



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.

[Silence] 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 Hymn 21, "For the Beauty of the Earth." No. 21.

HYMN 21, For the Beauty of the Earth

A Religious Literacy Quiz
A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE
 Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga
 October 17, 2010

For the beauty of the Earth,
For the splendor of the Skies,
For the Love which from our birth,
Over and around us lies.
Source of All, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony,
linking sense to sound and sight.
Source of All, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour,
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light.
Source of All, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human care,
sister, brother, parent, child,
For the kinship we all share,
For all gentle thoughts and mild.
Source of All, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

GREETINGS

BONNY. 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*.

There is no religious education for children today, so the kids are

welcome to stay with us through the service. However, the nursery is open for business, so if younger children want to go there, they can.

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 going on around here is to sign up for a weekly e-mail. To do that, please see Chris in the office.

This morning we are pleased to welcome Siegmund Haus to our service. He begins with a piece by Edward MacDowell.

PRELUDE: "To a Wild Rose"

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Since we began with a hymn honoring Our Mother Earth, let's light our chalice with a responsive prayer to Mother Earth by Jo Poore. Your words are in italics.

Mother, Father, God, Universal Power. Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life.

*Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation,
as we strive to respect all the living beings on this planet.*

Penetrate our souls with the beauty of this earth, as we attune ourselves to the rhythm and flow of the seasons.

Awaken our minds with the knowledge to achieve a world in perfect harmony And grant us the wisdom to realize that we can have heaven on earth.

STORY: Potential

Good morning! I have brought something with me this morning, and you are not going to believe me when I tell you what it is. Would anyone like to venture a guess?

Well, those are all good guesses, but none of them is correct. Actually, I am holding in my hand a mighty oak tree. It's about 150 feet tall. *[No...shaking of heads]*

Well, maybe I should say I am holding in my hand a potential mighty oak tree. Anybody want to guess again what I am holding in my hand? *[An acorn?]*

That's right, I am holding an acorn. You see, acorns like this one grow on tall oak trees. And when an acorn falls to the ground in just the right spot and at just the right time, it can sprout and become a tiny oak seedling that may eventually grow up to be a tall oak tree.

So what I am holding is the possibility for a mighty oak tree. It takes a long time for a mighty oak tree to grow tall. Some are as old as one hundred years. But the oak tree has to start somewhere, and it starts with a tiny acorn just like this one.

You know, it is sort of that way with each of you. Inside each of you is an acorn. Inside each of you is something called potential.

po—TEN—shull! Say it now. Potential!

Whaddya got? *Potential!*

Whaddya got? *Potential!*

Whaddya got? *Potential!*

And what is potential? Potential is possibility. When we are created, the possibility for greatness was put inside us. If we are able to discover the wonderful potential that is within us and nurture it, we

may grow up to do something important and special. One of the aims of the religious education here at our church is to help each of you to find and develop your potential.

So we can all grow up to be oak trees, right?

We won't grow up to be mighty oak trees, will we?

But we can grow up to be special in many other ways.

Thanks for listening to my story. You are free to go find your potential now.

CHILDREN'S RECESSIONAL

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 your go.

OFFERTORY: "Adoration"

Toward the end of his life, George Bernard Shaw was challenged by a reporter with this question: "Mr. Shaw, you have been around some of the most famous people in the world. You are on a first-name basis with royalty, world-renowned authors, artists, teachers, and dignitaries from every part of the world. If you had your life to live over and could be anybody, who would you want to be?"

"I would choose," replied Shaw, "to be the man George Bernard

Shaw could have been, but never was.”

What is your answer? Who is it you want to be? What is it you want your life to become? If you had your life to live over, what would be different?

Po-ten-shull. You won't find your potential attempting to be like someone else, or achieving what others have done. You find your potential by pursuing the untapped reservoir within you.

Lying on his deathbed, Rabbi Zusia was surrounded by his devoted disciples. Suddenly his eyes opened wide and a look of great anguish flickered on his face.

“Rabbi, what is the matter?” his disciples cried.

“I dreamed that I came before the Almighty,” Zusia replied, in a stricken voice. “The Holy One did not say to me, ‘Zusia! Why were you not Moses?’ And he did not say to me, ‘Zusia! Why were you not Jacob?’ And he did not say to me, ‘Why were you not the prophet Isaiah?’”

Rabbi Zusia looked into the eyes of his disciples. “What the Almighty said was, ‘Zusia! Why were you not Zusia?’”

The question will be simply why did you not become you, the fully active, realized person that only you had the potential of becoming.

We'll collect the morning offering now, for the support and ministry of this church. And you have the potential to make a generous contribution—I can feel it right now—because today we double the plate. A generous member of this church will match your donations this morning up to \$300.

This is not a joke. It's a gimmick.

Every dollar you donate today is matched by this generous person until he runs out of money and that will be \$300. If you don't know what that means, I have prepared a chart for all the popular denominations of American paper currency and it shows what happens when we double the plate. Pretty clever, hunh?

And if you want to off-load all those heavy coins, coins work as well. Even dollar coins. Does anyone here have a modern-day dollar coin? That would be an Eisenhower Dollar, a Susan B. Anthony, a Sacagawea, a Native American or a Presidential Dollar. If you drop it in the plate, I will donate five dollars for it.

Actually, if you have a two dollar bill and donate it to the plate, I will match it ten-fold. Please understand, I won't match a two-dollar donation with twenty, only a two-dollar bill. So that would make two equal twenty.

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, 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.

Please wish Susan Kennedy good luck tomorrow as she has a hip replacement. And keep Martha Berry in your thoughts and prayers as she recuperates from an operation. And lastly, offer a prayer of gratitude that all 33 Chilean miners were extricated safely from the mine which collapsed and trapped them for 69 days.

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 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

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 its sustaining and renewing
sought and found.

Here may growth of spirit be our purpose;
such understanding as shall lead us
to new ways in which to blend our lives.

SERMON: Religious Literacy

Last week, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released the results of national poll. They called 3,412 randomly selected adults from May 19 through June 6, 2010, on land lines and cell phones, in English and Spanish. They asked fifteen questions about religion and some other questions to make an accurate poll. They call it the US Religious Knowledge Survey. You may have read the articles in the newspaper about it.

Overall, Americans didn't do so well on this survey, scoring about

50%. If we examine the demographics of the people who were polled, we see that atheists and agnostics, Jews and Mormons were among the highest-scoring groups, outperforming evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics on questions about the core teachings, the history and leading figures of major world religions.

Atheists and agnostics average about 62%, Jews and Mormons about the same. Protestants about 50%, Catholics a bit worse at 46%. Maybe atheists, agnostics, Jews and Mormons are better educated? Perhaps, but they perform better than other groups on the survey even after controlling for differing levels of education. There was no breakout for Unitarian Universalists.

On questions just about Christianity, Mormons scored 65% and white evangelical Protestants, 60%. Jews, atheists and agnostics stand out for their knowledge of other world religions; Jews scored almost 72%, three times better than the national average and atheists and agnostics scored 68%, 2.5 times better than the national average. Atheists, agnostics and Jews also do particularly well on questions about the role of religion in public life.

You might wonder why Jews, Mormons and non-religious people know more about religion, and I have one answer. Minorities tend to know more about the majority than the majority know about themselves. This would explain why atheists, agnostics, Mormons and Jews know more about religions than the majority Protestants. So if you are a Unitarian Universalist, you might do very well on the quiz. We'll see in a moment.

So what does this all mean? It's really not news, I think. I preached about American's astounding lack of knowledge about religion in March of 2009, when I used this book. This is *Religious Literacy*, by Stephen Prothero. His point was that in these days, when religious zealots wreak havoc among civilized people, it pays to have a decent knowledge about religion.

He points to the firestorm that killed the Branch Davidians, and says that if Janet Reno or someone in the government had a knowledge of end times theology, that the raid in Waco, Texas might have been more peaceable. He points to Balbir Sodhi, who was murdered a few days after 9-11 by a vigilante who thought that because he wore a turban, he must be a Muslim. He wasn't. He was a Sikh.

Prothero points to the appalling lack of knowledge about Islam that came to light in the aftermath of 9-11. In those days, you didn't need one hand to count the number of Arabic-speaking experts in the State Department who knew something about Islam.

Religious literacy, Prothero contends, is critical for modern life in a shrinking and multi-cultural world. I would add that it's critical for southeast Tennessee, once a provincial place, but now becoming more cosmopolitan.

When I read the news reports, I thought I'd take the test. You can take the test yourself at the Pew website and you can read all sorts of background material and other findings. If you want the website address, see me after the service.

I aced the test. But as I told a friend, I spent nearly ninety thousand dollars and four years preparing for the test. Clint Cooper, the religion writer for the Times-Free Press, scored 80%, which is pretty good for an American Protestant.

Did you take the test? Well, here's your chance. I thought we'd take the test this morning, so I brought it with me. Don't answer aloud. Here's the first question.

Which Bible figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt?

Job
Elijah

Moses
Abraham

What was Mother Teresa's religion?

Catholic
Jewish
Buddhist
Mormon
Hindu

Which of the following is NOT one of the Ten Commandments?

Do not commit adultery
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
Do not steal
Keep the Sabbath holy

When does the Jewish Sabbath begin?

Friday
Saturday
Sunday

Is Ramadan...?

The Hindu festival of lights
A Jewish day of atonement
The Islamic holy month

Which of the following best describes the Catholic teaching about the bread and wine used for Communion?

The bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In which religion are Vishnu and Shiva central figures?

Islam
Hinduism
Taoism

Which Bible figure is most closely associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering?

Job
Elijah
Moses
Abraham

What was Joseph Smith's religion?

Catholic
Jewish
Buddhist
Mormon
Hindu

According to rulings by the US Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to lead a class in prayer, or not?

Yes, permitted
No, not permitted

According to rulings by the US Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to read from the Bible as an example of literature, or not?

Yes, permitted

No, not permitted

What religion do most people in Pakistan consider themselves?

Buddhist
Hindu
Muslim
Christian

What was the name of the person whose writings and actions inspired the Protestant Reformation?

Martin Luther
Thomas Aquinas
John Wesley

Which of these religions aims at nirvana, the state of being free from suffering?

Islam
Buddhism
Hinduism

Which one of these preachers participated in the period of religious activity known as the First Great Awakening?

Jonathan Edwards
Charles Finney
Billy Graham
Billy Sunday

So how did you do? Not so well?

In order for the poll to be accurate, the pollsters rotated the questions they asked; so there were actually 32 questions, but they boiled the results down to the fifteen you just saw. Here are some interesting

items they discovered in the course of asking the questions that were not published:

Considering the Bible, the Torah, the Koran or any other holy scripture, 35% of Americans believe that their holy book is the word of God to be taken literally word-for-word; 28% believe it's the word of God, but not to be taken literally and another 28% believe it's not the word of God at all.

52% of respondents believe that humans and other living things have evolved over time; 40% believe that humans and other living things have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

65% correctly identified Zeus as the King of Gods in ancient Greek mythology; 54% correctly identified the Koran as the holy scripture of Islam.

43% of Jews do not recognize that Maimonides, one of the most venerated rabbis in history, was Jewish.

Only 47% of Americans know that the Dalai Lama is Buddhist. And only 27% of Americans correctly answered that most people in Indonesia—the country with the world's largest Muslim population—are Muslims.

And 72% of respondents went to public schools.

Now let's have a little fun. I have a Unitarian Universalist literacy quiz for you. I asked a few colleagues for their suggestions and made a few of my own. Here are twelve questions about this church and Unitarian Universalism.

A word about the first question, which concerns William Ellery Channing. It was suggested by a colleague, and I replied that it was too esoteric, that I was looking for questions that were challenging, but I didn't want to flunk everyone. He thought it was an easy

question, I thought it was pretty hard. So I shot my mouth off and wrote him that I'd bet \$100 that fewer than 30% of signed-up, registered members of UU congregations could not answer correctly *any* question about William Ellery Channing.

And he took my bet. If 30% or fewer of his members do not know the answer to the first question, he will donate \$100 to the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center. If 30% or more do know the answer, I will give \$100 to an organization of my choice.

Here's the first question.

At the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore in 1819, William Ellery Channing preached a 90-minute sermon entitled...

“The Transient and Permanent”

“Abolish the Abolisher”

“*Unitarian Christianity*”

“A Faith for All Seasons”

This church is in which district of the UUA?

Mid-South District

Thomas Jefferson District

Joseph Priestly District

Clara Barton District

The word “Unitarian” means...

Freedom of belief

Reason over faith

Acceptance of other religions

God is a unity

The word “Universalist” means...

A world-wide religion

All are saved

God is the universe

A religion for everyone

Since 1952, this congregation has met in how many places?
(*Trick Question!*)

Eight

Four

Five—the County Courthouse, on Dodds Avenue, Spring Creek School in East Ridge, downstairs and up here

Two

It happened in 1863. What was it?

The Unitarians ordained a woman

The Universalists ordained a woman

The Unitarians merged with the Congregationalists

The Universalists merged with the Reformed Church

James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo were...

The first husband & wife ministers

The first male & female minister team

Unitarians killed in Selma, Alabama

Freedom Riders killed in Montgomery, Alabama

The group of young people, both Unitarians and Universalists, that pre-dated the merger was...

LRY [Liberal Religious Youth]

COA

ALUUMNI

YUUTH

In the Bible, Michael Servetus could not find...

proof that Jesus is God
proof that Mary was a virgin
proof of the Trinity
proof that God exists

Unitarians are descended from...

the Puritans
the Pilgrims
the Church of England
All the above

Universalists are descended from...

the Methodists
the German Brethren
the Church of England
Two of the above

Rev. William Sinkford is notable because...

First President of the UUA
First African American President of the UUA
Youngest President of the UUA
First Methodist to be President of the UUA

Rev. Peter Morales is...

Oldest President of the UUA
Current President of the UUA
Youngest President of the UUA
First Hispanic President of the UUA
Two of the above

OK, enough for today. Did you do very well on this quiz? No? Well, let me use this opportunity to plug the upcoming UU101 class. I may not cover this quiz, but I will cover the basics of Unitarian and Universalist history and the history of this church. Watch the UUpdate, I will announce it soon.

I think the reason that Americans as whole didn't do so well on the Pew quiz is because they just don't care about religion anymore. It used to be that the church was central to the lives of many people. Honestly, I cannot speak for Jews or Muslims here. Used to be that people's lives were filled with church socials, church meetings, church this and church that. Not any more. The remnants of that culture you can find in small country churches today, but they are disappearing quickly.

In metropolitan areas and increasingly, in rural areas, there are so many more opportunities for spiritual development. And there are so many more activities and distractions on Sunday morning or Friday evening or any time of the week.

I think that the single most important thing that the church used to provide—a community—is no longer *only* available at a religious society. People find their communities at football games, soccer games, book clubs, garden clubs, and so many more organizations that make no demands on their spiritual nature.

Furthermore, religion is not the haven it once was. Used to be that much of the world was a mystery. And frightening. Religion helped people cope with their fears. But today, with nearly every physical phenomena explained, the world is not so scary a place. And if it's not yet explained, it's understandable. So people don't need religion as a solace anymore.

So if people go to church, I think a huge percentage of them go to be sociable, to find people like themselves and whom they like. They want to be part of a community. I don't think people are concerned

about saving their souls so much anymore. And if they like the people and like the sense of community, people will put up with a lot of religious nonsense that they would otherwise reject. I think people go along to get along.

I can't change any of that, so I have made peace with the prospect that my calling is to something that in the future may not be a religion. I don't know now whether that's good or bad.

Please join me now in singing Hymn 34, "Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire." Number 34.

HYMN 34, "Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire"

Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain;
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be given by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship and are freed.

BENEDICTION

Continuing our theme of nature and Mother Earth, for a benediction, I have a poem by Edward Hays.

O sacred season of Autumn, be my teacher,

for I wish to learn the virtue of contentment.
As I gaze upon your full-colored beauty,
I sense all about you
an at-homeness with your amber riches.

You are the season of retirement,
of full barns and harvested fields.
The cycle of growth has ceased,
and the busy work of giving life is now completed.
I sense in you no regrets:
you've lived a full life.

I live in a society that is ever-restless,
always eager for more mountains to climb,
seeking happiness through more and more possessions.
As a child of my culture,
I am seldom truly at peace with what I have.

Teach me to take stock
of what I have given and received;
may I know that it's enough,
that my striving can cease
in the abundance of God's grace.

May I know the contentment
that allows the totality of my energies
to come to full flower.

May I know that like you I am rich beyond measure.

As you, O Autumn, take pleasure in your great bounty,
let me also take delight
in the abundance of the simple things of life
which are the true source of joy.
With the golden glow of peaceful contentment
may I truly appreciate this autumn day.

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.

POSTLUDE: "Love's Greeting" (Salut d'Amour)