

Shatter My Soul

A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE

Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga

May 15, 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. Let's begin with Hymn 305, "*De Colores*."

"*De Colores*" was brought to the Americas from Spain during the 16th century. It is widely used in spiritual communities within the Roman Catholic Church. It is also an unofficial anthem for the United Farm Workers union.

The words of the song are an expression of joy and a celebration of all creation with its many bright colors. This is a traditional folk song known throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The first Spanish verse is printed in the hymnal, so if you'd like to sing that, please sing the Spanish words whenever you like.

HYMN 305, De Colores

All the colors,
yes, the colors we see
in the springtime with all of its flowers.

All the colors,
when the sunlight shines out
through a rift in the clouds and it showers.

All the colors,
as a rainbow appears
when a storm cloud is touched by the sun.

All the colors abound
for the whole world around
and for everyone under the sun.

All the colors,
yes, the colors of people

parading on by with their banners.

All the colors,
yes, the colors of pennants
and streamers and plumes and bandanas.

All the colors,
yes, the colors of people
now taking their place in the sun.

All the colors abound
for the whole world around
and for everyone under the sun.

All the colors,
yes, the black and the white,
and the red and the brown and the yellow.

All the colors,
all the colors of people
who smile and shake hands and say, "Hello."

All the colors,
yes, the colors of people
who know that their freedom is won.

All the colors abound
for the whole world around
and for everyone under the sun.

GREETINGS

BOT REP. 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 are **no religious education classes today**. The children are welcome to join us here in the sanctuary. The nursery, however, is open for business.

Please remember that this church will hold its **annual meeting** after the service today. A change in by-laws is up for a vote, as well as next year's budget.

If you have a particular **joy or sorrow** or something you'd like added to the prayer of the people, please clearly write it on an index card and drop it in the basket back there. You may sign it or not, as you wish.

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

For service music today, Steve brings us what he calls drop-dead gorgeous pieces from composers who had difficult or complicated lives.

PRELUDE

Francis Poulenc: Novelette No.1

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

▣ Lee Adler, would you light our chalice, please? The words for lighting the chalice come from Stephen Shick. ▣ Please read with me.

Our dreams and fears
become entwined
in stories woven over time
and shape the truth
in trembling minds

that want to know
beyond all doubt
what life is all about.

STORY: I Want to Be a Tiger!

MINISTER. Once upon a time there was a boy named Tim. Tim was a very bright little boy, and very imaginative. His parents were very proud of him.

MOM & POP. Tim, you have the most wonderful imagination.

MINISTER. And they were right.

One time at school, Tim's teacher spent a whole week talking to the kids about the kinds of jobs that people have when they get to be grown-ups. She had some of the kids bring their parents into class and the parents told the kids what it was like to be a doctor, or a teacher, or a fireman, or a minister.

At the end of the week the teacher asked the kids, what they wanted to be when they grew up. One of the kids said a baseball player; another kid said a dancer; another kid said a reporter; and another kid said a scientist. Then the teacher asked Tim.

TEACH. Tim, what do you want to be when you grow up?

MINISTER. Tim had thought about that all week. He answered right away, because he had made up his mind.

TIM. When I grown up I want to be a tiger.

MINISTER. All the kids laughed, and even the teacher giggled a little before she made herself stop.

TEACH. Tim, you can't be a tiger when you grow up, but you sure

have a wonderful imagination.

MINISTER. But Tim had spent a lot of time thinking about himself and getting to know himself. Tim knew that he really was supposed to be a tiger when he grew up. The more he thought about it the more it felt like he really would be a tiger when he grew up, and when he thought about himself being a tiger it made him very happy.

A few years later Tim's grandparents were visiting him and they had the same conversation with Tim.

GRAMPS. Tim, what do you want to be when you grow up?

TIM. I want to be a tiger.

GRAMS. Tim, you sure do have a wonderful imagination but what do you really want to be when you grow up?

TIM. I want to be a tiger, Grandma.

MINISTER. Tim's grandparents looked at each other and shook their heads a little.

After several more years all the boys and girls had become young men and women. The boy who wanted to be a baseball player decided he would be a computer programmer instead; the boy who wanted to be a dancer decided he would be an architect instead; the girl who wanted to be a reporter decided she would be a pilot instead; the girl who wanted to be a scientist decided she would be an insurance adjustor instead.

All the young men and women started to take classes and to bring home books to study so they would be ready to be what they had decided they would be.

Although they had the conversation before, Tim's parents brought up

the tiger business again.

POP. Tim, you're almost grown up now, it's time for you to decide what you want to be.

TIM. I know what I want to be: a tiger!

MOM. Tim, you've always had the most wonderful imagination, maybe you'd like to be a writer?

TIM. What I really want to be, what I really, really want to be, what I really, really, really will be, is a tiger.

MINISTER. Tim's father frowned and Tim's mother got a little tear in her eye. But Tim knew what he wanted to be and he meant it very seriously.

The High School didn't offer any special classes for kids who wanted to become tigers but Tim found ways to study on his own. He went to the library and checked out books on tigers and life in the jungle. He learned everything there was to know about tigers. He went to the park and practiced walking on all fours, hunting pigeons, and growling.

After awhile, Tim's skin began to change. His skin changed from being mostly smooth, to being kind of hairy. And his skin changed from being mostly one color to being kind of two colors, and sort of striped: orange and black. Slowly Tim got even furrier and his ears started to grow pointed. And one morning when he was getting dressed he saw that if he stood in the bathroom and twisted his head to look over his shoulder he could just barely see the beginning of a tail.

Tim was very pleased, but his parents were concerned. They didn't know what kind of a life it would be for their son if he became a Tiger.

TIM. Don't worry. I'll be fine, because a tiger is what I'm really supposed to be.

MOM & POP. We just want you to be happy.

TIM. I will, and I'm going to be the best tiger ever!

Over the next few weeks Tim's muscles grew very big and strong, and his hands and feet changed into paws. His nose turned black and his eyes turned yellow. By the end of the month Tim had become a tiger, and he really was the best tiger ever. He was beautiful, and strong, and colorful, and graceful. His parents still worried but both of them secretly felt a little proud at having such a wonderful tiger for a son.

Tim quit school, because tigers don't have to go to school and he found an apartment downtown. He got a job as a security guard, because although he was really quite nice he looked terribly ferocious. But Tim was such a handsome tiger people hired him to pose for advertising photographs selling perfume, and cereal, and automobile tires. Soon he was able to quit his job as a security guard and buy a condominium.

As time went on, sometimes the man who had become a computer programmer wished that he had become an astronaut instead. And sometimes the girl who had become a pilot wished she had become a forest ranger instead.

But Tim never even thought about being anything else and he lived happily as a tiger ever after.

I'll bet you know this, but let me say it anyway. This is not a story about a boy becoming a tiger, is it? People cannot turn into tigers. People will always be people.

So what's this story about?

It's about being yourself, even if everyone around you thinks you can't or shouldn't be yourself. It's about listening to your own inner wisdom and not being swayed by other people. It's important to be yourself, because no one else in the whole world can be you. Just you.

Thanks for listening to my story and remember that you can be what you want to be, even if everyone thinks you should be something else.

*OFFERTORY: Rachmaninoff
Prelude Op. 23, No. 10*

Thank you so much for sharing the plate last week. We sent a check to the Chambliss Children's Center for \$331! I am pleased to be the minister of such a generous congregation.

This morning, my sermon deals with what people say to each other. In researching the topic, I ran across a man who was known for not saying much of anything, but still getting his point across. Calvin Coolidge was the 30th President of the United States. He was known as "Silent Cal," because he was reticent. You know, quiet. Untalkative. Speechless. Closed-mouthed. Tight-lipped. Buttoned-Up. Mum. Taciturn. Indisposed to speak. This is the White House photo of him. Doesn't look like a man whose lips move much.

On returning from church one day, Coolidge was asked on what topic the minister had preached. After a moment, he replied, "Sin."

"And what did he say about sin?" His friend inquired.

"He was against it."

A lady sitting next to Coolidge at a state dinner tried to coax him into

talking to her. "I have made a bet, Mr. President, that I could get more than two words out of you."

"You lose," said Coolidge.

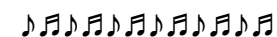
The ambassador of Great Britain called at the White House one day for an important and private conversation with the President. The next day, correspondents asked if he had anything to say about the conference.

"No," Coolidge said. "And I don't have anything to say about anything else, either." And as the press corps got up to leave, the President called after them, "And don't quote me!"

Aside from being reticent, Coolidge made no secret of his distaste for public life and the Presidency.

Soon after he had left the White House, Coolidge had to fill out a form for membership in the National Press Club. After writing his name and address, he came to the space marked *Occupation*, in which he wrote "Retired." Under that was a space titled *Remarks*. Coolidge wrote, "Glad of it."

We'll collect the morning offering now for the support and ministry of this church, and whether you are retired or still hard at work, please be generous when the plate comes your way and we'll all be glad of it. If you have a pledge payment, please mark it as such. As always, the Wood-Wilhoit Memorial Food Bank is happy to accept your donations of non-perishable food and household items for the Community Kitchen. The collection basket for that is by the front door. If you wish to light a personal candle of joy or sorrow, you may step up here and Mary Hunter will assist you.



Eternal Spirit of life and love, we are profoundly thankful for the

blessings we experience today. Would that we recognize our blessings every day and remember to be thankful for them.

Christina—and Jesse—please lead us in our Hymn of Thanksgiving.

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

Oh, we give thanks, for this precious day,
For all gathered here, and those far away,
For this time we share, with love and care,
Oh, we give thanks, for this precious day.

ORISON

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

Although there are probably millions of people and institutions that need my prayers more, today I pray for this church.

I pray its resources grow with its needs and its finances remain secure in times of stress; I pray that its leaders serve the congregation with passion and commitment; I pray the congregation supports those who need it; I pray that visitors are welcomed and find a friendly face or two amongst the crowd; I pray the children are secure and are excited about the activities planned for them. I pray that the people in the church regularly find a way to reconnect with that which is most important to them and I pray that anyone who needs this church find a way to the front door on Sunday morning.

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 strive everyday to make the world a better place, 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 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.

SERMON: Shatter My Soul

The title of my sermon, “Shatter My Soul,” comes from a line written by a young woman who has a daughter and is struggling to raise her in a time of hardship and economic challenge. She seems to be doing all right, as far as I can tell, although, like everyone, she has her ups and downs.

She responded to the message I have been running in the UUpdate about sermon topics. Something had recently happened to her and she wanted to hear what I had to say about it. She wrote,

Lately I have been struggling in the balance to accept others that refuse anything except their own beliefs. This normally is not a problem but sometimes I am just plain bullied by people who have different beliefs.

Some have told me that, “Only God can change you and when I say God, I mean Jesus Christ.” I also get these little snide, veiled remarks from my family. I normally keep facts about my beliefs to myself, but I don’t go out of my way to hide them.

I grow tired of hearing I will “burn in hell” or that I am someone to be “saved.” I just want to be able to brush all of this off but it’s hard and words can hurt. I hate to say it, but Christians can sometimes be bullies.

I have often thought about making a sign for my door that says: “I am happy with my choice of, or absence of, God or gods. Thank you and have a nice day.”

These days, many people close their e-mail messages with an

epigram. Perhaps you’ve noticed that. Anyway, she closed her message to me with these words:

Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can shatter my soul.

Reading that, I was impressed with the magnitude of her emotional reactions to what the bullies had said to her. I thought she must have been in a vulnerable place and the bullies, sensing her wounds, just piled on.

Or her epigram could have been hyperbole. People have been known to exaggerate in e-mail. Maybe it was her way of appearing more wounded than she really was.

Either way, the depth of feeling struck me. Why would she have such strong feelings about this, I thought. Shattering one’s soul is certainly much more profound than breaking one’s bones, and the conventional expression reads that words cannot hurt you. But they do. Words can hurt, especially when spoken by family members, who should offer support, not condemnation.

I think that evangelicals—and I use that word in the general sense of someone spreading the good news—evangelicals have gotten a bad rap because of an insensitivity displayed by some, which has painted all the rest.

How often do we hear of a respectful, quiet, demure evangelical minding his own business? How often do we see a caricature of an aggressive, convinced—he’s-got-the-truth evangelical?

Why does this happen? Why do some Christians consider it their bounden duty to convert the heathens and save them for Jesus? Buddhists don’t proselytize. Hindus don’t proselytize. Muslims don’t go door-to-door like Mormon missionaries or Jehovah’s Witnesses. What is it about these people that makes them go out of their way to get in your face?

First, to give them the benefit of the doubt, some are sincere. Some are genuinely pleased to have found a source of solace and inspiration in Jesus. That's good. But all people do not find inspiration in the same place or person. Solace for one might be hell for another. That's human nature.

But beyond the sincerity of some missionaries is a darker aspect to Christianity. At its core, Christianity has a missionary spirit that is enshrined in scripture.

Have you heard of the Great Commission? The Great Commission is the name of a passage in the last chapter of Matthew's gospel wherein Jesus tells his disciples to spread the good news. It reads, *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

That's not Jesus talking there, even though the letters are in red. Those words were created by an editor and reflect an emerging movement. They look back on Jesus from afar. There's even an "Amen" at the end.

The commission also occurs in John and Acts. Here is how Luke wrote it: *Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.*

And that's not Jesus talking either. The author has painted quite a picture. We can almost see the apostles as they depart with nothing but the shirts on their backs, smiling at each other and telling jokes along the way.

That's all well and good. But the letter that Paul wrote to the church in Rome has a different tone. Here are the first four verses of Romans, chapter ten: *Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Here are a few more verses from that letter of Paul:

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?

It seems to me that an over-reliance on those passages might convince someone who needs a purpose in life to go out and forcibly spread the good news. You could easily justify aggressive proselyting with references to the Great Commission and the letters of Paul. And when you are concerned with saving souls—admittedly a project of immense importance—you could be forgiven for being rude on occasion. After all, you are spreading the good news.

Do you know Billy Sunday? He was a decent baseball player in the 1880's; an excellent base-runner. He quit after seven years and became the best-known evangelist of the 20th century. During the

course of about twenty years, he was said to have preached to more than a million people and converted or saved more than 300,000 of them. All without television or radio or loudspeakers.

Interesting statistics. All the web pages about Billy Sunday and all the books about him mention these stats, as if someone were keeping score. And I guess that some people do keep score. In the Age of Discovery in the 15th and 16th centuries, priests and missionaries accompanied Columbus, Magellan, Vasco Da Gama, Amerigo Vespucci, Ponce De Leon and all the *conquistadors*. Their job was to convert the pagans they encountered in their travels. I don't imagine they tried to make nice with the natives. Perhaps that's where the tradition of aggressive proselytizing originated.

Islam and Christianity share the same problem. They are exclusive clubs. In other words, both Islam and Christianity say that you cannot belong to both at once. You are either a Christian or you aren't. You are either a Muslim or you aren't. You're either in or you're out.

The Qur'ān doesn't so much command Muslims to spread the good news, that's pretty much understood. It's understood that Muslims should set a good example and thereby promote the faith.

What gets Muslims into trouble is an over-reliance on certain verses wherein the Qur'ān stresses the need to resist and fight the non-believer, the enemy of Allah. The Qur'ān has many verses filled with war-like imagery, words of violence and what country folk would call "Fightin' words." This, combined with a twisted interpretation of jihad is what produced Osama Bin Laden.

Here are a few verses from the Qur'ān which stress the need to fight the foe and vanquish him for the sake of Allah:

O Prophet! urge the believers to war; if there are twenty patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred... (8:65)

Surely the vilest of animals in Allah's sight are those who disbelieve (8:55)

Fight those who do not believe in Allah...And the Jews say Ezra is the son of God; and the Christians say Jesus is the son of God; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; Allah's curse be on them; how they are turned away!" (Koran 9:29-30)

And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah (8:39)

And if they intend to act unfaithfully towards you, so indeed they acted unfaithfully towards Allah before, but He gave you mastery over them (8:71)

O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them; and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination. (9:73)

You can see me later for the citations of those passages if you want to look them up.

Aside from being exclusive, both Christianity and Islam are convinced they have a corner on the truth. A good Christian cannot possibly concede that Hindus might be right. A devoted Muslim cannot possibly concede that any portion of his faith is questionable. Of course there are reasonable people in every religion and some would even grant the possibility that someone else of another religion might actually be right.

The reason that evangelization and proselytizing annoys people of a more malleable conscience and reasonable nature is missionaries often imply that they have God and you don't. The missionary has God and you don't.

My friend Jim Philpott tells a story about a divorce recovery group

for women that he was conducting. Things were going along just fine as the group met once a week to work out their grief and their anger and share resources. But in time, one woman decided she would leave the group. She wasn't getting anything out of it anymore, she said. And as she left, she turned to the group, put her hand over her heart and said, "Besides, I have God."

The other women and Jim were dumbstruck, but they offered her good wishes, smiled and said good-bye. But when they met the next week, things were different. The women were livid. They were outraged. They were furious with the woman who left. They were angry because in saying she had God, she implied that they did *not* have God.

And it's the same for aggressive proselytizers and overly-zealous evangelists. Of whatever stripe and regardless of the religion they profess.

So back to the woman who wrote me, whose "soul was shattered." The way I see it, there were several factors at work in the family dynamic that produced the conversation that shattered her soul.

In Christianity, the kernel of evangelism or in Islam, the ethic of competition can get in the way of your best efforts to promote your religion. In my opinion, devoted adherents of any religion have a better chance of saving souls or converting infidels if they refrain from aggressive recruiting practices.

Exclusivity is another problem. The notion that you have "The Truth" with a capital T and everyone else does not; the notion that there is one way and only one way to be happy in this life and the next stymies dialogue and does nothing for mutual respect. It seems to me that if you want to save souls or convert infidels, you'd have a better chance with a reasonable conversation than you would with a know-it-all-lecture. Exclusivity can easily lead to arrogance, which is a big turn-off when you're trying to win friends and

influence people.

Do you know what modernity is? It's a philosophical term describing the culture and civilization of the western world after the medieval age up through about 1950. It was an age of exploration, enlightenment, industry, discovery and development.

We live in the post-modern era. One of the aspects of the post-modern world is the problem of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative. Post-modern reality is plural and relative, whereas modern reality could easily be defined and codified. Post modern reality depends on who the interested parties are and what their interests are. Modern reality was always defined by the biggest bully on the block. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, visual arts, and music.

And religion. The post-modern attitude toward religion is that, while some religions may be more sophisticated than others, they are all of equal value *to their believers*. In other words, as the bumper sticker on Rich Dwyer's car reads, "My karma just ran over your dogma." One mountain; many roads to the top.

But this thing is about more than being bullied by overly-zealous Christians. I have a friend who tells me about people who "knock her lights out." She created that phrase one day when she had just finished making something very nice. Someone came by and made no mention of it, but criticized something else she had done and suggested several ways to improve.

Some people just have this habit of opening their mouth, tilting their head forward and dumping in your lap whatever is on their mind. Most often, what they dump in your lap is negative. Could be about you, but could be something else. Could be they want you to do something about it. You ever meet one of them? Thanks to Spiro Agnew, we know what they are. They are "nattering nabobs of

negativity.”

My friend’s lights get knocked out because invariably, the nabob makes no attempt to size up my friend’s state of mind, or my friend’s concerns, what she is doing or what kind of mood she’s in. It doesn’t matter, see, because the nabob is overly-intent on getting his message out and that over-rides any sense of decorum, civility, courtesy, etiquette, or just plain old being polite.

The woman who left the divorce recovery group is in this category, because she didn’t bother to assess how her remarks would land on the other group members. Aggressive proselytizers and overly-zealous soul-saving missionaries are in this category as well, because their mission is a helluva lot more important than anyone’s feelings.

At times like these, my experience is similar to the women in the divorce recovery group. In the moment, I am dumbstruck. I am usually at a loss for what to say. My sense of revenge wants a retort to make the nabob feel as bad as I do. But what I have discovered is that thinking in anger is like trying to catch a fish with your bare hands. You might do it once or twice in your life, but it’s better to prepare yourself with a rod and reel, some bait and a stringer. And a six pack. You’ll enjoy the day more that way.

So prepare yourself for these moments when someone knocks your lights out by composing a very simple response. Something like this: “I wish you hadn’t said that. Your words hurt my feelings.”

Use “I” language, that is, statements that begin with I, or contain me or my. Respond with how you feel, not with an attack on the person. See, you can talk about how you feel and no one can argue with you about it.

For religious encounters, if you want a dialogue, you can prepare an elevator speech. That’s a short speech outlining your beliefs that you

can recite before the elevator gets to the tenth floor. It’s short, sincere, positive and it’s the truth for you. This doesn’t guarantee a dialogue—your nabob may bear down even harder. At which point you can politely say, “Thanks for sharing, but I can’t discuss this right now.”

On the other hand, if you are feeling rather snarky, you might want to argue and convince someone of the superiority of your position. I cannot recommend this approach, although in the abstract, it might seem the more satisfactory response. In my experience, zealots are rarely won over to another point of view, and your attempt to be snide, clever or insulting is usually lost on them. In other words, they couldn’t care less what you say; it’s only important what they say.

The flip side of having your lights knocked out is being aware of what we say to others and how our words land on other people’s ears. So slow down, check out the person before you do a mind dump and scrub your message of negativity. You don’t want to be a nabob.

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

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.

till you flame
like a chalice of hope.

Lee Adler, would you please extinguish our chalice? Please read with me.

POSTLUDE
CHOPIN: Prelude Op. 28, No. 11

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.

Thank you for joining us in worship today. Your presence is very much appreciated. Now let's enjoy a time of fellowship with the best fair-trade coffee in southeastern Tennessee.

BENEDICTION

Is the fire going out?
Not in your belly,
for you are still alive.

But in your soul,
that place
where dreams
fuel commitment
where longings
shape action
where meaning flames purpose
where passion ignites and rekindles
your life fire.

Is the fire going out?

If your soul smolders,
dream on