

A Memorial Service in Celebration of the Life of Craig Scott Amundson

Saturday, September 29, 2001 - 9:00 am
Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington
The Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, officiating

We come in love's name. Amen.
A human life is sacred.
It is sacred in its being born.
It is sacred in its living.
And it is sacred in its dying.

Today we have gathered to remember and to celebrate the Life of Craig Scott Amundson

Greeting:

My name is Linda Olson Peebles, one of the ministers of this, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. With me today is Chaplain Sir Walter Scott, Chaplain for the US Army at Ft. Belvoir. I welcome you this morning to our church home.

Call to Worship:

The sorrow and joy of life weave a tapestry of our individual lives as Death gathers us today into a community of care:

- * to bid one we have known and loved, farewell;
- * to search for Life's deepest meanings;
- * to seek the comfort and the healing women and men offer one another;
- to say "yes" to Life's greatest expression - Love. Love believes all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

The Unitarian Universalist minister Edward Searl reminds us:

At this time, we are united with the wisdom and customs of all people in all ages. Though we are a small group of this particular family and friends, we feel the embrace of the ageless human community. Our feelings, and our source of strength, come from a deep well of all humanity. In this spirit we join our individual feelings and thoughts as well as the faiths that sustain us separately into a harmony of memory and celebration.

This morning we shall celebrate Craig's living and we shall grieve his dying. As we share our thoughts, we may feel occasionally like laughing out loud. That is fine - there are times in Craig's life that give us joy. Craig was a very special man who got great joy from his family, his friends, his art, his career.

And we will also feel like crying, and that also is fine-- because there is great grief in losing someone whose life we hold dear. There is great grief in realizing the pain of such an unexpected, unjust too-early death. Craig was a so precious to so

many - as a son, a brother, a friend, a husband, a father, a co-worker. Our tears today help us begin to learn to live without Craig.

And that is what we shall do together this morning - not bring a close to our relationship with Craig, but begin a new way of appreciating his life and all it has meant and will continue to mean to us.

William Blake wrote:

*"Joy and woe are woven fine...
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so
We were made for joy and woe."*

Though grief is strong and we must mourn, we will not let the shadow of death obscure the living person who touched us many times, in many ways, filling our lives with memories, meaning, and love.

Chalice Lighting and Hymn:

We light the chalice, symbol of our faith in the power of love. May the spirit of the divine, the powerful presence of love, be with us at this time.

Please rise and join in singing hymn #123 - "Spirit of Life"

For Craig's children:

I have here a heart-shaped balloon. I love balloons. They remind me of parties and circuses and happy times. But sometimes, I've seen balloons make people cry - like when they pop, or when they blow out of your hand and fly away.

When someone we love dies, it feels like that. They made us so happy, that losing them makes us sad. I know that is how Elliott and Charlotte feel about missing their daddy.

I have a special thing to tell you - inside your heart you have memories and love for your daddy that will always connect you to him. When I let go of this balloon, I stay attached to it by this golden ribbon. Even though the balloon rises far, far away, I can tug on it with my ribbon and keep it in sight.

The love you have for your daddy is like that - remember that you have a golden ribbon in your heart to remember your daddy and stay in touch with him.

Remarks:

It is good that we have come together this morning, to remember and celebrate Craig's life. Because we need each other in empathy and consolation, and because we need each other

in courage and wisdom:
To face Craig's death,
To celebrate his life,
and to show our love and support for his family -
his wife Amber, his son Elliott, his daughter Charlotte
his parents Karen and Orland Amundson
his brothers Barry and Ryan
and all the family of loved ones in these family circles.

This is so very difficult - facing up to such a tragic loss. We are in the midst of a national mourning. So many were hurt on September 11, and the world will forever change because of it - but we know that this loss - Craig's death - is personal to those who loved him. And so, It is good to be together - because a human life is sacred - Craig's life is sacred - in its being born, in its living, and also in its dying.

We offer one another comfort, and we receive the comfort of the teachings of religion and the human experience of the transcending mystery and awe of life and death.

[Chaplain Scott offered a Scriptural reading]

Eulogy:

Craig Scott Amundson was born on August 21, 1973, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He died September 11, 2001, at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. In between those two dates and those two places was a life lived, a life of many dates and places and people, a life of different stages of learning and working and loving.

I met Craig, along with his beautiful young family, back in 1999, shortly after they had moved here. In a short time, I detected what those of you who knew him well have been telling me this week. Craig was a sweet, kind person with a beautiful spirit - open to people to ideas to caring.

His life was joy-filled. His childhood was happy - first with his family as a boy - born into a Midwest Norwegian family - in Cedar Rapids, and then the very happy days in junior and senior high school in Anamosa, Iowa. He loved those years - he was popular in school, played football. His years at the University of Iowa in Iowa City were also great years. He was a communications and film studies major, a d.j. on the college radio station, and had many good friendships.

It was at college that he and Amber met, and became good friends, and fell in love. The year 1996 brought marriage and the birth of their precious first child - Elliot.

Since Craig was an artist and a film-maker, let us show you this video he himself made of that special time:

After the family moved to Dubuque, and began the work of shaping home and careers, Craig decided that his talent and commitment to world peace needed to find a good creative outlet. Believe it or not - he figured out - way before many of his family and friends - that the US Army, with all its resources, was a great place for him to develop his skills and serve a larger mission of making the world a good place to live in. And while he was still in training, the miracle baby Charlotte arrived. The story of her birth and how Craig came to be present for it is one worth hearing!

Craig did such amazing work in his advanced training in multi-media illustration, and graduated with honors, so that he received an invitation to serve in a special position at the Pentagon, working with General Maude - Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel - as multi-media illustrator.

The family moved in the spring of 1999 to Ft. Belvoir. Neighbors there knew Craig as a patient, loving father. They'd often see him with his children, pulled in a wagon on the way to a playground. He was a wonderful husband, supportive of Amber's decision to go to grad school, and enthusiastic about sharing the home and parenting.

He *loved* his job, helping the Army look at ways of attracting more intelligent and talented young people - like him - to join in service to our country in the armed forces. His answer, when they asked him what would work in advertising campaigns, was "Focus more on peace."

Craig had a spirit and a soul and a mind that was tuned in to something special. The evil that came on September 11 to end his life couldn't destroy what he believed - what he knew,. He was a visionary and an idealist. We've printed in the program today some lyrics from Tracy Chapman that resonated with his ideals. Tracy Chapman called Amber to give her personal condolences and express her hope that her music will be of comfort and inspiration.

Let us listen now to one of these, from a CD sung by Tracy Chapman - and take comfort in the midst of our grief as we let the memories of Craig and the light of his spirit fill your mind and heart.

[Recorded song - "Heaven's Here on Earth" by Tracy Chapman]

Recollections from the congregation:

There are many stories to tell about Craig, so much about him that was wonderful! I hope everyone will take time later today - or in the weeks and months to come - to tell one another what you remember and love about Craig. It will take many voices and many memories! This morning, we've asked just several people to share a few brief comments.

Major General Susan Dewitt
Sergeant Steve Goosey
Max Smith

We give thanks for the many memories that remain unspoken today, but fill our hearts nevertheless.

[Chaplain Scott - prayer]

Reflection:

Death brings us face to face with Life. Our feelings and our memories may feel confused or too many to find a pattern. But, we can begin to see and to feel when we allow our thoughts to flow. We know there is mystery in death, and even in the richness of life. There is mystery. And yet we are comforted that we need not feel alone in this time.

Today, and in the coming weeks, as we remember and share our feelings and our stories about Craig, in light of his death, we can begin to live Life - hesitantly, but ever more abundantly. Especially if we live life the way Craig did - with great understanding and tolerance for people, with a yearning to work for peace and compassion in the world.

One of Craig's favorite books was one written by two Unitarian Universalist authors - John Buehrens and Forrest Church - "Our Chosen Faith." Let me read these words from Dr. Church, from a book that he wrote to try to understand the mystery of life and death. The title of the book is "Lifelines":

"Death is love's measure. Our grief when someone dies is testimony to our love, and the love he has given us is the one thing death can't kill. Only unspent love dies when we die."

Here are A. Powell Davies' words -

*"When sorrow comes, let us accept it simply, as a part of life.
Let the heart be open to pain; let it be stretched by it. ...
An open heart never grows bitter.
Here, also, is a deepening of meaning -- and it can lead
to a deepening inward knowledge that, in the final reckoning, all is well."*

We must say good-bye to Craig. He has died, and we are left to go on living without him. But we can live with him in our hearts - the love we have for him will never end. And we can honor Craig by living as he did - with sweet spirits, tolerance for different people, compassion and questing for peace. Craig is dead; and we grieve. But as long as our lives go on, in many ways, his life shall also go on - in how we live and love and remember him.

Let us rise now to sing. Immediately following, we will ask everyone who is going with us to the Arlington Cemetery to adjourn to your cars, and follow us the couple miles to that national memorial place for our American heroes. - and we know Craig was one.

Closing Hymn # 108 - "My Life Flows On in Endless Song"

Closing Words:

Let us take one another's hands -

We give thanks for the life of Craig Amundson!

Let us always honor and celebrate his life by living, ourselves, with appreciation of life and love in the days ahead.

Let us go in peace and thanksgiving, grateful for Craig's life,
and sustained by one another. Amen.

SERVICE OF INTERMENT

Arlington National Cemetery

September 29, 2001 11am

Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, officiating

Rev. Peebles:

We come together in love.

We come together to be here, in this special place.

This is a place for us. Set aside, for us who love,
for us who remember, for us who have said our farewells.

And who will say our farewells for as long as we live.

We come together in love.

And we join in a large and universal community of those
who honor the procession of life and death.

This is a special place - a place of beauty, of memory.

This is a place of sky and sunsets and long views.

This is a place of wind and rain and sun and shadow.

This is a place of earth and stone and grass.

This is a place hallowed by its beauty

...hallowed by the grateful nation

...hallowed by the community of friends and family

...hallowed by the names of those

we have loved and will always remember.

In the rising of the sun and in its' going down,
we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,
we remember them.

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.
[From Roland B. Gittelsohn, adapted]

[Chaplain Scott - Prayer]

Rev. Peebles:

Craig Scott Amundson was born on August 21, 1973, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He died September 11, 2001, in Arlington, Virginia. Today, September 29, 2001, have his earthly remains come to rejoin the earth.

This is a good place to return Craig to the earth.
This place is sanctified by this day.
Here will his name be inscribed.
Here will his earthly remains come to rest in the earth.

We now commit Craig to this sacred place.

Rev. Peebles:

Dearly beloved, you can come here to remember Craig,
and you can remember this place when you are far away.
No matter how far away you go, or how many days and
years go by,
This is a place you can feel close to Craig;
here on this place set aside, on this planet earth,
where he lived and loved and worked.

Life and death are a mystery to us... but the whole is a blessing.
Now may Craig Amundson's life and death be blessed
by our memorial here -- held by the nurturing earth,
breathed on by the hillside winds,
warmed by the fiery sun, and washed by the falling rains.

Let us be together now, with these words of blessing:
When we go from here, may we remember to praise, to live in the moment,
to love mightily, to bow to the mystery.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.

So be it. Amen.

(The service was followed by a 21 -gun salute; taps; presentation of flags; presentation of medals; dignitaries' condolences).

