

Morning Worship

Rev. Gail Geisenhainer and Claudia Jiménez

UUA General Assembly

June 22, 2007

8:00 AM

INTRODUCTION:

Good Morning!

My name is Gail Geisenhainer

And I serve as Minister

With the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Vero Beach, Florida

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We are gathered for worship.

Let us gather today to honor the legacy and challenge
Of the prophets, sages, heroic and ordinary souls
Who envisioned and demanded and yearned,
That we live lives of peaceful non-violence,
That we teach peace to our children.

When we gather for worship:

We come together to build up a world
of justice, peace and compassion.

We come together to insist
On the inherent worth and dignity of every person.
That the holy be recognized: face to face.

We come together to ignite the best
Within each of us.
That the holy be honored: here and now.

We worship together to offer comfort and respite
To all those who mourn
To all who are sorrowful and heavy laden with grief.

We worship together
that we might strengthen ourselves
to feed the hungry, clothe the naked
and shelter the homeless.

We Unitarian Universalists are willing to bet our lives
To acknowledge
That love is a greater force for good
Than fear can ever be.

We teach our children, we practice ourselves
Lives committed to love and compassion
Lives committed to the emancipation of goodness
For all who would enter the Beloved Community
Of Justice, Mutual Respect, and Peace.

We are gathered for worship.

Hymn # 166 - "Years Are Coming"
Led by Sarah Dan Jones, GA Music Coordinator

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning.
My name is Claudia Jiménez,
and I serve the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Vero Beach
as religious educator.

Reading

"No Great Things" by David Duncan, *abridged*

"The day I rediscovered Mother Teresa's words "We can do no great things, only small things with great love," the so-called war on terror had just cranked up, and the rhetoric was so over the top that it abrogated divine authority – Operation Infinite Justice, for example. What a grounded, utterly human antidote her words were. And what a relief! Instead of waking each morning and defining myself as an impotent war protester in America. I started waking up and thinking, "Okay. What small thing can I do today with love?"

"Mother Teresa's advice gave me permission to do stuff like play with my kids and go fishing again. I actually live her advice when I fish. No joke. On big Montana trout rivers, you often see fly fishers trying to do great things by fishing heroically, making great long casts out into the giant flow as if they're thinking Operation Infinite Trout! But we can do no great things. So those of us who actually catch trout scarcely glance at the vast flow. Instead we parse the river, slicing off a tiny ribbon known as a feeding lane, where you target a single trout repeatedly rising. In huge western rivers, three or four hundred feet across, I'm talking about a ribbon six inches in width. Yet this ribbon, believe me, is where all the rising trout get hooked.

"A fly-fisherly strategy for those who yearn to make a difference: Every morning look for "ribbons." One small thing you sense could be done with full-on attentiveness and love. And after you finish it, look for another. Ad infinitum."

Reflection

Claudia Jimenez

We have an inclination to make a difference, to be a part of making the world a better, peaceful place. Yet, we also recognize what an intimidating, overwhelming task peacemaking can be. That is why David Duncan's description of fly fishing resonated with me. How many times do we glance at the vast flow, get caught up in the big picture, instead of focusing on the tiny ribbon, the feeding lane where trout are actually caught? That "ribbon" represents the small things that Mother Theresa encourages us to do lovingly. Her words are uplifting and realistic. They invite us to reflect on our limitations and still see possibility:

"We can do no great things –
only small things, with great love."

Now, I consider myself an optimist, open to possibilities in terms of the bigger picture. But doing "Small things, with great love" makes sense. In a time of great issues: war in the Middle East, poverty at home and abroad, global warming, inadequate healthcare for many Americans, hurried families, children left behind and so on the idea of doing small things with great love may seem delusional. Yet, the genuine giving of one person can make a difference that can be great to the person that receives it.

For some of us who are part of the workforce and raising families, small things done with great love are doable. We can be mindful and loving as we parent and interact with co-workers. We can approach work with attentiveness and pride. We drive in traffic jams, deal with crowds on the subway, cook meals for our families, clean our homes, interact with difficult people in our lives and so on every day. How can we do these small things with great love to change the paradigms that surround us? How do we honor our UU principles in the process?

For youth and young adults struggling to find meaning and understand the world they are inheriting, small things done with great love are doable, too. Amidst the turmoil of adolescence, deciding on a career or area of study and becoming independent, there are numerous opportunities to move beyond focusing solely on one one's self: coaching a team, volunteering at a shelter or soup kitchen, tutoring another student, participating in a beach clean-up...so many ways that to give and see success. Young people can and do make a difference. And as they make a difference they are building and nurturing relationships with others. These relationships are the building blocks for peace.

For those approaching or in retirement, and dealing with the realities of aging, doing small things with great love makes sense. Finding time to be involved with one's family, mentoring a child, sharing one's story with a grandchild, participating in a green project in one's community...there are many

small ways to contribute lovingly to make the world a better place.

The work of peace making is anchored in the work of relationships; we all need to learn how to build and strengthen relationships. Healthy relationships bring us closer to peace.... I offer you this reflection from Mark DeVries:

“The bridge from childhood to adulthood is getting longer and longer. Young people in our time are stuck in a peer-centered culture. And unless they can find footing to step out of that culture they will perpetually be stuck in adolescence. Teenagers will not learn the skills required of mature adults in a peer centered [world]. The process occurs as the less mature have the opportunity to observe, dialogue and collaborate with [adults]. For too long, young people have been told that their greatest problems are sex, alcohol, drugs, etc. These are, in fact, symptoms of a much greater disease. The disease of youth is that key relationships are in disarray – their relationships with self, parents, friends, [the holy] and the world”

-- in *Family Based Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries

After reading this I asked my teenage daughters if they had any conversations in school with adults that day, and the answer was no. Then I asked them when they last had a conversation with an adult (other than their parents) and the response was one adult conversation each: one with the cross-country coach, the other with the piano teacher. Hmm...in a time of so much stranger danger and mistrust how can youth relate better to adults? Maybe we can be more intentional about forging connections with youth. This can make a tremendous difference in their lives, and our own lives. One small thing, a conversation, can be the start of a wonderful relationship bridging across many years. What better way to work towards peace, than to cultivate and model establishing meaningful relationships across generations? Healthy relationships bring us closer to peace.

Great things tend to be undoable things. But sometimes, attainable. Yet, small things, lovingly done, are always within our reach. One small thing we can all do is reach out to others, nurture healthy relationships, and together create a more peaceful world.

Responsive Reading # 602

“If There Is To Be Peace”

From the writings of Lao-Tse

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.

If there is to be peace in the nations,

There must be peace in the cities.

If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.

If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.

If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.

HOMILY

Gail Geisenhainer

Lao-Tse has given us the first clues in the treasure map to guide our quest for Peace. "If there is to be peace in the world," he counseled, "there must be Peace" at each of these points of connection: "in the nations, cities, with neighbors, in the home and in our hearts." We can enter into the work of being peace and building peace through any of these intersections.

I think there's one more element, one more intersection, one more point of entry where we can make a significant contribution to the work of peacemaking.

We have learned, since the time of Lao-Tse, that the choices we make emerge not only from the human heart but from the various sections of the human brain. We know more now about how we human beings decide, or don't decide, to make responses, to choose our actions. We have learned how our most primitive brain, our so-called "reptile brain" provides us with the ability to take quick action. The Fright or Flight reaction, we call it. The ability to sense danger and jump to safety is what saved our earliest ancestors from the attack of saber-toothed tigers.

We can react, we can jump at a stimulus. And we also have developed other brain capacities. We can take stimuli and we can consider a response. We can think, reflect and ponder. We can choose. Will we be reactive or will we be responsive?

The work of justice is rarely well served when we react to one another, when we do not take the time for discernment, time to listen and reflect, when we react rather than respond. I call it being dead right. When I jump in certainty without listening or reflecting. Here's why...

When I was very, very young... Just walking and talking on my own, Anna, my grandmother, and I were about to cross the big Avenue that ran through Union City, New Jersey where we lived. I was staring up at the traffic light. Cars were flying by us at great speed. The light turned yellow and I began to move forward. Anna was one of those grandmothers with an iron grip. She had seen too many children lost to too many of the world's perils. She wasn't going to let a grandkid slip by. She grabbed my hand. The light turned from

yellow to green. I darted out only got as far as her arm would extend. She had me in her iron grip.

“But Grandma,” I whined and wiggled, “the light turned, they have to stop.” “You are right, little one,” Anna replied, “but if you run out before looking at the cars, you could be dead right.”

Dead right. The kind of right that is so singular, so uni-focused, that there is no life in it. Dead right. A way of reacting where we are so certain in our truth, so focused and inflexible that our act of being certain cuts us off from all conversation, cuts us off from all dialogue, from all learning, from all humility or even compassion. Eventually, our certainty cuts us off from trust and respect of others. Cuts us off from all entries into the work of peacemaking. Dead right. Before we can move deeper in the work of justice building and peace making we need to be in right relationship with ourselves and with each other. This can be the work of the church; to help us grow in maturity and focus; to help us deepen our relationship with ourselves, each other, and the planet.

Peace will not come to life until we do the work of building just, healthy and balanced relationships. We will feed the hungry not with passionate intentions or even technical innovations, but through the labors of human hands in productive relationship. We will clothe the naked not with sound bites and slogans, but through the labors of human hands in productive relationship. We will house the homeless not through indignation or partisan political bickering but through the labors of human hands in productive relationship.

The Buddha said, “Never does hatred cease by hating in return. Only through love can hatred come to an end.”

If we cannot respect and trust one another well enough to have civil discussions and calm dialogue at meetings, we will never know peace. If we cannot listen carefully enough to one another to have reasoned discourse in our newspaper editorials, we will never know peace. If we cannot talk within our families and kinship circles in ways that take time to listen deeply, to reflect, to consider the other’s words, we will never know peace. If we cannot encourage our elected officials in churches, towns and our government to listen and reflect and consider the views of others with care, we will never know peace. We will all continue to be dead right. Right with a hard certainty that bespeaks the rigors of death and not the pliant strength of new life.

If we are willing to teach peace at every level of our lives, I believe that peace can work. If we are willing to practice and learn peace at every level of our lives, I believe that peace can work.

The work of peacemaking begins in relationship. The work of peacemaking begins with our ability to forgo reacting and seek measured responses that reflect our most deeply held values. In the mid-twentieth century, Unitarian giant, A. Powel Davies said, “For Religion to be effective in the age into which we have now entered, it must give up being infantile. The time has come for religion to

grow up. What is needed today is mature minds and grown-up souls...," The work of peacemaking begins with our own spiritual disciplines, with our own interior work, with the goal of personal maturity that Channing called "Self Culture."

In his own language, William Ellery Channing described "Self-Culture" as "the care which everyman owes himself to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature." Two hundred years ago it was hot news that men of different social classes could be expected to practice a self-cultivation that would unfold and perfect their natures as men. Over a century later Unitarian Universalist women joined the revolution by insisting that women were as capable as men in the disciplines of self-cultivation. As a nation and as a culture and as a faith community, we continue to battle the obscene assertion that human beings of ethnic and racial origins differing from Caucasian Western Europeans might not possess the capacity for full human maturity and spiritual depth. But battle the obscenity of racism we do and battle the obscenity of racism we shall until all human beings are recognized as capable and worthy of cultivation, care, protection, justice and peace.

The work of peacemaking begins when we each commit to deepening our capacity for right relationship. When we each turn to slow down our consumption of resources, air, water, time and wisdom. When we slow down, focus, and direct our attention to the tasks at hand, we will be working toward peacemaking in our hearts, our homes and our communities.

And people will notice. When each one of us risks moving to a deeper level of spiritual maturity, when we grow our souls, folks will notice. In our families, homes, churches, folks will notice. In our jobs, clubs, and committees, folks will notice. And when folks notice they will walk with us, join with us.

When we choose mature values and focused responses for our every encounter, we will create the change we desire. We will be peace, build peace, teach peace and maybe..., if we are careful and perseverant and lucky, we will catch a glimpse of justice. It's our choice.

Hymn # 95 "There Is More Love Somewhere"

Unison Reading # 580 "The Task of Religious Community"

By Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

The central task of the religious community
is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all.

There is a connectedness,
a relationship discovered
amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others.
Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

It is the church that assures us
that we are not struggling for justice on our own,
but as members of a larger community.

The religious community is essential,
for alone
our vision is too narrow
to see all that must be seen,
and our strength too limited
to do all that must be done.

Together, our vision widens
and our strength is renewed.

Benediction:

Go out from this place
Knowing down into the marrow of your bones
That you are loved and cherished,

And bring that certainty with you
Into all your endeavors.

Go In Peace,
Amen and Blessed Be.