



## *Clear Eyes, Full Hearts. Dispeleramus!*

*A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE*

*Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga*

*September 5, 2011*

### CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Rich Dwyer and I am a member of the congregation. We begin each Sunday at this time with Connections. This is a time of

community and contemplation, where we share the joys and the sorrows going on in our lives. This is not a time for announcements, politics or expressions of personal anger, but a time of deep sharing, where we are reminded that we are all human beings and we're all in this together.

Enjoy the experience of sitting in restorative silence until you are moved to speak. Please allow a breath of silence after each person speaks, so that we may focus our attention on what has been said. If you have something to share, please come forward, tell us your name and what's on your mind.



Let us pause to dwell inward. Spirit of Life, please meet us where we are, in the struggles we choose for ourselves; in the ways we move forward in our lives, and bring our world forward with us. It is right that we pause to remember those who need love and support; who are ill or in pain, either in body or in spirit; who are lonely or have been wronged. Let us open our minds and hearts to a place of quiet, to a silent prayer for the healing of pain, and the soft, gentle coming of love. In this time of silence let our thoughts be with those who have spoken or been spoken about this morning. Amen and Blessed Be.

Please rise now and greet your neighbors at the door. Welcome them into the sanctuary with a hand of warmth and a smile.

Good morning. My name is Jeff Briere and I very happy to welcome you to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. I am the minister of this church and to begin our service let's get our blood flowing with Hymn 361, "Enter, Rejoice and Come In."

*HYMN 361 "Enter, Rejoice and Come In"*

Remain standing a moment, if you will, please. Look around you. These are your friends and neighbors, your fellow congregants. You know many of them, but I'll bet you don't know them all. So in the

next few minutes, find someone you don't know and make a new friend. OK, everyone, Greet your new friends!

GREETINGS

**Eric.** Thanks so much for joining us in worship today. We hope you find the service rewarding and that you leave here inspired and uplifted. And thank you so much for helping to create a reverent atmosphere during *Connections*.

If you have a particular **joy or sorrow** or something you'd like added to the prayer of the people, please clearly write it on an index card and drop it in the basket back there. You may sign it or not, as you wish.

Registration continues today for **small group ministries**. Small groups are a good way to deepen your spirituality, and make stronger connections with other congregants in the church. Please check out the table in the fellowship area after the service.

Next Sunday is our annual **Ingathering & Water Communion** service, which begins our church year. Remember to bring a small bottle of water collected from a place special in your life. A portion of next week's service will be a remembrance of September 11, 2001.

Notice how high the ceiling is in this room? How do you suppose we change the light bulbs? Well, right now, we can't. Uncle Paul and Uncle Ron use a **scaffold set** to reach the light bulbs and fans. But someone borrowed the scaffold and forgot to return a critical part of it. So please return it if you have it. Don't make Uncle Paul come down here.

Please check out **the complete listing of announcements** included with the bulletin. The best way to find out what's happening around here is to sign up for a weekly e-mail. To do that, please see Chris in the office.

For service music this morning, Steve chose music by John Williams that was composed for the first Harry Potter movie. This is "Diagon Alley."

PRELUDE: *Diagon Alley*

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Skip Stevens, would you light the chalice, please?

Henry David Thoreau was a Unitarian. I'll bet you knew that. He published *Walden* in 1854, and it details his experiences over the course of two years in a cabin he built near Walden Pond, amidst woodland owned by his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, about two miles from Concord, Massachusetts.

Thoreau did not intend to live as a hermit, for he received visitors regularly, and returned their visits. Rather, he hoped to isolate himself from society to gain a more objective understanding of it. Simple living and self-sufficiency were his other goals, and the whole project was inspired by transcendentalist philosophy, a central theme of the American Romantic Period.

To kindle our chalice this morning, I have a passage from *Walden*.

**Minister.** There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the brain or the hands.

**Skip.** Sometimes, in a summer morning, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amid the pines and hickories and sumacs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around, until, by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveler's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time.

**Minister.** I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance.

*STORY: The Cure*

**Minister.** Ever had a friend who was sick or injured? Maybe laid up in bed? How did you feel about your friend? What did you want to do for your friend? I have a story about that.

Once upon a time there was a young girl named Maggie, who found out she had a very terrible disease and probably would never be well again.

She was very, very sad, and although she had many friends, all of them were afraid to visit her because they were afraid of catching her disease.

So Maggie stayed in her bed all by herself and was very lonely.

One day she heard a knock on her door and in walked three people. One was a doctor, one was a minister, and one was a magician. Maggie was very glad to see them for no one else had been brave enough to visit her.

“Hello, Maggie,” they said as they sat down around her bed.

“We came to tell you something,” the said. “Each one of us is going to try to find a cure for your disease.”

“Yes,” said the doctor, “I’m going to go into my laboratory and do experiments until I discover a medicine that will cure your disease.”

“And I,” said the minister, “am going to pray every day that you will be healed of this terrible disease.”

“And I,” said the magician, “am going to look through my books of magic until I discover a potion or spell that will rid you of your disease.”

Maggie smiled and was happy because she saw how much they cared for her.

“We’re sorry that we can’t stay long to visit,” they said. “But we must rush off and begin our search for a cure. We’ll return in three days and surely by then one of us will have found a way to cure your disease.”

And so her friends went away in search of a cure, and once again Maggie was very lonely.

For three days Maggie’s new friends did everything they could to find a cure for the disease. The doctor worked hard in the laboratory but couldn’t discover any medicine that could help Maggie. The minister prayed every day and every night that Maggie would be healed of her disease, but she was still sick. The magician looked through all the magic books, but there were no spells or potions that could cure Maggie’s disease. All three of Maggie’s friends were very sad for they felt that they had failed.

After three days, the doctor, the minister, and the magician returned to Maggie’s house and told her the bad news. “We’re sorry,” they said, “but we couldn’t find a cure. We did our best.”

“Don’t be sad,” said Maggie. “Before I was sick I had many friends, but now they’re all afraid to visit me. I am sick, and that is pretty bad, but it’s nothing compared to being lonely. I think loneliness is the worse disease of all.

“Right now the medicine I need most is your friendship. The prayer I need most is for you to simply be with me. And the magic I need most is your love.”

And so the doctor, the minister, and the magician gathered around Maggie and stayed a long time with her. In the silence that followed, it is said that they found the cure.

Now what was this story all about? What can we learn from this story? Visit your friends when they are healthy and when they are ill. Just be there. That's the most important thing.

Thanks for listening to my story. I hope you enjoyed it. We're singing a new song now, as you leave for your classes. We'd like you to sing it one time with us, sing it to each other and really listen to the words. And then you can leave while we sing it once more.

*CHILDREN'S RECESSONAL*

*OFFERTORY: Family Portrait*

Friendship is a delicate matter. Here's how three people thought about it. During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln once referred to the Southerners as errant human beings rather than as foes to be exterminated. An elderly lady, a fiery patriot, rebuked him for speaking kindly of his enemies when he ought to be thinking of destroying them. "Madam," said Lincoln, "do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

Marie Joseph Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette, was great friends with Thomas Jefferson. Upon Lafayette's last visit to the United States, he called on Jefferson at Monticello. The news of the visit drew a great crowd, who watched as the old and feeble former President and the lame French hero, broken from years in prison, were to meet. Jefferson walked down the steps of his house as Lafayette descended from his carriage. At first they walked toward each other, then broke into a run, falling into each other's arms. Among the four hundred witnesses, there was not a sound nor a dry eye as the two men slowly walked into Monticello, their arms around

each other.

Cimon was an Athenian admiral and statesman. He died about 600 years before the birth of Jesus.

A prince who had formerly supported Cimon's enemies abandoned them and came to Athens, seeking to place himself under Cimon's protection. To ensure his welcome he brought two baskets, one filled with gold pieces and the other with silver, and placed them before Cimon. Cimon looked at them and smiled. "Would you prefer to have me as your mercenary or as your friend?" he asked.

"As my friend," replied the man.

"Go," said Cimon, "and take these things away with you. For if I am your friend, your money will be mine whenever I have need of it."

We'll receive the morning offering now for the support and ministry of this church, and we hope our friendship stays strong. Please be generous when the plate comes your way. If you have a pledge payment, please mark it as such. As always, the Wood-Wilhoit Memorial Food Bank is happy to accept your donations of non-perishable food and household items for the Community Kitchen. The collection basket for that is by the front door. If you wish to light a personal candle of joy or sorrow, you may step up here and Mary Hunter will assist you.



Eternal Spirit of life and love, we are profoundly thankful for the blessings we experience today. Would that we recognize our blessings every day and remember to be thankful for them.

Jesse & Christina, please lead us in our Hymn of Thanksgiving.

*HYMN OF THANKSGIVING*

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

*ORISON*

*Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.*

Carolyn Moore was president of this church from 1989 to 1990. When she learned she had cancer, she moved to Texas several months ago to be with her daughter. The cancer she had grew quickly and overwhelmed her and she died on Tuesday. I have no more information right now.

Jennie Schrock was mother to Georgia Wooten and grandmother to Dez Papendorp. She was 94 and suffered from dementia for the last few years. She died Monday.

Since this is the prayer of the people, in these next few moments, please speak the name of someone or something that needs our prayers and good wishes.

Please join me in the Orison.

Thou, which are everywhere,  
Many are your names.  
May we always feel your presence,  
May love and wisdom guide us,  
In our deeds as well as in our dreams.  
May we have what sustains our body and soul;  
Lead us first to forgive the mistakes of others  
Even as we hope our own mistakes will soon be forgiven.  
May we resist the temptation of the quick and easy,  
And be delivered from that which demeans and destroys life.  
May we live purposefully and joyfully

in every moment, in every encounter,  
now, and in the time to come.

During this time of silence let us hold close to our hearts those who strive everyday to make the world a better place, but let us never forget those who suffer the fallout of war.

*Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.*

*RESPONSE*

When our heart is in a holy place  
When our heart is in a holy place  
We are blessed with love and amazing grace  
When our heart is in a holy place

*HERE*

Here may no one be altogether a stranger,  
no honesty of thought ignored,  
no depth of feeling dismissed,  
no life belittled, and no life shut out.

Here may clarity of mind and heart  
be humbly treasured,  
brought to bear toward word and person.

Here may fellowship be treasured most of all  
and paths to sustain and renew it  
be sought and found.

Here may growth of spirit be our purpose;  
such understanding as shall lead us  
to make the world a better place.

*SERMON: Clear Eyes, Full Hearts. Dispelaramus!*

On July 15, two things came to an end. Anyone know what they were? One was that the last episode of *Friday Night Lights*. *Friday Night Lights* will now only be seen in syndication or reruns. I'll tell you about the other thing that ended in a moment. Just want to let the suspense build.

I got to thinking about how much *Friday Night Lights* meant to me, but mostly, I thought about endings, and how we handle them as human beings. I was quite attached to *Friday Night Lights*. I thought it was one of the best things on television with accurate portrayals, good acting, important stories and positive messages.

*Friday Night Lights* was first a novel about Texas high school football, written by H.G. Bissinger, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. He spent all of 1988 in Odessa, a declining oil town in west Texas. In Odessa, the Permian High School Panthers compiled the best record in state history, and the self-image, the well-being of the town rose and fell with the fortunes of the Panthers. Life in Odessa was all about the Permian Panthers.

In 2004, a movie based on the book was released. And in the grand tradition of American literature and media, in 2007, a TV series debuted with the same name, same characters and the same theme. It's the TV series that ended in July. I didn't read the book and I didn't see the movie, but I saw every episode of the TV series.

*Friday Night Lights* was an excellent show: It was continually hailed as one of the Top 10 shows of the year by critics and received a Peabody Award, three awards from the American Film Institute, an Emmy Awards, an ACE Eddie Award, an NAACP Image Award, a Television Critics Association Award, and multiple Writers Guild of America nominations.

The show addressed many issues, such as teen age drinking and sex,

dementia, abortion, the out-of-proportion influence of high school sports, the politics of public education, residual racism and responsible parenting. One thing the show highlighted is that marriage is teamwork, and that really caught my attention.

It was not good TV, as American commercial television goes. The downfall of the show was that it tried to combine sports drama with human drama and alienated fans of both genres. It never found the right audience or developed an audience large enough to attract sponsors. It was a superb show; it was poor commercial television.

To give you a glimpse into the series, I have a couple clips to show you. The first one is from the opening episode, five years ago. The star of the football team has been injured in the opening game of the season and is paralyzed. This montage features all the characters who would inhabit the show: the coach, his wife and daughter, the quarterback, his team mates, the team booster, cheerleaders, girlfriends and parents. They represent everyone in the town. Notice the faces and expressions.

What you hear is the coach telling his team that their quarterback has been paralyzed. He says that everyone will fall and at that time we will be tested.

That was the ending montage from the first episode in the series. Something that has been trivialized is the motto of the football coach, first heard at the beginning of that first show. As they are about to take the field, the coach says, "Clear eyes. Full hearts. Can't Lose" "Clear eyes, full hearts, can't lose!" is a catchphrase that has been borrowed, stolen and ripped off by dozens of bloggers, composers and wanna-be people who find in it something not intended by its originator.

Here's the first time we hear it.

"Clear eyes. Full hearts." is a paraphrase of a line in the movie

spoken by Billy Bob Thornton. Now that last part, “Can’t lose!” came about because of an ad-lib by an actor. Do you know how most movies and TV shows are created? A writer writes the script; it goes through numerous revisions; it’s given to the cast and they are told how to move and speak by the director. A scene is composed of tiny segments lasting maybe 20–30 seconds each, each one of which may be re-shot two or three dozen times until the director is satisfied. And then it’s all edited together later in a dark room by technicians. What you see may be the result of twenty takes over three days.

The cast of *Friday Night Lights* was allowed an unusual amount of latitude in blocking their own scenes, changing their lines and in the influence they had in the writing process. Not only that, but scenes were shot in one long take by three cameras, so there was no start-and-stop to the filming, which gave every scene an organic feeling. More often than not, the first take was the one that was printed. When the actor added “Can’t lose,” they kept it in and it then became a motto repeated by everyone.

Our eyes should always be clear. To have cloudy vision, to be unable to see where we’re going will surely wreak havoc in our lives. I’m speaking metaphorically, of course. Even if we are blind, we can still know where we’re going. We should know exactly what we are doing. When we act impulsively or react blindly, we suffer consequences or we are saved by dumb luck. We should know intimately our intentions, our methods, our limits and our goals. We should have clear eyes.

Our hearts should always be full. To be empty-hearted is an awful character trait, don’t you think? The only people I know who are truly empty-hearted are Ebenezer Scrooge and the former vice-president. By the end of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge redeems himself—he creates a grand Christmas for Tiny Tim. As far as I know Dick Cheney has more work to do. Of course our hearts should always be full of love, that is what gives us life.

Saying “Clear eyes. Full hearts. Can’t Lose” often enough and loud enough makes it easy to believe that you can’t lose. But of course, you *can* lose. Your team could be out of shape, the other guys could be better, the referees might be blind—there are a dozen reasons why you may not win.

For some people, “Clear eyes, full hearts, can’t lose” is a new way to say “It doesn’t matter if you win or lose; what matters is how you play the game.” But I think it goes beyond playing the game on the field. I think the catchphrase points to how you play the game of life. The way I hear it is that if you have clear eyes and full heart, you can’t be a *loser*.

I once heard someone say, “The purpose of life is living life on purpose; the meaning of life is the meaning you find in it.” It seems to me that having clear eyes allows you to see your purpose in life and having a full heart allows you to know—deep-down know, in your heart—the meaning of your life.

The second thing that ended on July 15 is the film franchise built around Harry Potter, the wizard whose life from 11 to 17 is told in seven books by J.K. Rowling. Each book chronicles one year in Harry’s life; the first book appeared in 1997 and a movie based on each book followed within a couple years. The last book was published in 2007, but it was made into a two-part movie. The second part of that final movie is what premiered in July. Now there will be no more new Harry Potter movies; you’ll have to see them on TV or DVD.

Anyone here not read a Harry Potter book or not seen a Harry Potter movie? I read the first two Harry Potter books and I saw the first movie. Although I didn’t get into Harry Potter as much as others did, I know that the books and movies were very important to young people between 10 and 20.

For the benefit of those who have no idea about Harry Potter, this

preview of the fifth movie in the series will give you a good idea of what it's all about.

Harry Potter had exactly what every youngster needs: A little excitement, a mystery, violence, a little love, fun and games. I recognize the enormous impact Harry Potter had on young people and adults, but because I was not as into the series as others, I want to quote Stephen King on the books. This is some of what he wrote when the last book was published. I took it down to about 600 words. He actually wrote nearly 3000 words in this article from *Entertainment Weekly* in 2007.

“J. K. Rowling set out a sumptuous seven-course meal, carefully prepared, beautifully cooked, and lovingly served out. The kids and adults who fell in love with the series savored every mouthful, from the appetizer to the dessert. But very few mainstream writers stopped to consider what Ms. Rowling has wrought, where it came from, or what it may mean for the future. So how did this Ministry of Magic come about?

“Rowling has been far more successful, critically as well as financially, because the Potter books grew as they went along. That, I think, is their great secret. Rowling's kids grew up...and the audience grew up with them.

“This wouldn't have mattered so much if she were a lousy writer, but she's not—she is an incredibly gifted novelist. While some have mentioned that Rowling's ambition kept pace with the skyrocketing popularity of her books, they overlooked the fact that her talent also grew. This talent scout says Rowling was more than adequate when she started, but by the time she penned the final line of *Deathly Hallows*, she had become one of the finer stylists in her native country.

“And, of course, there was the magic. It's what kids want more than anything; it's what they crave. That goes back to the Brothers

Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Alice, chasing after the rabbit. Kids are always looking for the Ministry of Magic, and they usually find it.

“It was children whom Ms. Rowling captivated first, demonstrating with the irrefutable logic of 10 bazillion books sold, that kids are still perfectly willing to put aside their iPods and Game Boys and pick up a book—if the magic is there.

*Still quoting Stephen King here.*

“Unlike the authors of other children's literature, Rowling brought adults into the reading circle, making it much larger. This is hardly a unique phenomenon, although it seems to be one associated mainly with British authors. *Alice in Wonderland* began as a story told to a 10-year-old. It is now taught in college lit courses. *Watership Down* began as a story told to amuse the author's preteen daughters on a long car drive. As a book, though, it was marketed as an 'adult fantasy' and became an international best-seller.

“Maybe it's the British prose. It's hard to resist the hypnotism of those calm and sensible voices, especially when they turn to make-believe. Rowling was always part of that straightforward storytelling tradition. She never loses sight of her main theme—the power of love to turn bewildered, often frightened, children into decent and responsible adults—but her writing is all about story.

“Her characters are lively and well-drawn, her pace is impeccable, and although there are occasional continuity drops, the story hangs together almost perfectly through more than 4,000 pages. Mostly Rowling is just having fun, knocking herself out, and when a good writer is having fun, the audience is almost always having fun too. You can take that to the bank.

“As The Who said, *The kids are alright*. Just how long they stay that way sort of depends on writers like J.K. Rowling, who know how to

tell a good story and do it without talking down or resorting to a lot of high-flown gibberish.

“It’s good make-believe I’m talking about. Known in more formal circles as the Ministry of Magic. J.K. Rowling has set the bar high and God bless her for it.”

*The words of Stephen King.*

My own opinion of Harry Potter is that anything that makes it easier for a youngster to face the challenges of becoming an adult is worthwhile. And that’s what I saw the books and the movies do. I only wish she had written her books fifty years ago, when I would have devoured them. But then, such magical movies as we have seen could not have been made in 1960.

I want to correct an error I made in the title of my sermon. The title I wrote is, “Clear eyes. Full Hearts. *Dispelaramus*.” You know the origin of “Clear eyes. Full hearts.” I mis-remembered a word from Harry Potter and came up with *Dispelaramus*. It should have been *Expeliarmus*. *Expeliarmus* is a spell cast to disarm another wizard, typically by causing the victim’s wand to fly out of reach. You gotta be careful when saying these words to cast a spell. Saying the wrong word might make your own wand disappear.

I was sad to see *Harry Potter* and *Friday Night Lights* come to an end. One had become part of my life and the other a part of the lives of millions. So I began to think about endings, and how we often want things to continue, even when they can’t. We want our love affairs to continue, we want our jobs to continue, we want our automobiles, our computers and our cell phones to continue. But they all eventually stop. We know that. And yet, what angst we feel when something ends.

I want to paraphrase something I mentioned a few minutes ago. It doesn’t matter so much what we lose or that we lose; it matters more

what we learned from having it, and how we apply that knowledge and experience. Of course it was wonderful having what we had. We loved it, it was part of us. But it matters more how we grow from our loss than what we were before it.

Every man-made thing ends, every football game, every book, every movie, every TV show, every adolescence, every season, everything ends. Our lives end. We want our lives to continue, but we know it will all come to an end. And when we have clear eyes and full hearts, we will receive the end’s blessings as much as the beginning.

In his speech to his football team, Coach Taylor was somewhat soft-spoken in the clip we saw earlier, so I’d like to repeat what he said.

“Give all of us gathered here the strength  
to remember that life is so very fragile.  
We are all vulnerable.  
And we will all, at some point in our lives, fall.  
We will all fall.

We must carry this in our hearts:  
That what we have is special.  
That it can be taken from us;  
and that when it is taken from us we will be tested.  
We will be tested to our very souls. We will all be tested.  
It is these times, it is this pain  
that allows us to look inside ourselves.”

Coach Taylor didn’t say this, he didn’t carry his thoughts to the end, but when we look inside ourselves, we find the source of our strength to endure our loss. And if we are lacking, we have this community; we have this congregation.

Please join me now in singing Hymn 352, “Find A Stillness.”

*HYMN 352, Find A Stillness*

*EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE*

Skip Stevens, please extinguish our chalice.

We extinguish this flame,  
but not the light of its truth,  
the warmth of this community,  
nor the fire of our commitment.  
These we carry in our hearts  
and share with all the world.

*BENEDICTION*

For a benediction, I offer you these words of Julia Cameron, who accepts her loss as a gateway to gain.

The universe gives to me by what it takes away. My loss is a gain which I am as yet unable to see. As I let go of the good to which I cling, other good moves toward me. As I surrender my short-sighted agenda, events and people better suited to my long-term happiness enter my life.

In the face of loss, I feel my feelings but I do not draw conclusions based on false evidence appearing real. I remind myself that life is evolutionary, that situations have a way of working toward my good if I will stand aside in faith and allow the hand of the universe to set things right. I bless the grace active in my life which carries all things toward the good.

*POSTLUDE: Hogwarts Forever!*

Thank you very much for your participation in our service this morning. Parents, please rejoin your children now and we'll enjoy

a time of fellowship with the best fair-trade coffee in southeastern Tennessee.