

**Saturday Evening Worship - June 27, 2009 - 8:00PM**  
**Salt Palace Hall E**  
**Salt Lake City, Utah**  
**Following UUA Election and preceding Ware Lecture**

**Opening Hymn – John Hubert**

We open our evening worship with #347 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, **Gather the Spirit** by Jim Scott. In the singing of this, let's give thanks for all who have enriched Unitarian Universalism with their time and talents and give witness to the phrase: "Our separate fires will kindle one flame."

*Gather the spirit, harvest the power.  
Our separate fires will kindle one flame.  
Witness the mystery of this hour  
Our trials in this light appear all the same.*

*Chorus: Gather in peace, gather in thanks  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again.*

*Gather the spirit of heart and mind.  
Seeds for the sowing are laid in store.  
Nurture in love, and conscience refined.  
With body and spirit united once more.*

*Chorus: Gather in peace, gather in thanks  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again.*

*Gather the spirit growing in all  
Drawn by the moon and fed by the sun.  
Winter to spring and summer to fall,  
The chorus of life resounding as one.*

*Chorus: Gather in peace, gather in thanks  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again.*

## **Invocation/Chalice Lighting – Anne Bancroft**

Welcome and well come to our service this evening – a service of discovery about our leadership going forward, a service of gratitude for willingness to serve.

The final stanza of Marge Piercy's verse, *To Be of Use*:

The work of the world is common as mud.  
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.  
But the thing worth doing well done  
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
but you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry  
and a person for work that is real.

Our work brings us to this evening. Our shared visions, our common goals, our things worth doing call us to service in Unitarian Universalism: each of us in our own way contributing to the whole.

How grateful we are for real work, for the call to service that reminds us that we are each needed in the healing of an ever broken world, and for the response to that call, the willingness to serve.

We light our chalice this evening duly blessed, and truly grateful.

## **Announcement – Paul Rickter**

This afternoon, delegates representing the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association voted to elect new and returning leaders of our Association. In addition, some delegates participated in this election by voting absentee before the beginning of this General Assembly.

For all offices other than President, there were no contested races. Therefore, I have certified that the nominated candidates for Trustee At-Large, Youth Trustee At-Large, Financial Advisor, Moderator, Nominating Committee, General Assembly Planning Committee, Commission on Social Witness, Commission on Appraisal, and Board of Review has been duly elected. Congratulations and thank you to each of these leaders for their willingness to serve.

For the office of President, two candidates were nominated, the Rev. Peter Morales and the Rev. Laurel Hallman. A total of 3,550 delegates cast ballots in the election, 1847 by absentee ballot and 1595 here in Salt Lake City.

Before I announce the vote totals, I want to thank Laurel and Peter for their service to us by putting themselves forward as candidates in this election. They each ran a campaign

that focused on the issues that matter to the future of Unitarian Universalism and each campaigned in a manner that was in keeping with this religious office. Please join me in giving our two candidates a round of applause.

Now, to the results: Of the 3,550 votes, Laurel Hallman received 1,481 and Peter Morales received 2,061 votes. I therefore, certify that Peter Morales has been elected the eighth President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

### **Instrumental Interlude**

*"Unconditional Love"* by David Burrows.

Performers: Keith Arnold, piano and David Burrows, flute.

### **Homily – Burton Carley**

Theologian, pastor, teacher and author Howard Thurman said, "Always there is a shadow. Always there is the wide place between the dream and its fulfillment." Leaders cast dreams so they understand this regardless of their degree of success.

In this wide place East of Eden things go wrong. In 1895 there were only two cars in the whole state of Ohio. They collided.

This is part and parcel of the human condition. There is never a moment when life is not trying to teach us something. Challenges abound. This is not remarkable. What is remarkable is that there are people who are called to lead in this wide place where shadows play. They do so not in resignation. Between the dream and its fulfillment is the perfect habitat for faith. In that wide place faithful people rise to bless us, to encourage us, to inspire us forward.

Some of us are disappointed that our candidate did not win the election, and some of us are delighted that our candidate won, but we all can be thankful--thankful for those willing to risk their skills and talents for our faith. This is not an easy thing in a company of people with perfectionist tendencies, strong opinions, and righteous attitudes.

We are thankful for the quality of our ordained and lay candidates seeking to be servant leaders. Read their resumes and the commitment to our collective religious life is impressive. There is only one line missing in their descriptions. Perhaps because it is assumed or taken for granted. But we should not do so. That line is: "I love my faith." For this is our covenant, to walk together in the ways of love known and to be known. In the end it is how we are judged, by how well we abide by this promise we make to each other.

And this is the thing about love: it possesses a transforming power. Leaders have experienced that power in their own lives and out of gratitude want to serve it and build its capacity among us. That work of love is nothing sentimental, and it is not about pleasing us. It can be so hard, stretching us, confusing us, and even challenging our

most cherished beliefs. This is what love does in that wide place. It urges us to narrow the gap between the dream and the reality.

So when we come to install our elected servant leaders, faithful in their love of our faith, willing to risk their skills and talents for us and against the difficult challenges that are ahead, remember the transformations that have brought you here. Remember the struggles and delights of creating something new in your congregation, of becoming however imperfectly the embodiment of our faith for souls that hunger and thirst for a new living expression of the spiritual life. Remember your vision for that was transformation. Remember the growing pains, the accomplishments, the promises fulfilled and the promises that brought the taste of ash to your lips. Remember the long night walking through the valley of the shadow for that too was transformation.

Remember how the task is always to traverse the gap between the ideal and its reality. Remember how the pathway is made up of the qualities of the spirit, qualities like patience, prudence, forbearance, compassion, sacrifice, courage, grace and forgiveness. Remember the names and faces of the people who sputter and sometimes shine with these qualities. Remember how imperfect people did remarkable things and do them still. Remember how lives have been changed and are changed by our faith. Remember how the church is not your social club but where you come to face what is Holy and thus to be transformed.

Remember these things and feel gratitude for our community of faith: its heritage of the Free Church, its fidelity to the covenantal way, its desire to be in right relationship with the Holy and the whole motley crew of humanity, and its power to heal and draw out our best selves. Give thanks for the long line of pioneers, prophets, leaders and faithful people who bequeathed to us our tradition, and for those who are still called by the spirit to serve. Remember these things and hold them as something sacred even as you recognize the wide place between the dream of our promise and its reality.

Remember because these transformations are not all. Remember because the maturing of our vision, mission and ministry, the reaching out to others in love and justice, will call forth new challenges. Because with new challenges always comes the possibility of things going wrong. Because the fault line that runs through even the best of hearts will tremble and quake. Because no one of us is so good that we don't need the amazing grace and encouragement of others to endure the wide place.

So walk in covenant with your leaders. Be accountable with them, encourage their strengths and forgive their weaknesses. Sense how our historic faith is larger than any individual, minister or lay, and connects past to present to future, and that to serve the Free Church, to be part of its living tradition and present covenant, to be stewards of its heritage and creators of its vision, to be about the work of its ministry, is something worthy of our best selves and that does indeed make us whole. It is our salvation in this wide place we inhabit.

Walk in the bonds of love with your leaders, not because they are perfect or that you agree with them in all things. Do so because it is in the loving community created by covenant that the free mind and the life of the spirit prosper. It is love that makes all healing possible in a world where things go wrong. It is love that called our leaders to serve and brought us into covenant. It is love that brings me here to you and love that has served you through all the years of your transformation, and love that will serve you still in the challenges that are ahead. And this love I swear, is not only your own.

With gratitude remember all who have served our faith, serve it today, and will serve it into the future. Give thanks for the opportunities given to us by living in this wide place between the dream and its fulfillment. Then you shall know how this day is not an end but a beginning, and will call forth from you things not yet dreamed of, the difficult things that love requires, our transformation. So may it be.

Amen & Amen & Amen

**Prayer/Litany – Led by Rev. Tracey Robinson-Harris**  
**A Litany for Leadership by Rob Eller Isaacs**

Minister: We gather here this evening in humility and hope to offer our deep thanks to those whose terms of office come now to an end. May you rest and return to us seasoned and refreshed.

Congregation: Even as we mark your going we confess that we have sometimes judged too harshly. Thank you for calling us to task. Thank you for all you've tried to teach us. Thank you for pointing to the power of strong leadership well-shared.

Minister: Together let us praise three attributes of leadership that we affirm. Good leaders ground their lives in gratitude. Good leaders listen. And good leaders lead. As we welcome those of you newly elected to lead us we charge you:

Congregation: To take the time you need to find and keep your balance. We know, that "new occasions teach new duties." We need you to be strong and wise. May these new duties you embrace inspire and include a deeper devotion to personal practice.

Minister: Good leaders listen.

Congregation: We want you to hear us, not only our words, not just our opinions but also we want you to listen for all that remains unspoken. We know how hard

it can be. And so we pledge to strive to listen to you with open ears and open hearts in hope of ever more effective ministry.

Minister: Good leaders lead.

Congregation: Be brave and we will be kind. Be prophetic and we will yoke our strength to your new vision. Thank you for investing your lives in this small sturdy faith. In gratitude and grace we now begin again. Confirmed in love, made true by listening, we now renew our covenant to lead and to be led in bringing in the reign of mutual respect.

Minister: And let the people say, Amen.

Congregation: Amen and Blessed Be.

### **Closing Hymn John Hubert**

Our closing song is ***For All That is Our Life***, #128 from *Singing the Living Tradition*. As we go forward and continue our work for the common good, now with new leadership, rise in body or spirit and sing this song of justice and service.

*Vs. 1*

*For all that is our life we sing out thanks and praise  
For all life is a gift which we are called to use  
To build the common good  
And make our own days glad*

*Vs. 2*

*For needs which others serve, for services we give,  
For work and its rewards, for hours of rest and love;  
We come with praise and thanks  
For all that is our life.*

*Vs. 3*

*For sorrow we must bear, for failures, pain, and loss,  
For each new thing we learn, for fearful hours that pass:  
We come with praise and thanks  
For all that is our life*

*Vs. 4*

*For all that is our life we sing out thanks and praise  
For all life is a gift which we are called to use  
To build the common good  
And make our own days glad*