

**GA Closing Worship – June 28, 2009
Salt Lake City, Utah**

Gathering in Song (John Hubert)

Good evening. As we gather for our last time of General Assembly we welcome you all in worship. We are going to start out this evening's service with some congregational singing. Our first song is from the soon to be debuted hymnal *Las Voces del Camino* entitled *Cansado del Camino* by Jesús Adrián Romero and arranged by Unitarian Universalist musician Susan Peck. I am joined by Leon Burke from Eliot Unitarian Chapel in St. Louis Missouri. He will help you learn this song.

Leon: Hello! I would like to introduce this song to you in three parts.

Here is part one. First we will speak the text, and then sing it.

Please repeat after me.

*Cansado del camino, sediento de ti,
un desierto-he cruzado
sin fuerzas he quedado
vengo-a ti.*

And now I will sing each line and I invite you to repeat after me.

*Cansado del camino, sediento de ti,
un desierto-he cruzado
sin fuerzas he quedado
vengo-a ti.*

Here is part two. Please note that it has the same melody as part one.

Please repeat after me.

*Luché como soldado
y-a veces sufrí
Y-aunque la lucha-he ganado,
mi-armadura-he desgastado,
vengo-a ti.*

And now I will sing each line and I invite you to repeat after me.

*Luché como soldado y-a veces sufrí
Y-aunque la lucha-he ganado,
mi-armadura-he desgastado,
vengo-a ti.*

And finally, here is part three.

Please repeat after me.

*Sumérgeme
en el río de tu-espíritu,
necesito refrescar este seco corazón
sediento de ti.*

And now I will sing each line and I invite you to repeat after me.

*Sumérgeme
en el río de tu-espíritu,
necesito refrescar este seco corazón
sediento de ti.*

Very good! The translation for this song is *Weary and thirsy, I have crossed the desert searching for you. Immerse me in the river of your spirit that I may refresh this parched heart.* Now let's sing the whole thing. You will sing the first two parts twice then we will sing the last part twice with two final *Sumérgeme* Here we go.

*Cansado del camino, sediento de ti,
un desierto-he cruzado sin fuerzas he quedado,
vengo-a ti.*

*Luché como soldado y-a veces sufrí
Y-aunque la lucha-he ganado, mi-armadura-he desgastado,
vengo-a ti.*

*Cansado del camino, sediento de ti,
un desierto-he cruzao sin fuerzas he quedado,
vengo-a ti.*

*Luché como soldado y-a veces sufrí
Y-aunque la lucha-he Ganado, mi-armadura-he desgastado,
vengo-a ti.*

*Sumérgeme
en el río de tu-espíritu,
necesito refrescar este seco corazón
sediento de ti.*

*Sumérgeme
en el río de tu-espíritu,
necesito refrescar este seco corazón
sediento de ti.
Sumérgeme
Sumérgeme.*

Blue Boat Home

Our next hymn is ***Blue Boat Home, # 1064*** in *Singing the Journey*. It seemed fitting to sing Peter Mayer's text of this traditional hymn (which is Hyfrodol) prior to the last service with Bill Sinkford as our President. It is one of his favorites, and a growing favorite in many of our congregations.

*Though below me I feel no motion, standing on these mountains and plains.
Far away from the rolling ocean, still my dry land heart can say:
I've been sailing all my life now, never harbor or port have I known.
The wide universe is the ocean I travel, and the earth is my blue boat home.*

*Sun my sail and moon my rudder, as I ply the starry sea.
Leaning over the edge in wonder, casting questions into the deep.
Drifting here with my ship's companions, all we kindred pilgrim souls.
Making our way by the lights of the heavens, in our beautiful blue boat home.*

*I give thanks to the waves upholding me, hail the great winds urging me on.
Greet the infinite sea before me, sing the sky my sailor's songs.
I was born upon the fathoms, never harbor nor port have I known.
The wide universe is the ocean I travel, and the earth is my blue boat home.*

When the Spirit Says Do

John: Our last song in this hymn sing is ***When the Spirit Says Do, Hymn #1024*** in *Singing the Journey*. This arrangement by Mark Freundt is an African American Spiritual from the Civil Rights period which exists in public domain. We honor the voices and the struggles that shaped this song.

*You've got to do when the spirit says do
You've got to do when the spirit says do
When the Spirit says do, you've got to do, oh Lord!
You've got to do when the spirit says do*

*Spirit says do! Spirit says do!
Spirit says do! Spirit says do!
Spirit says do! Spirit says do!*

*You've got to sing when the spirit says sing
You've got to sing when the spirit says sing
When the Spirit says sing, you've got to sing, oh Lord!
You've got to sing when the spirit says sing*

*Spirit says sing! Spirit says sing!
Spirit says sing! Spirit says sing!
Spirit says sing! Spirit says sing!*

*You've got to pray when the spirit says pray
You've got to pray when the spirit says pray
When the Spirit says pray, you've got to pray, oh Lord!
You've got to pray when the spirit says pray*

*Spirit says pray! Spirit says pray!
Spirit says pray! Spirit says pray!
Spirit says pray! Spirit says pray!*

*You've got to act when the spirit says act
You've got to act when the spirit says act
When the Spirit says act, you've got to act, oh Lord!
You've got to act when the spirit says act*

*Spirit says act! Spirit says act!
Spirit says act! Spirit says act!
Spirit says act! Spirit says act!*

*You've got to do when the spirit says do
You've got to do when the spirit says do
When the Spirit says do, you've got to do, oh Lord!
You've got to do when the spirit says do*

*Spirit says do! Spirit says do!
Spirit says do! Spirit says do!
Spirit says do! Spirit says do!*

Spirit says do!

Invocation (Beth McGregor)

Tonight we light our chalice for the last time at this General Assembly.

(Paul Rickter lights chalice)

We are thankful for all that we have lived and learned in these days, for our work and worship together.

We are thankful for leadership, past and present, and pledge ourselves to move forward together.

May our time here prepare us for the work ahead, as we return to our congregations and communities..

And may the flame of this chalice be a beacon of hope we will carry in our hearts in all of the days ahead.

GA Slide Show – 10 minutes, with music accompanying – Bill Sinkford images followed by GA 09 images.

Honoring Bill Sinkford (Kay Montgomery)

Three things remain, Corinthians says, faith, hope, and love.

Bill, you've managed to instill these three things in pretty much everything you've done in the fifteen years since you came to the UUA and particularly in these last eight years as president.

And who knew, eight years ago, that you were walking right into the fire? There's been so much, almost too much to remember, almost too much to name about your presidency.

- The music and the words and the ministry that you've brought to everything you touch.
- The changes, sometimes unbearably tough, sometimes thrilling, in your personal life.
- Cancer, back surgery. Into the fire.
- The historic wedding on May 17, 2004 in the chapel at '25' for the lead plaintiffs in the Massachusetts' Goodridge case. Beacon Pres author E. J. Graff wrote afterward, in a magazine article, "the Unitarian Universalist president, the Reverend William Sinkford, intoned, 'By the authority vested in me by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts . . .' Congregation and media roared. I was blindsided by a riptide of sobbing. I've cried at weddings before; this was entirely different. It was like hearing someone announce that the terrifying excommunication I'd felt at age 15 . . . had been rescinded. I was an ordinary citizen at last."
- The budgets, the meetings, the retreats, the pastoral messages, the columns, the demonstrations, the marches, the arrest. Right into the fire.
- Your sure-footedness as a manager, always knowing when to intervene and when to authorize others and get out of the way.
- Disasters of all kinds: September 11, you, newly elected; Katrina and Rita; Knoxville, floods and fires and a tsunami. You holding steady. And so very *present*.
- Tapestry of Faith, credentialing religious educators and, this year, musicians. Your commitment to excellence in ministry.

- The risks you've taken, the political battles both won and lost, the experiments bravely tried. Right into the fire.
- Your humor (I have never worked with anyone with whom I've laughed so much) and your humility (always knowing what you don't know).
- Your fidelities: racial justice, youth, the growth of our faith. Ah, and religion.

Bill, you've been an elegant and omnipresent and wise president. You've been admired and loved. As a deep introvert, you've had to work against the grain. Bill, for your faithfulness and your hopefulness and your love and devotion to our faith, we thank you so very much. Your faith and hope and your love have left an indelible mark on Unitarian Universalism. We've been blessed to have had you as president.

Installation of Newly Elected Leaders (Paul Rickter)

Secretary: Guided by love for this tradition and hope for the future, this General Assembly has elected members of the Board of Trustees and committee members and our districts have elected members of the Board of Trustees. These leaders represent both new and continuing leadership for our Association of congregations.

Will these newly elected leaders please rise and face your colleagues and friends in this General Assembly to be installed to your positions of leadership?

Now everyone, please join me as we covenant together to install these leaders to the offices to which we have elected them.

Secretary and General Assembly: May our Unitarian Universalist faith and heritage inform your work and deeds as you serve with our leadership and congregations and our staff. May your approach inspire good will among all.

Newly Elected Leaders: I covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Secretary and General Assembly: As you signify Unitarian Universalism in the wider world, may you serve as an instrument of reconciliation, hope, and welcome.

Newly Elected Leaders: I covenant to affirm and promote a goal of community of peace, justice, and liberty for all.

Secretary and General Assembly: May you deal forthrightly and honestly with us, keeping foremost in your heart the health and well-being of our movement, speaking your truth without fear of repercussion and encouraging others to do the same.

Newly Elected Leaders: I covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process.

Secretary and General Assembly: In the spirit of hospitality and understanding among people may all who cross your path feel they have been heard and seriously considered.

Newly Elected Leaders: I covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all.

Secretary and General Assembly: We covenant to encourage you and support you as you serve our movement. May our trust carry you through both difficulty and triumph. In gratitude we thank you for your willingness to serve.

Newly Elected Leaders: With gratitude I acknowledge and accept the trust that you have placed in me.

Anthem

Installation of New President (Paul Rickter)

Secretary: We gather tonight in a spirit of interdependence and dedication to install Peter Morales as the eighth President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. In an election held at this General Assembly, the duly selected delegates of the member congregations of Association, have invited you, <name>, to be our new President. In electing you, we have called you to lead us in a spirit of engagement, collaboration, and prophetic ministry. Mindful of the centuries of tradition that have lead us to this moment and to the great promise that lies ahead, we look to you for leadership during the coming four years. Do you accept the invitation of our member congregations to be our President?

President: I do.

Secretary: In formal recognition of the election of <name> and <her/his> acceptance, I hereby install you as President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations.

Charge to the President (Rev. William G. Sinkford)

Peter,

It is my role to offer a charge to you. I've just joined one of the most exclusive clubs on the planet; it has only five members, the living past presidents of the Association. Rather than relying on my own wisdom alone, I asked each of the other four (Bob West, Gene Pickett, Bill Schulz, and John Buehrens) to offer a thought about how to charge you. I'll offer one thought of my own as well.

From Bob West, who served from 1969 – 1977

Keep your sense of humor. Never lose the long-term view: the consequences of your actions (or inactions) for the future. Always listen to others when making decisions—not necessarily to do what they wish, but to consider their perspectives and information. Continually bear in mind that the life and real strength of our religious movement reside in the day-to-day lives of the local members and professional leaders of our congregations; they are the life, heart, and soul of our denomination.

From Gene Pickett, who served from 1979 – 1985

It is important to realize that one's influence as President resides in the ability to balance the varying needs, to honor our diversity, and to reconcile our differences in order to move forward together--remembering always how much we need one another. Such recognition of dependence need not be viewed as a weakness. Acknowledging one's dependence can result in a greater openness to others, a deeper sense of mutuality, and an expanded sense of self that frees one to absorb the energy, the perspectives, and the insights of others.

From Bill Schulz, who served from 1985 – 1993

I'd say the most important trait in any leader is to remember that how he or she is perceived is more a function of other people's needs than of his or her performance. We are neither as wise and wondrous as our admirers believe nor as bumbling and iniquitous as our detractors insist. Given that, it is best just to try to be as authentic as possible and let the chips fall where they may. What helps is to have a pocketful of close friends who will defend you to the hilt in public and then, behind close doors (and, preferably, with a martini in hand), tell you when you're being a horse's ass.

From John Buehrens, who served from 1993 – 2001

I charge you to have a devotional discipline of meditation and prayer. Not for your equanimity alone, though that will surely be tested. But a daily practice of remembering your colleagues in ministry and the devoted lay leaders of this Association -- especially those who may be struggling in body or spirit at any given time. If you think of them, you will recall also that being President is NOT about you; rather it is about your service to the mission and covenant that all of us share; and that you are not alone in this work.

In a congregational setting, the charge to the new minister almost always includes the instruction to take care of yourself. There is much about self-care in the words of the other past presidents, if you listen carefully. If my experience is any guide, you will regularly receive that same instruction from colleagues and lay leaders. Travel less; attend fewer meetings they will say. They mean, of course, travel less except to attend my event and attend fewer meetings except the one I am chairing. Try to take that in as a complement that your presence makes a difference. But I assume that you have learned what you need to keep yourself grounded and focused. I'm assuming that the self care charge is securely a part of your ministry. You've survived the grueling campaign trail after all.

My charge to you is in another direction. I charge you to love our people. Your role is to cast vision, to help set our spiritual priorities, to point us to a hopeful and vibrant future. So you must love the people we can become, you must love our aspirations. But I also charge you to love us as we are, in all our fallibility and our shortcomings, with our certainties held too tightly and our uncertainties often hard for us to acknowledge. I charge you to love us warts and all. It is easy to love an aspiration, but only if you love us as we are will you find that grounding that can help you lead us forward. The hopeful future is waiting to be born in us. Love us, Peter/Laurel.

The service of ordination in a congregation usually includes the presentation of a stole to the new minister. You are far from a new minister, but you are a new Association President. The stole carries with it the image of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. It represents the towel that Jesus had around his shoulders to dry the feet of those who followed him. It is a powerful symbol of service. This ceremony is the celebration of the passing of leadership to you. As the mantle of leadership passes, please accept this stole as a symbol of that passage. The words around its border (faith, hope, love, urgency, humility and patience) are some of the ways of being President that can help you as you take up this ministry.

(Bill removes stole from his shoulders and places it around the shoulders of the new president.)

May your leadership be a blessing to our congregations and to this faith that we all love. And in your new ministry as President may you find both challenge and fulfillment.

Laying on of Hands Victoria Safford

In our tradition the authority of leaders - of ministers, lay leaders, presidents - is granted by the people. The call to serve may originate within a person, or within whatever holy conversation has grounded his conviction, but in our polity that call must be recognized, and can only be ratified, by the congregation. Ours is an embodied faith, through which the sacred finds voice in our own spoken words, and it acts in the world through our own hands.

The old practice of laying on of hands, in ordinations, in installations, in circles of healing and blessing, reminds us of the sources and context of our power. Leaders do not serve alone, and ours is always a partnered ministry.

Peter, I invite you to come forward and sit before us here.

Peter, we would not simply install you in your office, but bless you on this journey. We invite you to be still, to close your eyes and be held in trust by our physical presence, the literal touch of our hands.

- You are companioned most closely now, and will be in the days to come, by your **family**.

I ask Phyllis and Marcela to join us now, to gather here and lightly lay their hands upon you.

We hold in our hearts others whom you love, not able to be with you tonight, yet present in spirit:

Miguel, and other members of your family, those present in beloved memory:

Breathe deeply. Remember who you are. Remember where you come from, where you live, where your heart is most at home.

- You are companioned in this call by a long line of worthy predecessors. I ask **Bill Sinkford** to join you now, and to lay his hand upon you.
- You are companioned by strong leaders of our Association, called to serve and elected by our people, just as you have been. You will be partnered by comrades who will challenge and support you, who will draw your strength forward and look to you to draw out what is best in them. I ask **Gini Courter** to join you now, and members of the **UUA Board of Trustees**.
- Peter, you are companioned also by your beloved **colleagues in ministry**. I ask ministers here on the stage to join you. (*to those on stage: Friends, as you gather now, make concentric circles around Peter, placing your hands on the person in front of you.*) I ask ministers in the congregation to rise in body or spirit.
- Most importantly, you are companioned in this work by our people: **countless lay leaders** who serve their congregations and our movement. There is no one else, no ecclesiastical body, no bishop, who can recognize and authorize this naming. The very hands that embody our faith beyond this place, in every congregation large and small, in worship, in peace making and justice seeking, in institutional commitment, in the day to day celebration of life – the very hands that hold our faith are laid upon you now. I ask those on stage to come forward and lay your hands on Peter. I ask all in the congregation to rise in body and spirit. Peter, it is from their trust and their vision, that your authority derives. You are called specifically, by this people, called out and chosen to lead and to listen, to lean on them, on us, for wisdom, clarity and courage.

(To those in the hall): Friends, join hands in body or spirit. With the help of us all, you in the wider congregation will be joined with us up here.

(Pause, as those in front on the main floor make hand-to-hand links all the way up to the stage. Victoria moves to center stage, placing one hand on Peter.)

We are gathered here in one strong body,
gathered here in the mystery of the hour, and in the struggle and the power,
standing in the need of prayer, imploring Spirit to draw near.
Please join in a spirit of meditation, a spirit of prayer.

Spirit of Life and love, moving in all things –
in prairie winds and blowing grasses,
through red rock desert and rolling rivers, running silent under ice,
among the stars and between the stars, and atoms,
and part and parcel of them -

Spirit that sounds in the voices of birds, the voice of thunder,
the laughing voices of children and the laughing voices of ancestors,
Spirit of life and love, moving in all things and in each of us,
gracious God of a thousand names,

Be here now.

For the gift of wise and willing leaders, lay and ordained, we are grateful.

May Peter Morales lead us with courage and humility,
fully certain of the authority we bestow upon him here,
fully certain of the authority of his own heart,
and of his call to do this work, this ministry, this sacred servant-leadership.

May he invoke often the spirit of those who have walked this way before,
all the saints who from their labors rest,
and may he heed with open heart and open mind
the various, variegated voices of our living faith,
now harmonious, now and then discordant: the rich music of our people.
May he heed especially the voices of the voiceless, and of the young, who are our future.
Above all, may he listen every day
to the constant whisper underneath the clatter of responsibility:
the voice of his own God.

May Peter speak plainly, tenderly and boldly to the wider world
the saving message of Unitarian Universalism, our principles, its purpose.
May his conscience be not compromised by conformity, convention,
nor any surfeit of caution.

May we, who are his partners in this work offer Peter
our deep trust and the pledge of our support.
S/he has taken up a joyful but sometimes lonely office,
and we would offer the best ministry we know.

May our Association thrive through Peter's tenure,
our movement grow deeper, stronger, broader in spirit.

Our calling, one by one and as a gathered people, is to grow our souls and serve the
world.

Together with Peter hand to hand,
May each of us answer with gladness and gratitude.
Amen and amen.

HYMN *if time allows:* Spirit of Life

Music: We Pray

(interspersed with the words below)

Charge to the Congregation (a litany) Gini Courter

1. Holy spirit, human spirit, God of many names and none at all,
We have worshipped, debated, discerned, and elected
An now we prepare to leave. Tired, energized, disappointed, jubilant,
We feel the sadness of parting as we return to our separate congregations.

*Music: Sometimes I feel discouraged
And think my life's in vain
But then the holy spirit
Revives my soul again (and again): we pray*

2. Spirit of Life and Love, may we leave here with common understanding and
uncommon resolve
To embrace the possibilities and challenges that new leadership provides.
Willing not only to 'be the change,' but to be changed,
Steadfast in our commitment to the holy work that we are called to do.

3. Help us celebrate and support Peter's leadership, not just here but in all our
congregations
Not only for this season of celebration, but for all the years of his service.
May we always remember to listen as eagerly to the President as we did to the candidate
And temper any future impatience with a clear memory of the promise of this moment.

4. Dear God, help us invite our leaders to make us uncomfortable and discontented,
To challenge our privilege, our cynicism, our arrogance, our complacency,
To trouble our hearts to see the gap between the world that is and the paradise that should
be

[pause]

Help us expect much of our leaders, but even more of ourselves...

*Music: So feel the love around you
This love can heal your soul
If you let this love within you
This love can make you whole...we pray*

Benediction (Peter Morales):

I invite you to take the hand of your neighbor for our benediction.

As we take one another's hands, let us feel the connections that bind this faith across the this land, all over the earth, and across the centuries.

We are one people.

We are one people united by what we love. We love compassion, we love life, we love freedom, we love justice, and we love one another. That love endures. Candidates, resolutions and General Assemblies come and go. Love endures. And love will guide us.

Together, together, we can grow our faith and help heal the world.

Let us go from here renewed. Let us go with hope and joy in our hearts.

Amen

Closing Song: Fire of Commitment

John Hubert: As we close our final service of General Assembly 2009 and begin a new era within Unitarian Universalism, I invite you to rise in body or spirit and sing Jason Shelton's rousing anthem *The Fire of Commitment*.

Vs.1

*From the light of days remembered burns a beacon bright and clear
Guiding hands and hearts and spirits into faith set free from fear*

[Refrain]:

*When the fire of commitment sets our mind and soul ablaze
When our hunger and our passion meet to call us on our way
When we live with deep assurance of the flame that burns within
Then our promise finds fulfillment and our future can begin.*

Vs.2

*From the stories of our living rings a song both brave and free
Calling pilgrims till to witness to the life of liberty.*

Refrain

Vs.3

*From the dreams of youthful vision comes a new, prophetic voice
Which demands a deeper justice built by our courageous choice*

Refrain