

2010 Paper & Stone 2011

A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE

Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga

January 2, 2011

Good morning and welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Jeff Briere and I am the minister of this church. Just want to make sure y'all found your regular seat. Any problems? Don't worry, it's not a communion table. Let's get our blood flowing in 2011 with Hymn 361, "Enter, Rejoice and Come In." No. 361.

HYMN 361, Enter Rejoice and Come In

Enter, rejoice, and come in.
Enter, rejoice, and come in.
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

Open your ears to the song.
Open your ears to the song.
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

Open your hearts everyone.
Open your hearts everyone.
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

Don't be afraid of some change
Don't be afraid of some change
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

Enter, rejoice, and come in.
Enter, rejoice, and come in.
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

GREETINGS

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 reminder to parents: At the end of this service, please go immediately to the RE classroom where your children are, and pick them up.

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.

Kate got a little loose this week and found some jazz pieces for us today. She begins with one called "Easy Does It." Which, she says, was not so easy.

PRELUDE: Easy Does It

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Kate wears a necklace around her neck. On it are a heart with a key, which I gave her, and another half-a-heart. The other half-a-heart

hangs around the neck of her daughter. Awhile ago, she misplaced her necklace, and thought it was lost. She looked for it here, there and everywhere. Not finding it, she drilled her friends, her daughter and anyone else she thought might know where it was. I asked her if the one around her neck is the one she sought. She reached up to it and felt happy that her necklace was found.

And the next day, when she went out to lunch with Maddie and Carmen, they asked her if she found her necklace. She said “Yes,” as if it had been lost and recovered. In fact, Kate never lost it. She had it all the time.

The real enemies of our life are the “oughts” and the “ifs.” They pull us backward into the unalterable past and forward into the unpredictable future. But real life takes place in the here and the now. God is a God of the present. God is always in the moment, be that moment hard or easy, joyful or painful.

The great teachings unanimously emphasize that all the peace, wisdom, and joy in the universe are already within us; we don’t have to gain, develop, or attain them. Like someone standing in a beautiful park with eyes shut tight, there’s no need to imagine trees, flowers, water, birds, and sky; we merely need to open our eyes and realize what is already here, who we already are.

What you seek, what makes you happy, is within your grasp. It may even be hanging around your neck.

SONG: We Are Here

And as long as we all have what we need right here, we are gonna learn to sing some jazz. Y’all know what jazz is, right? Can you define it? Not easy, right? In your bulletin, I reprinted what Wikipedia has to say about jazz.

I always thought jazz was all about improvisation. I always thought that the musician would play the melody, and then change a few notes in it, change a few more and bend the melody until it was almost unrecognizable and then bring it back again. And some jazz is like that. But jazz also has other characteristics, and you can read about them in your bulletin.

I wanna talk today about the blue note. The blue note.

Do you know about the blue note? Kate, would you play us a blue note?

Do you hear that? It doesn’t sound quite right, does it? It’s unresolved, like it’s full of tension and needs to relax. Kate, would you play the blue note again and then relax it? Did you hear that?

Now the blue note did not originate with jazz. It is as old as music, and through time, it was known as a seventh chord or a leading tone, because it always led to something else. The music always relaxed. Can you play a fuller version of a seventh chord and its resolution?

When jazz developed, it used the seventh chord differently. Jazz highlighted the seventh, hung on it, and played with it, instead of using it as a transition or as a leading tone. Jazz began in the African American communities of the south, and at that time, the lives of African Americans were hard, most people were very poor and many were miserable. And I think that the blue note developed because their lives were full of tension, because resolution and relaxation were harder for them to find.

Kate found a song for us to sing today that has a blue note. It’s called “We Are Here,” and it’s a song about what we do in life. We’ll sing the song as a response in the service today. Kate would you teach us to sing this song now?

We are here to give birth
to the dreams of our lives.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

CHILDREN'S RECESSIONAL

We are here to give birth
to the dreams of our lives.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

We are here to give voice
to the dreams of our selves.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

OFFERTORY: Things to Come

Louis Armstrong was one of the most admired and talented jazzmen of his era. His music was accessible and very popular. One afternoon in the spring of 1928, Armstrong was strolling through his South Side Chicago neighborhood with Bud Freeman, who played tenor saxophone. They came upon a group of street musicians who were playing "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," a tune written by Armstrong's wife, Lil, and recently recorded by Armstrong's group Hot Five. The trumpet player was laboring his way through Armstrong's own solo, note for note.

When the trumpeter finished, Armstrong clapped politely, then stepped closer, not wanting to embarrass him, and murmured, "Man, you're playing that too slow."

"How would *you* know?" asked the trumpet player, indignant.

"I'm Louis Armstrong. That's my chorus you're playing."

When he and Freeman passed by the next day, the musicians had put out a hand-lettered sign next to their tin cup: "PUPILS OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG."

We'll collect the morning offering now, for the support and ministry of this church. No matter if you're a pupil or a teacher, 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.

Kate, please lead us in our blue note Hymn of Thanksgiving.

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

We are here to give birth
to the dreams of our lives.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

We are here to give voice

to the dreams of our selves.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

ORISON

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

Today, as this is the first service in 2011, I am reminded in my prayers of the members of this church who died in 2010. Let us remember in silence JEANNE YOUNG, OLLIE GRIGSBY, RAY SOLOMON and NANCY LANE WRIGHT.

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.

Please hold close to your heart those who are suffering and rejoice with those who are jubilant, recall with fondness those members who left us and never forget those who suffer the fallout of war.

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

RESPONSE

We are here to give birth
to the dreams of our lives.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

We are here to give voice
to the dreams of our selves.

We are here to sing,
We are here to dream.

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.

Let It Go

Let It Go. Just let it go.

This is the second day and the first Sunday of 2011. We have 363 and 51 more to go. And today we're going to let it go.

There is something that has to go, something that needs to go, something that ought to go.

There is something that has to stop. It's been long enough now. It ought to stop.

Something to let go—it might be harmless, really, but it's done its duty, its time is past, and now it's time for this thing to go.

I'm talking about something to be rid of, like an old, worn-out pair of shoes that fit and feel familiar only because you've worn them so long—not because they protect your feet or cushion your heel or look good or do anything that a pair of shoes is supposed to do.

It could be a haircut, a car, a bike or a shirt. It could be, but more likely, it's a relationship, a feeling or a crutch. It's like a set of emotional training wheels, or a psychological security blanket that you don't need any more, because you've outgrown it.

It could be a bad habit. It could be a guilty pleasure. It could be an secret indulgence.

It might be something harmless. Has been harmless. But not now. Could be something that was once benign, but now could bring you down or hold you back or really screw you up.

This is something without which, you could devote more attention to what you should do; what you could do; what you would do.

I think you know what this something is. I think you know what I'm talking about. You've been thinking about this now for several minutes.

And you are gonna feel so much better once this thing has gone away. Trust me. And I will give you a vision this morning, a vision of success. I don't mean to sound like a side-show barker, but this morning, you will see this thing disappear right before your very eyes. You will see it dissolve away and having that vision of success to guide you in 2011, you will succeed in ridding yourself of that thing that has to go.

I have some paper here, and I want you to take a sheet and hold it for a moment until everyone has one. You will write something on this paper, so if you need a pen or pencil, take one as well.

This paper is sorta delicate and fragile, so treat it nice. You can share a pen but you can't share a paper. Well, I don't know, really, now that I think about it. I suppose if you and your spouse or partner want to be rid of something together you could use one sheet of paper between you.

One word. Just one word. That's all. Write just one word on the sheet of paper. One word that represents the thing that has to go. One word. If you think you have to write a phrase, think bigger. Think real big picture. Go to the top of the category and find the one word that represents that thing that has to go.

If you are sharing a paper with someone, you can write the same word on both sides.

When you have written the word, step up to the magic bowl here and drop your paper into the water, and watch it disappear before your very eyes. Watch it dissolve away to nothingness, leaving behind only shreds of what was. If you want to make that thing *really go away*, with this magic wand, you can stir the magic water for and it

will go away faster. Just stir the magic water, though; don't whack the magic bowl.

Full disclosure: This is not magic. This is not a magic wand, this is not magic water and the paper is not magic, but only treated to quickly dissolve in water. But you—you are extraordinary. You now have a vision of the future and you are fully capable of divesting yourself of whatever that thing is that has to go. This is not magic—you still have to do the work to make that thing go away. But now you have a vision; a vision of success that will guide you through 2011. You saw that thing go away. You saw it. And in time, that thing will go away.

So let it go, just let it go.

Bring It On

Bring It On. Just bring it on.

This is the second day and the first Sunday of 2011. We have 363 and 51 more to go. And today we're going to bring it on.

Bring on the commitment! Bring on the energy! Bring on the good stuff! Bring it on!

There is something you must do, but haven't.
There is something you should do, but wonder if you could.
There is something you want to do, but think you can't.

There is something that someone wants you to do, but you haven't heard, you haven't listened, or you haven't begun.

There is something that someone needs you to do, but you haven't thought about it or maybe you forgot it.

There is something you've dreamed of doing, but you're scared of it.

There is something that demands your attention; something that, when done, will allow you to live a fuller life; something that while not completing you, puts another brick in the wall, to put a different spin on Roger Waters.

It might be an uncompleted project or an incomplete relationship. It might be an unwritten letter or an unspoken gratitude. It might be undone, un-begun or unfinished. It might be unpleasant, but it's not unhealthy.

It's been on your mind, over your head and under your skin for quite awhile now. It's there when you go to sleep and it doesn't move overnight. It's there when you wake up.

You can't shake it and you can't fake it. But you can make it.

It's been on the back burner for too long, and it's about to boil over. And if you don't pay attention to it right now, there will be hell to pay and a big mess to clean up.

It might be a job you must do or a break you must take. It might *seem* hard, it might *seem* scary, it might *seem* too big, too much or too *too*. But it's not. I have it on the best authority that this thing you gotta do is *not* hard, *not* scary *not* big, *not* too much and *not* too too.

Furthermore and also, too and to boot, it's within your capabilities. I mean you could do this blindfolded, with one hand tied behind you and standing on one leg on a stepladder in the middle of I-75 on Friday afternoon!

I think you know what it is you gotta do. I think you know what I'm talking about. You've been thinking about this now for several minutes.

Bring on the commitment! Bring on the energy! Bring on the good stuff! Bring it on!

Now on the table in front of you are several stones and markers. They are commitment stones. They are magical commitment stones and magical markers. Whatever is written on a magical commitment stone with a magical marker eventually infuses itself into the owner of the stone. Provided the owner consults the stone frequently, like a few times a week.

So if you were to have a commitment stone with the word “gusto” written on it, and you consulted the stone a few times a week, perhaps put it in a prominent place where you’d see it and touch it often, maybe rub it with your elbow, eventually, you’d develop some gusto.

One of those stones in front of you is yours. Go get it. And get a marker, too. Don’t worry if there are no markers left by the time you find your stone. You’ll have to share the markers. And if you choose one of these really dark stones here, I have a special magical white marker for them. It’ll all work out.

One word. Just one word. That’s all.

One word that represents the thing that you gotta do.

One word. If you think you have to write a phrase, think bigger. Think real big picture. Go to the top of the category and find the one word that represents that thing that you gotta do.

Here are some words that might work for you:

hope, smile, silent,
vigor, alignment, happy,
love, see, courage
compassion, animation, flexible
energy, family, comfort
look, healing, caring
embrace, proficiency, understand
passion, voice, connection

service, expand, open

Just one word. That’s all. Write it on the stone and eventually you will do what you must do. I guarantee it. Write just one word on your commitment stone.

Full disclosure: These stones are not magical, nor are the markers. They are ordinary stones from a stone quarry and ordinary markers from the Sharpie Factory. But you—you are extraordinary. You have the energy and the strength and the determination to do what you gotta do. Plus, in addition and also, you now have your own personal commitment stone which will assure your eventual success.

You are determined to do this thing; you are prepared, you have all you need. You are committed and now you have a magical commitment stone as a symbol of your determination to do what you gotta do. And you can’t go backwards now. You wrote with a permanent marker. You can’t undo what you have done, because it’s carved in stone.

Put your stone in a place where you will see it often. Touch it.

And bring it on. Just bring it on.

And while you’re bringin’ it, bring your voice to Hymn 350, “The Ceaseless Flow of Endless Time.” Number 350.

HYMN 350, The Ceaseless Flow of Endless Time

The ceaseless flow of endless time
no one can check or stay;
We’ll view the past with no regret,
nor future with dismay.

The present slips into the past,
and changes melt away

The breaking of tomorrow's dawn
begins a new today.

The past and future ever meet
in the eternal now;
To make each day a thing complete
shall be our New Year's vow.

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

We are here today, at the beginning of a new year.

No year has ever been like this year, and no year will equal it.

Like a newborn baby taking her first breath,
it glows with potential.

What is possible in this new year can seem limitless.

Yet some may approach this new year with apprehension.

As their bodies become more frail and vulnerable
they anticipate less, not more.

For them, possibilities narrow with time,
as the sun sinks slowly toward the horizon.

Like an old, aching man, releasing his last breath
the light may go out.

Whether your possibilities
are expanding or contracting

The planetary consciousness
vibrates with growth and development.

The interconnections between us
increase exponentially

Along with what Google knows about everything.

And ecological stresses and resource depletion loom ahead
like a brick wall before a runaway train.

No matter what happens to us in this coming year,
we will be changed.

May that change move us
toward compassion and away from hate,
toward justice and away from oppression,
toward the good, the beautiful and the true.

In hopeful anticipation, let us join together in the celebration of life.

POSTLUDE: Yes, Indeed

Yes indeed
Yes indeed
I've got that feelin' in me
Yes indeed

You'll shout when it hits you

Yes indeed
Yes, you'll shout when it hits you
Yes indeed
When the spirit moves you
you'll shout hallelujah
When it hits you, you holler
Yes indeed

It comes out if it's in you, yes indeed
Yes indeed
Makes you shout, Jack, it sends you
Yes indeed
When the spirit moves you
you'll shout hallelujah
When it hits you, you holler
Yes indeed

When the spirit moves you
you'll shout hallelujah
When it hits you, you holler
When it hits you, you holler
When it hits you, you holler
Yes indeed

Parents, please leave now to pick up your children in the RE
Department and we'll all enjoy a time of fellowship with the best
fair-trade coffee in southeastern Tennessee.