and Too-Too Moo were hungry.

The next day was the same. And so was the day after that.

Too-Too Moo and Mother Moo were starving.

On the fourth morning, Too-Too Moo got up, fastened her hair with her long hairpin, and helped her mother gather firewood and flowers and herbs. Then Mother Moo cooked the stew for the giant and left for the market.

The savory smell of Mother Moo's stew filled the little house. Too-Too Moo was so hungry, she couldn't stand it.

Too-Too. Just where does that stupid giant get off, thinking that he can come 'round whenever it suits him and eat up all the stew that we have? I've had it up to here with him! No, up to here!! I am hungry and my Mother Moo is too, and we'll eat this stew!!!

Narrator. Too-Too Moo uncovered the pot and ate half the stew and left the other half for Mother Moo. Then she heard the giant's footsteps.

Giant. Boom! Boom! Boom!

Narrator. And she smelled the giant's stink.

Too-Too. Peeeee-Uuuuuuuuu!

Narrator. Too-Too Moo covered the pot, hid it in a closet and shut and locked the door. Then she held her nose and relaxed in her chair. The giant stomped up to the house. With one huge finger, he knocked on the door—

Giant. Knock! Knock! Knock! Too-Too Moo! Where are you?

Too-Too. *[Aside, angry]* Where do ya think I am, ya big bozo? *[Nasal]* In the house.

Giant. And where is Mother Moo?

Too-Too. *[Aside, angry]* On the moon, where I wish you'd go. *[Nasal]* At the market.

Giant. And where is my stew?

Too-Too. *[Flat]* I wouldn't have the faintest idea.

Narrator. This gave the giant pause.

Giant. Too-Too Moo! Where are you?

Too-Too. I already told you where I am. Hello!? Clean out your ears! Go home and leave me alone.

Narrator. With one blow of his fist, the giant knocked down the door. He reached in his long arm and felt all around till he found Too-Too Moo. Then he pulled her from the house, tossed her in his mouth, and swallowed her in one big gulp. Too-Too Moo tumbled into the giant's stomach.

Too-Too. Oh yuck! This place is a mess! Turn on the light!

Narrator. But the giant didn't listen as he turned and stomped back through the forest. Too-Too Moo was scared, but not too scared. She remembered her long hairpin. Quickly she pulled it from her hair. With both hands and all her strength, Too-Too Moo stuck it into the giant.

Giant. Ow!

Too-Too. Pretty sharp, eh?

Narrator. Too-Too Moo stuck him again.

Giant. Ouch!

Too–Too. Get the point?

Narrator. Too–Too Moo stuck the giant again and again. The bellowing giant raced through the woods. Mad with pain, he did not look where he was going. He tripped on a root and cracked his head on a rock and knocked himself out.

But Too–Too Moo was still trapped inside.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Mother Moo was almost home. She had been lucky that day, and had quickly sold all she had carried to market. So she had bought rice and fish and vegetables, and even boiled peanuts as a special treat for Too–Too Moo. But when she reached the house, she saw the door knocked in. She called,

Mother Moo. Too–Too Moo! Where are you?

Narrator. There was no answer. Mother Moo dropped the things she had bought and ran along the trail of the giant’s footsteps, calling,

Mother Moo. Too–Too Moo! Where are you?

Narrator. Still no answer. Then she came to where the giant had fallen. But her daughter was nowhere to be seen, so she called one last time.

Mother Moo. Too–Too Moo! Where in tarnation are you?

Too-Too. [*Muffled*] I’m in the Giant!

Narrator. Mother Moo took hold of the giant’s chin. With both hands and all her strength, she pulled his mouth open. And out climbed—

Mother Moo. Too–Too Moo! As good as new!

From that time on, Too–Too Moo and Mother Moo were happy. The giant learned to find food for himself and never came back to bother them. They always had enough to eat. And they had stew for breakfast, every single day.

CHILDREN’S RECESSONAL

CANDLES OF COMMUNITY

OFFERTORY: Sacred Road [David Lanz]

Anyone here know the American John Chapman, born in 1774, died 1845? He was a frontiersman who earned the nickname “Johnny Appleseed” for his work seeding and pruning apple trees across the Ohio River valley.

Johnny Appleseed once entered a house in Washington County, Ohio, and introduced himself to the occupants. Johnny Appleseed was barefoot and the man of the house asked why he wasn’t wearing shoes. Johnny Appleseed, who had recently stepped on a rattlesnake, held out one of his feet and said, “Sir, this foot is guilty of an offense in that it trod unmercifully upon one of God’s creatures. As a corresponding punishment I am now exposing it to the inclemency of the weather.”

Johnny Appleseed carried his reverence for other forms of life to what we might consider extremes. After exclaiming that he was lucky to be alive, Johnny Appleseed’s host asked him what had become of the snake. “The poor thing!” he replied, his eyes filling with tears. “Hardly had it touched me than I, overcome by a godless passion, cut off its head with my sickle. The poor, poor innocent thing!”

On the other hand, carrying things to extremes can be appropriate at times. Like now, as we collect the morning offering for the support and ministry of this church. As the basket comes your way, I urge you to be extremely generous in your support of this church. As always, the Louis Wilhoit Memorial Food Bank is happy to accept your donations of non-perishable food and household items. The collection basket for that is by the front door.

Eternal Spirit of life and love, we are profoundly thankful for the blessings we experience everyday. Would that we recognize what is truly valuable to us every day and be thankful for it. Linda, please lead us in our hymn of thanksgiving. The words are in your program.

Oh, we give thanks for this precious day,
For those gathered here and those far away,
For this time we share with love and care,
Oh, we give thanks for this precious day.

SERMON: The C-Word

I spend about two hours or more producing this. This is the program for the worship service today. I often wonder if it's worth my time, because no one ever says anything to me about it. I get comments about the service and the sermon and the story, but no one ever says anything about this program.

I am not fishing for compliments about the printed program, it's just the way it is. I'm sure that I'll keep on producing it this way, because one of my guiding principles about worship is that everything should lend itself to the promotion of the theme, even the printed program.

If you read this program closely, you'll see a small notice in the upper right corner about the worship service today and the one next week. The one about today gives you what educators call a "pre-cognitive set," so you'll have some idea of what's going on.

The notice about the following week is designed to pique interest and encourage attendance.

I am happy to report that one among you proved that indeed, my labors with this program are not in vain. After the service last week, a congregant spoke to me about the notice for today, thus proving that he read it. And thought about it. I am pleased to say that the notice had its desired effect, for he is present at this service.

The notice for today that appeared in last week's bulletin is similar to the one in today's bulletin. What got the congregant's attention is the phrase, "the c-word." He didn't know what that was. Anyone here know what the c-word is?

I hope that you will take the high road and not think first of the "obscene c-word." That's not it. So clean up your imagination. As I told the congregant, you'll have to listen to my sermon to find out.

Did you know that the nearest Unitarian Universalist society is about 90 miles away? In just about any direction? Chattanooga is in the middle of a giant X, with Knoxville, Nashville, Atlanta and Birmingham at the four ends of the X. In each of those cities there is at least one Unitarian Universalist church, and three in Knoxville and several in Atlanta. We are isolated here, and I feel the isolation from my colleagues.

In order to stay connected, I participate in an online forum with 592 other Unitarian Universalist ministers. That's about a third of all Unitarian Universalist ministers. From this forum, as many as 30 messages a day come my way on such topics as church life, pastoral care, worship, room mates for General Assembly and other ministerial questions. The conversations are privileged and confidential, and I freely admit to learning an awful lot about being a minister by just reading the messages. I have participated in this forum since 1999.

A few weeks ago, a colleague asked the group how we would respond to the statement, “I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.” Apparently, he was considering his own response to that statement and he wanted our opinions. So over a few days, we answered the question and, what’s more interesting, we went off on tangents stimulated by something in the answers.

Most often, these online discussions prove the stereotype of Unitarian Universalists, that they love to discuss. Anything. Forever. But sometimes, the discussion can clarify issues that cloudy for me. And my colleagues will often say what I would say in much better terms. Those ministers I quote here this morning generously allowed me to quote their response to “I’m spiritual, but nor religious,” and after they had their say, I’ll give you my take on it and *then* we’ll get to “the c-word.”

First, let’s open the dictionary and look up the roots of religion and spiritual. Religion is rooted in the Latin *religare*, meaning to re-bind, to tie up again, or re-connect. The root also gives us other words dealing with connection, like ligament, liable, reliant and obligation.

Also from Latin, spiritual comes from *spiritus*, meaning breath and in another form, *spirdre*, to breathe. Inspiration, expiration and respiration are a few more words, all dealing with breath, that come to us from that same root. Spiritual and inspire, though, seem to have taken the root meaning and, like my colleagues, gone off on a tangent.

I have tried before, without much success, to define spirituality and religion. You would think, given the vast power of our government, that it would have sorted out long ago what is a religion and what is not. Sadly, they don’t always get it right, because using the US Government’s tax-free status as a religious yardstick is not helpful.

According to the Internal Revenue Service, the United Methodist

Church, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Unitarian Universalist Association are religions; the Branch Davidians, People’s Temple and the Apostolic United Brethren, a fundamentalist Mormon sect, are not. Although I have big issues with those last three, and although I disagree strongly with their theologies, I must also disagree with the IRS, for they are religions in my book.

And as for spirituality, I’ll just quote Justice Potter Stewart and say, “I can’t define spirituality, but I know it when I feel it.”

OK, so now here’s my colleague apparently in conversation with someone and they get on to the topic of religion. The person says to my colleague, “I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.” And my colleague wants to know how we would respond. And here are some of the responses I gathered, and I’ll begin with one that was not part of the conversation, but I thought was important to hear:

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is both the head of state and the spiritual leader of Tibet. He said, ...religion is concerned with belief of and claims to salvation—an aspect of which is some form of metaphysical or philosophical reality, including, perhaps, an idea of heaven or hell. Connected with this are dogma, ritual, prayers and so on.

Spirituality is concerned with those qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony, which bring happiness to both self and others.

Kit Ketcham serves the fellowship in Vashon, Washington. When people ask her to define religion and spirituality, she usually says that ...religion is our public expression of our relationships with self, others, and the Divine while spirituality is our private experience of our relationships with self, others, and the Divine.

Nana Kratochvil is retired from the ministry and lives in Muskegon,

Michigan. She writes, ...the difference is that you can be spiritual alone. However, to be religious you must be in community. Therefore, if all you want is to be alone with your spirituality, it's fine to ignore religion. However, if you want to be in a caring community that explores spiritual issues, and that may be able to make a positive difference in the world, you need to find a faith community.

Katy Korb serves the congregation in Naples, Florida. She writes, ...I have a tendency to reply with some irritation that I, on the contrary, am religious but not spiritual. It always amazes me that people have the chutzpah to claim to be spiritual, given our tendencies toward narcissistic materialism. I would as soon publicly boast that I am wise, knowing my own foolishness. That is not to say that I wouldn't rather have the qualities of spirituality and wisdom than any others—just that I haven't achieved them yet.

Mary Ganz serves the church in Arlington, Virginia and used the question as a way of reflecting about worship. She writes, ...we come together in worship to attend to what is highest and best among us and within us, and to use our attention in the service of transformation. Spirituality is the individual expression of the quality of mind and heart and body and spirit that is evoked when we come together in worship.

Choosing to worship together is one of the ways we say to one another, “We are in this together; my transformation depends on your transformation, and on the transformation of our community.” When we make this choice, we are religious as well as spiritual.

Eugene Widrick is minister emeritus at the church in Carlisle, Massachusetts. He writes, ...the question reminds me of the old quote “My mind is my church.” I actually said that to someone once long ago, and she replied, “Too bad the pews are all empty.”

Sydney Wilde is co-minister at the church in Reston, Virginia. She

writes, ...various polls identify a significant percentage of people who call themselves, “spiritual but not religious.” They distrust organized religion and they identify American Christianity with fundamentalists, televangelists, and neoconservatives. Apparently, the word “religion” has fallen out of favor with many Americans, which is why President Bush coined the term “Faith Based Initiatives” instead of “religious” or “church.”

The expression, “spiritual but not religious” may have originated in these polls, but it has been adopted by the Network of Spiritual Progressives as an attempt to be inclusive. It is being used to say, even though these people don't go to church, synagogue, temple or mosque, they are still people of faith who share our values and must be included in the conversation.

Those who are “spiritual but not religious” are seeking a sense of awe, wonder, purpose and meaning, and have been turned off by the narrowness of beliefs and practices that characterize the organized religions they know. They do not know that there is another way to be religious.

Brent Smith serves the church in Grand Rapids, Michigan and he would urge caution about those who claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” He writes, ...when the “spiritual but not religious” knock on our door, they might be seeking the Church of Me, that “faith community and tradition that I can trust because it projects all that I want and nothing that I don't want.”

A liberal faith community demands a transcendence of self that multiplies freedom, generosity and broad-mindedness like loaves and fishes and changes people so that they can proclaim a liberal gospel to heal the world.

Tom Schade is minister at the church in Worcester, Massachusetts. He used to bridle at the distinction, but no longer does. He writes, ...spirituality is how people experience religion in a secularized

culture, when religion has been dethroned, and religious institutions are voluntary.

Western Religious history is aimed at the day when individuals find what Parker called the “permanent,” while the “transient” elements of religion become voluntarily held.

Let me explain what Tom meant with that reference. He refers to a sermon by the Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker, “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity,” from 1841. In the sermon, Parker states that the permanent aspects of Christianity would have appeared in history at some point, regardless of whether Jesus lived or died. That is, the truths of Christianity are so obvious that someone, somewhere, sometime would have stated them. In other words, the permanent aspects of Christianity do not depend on the spiritual leadership of Jesus. The transient aspects, Parker said, are the forms, the prayers, the rituals and the outward trappings of all the different sects. These come and go. My colleague says that those who are spiritual but not religious are looking for those permanent aspects—not only of Christianity—but of all religions.

David Bryce serves the church in Hastings-On-Hudson, New York. He writes, ...when someone says to me, “I am spiritual, but not religious” I take it that they have some desire for, or sense of, connection to something greater than self, but they do not accept the doctrine and dogma, the ritual and rites that they believe have taken the place of genuine spirituality. I take it that they are seeking something that fills their soul, but does not require that they sell their soul.

That is, I hear them say that they are just like me.

I also hear them say that they distrust organized religion, and feel justified in that distrust, but despite that, are seeking a place to be. I hear it as a statement of pain and hurt. Since I believe that people bring their pain and hurt when they come to us, and that we are partly

about easing pain and hurt and partly about exploring pain and hurt and learning from it, I welcome such a statement.

Tim Jensen serves the church in Carlisle, Massachusetts, and like me, went back to the roots of the words, re-connection and breath. He writes, ...religion is defined as that which binds us again to God—or whatever passes for God in your theology—while spirituality refers to that aspect of our experience which can be felt but not seen, which is as ubiquitous as air, and as intimate and essential as breathing itself.

It seems to me that people who claim to be “spiritual, but not religious” are folks who don’t want to feel tied down or held back by the traditional rules, rituals, and discipline of organized religion, but who still wish to be in touch with that higher mystery which gives us life and gives life meaning, but refuses to be rationalized or codified. That’s not so complicated, now, is it?

Religion does indeed have a place in our spiritual lives: we *need* tradition, ritual, discipline and mutual obligation and accountability just as much as divine inspiration in order to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Peter Richardson is retired and lives in Rockland, Maine, who thinks the distinction is not as profound as others do. He writes, ...in American society where the commercial culture isolates the individual, it is not surprising that some people opt out of the relational aspects of their spirituality. I believe that congregational life is one of the most exquisitely difficult of all spiritual disciplines.

Judith Walker-Riggs serves the church in El Paso, Texas. She recalled an incident from some years ago. She writes, ...one day an atheist Anglican priest said to me, “People find the old rituals helpful. Of course, the creeds behind them are nonsense.” And then he added, “You Unitarians have thrown out the baby with the bath water.” And I suddenly blurted out, “Yes, but you’ve kept the bath

water and thrown out the baby!”

Keith Goheen is chaplain at Bebee Medical Center in Lewes, Delaware. He writes, ...many of the people I have met who claim to be “spiritual but not religious” are great consumers of every trendy, road-to-happiness practice available at their nearest spirituality boutique. They are far too likely to mistake the confusions of their inner lives for the presence of the Divine Mystery.

Non-religious spirituality also offers little comfort and nurture in life-transforming setbacks. Sipping fair-trade coffee on your deck in the morning sun may bring feelings of well being, but those feelings evaporate swiftly when your social or financial security are threatened.

The demands of church discipline teach enduring values like trusting in others, sacrifice, and self-restraint. A religious life opens new vistas for the experience of joy and peace at levels more profound than what is available through non-religious spirituality.

Being spiritual without being religious frees people from the awkward necessity of being accountable to others.

Ron Robinson lives in Turley, Oklahoma. He reflected about the nature of church life. He writes, ...over the years, especially at fund-raising time, I hear people say, “The church doesn’t do very much for me,” which I take to mean that God does not run a very good service agency.

I reply the church is not your servant, but offers you the opportunity to be reminded on a regular basis that you are invited to become a servant of creation in God’s name; to become an active agent yourself, rather than a passive complainer.

In our time “the church” has become a code word for God. People can say that they don’t like the church or don’t like organized

religion, while really meaning that they wish to avoid an unpleasant situation with God.

Ron’s phrase, “an unpleasant situation with God” really struck me. Might end up as a sermon title someday. But his words prompted me to reply. And here’s what I wrote in a few moments of passion.

A religious life which provokes an unpleasant situation with God is not an altogether bad thing. If every time you meet God, you have a good ol’ time and nothin’ bad ever happens, if every encounter you have with God is pleasant, I suspect you are meeting with a God of your own design or a divine impersonator. The God I know is more often a pain in the patoot than pleasant.

God is not always convenient. Nor on time. The God I know picks the damndest times to show up. But he shows up when he’s needed, and if you allow yourself to be vulnerable, to be kicked around a little, you can learn something from the encounter and that’s far better than merely being buddies with a good-time God.

I think people who are spiritual, but not religious are afraid of commitment. Seems to me that religion requires a *commitment*. Uh-oh. I just said the “c-word.” Actually, there are a few more “c-words” of religious culture: *Communication*. *Co-operation*. *Connection*. And then there’s the biggest, baddest, most fearsome c-word of them all, *covenant*. Religion may require a covenant.

It’s not only religion. Many people are reluctant to commit themselves to anything. A young woman I know does not make plans because something better might be available at the last moment. In the town where I live, audiences do not make advance reservations for plays or concerts. It’s difficult to recruit congregational leaders because of the time commitment. Most Wall Street investors are not committed to their investments, they want only short-term results.

Why do people fear making a commitment? Oh. I can hear someone

say, “But what if it doesn’t work out?” Instead, I wish I heard someone ask, “How can I make this work out? How can I make this work?”

I see the fear of commitment rooted in a foreshortened sense of time; a sense that things should reach fruition soon, like in the next ten minutes. Instant winner. Instant rebate. Instant messaging. Instant gratification. You can even build an instant camp fire with creosote logs.

According to Forrest Gump, “Life is a box of chocolates.” According to Jeff Briere, “Life is not a cup of instant coffee. You cannot adjust the strength to suit your taste.” Life takes its own sweet time. And anything worthwhile will take a long time. I believe a religious life takes a strong commitment of time, talent and treasure. But stick with it and you’ll be richly rewarded.

In my opinion, someone who is “spiritual, but not religious” is not committed. And making a commitment, learning from it, working within it, making it work for you and for others, understanding in the long run how it makes you the person you want to be—that’s the value of being “religious and spiritual, too.”

HYMN 83, Winds Be Still

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our religious education program is led by Amy Ziegler, and she would welcome your help. Please see her and ask about volunteer opportunities.

On April 6th, this church will celebrate a **Passover Seder**. This is a communal and ritual meal, celebrated in the early evening for all the family to enjoy. A Seder is most often celebrated by the family in their home, but for many years, the members of this church who

boast a Jewish heritage, invited their church family to a wider celebration here in this sanctuary, this religious home. During the evening we read from a service, known as a Haggadah, which celebrates freedom and relief from oppression.

Of course there is a sumptuous meal and the children are set to looking for the hidden *Afikomen*. It’s modeled after a Jewish Seder but is interpreted in Unitarian Universalist fashion. If you want to know more, ask Lee Adler, Daidee Springer or Helen Solomon. Please make reservations with the office so we know how much of everything to prepare. The cost is six dollars for adults and children 4–12 are three dollars. Everyone else is free. Our “kosher cooks” will prepare brisket, chicken, matzoh ball soup, charoset, gefilte fish, and about a dozen different unleavened desserts. We’d like you to bring a dish to pass, *but a kosher dish*, so consult the newsletter or ask Daidee or Lee about keeping kosher.

Thanks so much for supporting **our rummage sale**. We made about \$1000 and more than half of that came from people who were not members. So we made a little money, we did a little outreach and a few more people now understand that Unitarian Universalists don’t wear horns and worship the devil. The hidden benefit, according to the volunteers, is that people came together to work on this, so it built community along the way.

We owe a big debt of thanks to **Leslie Walters** for organizing the chaos. A big thank you to **Joe Lewis and Jeff Johnson** at Marsh Micro Systems for making the sign on short notice. A couple other people who made this rummage sale successful are **Maddie Kertay and Lee Adler**, to whom you ought to offer thanks and huzzahs for their dedication.

Other members of the volunteer corps are **Paul Adler, Ruby Bruns, Claire Ballew, Pat O’Brien, Noel Dillard, Karl Hunt, Inga Johanneson, Tonia Durand, Greg Kertay, Linda Helton, Mike Bascom, Elaine Watkins, Deseri Papendorp, Carolyn Moore,**

James Joyner, Jerry Smith, Nancy Anderson, Kent Slawson and Nicky Ozbek. Please thank them for their efforts when you see them.

To all, we say, “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.”

During the week of April 15th thru the 22nd, we will host families for the **Interfaith Homeless Network**. In order to do that, evening and overnight hosts for the week are still needed. This is not hard work, I know. Aside from helping out and being a part of the solution to homelessness, another benefit is that you don’t have to answer your telephone at home when telemarketers begin calling at 6:30. Please see Marge Pasch at the IHN Volunteer Board after today’s service.

UU 101 meets Tuesday evening at 7. This is a three-session class for new members and anyone who wants to learn more about Unitarian Universalism. Please register with Chris in the office or use the sign-up roster on the minister’s door. See Jeff for more information.

Please send your announcements to the office by Thursday for inclusion in the Sunday service.

BENEDICTION

Two pieces this morning for our benediction. The first is by Lawrence Kushner from *Honey from the Rock*.

Some seem to be born with a nearly completed puzzle.
And so it goes.

Souls going this way and that
Trying to assemble the myriad parts.

But know this. No one has within themselves
All the pieces to their puzzle.

Like before the days when they used to seal
jigsaw puzzles in cellophane. Insuring that
all the pieces were there.

Everyone carries with them at least one and probably
Many pieces to someone else's puzzle.

Sometimes they know it.

Sometimes they don't.

And when you present your piece
Which is worthless to you,

To another, whether you know it or not,
Whether they know it or not,

You are a messenger from the Most High.

The second is by Peggy Tabor Millin, from *Mary’s Way*.

I was on a train on a rainy day. The train was slowing down to pull into a station. For some reason I became intent on watching the raindrops on the window. Two separate drops, pushed by the wind, merged into one for a moment and then divided again—each carrying with it a part of the other. Simply by that momentary touching, neither was what it had been before. And as each one went on to touch other raindrops, it shared not only itself, but what it had gleaned from the other. I saw this metaphor many years ago and it is one of my most vivid memories. I realized then that we never touch people so lightly that we do not leave a trace. Our state of being matters to those around us, so we need to become conscious of what we unintentionally share so that we can share with intention.

POSTLUDE: Swipsey [Joplin & Marshall]