

CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. I am Matt Hoyt. At this time we begin with Connections. This a time where we share the triumphs and hardships in our lives. Where we can reflect on what is happening about us. This is not a time for announcements, political statements, or expressions of anger. We share our happiness and thereby multiply our joy; and we share our pain, thereby easing the burden we carry.

If you have something to share, please do so. Come forward; tell us your name; and what is on your mind. After each person has spoken, give us a moment to contemplate what they said. If what you share is too personal to share with the congregation, please say so and it won't be mentioned in the worship service.



Spirit we share, let us rejoice in the successes mentioned here. Bring those with pain or suffering the clarity and peace to see those trials through and let our sympathy help them. Let love surround us. Let us contemplate what has been shared and offer hope for any events too painful to be shared.

Amen, let it be so, truly.

Rejoin the world; stand now and greet your friends at the door. Share your love.

Good morning and welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Jeff Briere and I am the minister of this church. Let's begin with a round, Number 396. After the trio reminds us of the melody, we'll sing it altogether once, then we'll divide as we usually do into three sections—by the windows, in the middle and over here. Watch your section leaders and we'll sing it as a round three times.

HYMN 396: I Know this Rose Will Open

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.

A complete listing of announcements is 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.

PRELUDE: One Voice

I don't normally spend any time introducing the Prelude, but today I want to say something about this song. "One Voice," contrary to its title, is actually about more than one voice. It's about two voices, three voices, all voices. This song shows us why one note is nice, but two are better, three are great and all together is excellent. This song reminds us that we are stronger and better people when we work together to accomplish our hopes and dreams. So that's what this song is about. And as we begin our stewardship campaign, I hope that is what this church is about.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

The words for our chalice lighting today are believed to have been uttered by John Wesley, an English cleric and theologian. John Wesley along with his brother, Charles, began the Methodist movement in the Church of England in the 18th century. Methodism became a highly successful evangelical movement in the United Kingdom and later, the United States. Mary Hunter, would you light our chalice, please? The words for our chalice are on the cover of the bulletin. Mind the last line, because it's 300-year-old English and the word order is not what you'd expect.

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

STORY: Pennies

What is the smallest coin in US money? That's right—it's the penny. This is the obverse side—what we call heads—with the image of Abraham Lincoln.

In 2009, four different reverse sides—tails—were struck in honor of Lincoln's 200th birthday.

This is what it looks like since 2010.

I don't know about other languages, but in the English language, there are several sayings about pennies. Anyone ever heard,

A penny for your thoughts.
A penny saved is a penny earned.
In for a penny, in for a pound.
Penny wise and pound foolish.
Pinching pennies.
It cost me a pretty penny.
Don't have two pennies to rub together.
That's my 2 cents.
“Pennies from Heaven.”
Penny-ante.
Worth every penny.
Every penny counts.

What's a penny worth? Will it buy a pair of shoes? Will it buy a PlayStation? A hot dog? How about a ticket to Riverbend?

A penny is not worth much if it won't buy anything. So we might just as well forget about pennies, right? Well, we can't and the reason is that people like them and they are needed. Every penny is needed.

What's a penny worth? A penny won't buy much these days. When I was a boy, about 10, I could buy a piece of

bubble gum or a piece of candy with a penny. With a penny, I could buy a gum ball from a machine. I'd put in my penny, turn the handle, and down the chute would roll a little green ball of chewing gum. Do they still have gum ball machines? Anyone seen one lately?

So why do we still have pennies? Sometimes, if the price of metal is high, it costs more than a penny to make a penny. Why don't we just stop making pennies? The answer is that people like them and they are needed.

Every second—every second—the US Mint produces 1040 pennies. That's 62,400 pennies every minute or about 30 million every day.

We don't know for sure, but the Mint believes there are more than 140 billion pennies in circulation today. Most of them are in jars on top of dressers, under car mats, behind couch cushions or in piggy banks.

140 billion. That's a lot of pennies. 140 billion pennies would cover a football field about 110 feet deep. If you stacked up 140 billion pennies how high would the stack be? About 197 miles high. If you laid the stack on its side, it would go all the way to Atlanta and back again.

But what's a penny worth? If you saw a penny on the ground, would you stop what you're doing, bend over and pick it up? How about a nickel? A dime? A quarter?

Would you think a penny is a good gift to give someone? How about a gift to the church? If all you had was a nickel, would a penny be a good gift?

A penny is still worth something. You'll never have a dollar if you have only 99 pennies.

A penny is still a gift, no matter who receives it, a friend, the church, whatever. A penny reminds me that every little bit of you is important, every hair on your head, every finger of your hand, even the nail on your little finger. Every little bit of everybody is important.

So don't ever downplay your talents or gifts. It's your gift to give.

Sometimes you may think that you don't have much to offer. As you look at others who are bigger and have a lot of talent or a lot of money, you may feel small or unimportant. You may feel like we don't have much to give. But you do. You have your gift to give and it will be well-received.

The important thing is that you give the best you have to give. When you sing, sing your best. When you help out around the church by straightening up chairs, do your best. When you participate in a religious education class, give the best that you can give. And when you give an offering, give the best that you have to give.

And when you give our very best, you can be happy with what you give, even though you may think your gift is small.

Thank you for listening to this story about pennies and gifts. You can go to your classes now.

CHILDREN'S RECESSONAL

We hold you in our love
as you go, as you go
May your heart

be at peace as you go.

To nurture the spark
of your precious life
We hold you in our love
as you go.

OFFERTORY: Simple Gifts

Many years ago, there was a man who saved all of his money. He was a real miser with a capital M. And he didn't trust banks or credit unions. He kept all his money at home in a shoe box. Now a shoe box won't hold much money, so every year, he'd go to the bank and change all his small bills into a couple thousands. This was back in 1954, when large bills were still in circulation. Today, the largest bill in circulation is a hundred.

He loved his money more than just about anything—even his wife. And just before he died, he said to his wife, "Now when I die, I want you to take all my money and place it in the casket with me. I wanna take it with me." So his wife promised him with all her heart that when he died, she would put all the money in the casket with him.

Well, wouldn't ya know it, one day he died. He was stretched out in the casket, the wife was sitting there in black next to her closest friend. When they finished the ceremony, just before the undertakers closed the casket, the wife said "Wait just a minute!"

She had the shoe box with her, and she placed it in the casket. Then the undertakers locked the casket down and rolled it away. Her friend said, "Don't tell me that was the shoe box with all his money."

"Yes," the wife said, "I promised. I'm a good person and I can't lie. I promised him that I was going to put that money in that casket with him. And I did. I took the money to the bank, opened an account and wrote him a check."

We'll collect the morning offering now for the support and ministry of the this church. And please know that we can handle either a check or cash. 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.

Christina—and Jesse—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.

This morning, I pray for the people of Libya and others in the near east who are flirting with democracy. I wish to reassure them, and I hope they will soon enjoy the freedoms of a more progressive society. Many people around the world who cannot be there in person are with you in spirit. But toppling an entrenched megalomaniacal leader and his family will not be easy. I pray that no more people are hurt, and that order is soon restored so that families can be together and rebuild their lives and countries.

Thou, which are everywhere,
Many are your names.
May we always feel your presence,
May your 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 are suffering and rejoice with those who are jubilant, 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

SCENE: Coyote's Doughnuts and Dollars

MINISTER. You may recall Coyote. Also known as the Trickster and sometimes as Kokopelli, Coyote is, as she tells it, a minor North American deity whose wisdom is balanced by her mischief. Her gender is, shall we say, fluid. She may appear as a he. In African cultures he is Anansi the spider and he is related to Mercury, Hermes, Pippi Longstocking and Bugs Bunny.

Well, she has visited me from time-to-time, mostly when I have a problem or don't know how to preach about what I got to preach about. We have enjoyed each other's company for more than a year now. We often meet at the Krispy Kreme on Brainerd Road, as we both enjoy doughnuts.

Lately, I have been staying away from Krispy Kreme. Or trying to. I am part of the new American Puritanism that puts longevity before pleasure. However, I needed to talk with Coyote, because I only had ten days to create a

service for the beginning of our stewardship campaign and I was at a loss for a good sermon. So I steeled myself and drove to the shop on Brainerd Road. I sat down, ordered a donut, and Coyote materialized beside me.

COYOTE. I'll start with a dozen; six raspberry-filled, four chocolate and a couple of those lemon-frosted ones.

MINISTER. Shall I call an ambulance first? *[Beat.]* I need to talk to you, Coyote. The people at my church are concerned about money. I need to come up with a good rationale for mentioning the unmentionable in church.

COYOTE. Don't ask me! You buy the donuts. I don't have pockets.

MINISTER. I don't know much about money either. But I'm talking about money as a spiritual issue, an emotional issue. You, being the minor deity that you are, being spiritual and all that woo-woo stuff, I thought you might have some ideas.

COYOTE. We can wonder together as long as your money holds out! I love this raspberry filling. Order a couple dozen more. If I don't eat them now, I'll take them home.

MINISTER. I suppose this is tax deductible. I can see the IRS reading it: *Three dozen donuts; sermon preparation.*

COYOTE. So what is this tax stuff? I can never find anyone to play this time of the year. They're all in shock about their taxes. It's as though the whole country has been to a funeral.

MINISTER. Taxes are simple. Taxes are a socialist scheme to provide employment for accountants. Sort of like the Pentagon, which produces jet fighters for boys who are bored with street racing.

COYOTE. You're cynical coyote nature is coming right along! Keep working on it, you have great spiritual potential!

MINISTER. Well, you know, one must have a conversion experience to become a mystic, whether Zen, Christian, or coyote. One of the pleasures of being a neophyte mystic is to play games with the standard cultural answers. Stand them on their heads. See if that makes more sense. For example, consider that people buy cars so they can go places. Turn it over; people go places so they will have a reason to buy a car. A revelation. A deeper truth.

COYOTE. So, can we apply this principle to money?

MINISTER. I'm a little slow this morning. Please expand on that.

COYOTE. Stand the conventional truth on its head thus: One does not need money to survive. Animals survive without money. Primitive humans survived without money. The pueblo people and the plains people met and swapped things—pots and hides and beads and stuff. Even today most people could survive on a lot less than they think they could. They might feel underprivileged doing it, but that is a spiritual disease, feeling underprivileged.

MINISTER. But people need money to buy stuff. And pay the rent and the power bill.

COYOTE. That's because you live in a money culture and have been taught that way. Jesus said, "Behold the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these." Matthew 6.

MINISTER. I know the passage, but I must not be spiritually advanced enough to appreciate it. Lilies and humans are different.

COYOTE. That's what humans think! Humans think they are more blessed of God. Or more despised by God.

MINISTER. That's because God told us we were. Since you are fond of quoting scripture, in Genesis 9, right after the flood recedes, God says, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

COYOTE. [*Repulsed.*] I hate that passage! You can't be God, so you try to be God on Earth! That's your ego talking! Let go of it!

MINISTER. Not 'til the day I die!

COYOTE. I can see your funeral march now: A big long Cadillac hearse followed by a marching brass band. How can you afford it?

MINISTER. I'll save up for it! Can we get back to my question, please?

COYOTE. From my observations, humans buy things to show they've got money. But after they buy things, they don't have any money. So they really buy things to show they have money left over after they buy everything they want.

MINISTER. Did you make these observations at Hamilton Place?

COYOTE. [*Mocking him a bit.*] Duuh. People who live on subsistence can't play the game. You need money over and above what you need—or be able to pretend you do—to play the game.

MINISTER. You can use a credit card.

COYOTE. That's just borrowing someone else's money to pretend it's yours. Which seems to be a national habit. I recall Ben Franklin saying, "The second vice is lying, the first is running in debt."

MINISTER. Why does Ben Franklin suddenly seem un-American?

COYOTE. According to what I've seen, there are many money games you humans play. Some are healthy, some are unhealthy. Some of them are spiritually nutritious, sort of whole-wheat oat-bran money games. And some are like these donuts; delicious, but in the long run, spiritually empty.

MINISTER. Tell me about the unhealthy ones first.

COYOTE. The unhealthy ones are games involving taking up more space than you need or using more of the earth's resources than you need or using money to control other people's lives, other people's spirits. Using money to buy people and exploit people.

MINISTER. Now you're talking like a Communist.

COYOTE. It isn't a matter of capitalism or communism. A capitalist company can be managed in a humane way. In fact it will probably be more successful if it treats its employees and customers as humans. This isn't about "-isms." This is a matter of human spiritual growth. Will you humans play healthy games with your money or

psychologically destructive games? In the last two or three decades, your culture has exploited more resources and people. As a consequence, it is less healthy. I knew a Russian wolf once, several years ago. He told me the Russian leaders forgot the people and their system died of rot.

MINISTER. Don't tell the Republicans. They think Ronald Reagan did it. Then what are some healthy money games?

COYOTE. Investments in people are always healthy money games. Remember the GI Bill? It did more to make America a good place to live than all the armaments industries put together. It was a national investment in educating people. I'll bet maybe a quarter or a third of your congregation got some of their education from the GI Bill.

MINISTER. I did and I am glad for it. There are other programs, too. My niece spent a year after high school in a program that gave her experience and skills in community organizing. I think that's a good investment in youth.

COYOTE. Wow! They're training her to be a coyote? This country needs some smart young coyotes! This country with its fat, complacent, self-centered population has given up on the democratic process, given up on caring for life's losers, given up on idealism and community and commonwealth.

MINISTER. You mean you care about us?

COYOTE. *[Whispering]* Yes, I care! You humans hold the future of the planet in your hands. I wish it weren't so, but it is. I have to wish you well because I am part of the commonwealth of life here. That's the only reason I talk to you. I look at your congregation and I think maybe there's hope!

MINISTER. Coyote! You truly think some modest little church on the eastern slope of Missionary Ridge is a hope for the commonwealth of planetary life? That's a tall mission for a small church.

COYOTE. The reason I think congregations like yours are a hope for the future is that you are open to new ideas. All churches try to be places where the spirit can grow, but most of them are locked into ancient ways of seeing the world, which aren't appropriate now that we're running out of room. In your hymnal, there's that Statement of Purposes; tell me about that.

MINISTER. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, not the subservience of humans to the gods, nor the inferiority of some people to other people. We promote justice, equity, compassion. We believe in a free and responsible search for truth. We promote democracy and work toward world peace.

COYOTE. Not many other churches affirm those values. You even respect what you call the interdependent web of all existence. I think if my brothers and sisters ever came to church, they'd come to your church.

MINISTER. We've got some church mice. We could make the others welcome. But we've strayed from our original subject of money games.

COYOTE. Not so. When you humans place your bets with your discretionary money, you put your money where your spirit is. Which is why I worry about some of your members...

MINISTER. They tell me they support other good causes.

COYOTE. They probably do, but so what? We are talking sources of the spiritual life. There are many wonderful

worthwhile organizations doing wonderful worthwhile things, but they are not specialists in the meaning of life. As I see it, churches focus on meanings. Other churches say the meanings come from God. Your church says there are many sources of spiritual meaning.

MINISTER. Like the direct experience of transcending mystery.

COYOTE. I can dig that, you know. Happens for me all the time, every day.

MINISTER. Our second source of spiritual meaning is my favorite. The words and deeds of prophetic women and men who confront structures of evil with compassion and justice and love.

COYOTE. Now that is very human. I can't wrap my coyote brain around it. Animals don't have structures of evil. You celebrate the tools of justice, compassion, and love by which you can overcome your own humanly created evil. The devil doesn't make you do it, you know. You choose it. Maybe for psychologically sick and neurotic reasons, but you choose it. And people of compassion and love and justice choose to undo it.

MINISTER. We honor religious prophets. We honor all the world's religions.

COYOTE. Amazing! You could be proud of that. You don't condemn people with different gods. Instead, you see if you can learn from them more about the transcending mystery.

MINISTER. All those varied pictures of the gods are insights into how humans experience the mystery. We are willing to listen and be taught.

COYOTE. As a minor deity, I admire that.

MINISTER. I suppose you could say That we believe the way to respond to God's love is to love our fellow humans.

COYOTE. When you get love, pass it on! Spend it! Like money! Don't hoard it! Put the love you receive to work by investing it in other people. That's what we deities—major *and* minor—do and you humans used to do before you were civilized.

MINISTER. We also affirm the glory of humanity.

COYOTE. That's another way of saying you glorify science. I am skeptical about your science; it has brought some really bizarre things to pass. But we admire your passion to know and explore and study and understand. If there were one human characteristic we might like to have, it is that unfailing curiosity. Yours is the only church I know that respects science as science rather than fearing science will erode religious authority.

MINISTER. I had no idea you knew so much about religion.

COYOTE. You know, I wish I had some money so I could contribute to your church.

MINISTER. You already have. The congregation loves to hear what you have to say.

COYOTE. [*Regretfully.*] Talk's cheap. That was a joke. [*Beat.*] What do you do with the children? I hope you don't sit them down in little rooms and have adults tell them the Truth.

MINISTER. No, they have a lot of activities. They go to convocations and meet other children. They sing in the

choir, they have a handbell choir. Once they planted a tree.

COYOTE. Damn! That's nice! [*Pulling out a five.*] I'm buying!

MINISTER. You are buying my donuts?

COYOTE. Right! I found this in the street this morning. As your poet Walt Whitman said, he finds letters from God in the streets and leaves them there because there will always be more. Most of the good stuff we get in life we probably don't deserve, so we might as well spend it. Pass it on. Besides, I believe in donuts for preachers so they are fat and happy. [*Starting to leave.*]

MINISTER. Thanks. Coyote, I wish you'd tell my congregation what you've told me.

COYOTE. [*Stopping in front of the congregation*] They'd never take my word for it. The question is whether they believe it themselves. If they don't, things are worse than I thought. [*Walking out.*]

MINISTER. Coyote, the congregation will sing a hymn now. Please stay and join us.

COYOTE. I only sing when the moon is full.

MINISTER. So I've heard. Will you come again sometime?

COYOTE. [*As she leaves.*] Of course. [*Howls.*]

MINISTER. I don't know why it is, but every time I have a chat with Coyote, I learn more about myself and humanity than animals. But I think she's right. When we place our bets with our discretionary money, we put our money where our spirit is. And if your spirit is here, place your bet with confidence, 'cause everyone will be a winner.

HYMN 331, Life Is the Greatest Gift of All

Mary Hunter would you please extinguish our chalice? Please read with me.

EXTINGUISHING THE 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

Why don't we do something a little something different for our benediction today? A responsive benediction. Your words are in italics.

Grieving dreams that have passed away,

We wait for night vision.

Marching to unfinished music,

We listen for whispers of wisdom.

Seeing the cost of impatience,

We take slow steps for change.

Sensing the price of waiting,

We walk with courage.

Letting go of innocence,

We touch our guilt with forgiveness.

Silencing prideful talk,

We lift up what has not been done.

Moving from solitude,

We walk side-by-side.

Balancing our dreams with reality,

We live in hope.

POSTLUDE: (Be the) Good News