

New Faces, New Phases

A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE

Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga

November 1, 2009

CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Matt Hoyt 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.

GREETINGS

DAVID. Thanks so much for joining us in worship today. We hope you find the service rewarding and that you leave here inspired and uplifted.

There is an emergency exit over here to my right, now is the time to put your cell phone in "Worship Mode" and childcare for the young and the restless is available downstairs in the nursery.

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.

Today we welcome new members during our service and our minister, the Rev. Jeff Briere will assess our membership when he preaches about, "New Faces—New Phases."

A complete listing of announcements is included with the bulletin and is available on our web site. The best way to find out what's going on around here is to sign up for a weekly e-mail. To do that, please see Chris in the office.

Kate has chosen a round from the hymnal supplement to get us started. It's called "Where Do We Come From?" But Kate and Jeff wanted to parse that title before we begin singing.

MINISTER. We are calling this a hymn-lude, as it serves as the prelude and a hymn. And it's a round. Lately, we've been doing good rounds around here, so Kate thought to kick it up a notch.

The lyrics for this are attributed to Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin and Brian Tate. Brian Tate wrote the lyrics that you will sing: “Mystery, Mystery, Life Is a Riddle and a Mystery.” The part that Paul Gauguin contributed is this: “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?”

The Gauguin lyrics come from the title of a painting of his that he began in 1897 and completed a year later. Created in Tahiti, it is currently housed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Gauguin died in 1903. Of the painting, he indicated that it should be read from right to left, with the three major figure groups illustrating the questions posed in the title. The three women with a child represent the beginning of life; the middle group symbolizes the daily existence of young adulthood; and in the final group, according to the artist, “an old woman approaching death appears reconciled and resigned to her thoughts; at her feet, a strange white bird represents the futility of words.” The blue idol in the background apparently represents what Gauguin described as “the Beyond.” The title of the painting is inscribed in the upper left corner on a yellow background. It reads,

KATE. *D’où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?*
Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

From the age of eleven to sixteen, Gauguin studied at a seminary near Orléans, and one of his textbooks was a catechism which contained three fundamental questions about the nature of life:

MINISTER. “Where does humanity come from? Where is it going to? How does humanity proceed?” These questions from a book Gauguin studied as a teenager obviously stayed with him. And they are the fundamental questions of every theological system of thought and every religion from the beginning of humanity up through the present day. We don’t know—with certainty—how we got here nor where we are headed. It’s a mystery. It’s what makes life so

interesting. One thing our religion does is attempt to make sense of those questions.

KATE. So that’s the background. Here are your words.

[Singing instruction.] You just sing those words over and over until you poop out, OK?

The joy of singing a round is that you can listen to the other parts because you know your own so well. Your part is truly easy—just two notes—so sing out and listen to the choir, but don’t follow them, because they are singing something else.

HYMN—LUDE: Where Do We Come From?

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Something different to light the chalice today, from the pen of Hilaire Belloc. Belloc was an Anglo–French writer who died in 1953.

For this chalice lighting, your words are in italics.

They say that in the unchanging place,
Where all we loved is always dear,

*We meet our morning face to face
And find at last our twentieth year.*

They say (and I am glad they say)
It is so; and it may be so:

*It may be just the other way,
I cannot tell. But this I know:*

From quiet homes and first beginning,

Out to the undiscovered ends,

*There's nothing worth the wear of winning,
But laughter and the love of friends.*

STORY: Meet Your Neighbors!

We will welcome several new members to the congregation today. And I thought you ought to meet them. In a moment I'll introduce them to you and you to them.

But first, I want you to know why I'd like you to meet these people. Now when you meet someone for the first time, maybe on the playground, maybe at someone's house or in school, what's the first thing you want to know? When you meet someone, what's the first question you ask?

Right. 'Cause you hafta know someone's name to be friends. This church is a religious community and to build it and keep it healthy, it's a good idea to know everyone who is a member.

And before I introduce you to the new members, I'd like you to meet some members who have been here for awhile.

George Helton—UTC professor of psychology

Monique Lewis—was a teacher, born in France

Kristi McKinley—Reiki practitioner

Tim Kleve—Math teacher

Nancy Beel—poet

Frank Caperton was a newspaper reporter and editor in my hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana.

Eric and Heidi Davis have a 5-year-old daughter named Ehlana.

Wesley Johnson works at the Wal-Mart in Dalton.

Yvonne Derrickson—worked for a TV station and got married on Valentine's Day.

Christina Hutsell is studying for the legal profession and has a cat named Bisq.

Wolfgang Poe survived Hurricane Katrina and volunteers in the kitchen.

Adam and Megan Foster play together in a punk band called *Police Navidad*. If you speak a little Spanish, you'll get that joke.

Ken Beaver and Wendes Jones moved here from Augusta GA and they like to restore homes that have been neglected.

To all the adults, your job is to get to know everyone, new and old. To do that, you'll have to greet people and tell them your name and ask for theirs. It's really a simple process. And for the children, when you see your new adult friends around here or in the parking lot, wave to your new friend and say, "Hello." That's the way we start to know each other.

And you are free to 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: Over the Rainbow/Wonderful World

We lit our chalice this morning with the words of Hillaire Belloc. Belloc's passionate convictions prompted him in 1906 to seek election as a Member of Parliament, although he knew that, as a Roman Catholic, he would have a struggle to overcome the voters'

religious prejudices. On the occasion of his first campaign speech, he appeared on the rostrum with a rosary in his hand. He was asked by a heckler if he were a Papist, a Catholic.

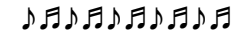
He replied, "I am a Catholic. As far as possible I hear Mass every day and I kneel down and tell these beads every night. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God he has spared me the indignity of being your representative." He was elected.

Belloc often worked under a great strain, turning out book after book, not always up to his highest standard, merely in order to make his livelihood. This caused him to regret many of his publications.

In 1915, Belloc wrote the *History of England*. It was published in eleven volumes. He wasn't too pleased with the result, but he let his publisher print it. In a railway carriage in 1937, Belloc noticed a man in front of him reading one of the volumes of his *History of England*. He leaned forward, asked him how much he had paid for it. After learning the price, Belloc took a corresponding sum out of his pocket and gave it to the man. Then he snatched the book from the fellow and tossed it out the window.

Evidently, he didn't think much of his own work.

We'll collect the morning offering now, for the support and ministry of this church. And have no fear, for we think much of your efforts. We won't toss them out the window. If you write a check, please sign your own name, not that of an old friend who looks like you. If you have an annual 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. And thank you very much for your generosity. 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 be thankful for them. 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.

John Anderson, married to Christina Koch, losing his job

Crystal Parker's father passed away last Wednesday. She wrote asking that we keep her family in our thoughts and prayers. She also expressed gratitude for her church community.

This morning I am moved to pray for those in our government and military who will soon make critical decisions. I speak of health care reform and Afghanistan.

It will soon be time for centrist lawmakers to cast their lot with their progressive or their conservative colleagues. Standing here and knowing people who cannot afford health care, it's difficult for me to understand anyone's reluctance to pass affordable health care legislation. I presume it will be expensive, but I believe the alternative will be even more costly. And from a moral standpoint, there's no question that everyone ought to be covered. I pray our

representatives think long and hard about their choice and that they are guided chiefly by service and not by personal gain nor ideology.

Knowing what happened to the British and the Russians in Afghanistan and standing here a Vietnam veteran, it is difficult for me to understand the attraction of meddling with another country's internal squabbles. On the other hand, when that country is populated by desperate and dangerous people intent on spreading mayhem, it makes sense to contain them.

So I pray that our leaders think long and hard before committing more troops to fighting a war that the British and the Russians were forced to abandon. I pray our generals fight the right war. If there is such a thing.

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.

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

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

ERIC. Today our community is enlarged in number and in spirit by several people who join us. Please look at both sides of your insert and note your part in this welcoming ceremony. New members, please step forward as I call your name and line up along the wall over here. And bring that insert with you.

FRANK CAPERTON	WOLFGANG POE
ERIC DAVIS	ADAM FOSTER
HEIDI DAVIS	MEGAN FOSTER
WESLEY JOHNSON	KEN BEAVER
YVONNE DERRICKSON	WENDES JONES
CHRISTINA HUTSELL	

Today, you enter a community of people who believe that we never stop growing, that we are fragile human beings who learn best from each other. We do not have all of the answers, but here you find people who live joyfully and creatively in the gray area. Here you will find comrades and compatriots in your search for justice and peace. Here are links to the interdependent web of life. We welcome you as members of this religious society.

CONGREGATION. We rejoice when you walk with us in our quest for community, justice, and love. Your presence encourages and strengthens our communal life. We accept our responsibility to include you in this free and open church.

ERIC. We invite you to join us in our pursuit of justice, to share our spiritual journey, to challenge us and to reflect on a life lived fully. We ask you to walk with us in freedom, trusting your instincts and

reason, sharing your hopes and fears, your joys and your sorrow. As Margaret announces your name, please sign your name in our Registry of Members, and stand next to her on the opposite side of the sanctuary.

MARGARET. Frank Caperton moved here with his wife from Indianapolis to be near their daughter and grandchildren, two boys ages 6 and 4. They miss their son who lives in Indianapolis. Frank was a reporter and editor for many years. His last job was executive editor of newspapers in Indianapolis. Frank says he was never a Boy Scout, but he was an adult volunteer for 30 years. He enjoys tennis, yoga, and reading about religion and current affairs. He is joining today because he feels we are a community of people where he is theologically comfortable.

Heidi and Eric Davis have one daughter, Ehlana, who is 5 years old. Heidi writes poetry (she says some of it is very dark), makes pottery, and she is working on a large collage which she would like to share with us when it is completed. Heidi is striving to learn more, to meet new people, and to study new ideas. She is joining this church because we provoke thought instead of forcing beliefs. She is not afraid to be herself here. She likes the open-mindedness we have with children. Heidi feels it will be easy to contribute here. When I asked Eric what he is proud of, he answered, “Being the father of Ehlana.” Eric’s hobby is sound systems. He has worked with local bands and he hopes to study broadcasting. Eric’s dad was a Methodist minister, but Eric began to explore his own beliefs and realized he was not a Christian anymore. Eric and Heidi found their way to us after a friend suggested they look into Unitarian Universalism. Eric had not been comfortable in church in years, but now his beliefs are respected.

Wesley Johnson lives with his parents and sister next door to Harold Linn in Dalton. He was raised in a Christian church, but he was uncomfortable with the forced beliefs. Harold invited him to our church and Wesley feels comfortable here. He loved it. He was just

hired by Walmart in Dalton, so he may not be able to attend as often as he would like. Wesley’s hobby is playing bass.

Yvonne Derrickson is actually re-activating her membership. She was born and raised in West Virginia—“almost heaven,” as John Denver sings. She met her husband Bill when he was working for Corning Glass Works. They were married 1975 in a quiet ceremony in front of a judge on Valentines Day. It made the front page of the paper. (They needed a Valentine story). They have two grown children, Dan and Tonya. After seven cold years in Corning, New York, they moved south. He was hired by Provident Insurance and she accepted a job with the local PBS station. During this time they found the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga and were able to meet “like-minded” people. She retired a couple years ago so she and her husband could work on their “bucket list.” They have been fortunate enough to travel often.

Christina Hutsell is a native of Dayton, Tennessee, but moved here when she was six with her father and her older brother. She was raised as a staunch Baptist until her un-conversion from Christianity at the age of nineteen. She believed in the absolute authority of the Bible and its indisputable scriptures until she started questioning her beliefs in high school. It was not too long before she started to accept evolution, sexual diversity, religious pluralism, and so on. After that, she went from liberal Christian, to Agnostic, and finally to Spiritualism. She had wanted to start going to church again, but kept putting it off because of the fear of being judged for having different beliefs. And so she decided to research liberal churches in the community, and with luck, she found our website. Christina says, that attending this church was one of the best decisions she ever made. She likes coming here because of the cheerful atmosphere, openness, and the potential to make great friends. She happily juggles her time working towards her Legal Assistant degree, and spending time with her cat, Bisq.

Edward Wolfgang Poe is a native of Birmingham, Alabama. His

parents brought him up in the strictest Southern Baptist traditions, which he rejected and sought his own path. Wanting to grow and see a bit more of the world, he moved to Atlanta. Six months of the Big City was enough for him and he decided to try the Small City life of Chattanooga. After several years he moved to Ocean Springs, Mississippi in late 2003, and we all know what a good idea that was. After Hurricane Katrina, he returned to Chattanooga and has been here ever since. He likes art, all kinds of music, antiques and books. Wolfgang volunteers his time in our kitchen on Sunday and we are very glad for his talents.

Adam Lee Foster was born in Chattanooga and raised in Rising Fawn, Georgia. He was raised Catholic and went to Catholic schools up until his freshman year in high school, when he left for an open-minded environment. Around this time Adam discovered the music community in Chattanooga and started booking shows. He attended a couple public schools before dropping out to educate himself and travel most of the United States with touring punk bands. During his four year break from formal education, Adam played guitar, bass, drums and sang in several local bands, some of which recorded and released CD's and went on tour. At age twenty he decided to give school a second chance so he attended Chattanooga State Technical Community College where he received an Associates Degree and served as the vice president of the Environmental Science Club. He is currently a junior at UTC majoring in Environmental Science with a focus in Anthropology and Sociology. He plays guitar in a comedic pop punk band with his wife Megan called *Police Navidad*. He is a proud father of a Levi Andrew Foster. He is also the proud caretaker of four rescued dogs and one rescued cat. Adam enjoys hiking, fishing, camping and growing shitake mushrooms. He is a full time 2nd shift housekeeping associate for the Tennessee Aquarium.

Megan Foster was born in Chattanooga and raised in north Georgia and north Alabama. Her family runs a leather working business and they travel the country and sell hand made leather goods at craft

shows. She has traveled with her family and assisted with their business since a very early age. She attended a private Christian school on Sand Mountain but was expelled for organizing and writing for a school paper. Instead of continuing her education at a north Georgia public school, she decided to educate herself. She is an avid reader and enjoys classic English and western Literature, fantasy, and science fiction. She has sung in a few local bands and made shirts and buttons for many other local bands. She is a full time mother and spends much of her time taking care of Levi. She plans on attending Chattanooga State next semester to work towards a career in education.

Ken Beaver was born and raised in the Detroit metro area, attending college in the east with the intent of becoming an architect, but somehow ended up as a chemical engineer, probably due to his extensive studies in fluid dynamics, of the 12 ounce variety. Over the years his career has taken him to many places, but two constants have remained throughout: first, his love of architecture, especially the creative renovation and reuse of distressed buildings, and second, his commitment to and involvement with the Unitarian Universalist church since first becoming a member in Raleigh, NC over 20 years ago. Since arriving this spring, he and his wife Wendes find themselves growing fonder by the day of this particular church and the city of Chattanooga. Their hope and intent is to stay here for awhile, put down some roots, purchase and renovate a home for themselves, get involved in the renovation of other properties in the city, contributing to the revitalization of the communities which they serve, and becoming active and contributing members of this congregation. They are honored to stand here today.

Wendes Jones still has the newspaper advertisement that caught her attention and got her, with young family in tow, to attend her first Unitarian Universalist worship service in Caribou, Maine in 1986. She has been a Unitarian Universalist ever since. In truth, she says, she had been one all along even without having a name for her theological home. In the last five years, she and Ken have attended

Unitarian Universalist churches in Augusta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Buffalo, New York; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and now here in Chattanooga. Each time they moved, they embraced their new church with the intention that they would be long-time members. Wendes met her husband Ken at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Augusta and she says, “With **this** move, with **this** membership, we fervently pray, ‘May it be so.’

MINISTER. I welcome you to our congregation. I charge you to hold our religious society close to your hearts and work to keep it vibrant and meaningful to you, for this church can only be what you make it. I charge the congregation to accept our new members with joy and embrace them as you now do one another, for they are now truly one with us. I charge us all to treat each other with compassion and understanding, for only with love will we survive.

NEW MEMBERS. We accept membership in this congregation as a gift as well as a responsibility. May our connections be strengthened day by day and year by year, and may the web of community be enhanced as we nurture and challenge one another.

ERIC. On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, I welcome you into membership and full participation in this community. We hope to earn your trust and come to know you in true religious community.

CONGREGATION. We welcome you to our midst in the spirit of freedom. May your days among us be long and full; and may we prove worthy of your trust as we travel together.

SERMON: New Faces, New Phases

Jesse, this question is not for you. Anyone here know the British rock band, *10cc*? In 1975, *10cc* released a song about a guy who is trying hard not to fall in love with his girlfriend. The first two lines

are

I’m not in love, so don’t forget it
It’s just a silly phase I’m going through

Just a phase I’m going through. You ever been through a phase? Like a growth phase? A phase in your education? A phase in your life? A phase in your marriage?

Everyone goes through phases. It’s the way we grow up, the way we grow wiser and the way we die. There are many phases in life, and I believe one way to successfully navigate your way through choppy waters is to understand what’s happening during the phase.

This church is going through a phase right now. For the past few years, this church has been moving through a phase in which our organization and culture changes from a family model to a pastoral model.

Here’s what I mean: There are four stages of growth in churches. The smallest churches—up to about 70 members—are known as Family Churches, because they operate much like a family, cozy, comfy and intimate, just like your favorite chair. A family church probably has a matriarch or patriarch who is in charge. In a family church, everyone knows everyone else, and everyone knows what’s happening and everyone knows the unwritten rules of behavior. In Tullahoma, there is a family church. They have about 43 members.

The next larger church is called a Pastoral Church. The attendance is between 100 and 200 members. Whereas in a family church everyone knows everyone, in a pastoral church, the pastor knows everyone. But everyone doesn’t know everyone else, everyone does not always know what’s happening and the unwritten rules of behavior need to be written or announced.

Most churches in America are this size. The average size of an American congregation of any religion is about 150. And this is us; with today's new faces, we are approaching 160 members.

Beyond the Pastoral Church is the Program Church and the Corporate Church. A program church, as its name implies is characterized by its many programs, such as addiction ministry, campus outreach, affinity groups, larger staffs and sometimes, multiple ministers. The Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, where Jim Adkisson shot and killed two people a year ago July, is a program church. They have more than 500 members.

A Corporate Church is very large and is subdivided into smaller units so that people can make connections. All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa is a corporate church. They have more than 1700 members.

This church began as a family church. But it has outgrown the organizational model that goes along with a family church. And we are now going through a phase. For the past few years we have inducted about 20 people a year, but our membership has not grown that well, because we have lost some members, too. We have gained more than we lost, so we're moving in the right direction.

So you might say we are at a plateau. Plateaus often occur as a congregation's attendance wobbles between family and pastoral size. In a plateau, the appeal of the previous size is compromised while the value of the next size is not yet realized. The danger here is that unless we know what is happening, this plateau can lead to a decline in church attendance.

Now you may ask yourself, "What's this mean? What's all this got to do with me?" The cover of your bulletin sums it up: New Faces—New Phases.

Members who have been around for awhile will probably be put off

by some procedures we had to introduce. But with more people around, standardized procedures are critical for smooth functioning. So if you've been here awhile, it might take some extra effort to make something happen; you won't be able to just do something without coordinating with others first. A good example is the Rachel Carson Dinner, which has to be coordinated with the Church of God.

Newer members might think we are a bit coolish, as they might see us talking to our friends instead of to them. So it might take some extra effort for everyone to get to know everyone else. What I mean here is that you might have to go out of your way to make new friends. They won't automatically walk up to you on Sunday.

It might get a bit crowded in here. This building was built when the membership was about a hundred. And it is a fine building. For a hundred people. It's somewhat inadequate for the way we do church today. The coffee hour is a good example of what I mean, as it happens partly in here and partly out there because the fellowship area is too small for everyone.

The needs of the religious education program are another good example. Two years ago, we only needed two rooms—one for the children and another for the nursery. Then the teens coalesced and the numbers of younger children exploded. Suddenly, we needed two more rooms.

I have said this before, but it bears repeating. The architecture of this church will eventually constrain our growth. It's just simple physics. In a decent economy and with Volkswagen coming to town, we might approach 200 members. At that point, or well before it, we will really have to take a long hard look at what we want to do and where we want to go. Even now, only approaching 160 members, it feels a bit crowded at times.

Volunteers may be easier to find for our programs when there is a

larger pool of members, especially when new members join us with a sense of wanting to contribute. Marge Pasch was concerned that no one would take over the kitchen until Wolfgang Poe came along. Frank Caperton has some experience in church finance and last week, I introduced him to Daidee and she invited him to meet with the finance committee. Who knows, someday we may even fill the vacancies on the Board of Trustees.

But new members don't know everything, like those of us who have been here awhile. They'll need us to show them the ropes. They have new ideas and fresh energy and it falls to us to see that everyone benefits from their presence.

So if you have been a member here for awhile—a long while or a short while—I encourage you to introduce yourself to any of the new members. Yes, it may be awkward to strike up a conversation with someone you don't know, but look what you have in common: You both attend the same church!

And if you are a new member—or a new-ish member—I encourage you to introduce yourself to one of the Old Guard. They are really not as scary as they appear. They're very nice and well-behaved, I can assure you. And, of course, you have something in common. You both attend the same church.

For the past few years, we have been slowly negotiating the move from a family church to a pastoral church. This is a tricky transition, as the congregational culture changes more abruptly in this one than in other stages, say from a program to corporate church.

For the most part, it's gone well. This can be an emotional time for members who have been here awhile, as they see new things in their church and new people taking over. This can be weird for new members, because although there is some transparency, some procedures and habits are not quickly available nor readily under-

stood by new folks. So what am I saying? Growing pains will not take care of themselves. We have to take care of each other.

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

Our benediction this morning comes from Henry David Thoreau, a Unitarian naturalist who spent several months living in a small shack by Walden pond near Concord, Massachusetts in 1845. He wrote,

We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold gray day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest brightest sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the stems of the trees in the opposite horizon and on the leaves of the shrub-oaks on the hill-side, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward, as if we were the only motes in its beams.

It was such a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen forever and ever an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child who walked there, it was more glorious still.

Such moments are to be treasured. Watch for them. May you have many.

POSTLUDE: Spirit Says Do!