



CHILDREN'S BELL CHOIR MEDLEY

GREETINGS

Maddie. 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, 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.

I invite you to attend the annual meeting of this church, which will happen directly after the service today. We must vote the budget for next year and elect officers for the Board of Trustees. Some light refreshments will be served. Please join us at that time.

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. I ask Diana & Haley Solomon to light our chalice.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

In the light of truth and the warmth of love,
we gather to seek, to sustain, and to share.

One thing that developed this year that everyone has loved is a children's choir. They have been working with Kate for several months and this morning they want to sing for us. This song is by Shelley Jackson Denham, the woman who wrote a favorite hymn of

CHILDREN'S RECOGNITION SUNDAY

A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE

Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga

May 17, 2009

ours, “We Laugh, We Cry.”

SONG: *Then I May Learn*

STORY: *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*

Who likes to read books or have someone read a book to you? Everybody? Good. Reading is important. It will lead to good writing. And good spelling.

Seeing a movie is good, too, because you can see what the storyteller wants you to see. But with reading, you can see what you want to see. You can use your imagination.

[To older child] What was the first book you remember reading?

Today, I want to share with you the first book I remember. I think my mother must have read it to me first, and as I learned to read, it was the first book I remember reading. There was another book about Dick and Jane, but I don’t remember it very well.

The one I remember best is by Ted Geisel. Do you know him? Ted Geisel is better known by his *nom de plume*. Do you know what that means? It’s French and it means “pen name.” So do you know what a pen name is? Ted Geisel is better known by the name he uses when he writes a book—his pen name or *nom de plume*. And his pen name is *Dr. Seuss*. Now do you know Ted Geisel?

And this is the first book he wrote, and the first one I read.

Before I read this book to you, I want you to know he wrote it almost 71 years ago. And he wrote it about memories he had as a child about 90 years ago. In the time when Dr. Seuss was a child, children walked to school. No one had a pickup truck or a minivan or even an SUV. In those days, the most common form of transportation was a

horse and wagon.

MARCO. When I leave home to walk to school,
Dad always says to me,

DAD. Marco, keep your eyelids up
And see what you can see.

MARCO. But when I tell him where I’ve been
And what I think I’ve seen,
He looks at me sternly and says,

DAD. Your eyesight’s much too keen.
Stop telling such outlandish tales.
Stop turning minnows into whales.

MARCO. Now, what can I say
When I get home today?
All the long way to school
And all the way back,
I’ve looked and I’ve looked
And I’ve kept careful track,
But all that I’ve noticed,
Except my own feet,
Was a horse and a wagon
On Mulberry Street.

IMAGINATION. That’s nothing to tell of,
That won’t do, of course ...
Just a broken-down wagon
That’s drawn by a horse.
That can’t be your story. That’s only a start.

MARCO. I’ll say that a zebra was pulling that cart!
That is a story that no one can beat,
When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street.

IMAGINATION. Yes, the zebra is fine,
But I think it's a shame,
Such a marvelous beast
With a cart that's so tame.
The story would really be better to hear
If the driver you saw were a charioteer.

MARCO. A gold and blue chariot's something to meet,
Rumbling like thunder down Mulberry Street!

IMAGINATION. No, it won't do at all ...
A zebra's too small.
A reindeer is better;
He's fast and he's fleet,

MARCO. Hold on a minute!
There's something wrong!

IMAGINATION. A reindeer hates the way it feels
To pull a thing that runs on wheels.
He'd be much happier, instead,
If he could pull a fancy sled.

MARCO. Hmm ... A reindeer and sleigh ...
Say-anyone could think of that,
Jack or Fred or Joe or Nat—
Say, even Jane could think of that.

IMAGINATION. But it isn't too late to make one little change.
A sleigh and an elephant! There's something strange!

MARCO. I'll pick one with plenty of power and size,
A blue one with plenty of fun in his eyes.

IMAGINATION. And then, just to give him a little more tone,
Have a Rajah, with rubies, perched high on a throne.

MARCO. Say! That makes a story that no one can beat,
When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street.

IMAGINATION. But now I don't know ...
It still doesn't seem right.
An elephant pulling a thing that's so light
Would whip it around in the air like a kite.

MARCO. But he'd look simply grand
With a great big brass band!

IMAGINATION. A band that's so good
should have someone to hear it,
But it's going so fast that it's hard to keep near it.

MARCO. I'll put on a trailer! I know they won't mind
If a man sits and listens while hitched on behind.

IMAGINATION. But now is it fair? Is it fair what you've done?
I'll bet those wagons weigh more than a ton.
That's really too heavy a load for one beast;

MARCO. I'll give him some helpers.
He needs two, at least.

IMAGINATION. But now what worries me is this ..
Mulberry Street runs into Bliss,
Unless there's something you can fix up,
There'll be an awful traffic mix-up!

MARCO. It takes Police to do the trick,
To guide them through where traffic's thick-
They'll never crash now. They'll race at top speed
With Sergeant Mulvaney, himself, in the lead.

IMAGINATION. The Mayor is there

And he thinks it is grand,
And he raises his hat
As they dash by the stand.

MARCO. The Mayor is there
And the Aldermen too,
All waving big banners
Of red, white and blue.
And that is a story that no one can beat
When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street!

IMAGINATION. With a roar of its motor an airplane appears
And dumps out confetti while everyone cheers.

MARCO. And that makes a story that's really not bad!

IMAGINATION. But it still could be better. Suppose that we add
A Chinese man
With chopsticks
A fancy Magician
Doing his tricks ...
A ten-foot beard
that needs a comb ...

MARCO. No time for more,
I'm almost home.
I swing 'round the corner
And dash through the gate,
I run up the steps
And I feel simply great!
For I have a story that no one can beat!
And to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street!
But Dad says quite calmly,

DAD. Just draw up your stool
And tell me the sights

On the way home from school.

MARCO. There was so much to tell, I just couldn't begin!
Dad looks at me sharply and pulls at his chin.
He frowns at me sternly from there in his seat,

DAD. Was there nothing to look at—no people to greet?
Did nothing excite you or make your heart beat?

MARCO. Nothing, I say, growing red as a beet,
But a plain horse and wagon on Mulberry Street.

Thank you for listening to this story, and I want you to stick around
for a few more minutes, because the choir has a song they prepared
especially for you.

OFFERTORY: Learn to Fly

Last week, we doubled the plate, and although we didn't make it to
the donor's \$300 limit, we did manage to collect \$230 which was
matched for a total of \$460. Thanks so much for your generosity.

Albert Einstein was a German-born physicist of Jewish descent who
won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921. He died in 1955, and the
stories about this man who first devised the Theory of Relativity are
numerous.

Otto Neugebauer was a friend of his. And he tells a story about the
Einstein as a boy. As he was a late talker, Einstein's parents were
worried. If your child doesn't talk, there may be a big problem.
Finally, at the supper table one night, Einstein broke his silence to
say, "The soup is too hot."

Greatly relieved, his parents asked why he had never said a word
before. Albert replied, "Because up to now everything was in good

order.” In addition to a prodigious intellect, Einstein had a playful side, too.

You know Caroline Kennedy, don’t you? The daughter of President Kennedy, for awhile, she was bandied about as a possible senator from New York. Her grandfather, Joseph Kennedy, once remarked that she was smarter than her father, who was his son, Jack. “Caroline’s very bright, smarter than you were, Jack, at that age.”

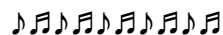
“Yes, she is,” agreed the President. “But look who *she* has for a father!”

William Haddad was an associate of Kennedy’s. After the President was assassinated, his young son, John, asked Mr. Haddad, “Are you a daddy?”

Haddad admitted that he was. Said little John, “Then will you throw me up in the air?”

Evidently, daddies are known far and wide for throwing children up in the air. We’ll collect the morning offering now, for the support and ministry of this church. And please do not throw your contribution up in the air. Throw it gently down into the collection plate. Daddies and Mommies alike. Please mark pledge payments 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 I will assist you.



I want to thank the choir for their work on that song. It was beautiful.

And thanks to the children for staying with us. You can go to your classes now.

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.

Ron Pasch injured his shoulder and last week underwent surgery to correct it. He says he intends to make the quickest recovery on record for this type of shoulder injury. We’re glad to see him back at church.

The choir is a little thin in the soprano section this morning because Martha Berry is not with us. She is laid up at Erlanger awaiting surgery next week. I’ll bet she would enjoy hearing from you and you can find her in room 7142. Call before you drop in and see her.

Bill Berry was so concerned about Martha’s condition that he neglected his own and contracted pneumonia this week. For a few days he was right down the hall from Martha in his own room. He’s home now, resting today and learning to take it easier.

Mary Hunter, another soprano, is also away this morning, tending to

her aunt, who is hospitalized, so please keep her in your prayers.

Ken Nickerson successfully underwent treatment for prostate cancer and he's pretty much rid of it. He's upbeat, in no pain and not constrained in any way. He wants you to know he's not an invalid and is not feeling sorry for himself. He's actually pretty pumped about his condition, considering it could be much worse. I'm sure he would enjoy hearing from you.

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.

In these few moments of silence, let us always remember those who suffer the fallout of war, but today, close to our heart, let us hold the hearts of children everywhere.

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

READING

Michael Wells is an author, entrepreneur, husband, and father of two. A lifelong resident of Montreal, Canada, he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from McGill University, where he wrote extensively for the university newspaper and local and regional publications.

Being a writer, he preserved many of the experiences he and his family had over the years. And this is the result. *Snapshots of Heaven*. It's 40 short vignettes of his life with his children, centered on those times when his children were the teachers and he was the student. Most interesting, I think, because I have daughters, too, are the times in which his daughter is the teacher.

Today, he is encouraging people to submit their own stories for an upcoming book, tentatively called *Snapshots of America*.

The author and his wife, Laure, are the parents of 18-year-old Jeremy and 16-year-old Jenna. Michael has played a very active role in the lives of his children, and has coached his son's hockey teams for many years. This passage recounts the time when he first coached his daughter's soccer team.

NOEL. Jenna never seemed to take to sports the way Jeremy did. By the time she was eight, I felt enough was enough. I always felt soccer was a game she could be good at, if she only tried. I decided the only way to get her to try was to play with her, or do the next best thing, coach her. So when I proposed that she sign up for soccer the next spring, and that I'd coach her, she jumped at the chance.

Way before May rolled around, with snow still on the ground, Jenna insisted I take her out and practice, but who played soccer in the Arctic? Almost every weekend, we went to the park, shoveled the

snow away, and practiced. Jenna just wanted to start the soccer season early and I had to oblige. After all, what coach is going to discourage an eager player?

Finally, the season began. Jenna didn't know the rules, so I had to teach her, and repeat every step along the way. We lost the first two games. But then I noticed something. Jenna came away from each game laughing and asking me when the next game was scheduled. Win or lose, she really didn't care. She just wanted to be with me and have fun.

“Aren't we having fun, Daddy? Aren't we?”

We were. But I've always been a very competitive guy. I loved to win. I didn't have to win every game. But I didn't enjoy losing every one either. I confess I didn't know what to expect when I started the season, but I certainly didn't expect this. We were a disaster! And everyone was having so much fun, except me.

It was a short season, thankfully lasting only eight weeks. Midway through the season, Jenna had improved a lot and comfortably found her position at defense, where she displayed a lot of promise. The whole team had improved a lot. But they didn't seem to care. They were having the time of their lives.

The last weekend finally arrived, and we still had yet to win one game. At least the girls were consistent. But our last game was against the first place team. I prayed for rain, but the day turned out to be beautiful. The referee blew the whistle and immediately the other team scored. This was going to be a long game, I thought.

Then, to my shock, we scored three minutes later. I couldn't believe it. The game was actually tied. I rubbed my eyes. Maybe I had to wake up. Then we scored again. What was going on here? Was this our team? Or was I temporarily transported to another city? On both goals, Jenna got an assist.

She was playing great. Nobody could get past her. Our goalie was making saves I never knew she could. We were actually playing like a team.

Halftime came with the score still 2-1 for us. But I was sure the fairy tale would soon end. And I was right. In less than five minutes of the second half, they scored two goals. Down by one, with one minute left, I felt it was over.

Just at that moment, the ball landed on Jenna's foot. I don't know what I said, but I was thinking, “Kick it, Jenna! Kick it to Nancy (our best shooter). Kick it like you want to hit the sun.” And kick it she did!

Wow! The ball went in between their players, landing a few feet from Nancy. “Kick it! Kick it in, Nancy,” I yelled. “Smack it in!” And she did.

I couldn't believe it. We tied the best team in the league. What a game! What a finish! I ran onto the field and started rolling in the grass like a five-year-old. The girls were jumping so hard I thought they would lose their breath. We tied, but against this team, it was a victory. What fun!

The season was over. We never won a game. But I no longer cared—and that was a first for me. Just to have fun and to love what you do had never been enough. I had to win. I thought if I didn't win, I lost. Then Jenna and the rest of the girls opened my eyes and heart to an experience I never had before and never dreamed possible.

Play with passion. Love what you do. Have fun. That's much more important than a bunch of trophies gathering dust on the mantle. This is what they taught me. And they were only eight years old.

SERMON

I used to say these words a lot: “I’m not good with kids.”

And I wasn’t all that good. Kids used to scare me, but I’m getting better.

I still remember the time Kate suggested I register as a substitute teacher. Yikes!

“They’ll kill me,” I thought. I had no earthly idea how to manage a room full of squirrely kids. And teach them a lesson? No way.

Kate pointed out that the lessons were prepared by their teacher and all I had to do was connect the dots. Didn’t matter. There’s always exceptions and teachers never leave instructions on how to connect those “exception dots.”

Kate even invited me to visit her class room once and I turned her down. She would have been in the room, even and I couldn’t deal with it.

Reflecting on my life, I can see why I am this way. I didn’t have any siblings, so I never had an objective view of my parents dealing with other children. All I knew was how they dealt with me, which was decent enough.

In the days when I was young, it wasn’t too cool for a boy to earn any money babysitting. That was girl’s work, and still is to some extent. So I shoveled sidewalks, mowed lawns and did a young man’s work. I never had any apprentice or journeyman training in child-rearing techniques.

But I did get some on-the-job training. My son was born in 1969 and he was a part of my life for almost four years. I interacted with him as any father would. I have memories of him being a good boy and easy to entertain. But I have deleted from my memory banks most of the images of changing diapers, teaching him to walk and

talk, and all those mundane aspects of infancy and toddler-hood.

I do retain two pretty good stories about John, both ill-suited for recanting here. Ask me after the service and I’ll tell you.

Whatever apprehension I might have had about infants and toddlers was dispelled by my time with John when he was very young. So it’s not the very young children that scared me. It was the older ones, the ones who knew more than me about whatever I was supposed to be doing. The ones who could pick me apart like a soft-shell crab.

I met my daughters when they were 10 and 13, fully matured, educated in the ways of the world and knowledgeable about every topic under the sun. I was kinda clumsy with them. What did I know about young girls? I am grateful to this day that they didn’t kill me.

They were in my house for about ten years, and I remember it being a pretty good time. They were good girls. Except when she tore down the swimming pool and flooded the neighborhood. Or when she snuck out her bedroom window for a night on the town and returned in a squad car.

Despite all that and despite my bumbling presence, they turned out to be decent and responsible women and one of them just produced a daughter and made me a grandfather. Which is good. I know what I’m doing around infants and toddlers.

And I suppose as she grows older, Shayla will teach me what I have to do with a young girl. I am grateful for the second chance at this, because I didn’t acquit myself well the first time around. And if my grand daughter gets outta hand, I can just turn her over to her mother and be done for the day. Ahhh, the life of a grand parent.

You may know I ride a motorcycle; less frequently as I grow older. But I am seriously considering purchasing for Shayla a pink electric-powered bike I saw the other day. We’ll tear up the asphalt

together. Her mother will be unable to resist, because she loves all things pink.

My relations with children started to turn around for me when I became the minister of this church. I began to get gifts from children in the religious education program. I was gifted with artwork, both good and unrecognizable as such. I got one little piece with a few choice words inscribed on it: “World’s Best Minister,” or something like that. Boy, that really made me feel scared, humbled and proud all at once.

“Why are these kids giving me these little treasures they made in the RE program?” I asked myself. And why was Sophie McCurdy always hugging my legs when she saw me? What was going on here?

Turns out I was giving *them* something—stories, encouragement and a special place in the life of this church. I was making them part of my life without knowing it and without any notion other than to include them in worship and in the culture of the church. And they were grateful for it.

In seminary, there’s no training to be a minister for children. They leave you to your own devices for that, unless you want to be a minister of religious education. So, although I was schooled in church administration and preaching and theology, I had no exposure to the process that children go through in maturity and how it might connect to church. I am grateful to Maddie Kertay, Dolores Wood, Amy Ziegler and Jamie Sullivan for filling in the holes in my preparation for the ministry.

No one arrives at parenthood completely trained and ready for everything. Sorta like the ministry. We learn by doing. As we heard in the reading from Noel, Michael Wells learned from his daughter to play with passion; love what you do and have fun.

Have fun. I often say that Cyndi Lauper is my favorite theologian, because of her song, “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun.” I say “People Just Wanna Have Fun.” And that’s another lesson that Michael Wells’ daughter taught him.

JAY. It was a spontaneous eruption of laughter that would have made Mt. Vesuvius look tame. My daughter Jenna and her friend Kira burst into such an uncontrollable cloudburst of giggling that I think even the heavens joined in. If giggles were bubbles, the whole world would have drowned in a sea of soap.

It was Saturday evening. Jenna, Kira, my wife Laure, and the kids’ grandmother—Mamie Rose, as they’d called her from birth—were playing a serious game of Scrabble. Well, it was as serious as you can get with two eleven-year-old girls. For nearly two hours all was quiet and serene. I was peacefully watching TV in the next room, oblivious to the “Game of the Century,” taking place in the kitchen.

Then the craziness started, slowly at first but quickly gathering steam. First, I heard my daughter start to lose it; then Kira joined in. At this point, Laure and Mamie Rose tried everything in their adult power to calm them down, so they could finish the game. After all, the New York Times was probably going to call any minute for an interview on the outcome of this global event.

I jumped up and joined the adult side, urging the girls to be still. I couldn’t hear my movie. I was serious—deadly serious. I wanted to watch my movie, and that’s all I cared about. Laure and Mamie Rose wanted to finish the game and that’s what they cared about.

After saying my piece, I went back to my movie, thinking I’d calmed the storm. But it didn’t last long. Instead of stopping, the giggles got louder. The whole affair was running out of control. I made a second try for quiet, but something told me I was losing this battle. I still had the support of the ladies, but the looks on their faces weren’t as stern as they’d been earlier. Whose side were they on, anyway? I

made it clear I wanted to watch my movie without any more noise.

Just when I was convinced my message was received, the sound of the giggles went up a few notches. I couldn't believe it. Wasn't anybody listening to me? Was I talking to an empty room? For a moment, I questioned myself.

But, enough was enough. I was close to my boiling point. This was supposed to be my little time of escape and relaxation—watching a movie. Was that asking too much? Was I being selfish? No, not at all, I concluded.

Having settled that matter, I decided to storm the kitchen this time and finish the job I'd started earlier. But as I entered the room, I stopped dead in my tracks. Not only were Jenna and Kira still rolling on the floor giggling, with tears streaming down their cheeks, but my wife and Mamie Rose had joined the ride. It was an incredible sight.

What could I do? I watched in disbelief, my mind going a million miles a second. Then it hit me—the answer to one of the great mysteries of life. Why, especially, do kids giggle? Kids' giggles were invented for a reason. And now I knew why.

Somewhere, many centuries ago, someone understood that every adult needs a break from it all. We need to escape through a secret tunnel, just for a little while, to remember what it was like, and what it can be like again. To remind us what not to lose, and to hang on, with all our might and power, to the ability to have fun. All we need, once in awhile, is to go through the Tunnel of Giggles. And the only guide is a kid.

That night the tunnel opened wide for all of us, including me. Within minutes, I joined the ruckus. How could I not? What movie? Who cared? That night I understood the power of Jenna's giggles. They were ordinary giggles that became anything but ordinary when my daughter and her friends got rolling. That night reminded me there's

no such word in any children's dictionary as "ordinary." That night I saw only an extraordinary sight.

Hearing Jenna's giggles, seeing her taking the other adults back, way back, if only for an hour or so, to when they were kids, amazed and enthralled me. Bitten by Jenna's giggle bug, I think my wife and Mamie Rose wished they too, would never stop.

After that experience, I vowed never to forget Jenna's lesson. Nothing in life can be taken for granted. Nothing in life is ordinary. Not unless I let it be ordinary. Not unless I refuse to enter the Tunnel of Giggles once in awhile.

MINISTER. Michael Wells says that we should be more child-like. Or better, that we should strive to perceive the world and react to it as we did when we were young. He suggests we should be more trusting, that we should be awed by life and that we should endeavor to enjoy every moment to the fullest. I have heard such advice before.

That quality of children—what can we call it? Naïvete? That word has negative connotations today. And so do many other adjectives used to describe a person whose personality is child-like: artless, gullible, trusting, simple, innocent, unsuspecting, unsophisticated, guileless, plain, ingenuous, open-hearted, inexperienced, impressionable and born yesterday.

As I paged through the dictionary and thesaurus in search of a good word for desirable child-like behavior, I began to think that our language is constructed to reflect a belief that it's *not* a good idea to be child-like; that it's better to be sophisticated, affected, mannered and pretentious; better to be cautious, suspicious, wary, cagey, distrustful, educated, experienced, blasé and dry behind the ears.

I finally came to one word that was not in the least pejorative and yet describes the quality of a child: *natural*. And that's it. Nothing

wrong with being more natural. Let's all be more natural. Jesse, we'll make an exception for your tattoos.

Unfortunately, that quality is bred out of children as they mature. We are hurt, sometimes, by those we trust, often our parents. So we learn caution and suspicion. We lose our awe of the world because we see it every day. And so we learn to pose or to affect a pose. And crazy as it seems, we often feel pain and sorrow more intensely than joy or exuberance and we wallow in it. And so we learn that we can feel good about feeling bad.

One thing we know in this world, something adults have known forever—we must protect ourselves, so we really can't be more child-like. We can't be like Peter Pan and Wendy Darling, living forever like a child. That's why it's called *Neverland*.

We gotta grow up. We can't live like children.

Or can we?

Can we throw caution to the wind and live without fear? Can we see magic in mundane events? Can we enjoy life as we did when we were young? Can we?

If we were more child-like, will someone look out for us like our parents did? Here's a good question to answer that question: If you met someone living like a child, trusting everyone, stunned by everyday events, would you try to protect her from herself?

My sermon ends with this question: Can we truly live the life of a child and still live a responsible and secure life? Can we throw ourselves on the tide of life, trusting that someone will throw us a life vest when the waves pound us to submission?

Or are we fated to be free and open and trusting and naïve and *natural* for just a fleeting period when we are blissfully unaware of

our extreme good fortune and the blessings we inherit as a child?

Or is there a balance?

HYMN 123, Spirit of Life

BENEDICTION

Let us not look back in anger,
nor forward in fear,
but around in awareness.
Support the weak.
Help the afflicted.
Love all souls.
Serve the spirit of life,
and rejoice in the power of love.

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.

PRELUDES: Chopin, Opus 26, Nos. 6 & 7