



Tornado!

*A Worship Service by the
REV. JEFF BRIERE
Unitarian Universalist Church
of Chattanooga
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CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Rich Dwyer and I am a member of the congregation. We begin each Sunday at this time with Connections. This is a time of community and contemplation, where we share the joys and the sorrows going on in our lives. This is not a time for announcements, politics or expressions of personal anger, but a time of deep sharing, where we are reminded that we are all human beings and we're all in this together.

Enjoy the experience of sitting in restorative silence until you are moved to speak. Please allow a breath of silence after each person speaks, so that we may focus our attention on what has been said. If you have something to share, please come forward, tell us your name and what's on your mind.



Let us pause to dwell inward. Spirit of Life, please meet us where we are, in the struggles we choose for ourselves; in the ways we move forward in our lives, and bring our world forward with us. It is right that we pause to remember those who need love and support; who are ill or in pain, either in body or in spirit; who are lonely or have been

wronged. Let us open our minds and hearts to a place of quiet, to a silent prayer for the healing of pain, and the soft, gentle coming of love. In this time of silence let our thoughts be with those who have spoken or been spoken about this morning. Amen and Blessed Be.

Please rise now and greet your neighbors at the door. Welcome them into the sanctuary with a hand of warmth and a smile.

Good morning. My name is Jeff Briere and I very happy to welcome you to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. I am the minister of this church and to begin our service and our church year, let's join our voices in Hymn 66, "When the Summer Sun Is Shining."

HYMN 66, When the Summer Sun Is Shining

Remain standing a moment, if you will, please. Look around you. These are your friends and neighbors, your fellow congregants. You know many of them, but I'll bet you don't know them all. So in the next few minutes, find someone you don't know and make a new friend. After you have met someone you don't know, greet a couple people you haven't seen for awhile. Y'all way back there, come forward and y'all up here, meet those way-back folks half-way up the aisle. OK, everyone, Greet your neighbor!

GREETINGS

MIRANDA. **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.

Please check out **the complete listing of announcements** 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.

This morning we are happy to welcome Kate Briere back to the piano. For service music, she delved into her book of opera tunes.

PRELUDE: Berceuse

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

Eileen Mulcahy, would you light our chalice, please? To accompany the lighting of our chalice this morning, I have words from Thich Nhat Hanh.

Eileen. Our true home is in the present moment.
To live in the present moment is a miracle.
The miracle is not to walk on water.

Minister. The miracle is to walk on the green Earth
in the present moment,
to appreciate the peace and beauty
that are available now.

Eileen. Peace is all around us—
in the world and in nature and within us—
in our bodies and our spirits.

Minister. Once we learn to touch this peace,
we will be healed and transformed.
It is not a matter of faith;
it is a matter of practice.

STORY: Han's Worries

MINISTER. A few days ago, I had big worries. It was Friday afternoon, and I accidentally deleted all my work since Wednesday. Nearly the entire service. Only the story, the sermon and a couple other tidbits survived. I was worried. *Really* worried. I was petrified. I thought I'd never be able to reconstruct the service, and even if I did, it wouldn't be as good as the original that I lost.

I was so worried that I had trouble sleeping Friday night. You know what I was doing wrong? I was not living in the present moment, like I preach, but the future. On Friday night, when I should have been asleep, I was living in Sunday morning. I can't do anything about the future. It hasn't arrived yet.

I preach about living in the present moment a lot. But I guess I didn't listen to myself very well. On Saturday, I finally gave up and quit worrying about the future. It would come soon enough. I got to work and rebuilt this service.

And you know what? Everything worked out. So far. And I remembered a story about a man named Han who worried a lot.

NARRATOR. Many years ago, in the kingdom of Qi, there lived a man whose name was Han. He was so worried and so anxious that he had trouble sleeping. He would lie awake at night and worry that the roof would fall on him. Or that his bed would collapse. Or that he'd oversleep and miss his appointments. And when he ate, he ate so fast, he always got indigestion.

In that part of the world, the night sky is beautiful and most people thereabouts loved to look at the shimmering, winking stars. But Han, once saw a falling star, and ever since, he lived in terror of stars plunging from the sky. And so he never looked up at the stars again.

While farmers around him rejoiced when thick, gray clouds ushered in spring rain, Han looked at those same clouds, pillowed high into great peaks and canyons, and fretted that they would surely come

crashing down upon him.

As time went on, he worried more and more that the sky itself would simply collapse and smother the world.

His friends, if you could call them that, laughed at his panic.

SHIN. The sky has been the sky forever. How can it tumble down?

HAN. How should I know? Can you assure me it won't?

NARRATOR. But no one could explain to Han exactly why the sky would not fall down, and so he continued to worry.

SHIN. Look, here. The sky is simply air. There is no place without air on this earth. Think about it: ever since you were born, you've breathed it in and out without any problem! Every day you live with it and walk through it. The air is all around you. It leaves the morning dew on your doorstep at dawn and sweeps away the day's heat with an evening breeze.

HAN. But what about the sun and the moon? If the sky is just air, full of nothing, won't the sun, moon, and stars drop out of the sky and land on us?

SHIN. The sun, the moon, and the stars are like a brightness in the air. No harm will come from them. Why do you worry so?

HAN. I don't know, I just do.

NARRATOR. Worry was his habit now, a part of him, like a shadow that followed him whether the sun shone or not.

So Han struggled not to think about the sun, the moon, the stars or the sky falling down. When the moon rose, huge and round behind the hills in the east, he turned away to keep from thinking about it

dropping right out of the sky. When the sun reached its zenith—its highest point—in the daytime, he distracted himself with work, so as not to tremble with fear of the sun directly over his head. To keep from worrying, he made every effort to not look up.

One day, Han left his village to conduct some business in a state far away. Wearing a hat and traveling by foot, he avoided looking at the sky and stared only at the dirt road before him.

It had been a spring of heavy rain, and the road was muddy and in disrepair. On the first day, he came to a river that had overrun its banks during the rains, carving away a large chunk of road. Han saw clearly, for the first time, that the forces of nature could move great swaths of earth.

HAN. Not only can the sky fall, but the land, too, can collapse! But I must continue. I must get to Chung Hui by nightfall.

NARRATOR. On the second day, Han noticed a number of rocks piled by the side of the road. Looking up to see how the rocks had landed there, he found himself at the bottom of a recent, large mudslide.

HAN. I knew it! It's the end of everything! A calamity! The earth falls down like the stars! A disaster! The earth is collapsing! There is no place where I am safe!

NARRATOR. And Han turned around, ran home, and never ventured outside again.

MINISTER. This is a story from China, as you might have noticed from the names of the characters. It's about 2500 years old and it's one of many stories that Chinese people refer to in their everyday lives. These stories have short sayings that go with them, and the one attached to this story is simple: *A man in Qi worries the sky will fall.* What happens is that in everyday conversation, people just mention the saying and everyone know what they mean.

So when a Chinese person says to her friend,

MARCIA. “A man in Qi worries the sky will fall.”

MINISTER. it might be a way of saying that you worry too much about things you can’t control.

American have saying too, although we don’t always have stories that go with them. “Let sleeping dogs lie.” “People living in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.” “What goes around, comes around.”

Karl, do you know a saying?

KARL. _____.

MINISTER. Marcia?

MARCIA. _____.

MINISTER. Thanks for listening to my story. I hope you enjoyed it.

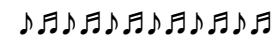
OFFERTORY:

I wonder if you know this man. He is one of only four senators featured in John F. Kennedy’s book, *Profiles in Courage*. His name is George Norris. He began his career as a country teacher on the plains of Nebraska, then became a small-town lawyer, a local prosecuting attorney and judge. In 1903, he entered the House of Representatives, and he was later elected to the Senate. Kennedy describes him as a “chunky figure” clothed in “drab black suits, white shirts, and little shoestring ties.” Norris was an independent-thinking Republican who sometimes took up unpopular causes and fought uphill battles. An independent-thinking Republican...Hm. We could use more of his type today. Of course that means we would elect

statesmen rather than politicians, a distinction I had forgotten until a friend reminded me. Norris once said, “I would rather go down to my political grave with a clear conscience than ride in the chariot of victory.”

Interestingly, he lost many of his most anguishing political fights. But years later, looking back over his life and career, Norris made this observation to a friend: *It happens often that you try to do something and fail. You feel discouraged, and yet you may discover years afterward that the very effort you made was the reason why somebody else took it up and succeeded. I really believe that whatever use I have been to progressive civilization has been accomplished in the things I failed to do rather than in the things I actually did do.*

We’ll receive the morning offering now for the support and ministry of this church, and the opinions of Senator Norris notwithstanding, do not fool yourself into believing that your inaction now may inspire your neighbor to drop a twenty in the plate. On the contrary, you dropping a twenty in may inspire your neighbor to drop a fifty. We encourage your generosity 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, will you 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.

This part of the service I call the Orison. Any casual observer of worship service would recognize it as a prayer. In fact, orison is an archaic word for prayer. We often refer to the orison as the prayer of the people, as I try to include some of the momentous happenings in the lives of congregants as well as some of the challenges they face.

Do you recall the near-revolution that ensued when I tried to change the culture of applause in this church? I certainly do. The rebels even had a Facebook page to organize themselves and recruit more disaffected congregants. Of course they got that idea from the Egyptians, but what does it matter?

You would hope I learned my lesson. I did, I assure you. But I won't let that stop me. This year, if it doesn't foment another rebellion, I'd like to try something a bit different with the Orison. I wonder if we'd like it if we recited it together, in unison, like other readings and meditations.

I suppose it's my Roman Catholic heritage made me get this bright idea, but I ran it by the worship group and asked a couple other people and the response was positive. So here I go again.

I am aware that some people do not consider prayer to be a useful enterprise. Historically, prayer has been aimed at a deity, but I don't

think of it that way. I often say that I do not pray to someone, I pray for someone, so perhaps that might be helpful. The word meditation was devised to put a different spin on prayer, and for some, that word serves well. I say if it sounds like a prayer, it's a prayer. I have endeavored in the past few years to reclaim some words from those who use religion as a cudgel in advancing retrogressive causes. In short, they ain't the only ones what can use religious language.

You may have noticed that this prayer is the one made famous by Jesus in his biographies by Matthew and Luke. I use it all the time, because it's the best prayer I know. Although it's a central prayer in Christianity, its origin and form and roots are purely Jewish. It follows the classic form of salutation, praise, confession and petition. My version is one I stole from a colleague, Dan Budd, and adapted a bit. I have tried to make it non-theistic and impersonal without throwing out the poetical feeling and the elevated language.

So if you are moved, please join me in the Orison.

But first, since this is the prayer of the people, in these next few moments, please speak the name of someone or something that needs our prayers and good wishes.

Thou, which are everywhere,
Many are your names.
May we always feel your presence,
May love and 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: Tornado!

Every year around this time, I begin to feel antsy. It's been awhile

since I've been to church and I'm apprehensive that I'll forget something, like the offertory or the projector or your name or something like that. Pulpit fright, I call it. I'm over it now, but I had a case of it this week. I'm glad to be back. Nice to see you.

In the worship services this year, I will return occasionally to the theme of blessings. What is a blessing? Who can bless or bestow blessings? What happens when you bless someone out? Blessing is a word that is tossed around casually by many, yet held in high regard by others.

So the days ahead, please consider your blessings. Tell me about them, if you would. I'd like to hear. This might be different for you, but also think about how you can bestow a blessing, or offer a blessing. What's it mean to you? Tell me, I want to know.

I am blessed. I need to tell you that because I enjoy my ministry here. My colleagues often ask me how it's going for me here in Chattanooga. That's minister-speak for "Is the church thriving? Are you thriving? Are they treating you well?" and other such queries. In the beginning and sometimes today, I reply that I think it's going well for me, but I don't truly know because this is my first and only ministry. I don't have a basis for comparison.

Mostly I think it's going well. Our long-term financial health could improve and our governance and policy practices need attention. But there are dedicated people all over that, so I am not concerned. What brightens the picture for me is that we seem to be a simpatico bunch. We get along with each other fairly well. No fistfights or scream-outs during the coffee hour.

I want to thank you again for your support. We are bound in a covenant, you and me. I agree to be the minister and help you when you need me and lead the spiritual life of the congregation. You agree to support me and together we keep the church going. I am very happy with this arrangement and I hope you are as well.

Like I said, I am blessed. I am blessed to be the minister of this church and I am blessed to still be the minister of this church. Last April, I came rather close to not being the minister of this church. I came rather close to not being at all.

Last April, when several tornadoes roared over the Hilltop neighborhood of Brainerd on their way from Alabama to Apison, they knocked over a bunch of trees. Within a few blocks of my house, a dozen trees were uprooted. I live about a third of a mile from here, on Lerch Street. Between Germantown and Belvoir, five trees blocked Lerch Street. You could not get there from here. These were big trees. One of those trees, an oak more than 70 feet tall, came down in my neighbor's yard, less than 30 feet from my house.

Do you remember the storms? Here are some photos from the Times-Free Press.

At the height of the storm, as the storms blew through, Kate retreated to the basement. Me? I was stupid enough to stand near windows so that I could witness the fury of the storm. I actually heard the blast of wind that caused the tree next door to fall and I heard thud when it hit the ground. But I was so entranced by the power of nature that I didn't put those two sounds together until about five minutes later when I looked out the bathroom window and saw the tree down.

Like I said, I am blessed. Blessed to still be the minister of this church. Blessed to still have a church, actually. You may not know that we took out several trees right out there that were compromised by the storm.

The results of the storm tested my patience for ten days. The trees took out power lines, so we had no power for nine days.

Ever had to live a powered life in a powered house without power? No? I'll tell you a little about it. You tend to do everything you have to do before dark, because after the sun is gone, all you have is the

reflected glow of the sunset and candles, neither of which are good for much. If you were blessed—as we were—to have purchased a camp stove and five bottles of propane the year before and not gone camping, you become quite skilled at preparing dinner in one 10-inch cast iron skillet. Nonetheless, as your skill improves, the variety of the dinners do not.

You either develop a tolerance for cold showers or you learn about FPC baths—ask me later—or you realize you can make hot water by leaving a black garden hose in the sunshine for a few hours. You re-learn how to wash dishes. You re-discover laundromats. You buy tons of ice trying to save the precious contents of your freezer. Then when your power returns, you throw it out anyway, 'cause it doesn't look appetizing after ten days in a cooler.

You can't even have toast and coffee in the morning, 'cause even if you can boil water, how can you grind coffee beans without electricity? And without power, how can you make toast? Firing up the oven—if it's gas—seems like overkill for two slices of toast.

You wonder what's goin' on in the rest of the world, 'cause no radio station really had extensive coverage. Talk radio tried to keep everyone updated, but their coverage tailed off after a few days.

It was so comforting to know that all the TV stations had extensive coverage. We did not have a battery-operated TV. And even if we had power, we didn't have any rabbit ears. And TV's today have to have digital tuners, anyway. And there certainly wasn't any cable or fiber optics, because the storm took out power poles, upon which are strung not only power lines, but telephone lines, cable TV and fiber optic lines.

We were blessed to have a battery-operated radio. We were blessed to have a battery-operated lantern that we could use to light up one room at a time. Still, we felt isolated because we lacked information and even if there were information out there, we had no way to get it.

We were blessed to have neighbors with smartphones which told us so much more than the radio.

Even the Times–Free Press was a couple days behind. The storm came through on Tuesday. Wednesday’s edition had a small article on the front page, Thursday’s had a larger article, but it competed with several articles about the rest of the world. It wasn’t until Friday’s edition that the editors got the big picture and devoted the entire front page and several interior pages to the storm.

But we were without a paper for a couple days. The mail was also delayed a couple days until the drivers figured out how to drive around the felled trees. They couldn’t get here from there.

Thank goodness you can still tell time without power, as so many gadgets, like cell phones, have clocks in them. We were blessed to have cell phones, and a way to charge them, although just drivin’ around, burning gasoline to charge the phones makes you feel guilty.

The cats were OK—we have a mechanical can opener so we could still open a can of cat food. But the fish began to suffer after one day, as the filter and more important, the aerator, stopped. We were blessed to find the last two battery-operated aerators in Chattanooga and they probably saved the lives of a dozen little fish. And we were blessed with generous neighbors who gave us some D–cell batteries to operate the aerators. There were no batteries to be found in Brainerd.

We are blessed to live close to the church and were blessed that on day 6 or 7, power returned to the church. Which brought Daidee and Steve, Kate and me in to check our e-mail and favorite web sites. You may recall that I asked if you have ever tried to live a powered life in a powered house without power. Ever tried to live a connected life with no connection? No connection, not even dial-up.

Speaking of dial-up, something I hadn’t noticed until the power went

out is that it rendered useless all the phones in the house, never mind that the phone lines were down and any telephone was useless. For a moment I thought if we had mechanical phones, we could use them. Who needs electricity? But we didn’t have phone service anyway—EPB took their own sweet time putting up their poles again and Comcast and AT&T had to wait their turn to restore their service.

And when’s the last time you used, or even saw, a mechanical telephone? I saw one once, several years ago in a doctor’s office. It was mounted on the wall and had a rotary dial, and—this is the truth—I was momentarily unable to recall how to use it. Using a dial phone is not like riding a bike—you forget what you don’t use.

So there we were, unable to connect for nine days at home, hauling our laptops to Starbucks or the church to get online and communicate. OK, I admit to being a computer junkie. Without the ability to get online, I was in agony, just like I was trying to kick a nasty drug habit. I rationalized that I was just trying to get information about the storm, but I knew in my heart I wanted to read Salon and Facebook and the New York Times. I rolled on the floor, made promises to God, and thought seriously about spending a few hundred dollars to have Amazon deliver a generator to my door. No way I could get a generator at Ace or Home Depot—there was a run on generators from the first day.

I finally kicked my e-mail habit just about the time the church got power and there it was again, like some evil temptress, just sitting there waiting for me to indulge my cravings. It was a connection! And I glommed onto it. You’ll be pleased to know I checked myself into the Lindsay Lohan Center for Connection Addiction and I’m making progress.

In preparing for this sermon, I noticed that what seemed overwhelming at the time, what was unbearable in April and May, is now not so vivid in my memory. I think there is a natural human tendency to suppress bad experiences, or at least put them in context,

so that in time, we are no longer driven by our feelings of aggravation, or in my case, pure despair. Sort of like the woman who forgets the hassle and pain of pregnancy and childbirth and has another child.

We were blessed that the temperature and humidity were comfortable for human habitation for nine days. Tornadoes don't normally come 'round in the summer when it's hot and sticky in Chattanooga. They are a springtime phenomenon. Nonetheless, we could have been miserable. Instead, with moderate temperatures, we were only frustrated, annoyed, irritated, exasperated, irked and vexed.

And why were we vexed and irked and grumpy? Only because we had no lights, no refrigerator, no TV, no telephone, no hot water, no coffee, no dishwasher, no oven, no washing machine, no dryer, no internet, and no e-mail. And no hot showers in the brand-new, just-remodeled, \$6000 bathroom. Oh yeah. And we had to open and close the garage door manually.

But we were blessed, weren't we? We had our home, our car, our cats and fish, some food, clean running water and our own bed at night. We had each other. At the time, and reflecting on it now, we really had no right to be vexed or annoyed. We were blessed.

There were moments of grace. People who heat with wood came 'round up with chainsaws and offered to clean up the trees. I am sorry to say their appetite for wood often exceeded their ability to cut up a mature tree. More than once, people took only the easy branches and left the rest, so for several weeks, we had large trunks laying around the neighborhood. Still do, actually.

A couple women from Cleveland showed up with a chainsaw and began to cut up the tree next door. I haven't told you about my neighbor. She is disabled, lives alone, and had no one to remove the tree from her yard and which was partially blocking the street. So when the two wonderful women with a chain saw appeared, I thought

our neighbor was blessed, too.

They just parked their car, took out a cooler of water and went to work. One had a little old chainsaw about this big and hacked the canopy off and the other stacked the wood. They worked all one Saturday until the chainsaw overheated. Kate asked them what brought them from Cleveland to our neighborhood and the older one replied that she had survived a tornado when she was young. Every other house but hers suffered some damage, but she and her family were spared. She said, "I know it's probably survivor guilt, but I just had to help."

My neighbors across the street had a tree taken out of their yard and they told the workers they'd pay them extra to cut up the main trunk left in my neighbor's yard next to my house. So they did. They had a serious chainsaw about this long and they cut the big trunk into sections, which left about two dozen large wooden discs in her yard. A few weeks later, someone came by with a trailer and loaded most of them up and took them away. She still has a pile of the large discs at the curb and the root ball in her yard.

It's tempting during a crisis such as this, when you can plainly see the devastation wrought by a disaster, to ask, "Why did this happen to my neighbor? Why didn't it happen to me? Why should I be spared when the folks in Alabama and Apison were wiped out?" It's tempting to ask, but we must resist that temptation.

Part of this is due to proximity and a shared culture. The outbreak of tornadoes between April 25 and April 28 was the largest ever recorded—336 tornadoes in 21 states and Canada. 346 deaths were attributed to the storms. In 2004, when a tsunami hit Indonesia and killed 230,000 people, I'll bet no one in Alabama or Apison asked, "Why?" Not that they should. It's a natural human response to be more moved by the disaster next door than the disaster on the other side of the world. You can see it. You may know the people. It's personal.

Some time past, I would have thought that everything happens for a reason, but I don't believe that anymore. I believe some things just happen. No reason. I believe some things defy reason, yet can be explained. We know how tornadoes and cyclones and hurricanes and typhoons form—I can tell you all about changing wind directions, differences in temperature, humidity and wind speed, how rising air within a thunderstorm tilts rotating air from horizontal to vertical—there's plenty of evidence about how tornadoes form, but there is no "why." No why.

Why them? Why not me? It just happened that way. It's chaotic, isn't it? And humans have the damndest time living with chaos. We want to explain everything so that we can control it.

We are not in control of everything. Some things happen by chance. In life, there is an element of chaos, and I'm glad of it. We humans are curious creatures and chaos stimulates our imagination. Imagine how dull the world would be if we had everything figured out. Imagine that we learn how to control the weather, so that we can bring the right amount of rain at the right time to every farmer on earth and let the sun shine forever on every beach and swimming pool and picnic and county fair everywhere. Imagine that the perfect amount of snow always falls at Sugarloaf and Telluride and Lake Placid. Imagine that we can make storms happen, but only for our own amusement, and probably only at sea, away from shipping lanes.

That would be a pretty boring world. Better, I think to learn to live with chaos. Then we'll have something to look forward to. I am not suggesting we become complacent and let Mother Nature do what she will. We ought to protect ourselves as much as possible. And we sure ought not beat ourselves up over the misery caused by a tornado. Or a tsunami. If we get knocked around, we can indulge in a moment of self-pity and then get to work. If our neighbors get knocked around, we can be thankful we're still in one piece and then get to work helping our neighbors.

And it's out of chaos that blessings emerge. When we humans are challenged, when we cope with the suffering from a disaster, we have an opportunity to bless the world. Our best coping mechanisms and our best hope and our best charity come out of chaos.

We—Kate and I—were blessed. We actually got a new roof, a new ceiling and a portion of our new bathroom from the storm. We were blessed. Which is what causes me to speak some this year about blessings. I invite you to join the dialogue.

Please join me now in singing a song that Kate found in a Presbyterian Hymnal. Don't worry—they said it's OK for Unitarian Universalists to sing it anytime we want. It's based on words found in the book of Isaiah. We've actually sung it before a couple times. "We Shall Go Out with Joy."

HYMN: We Shall Go Out with Joy

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

Eileen Mulcahy, would you please extinguish our 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: Quando men vo

Thank you very much for your participation in our service this morning. Parents, please rejoin your children now and we'll enjoy a time of fellowship with the best fair-trade coffee in southeastern Tennessee.