

Multigenerational Worship
Thursday, June 25, 2009
8:30 PM

Prelude - Come Alive With the Spirit (played by Band):

Chorus

Come alive with the spirit
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
Come alive with the spirit
(feel it set me free)

Come alive with the spirit
(I can hear it, I can hear it)
Come alive with the spirit
(Hear it calling me)

Verse 1

The weight of the world is on your shoulders
A moment to rest is all you ask
You need a way to lift your spirit
Raise your voice - you're free at last

Chorus

Verse 2

We're told that more is always better
But life's not about what we can buy
In time we'll find what we are after
When we look deep inside

Chorus

Bridge

Come alive with the spirit
In the music I can hear it
Don't you want to be near it
Come alive

Come alive with the spirit
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
In the music I can hear it
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
Don't you want to be near it
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
Come alive

Come alive with the spirit
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
In the music I can hear it

(I can feel it, I can feel it)
Don't you want to be near it
(I can feel it, I can feel it)
Come alive

Chorus 2X

Opening Words - Simon Zemlin

Our opening words are excerpted from the poem *Ulysses* by the nineteenth century British Poet Laureate, Alfred Tennyson:

“I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone

...

I am part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breath were life.

...

Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

...

Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in the old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are,
One equal-temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

Chalice Lighting - Revs. Laurel Hallman and Peter Morales light chalice

Opening Hymn

John Hubert: Our opening hymn is Now Let Us Sing, hymn #368 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. The hymn tune is Robeson, in honor of Paul Robeson, the brilliant African American singer who stated “The song of freedom must prevail”. The song, listed in public domain, has two parts. I am joined by Sarah Dan Jones, the GA Music Coordinator from 2007 and 08, who will lead the melody and remember, we are singing to the ‘power of the faith, hope, love and joy’ within!

I will begin the groove with the lower part, and then Sarah Dan will bring the melody in. I invite you to rise in body or spirit.

Congregation Singing:

Now Let us sing,
Sing to the power of the faith with-in
Now Let us sing,
Sing to the power of the faith with-in
Now Let us sing,
Lift up your voice, be not afraid,
Now let us sing to the power of the faith with-in

Now Let us sing,
Sing to the power of the hope with-in
Continues as above

Now Let us sing,
Sing to the power of the love with-in
Continues as above

Now Let us sing,
Sing to the power of the joy with-in
Continues as above

Youth Voice - Michael Kusz

Recently in my home congregation in West Seattle, we had a service to celebrate and commemorate our founding members. Since my church is only 40 years old, many of these founding members are still alive, and they were invited to speak to the congregation. It was interesting to me to meet the people who began the church that I now call my spiritual home. They spoke of the early struggles of the congregation, it was a fellowship back then, back when meetings were held in people's living rooms. The stories they told gave me a new perspective on my church.

And it made me think about multigenerational ministry in a new way. I began to realize that I had been thinking of multigenerational as bi-generational, as adults and kids, as us and them. But a real multigenerational community must be more than that, it needs to serve the needs of all generations, from the golden generation all the way to post-millennials. And more than that, a multigenerational community needs to recognize that each generation has different needs, that children have different needs than youth, and eighty year olds have different needs than sixty year olds.

So is it enough to put a youth on every committee and have workshops about end of life decisions and call that multigenerational community? I feel there is more to it than that. To tack on token resources for different groups is not spiritually grounded, nor does it allow us to reach our full potential together. It only serves to make us feel a little better. To truly achieve multigenerational community, we need to learn to look at all of our work as Unitarian Universalists through a multigenerational lens, not just when it is convenient or when it can be done without changing things too much, but in everything we do.

My vision for multigenerational community is one where all generations can find their spiritual home under one roof. It is a community where all ages are intentionally included, where multigenerational ministry isn't just a second thought, it's something we do.

Interlaced Hymn

John Hubert:

Our song this evening will be “We Are Building a New Way,” # 1017 in *Singing the Journey*. This positive song of action, peace, and freedom was written by Martha Sandefer and arranged by UU composer, Jim Scott. Tonight we will sing each verse at the conclusion of each of our speakers. I invite you to rise in body or spirit as we sing verse one of this song of hope.

Congregation Singing:

We are building a new way
We are building a new way
We are building a new way
Feeling stronger everyday
We are building a new way

Young Adult Voice - Natty Averett

Henri Nouwen said, “Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition in us to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.” I think being a human being is hard because we are compassionate but we want to avoid conflict and hard change and empathy that is more painful than we think we can bear. Even when our principles call us to it, even when our faith, our covenant, our sense of being in the world obligates us to be stewards of each other’s well being. In doing the work of becoming a multicultural, multigenerational denomination, I hear often “Why are we doing this?” It is not an accusatory question of “Why are you wasting my time?” It is the question that needs to be asked often and with a desire for a genuine answer. It is one of the ultimate questions of meaning and purpose that drives our collective development. Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? Where is the universe, humanity going? Where should it go? What can I, what can we do about it? Why are we doing this?

I do this work because there is suffering. Someone somewhere is lonely and vulnerable. I am too. We are weak and broken, sometimes in the same way, sometimes in different ways, but we get our strength from similar places. Sometimes the world offers us tools to find strength within and other times we get the support of people who, in the words of Robert Wicks, offer balm for the tears in the souls of others.

Robert Wicks considers compassion a major component of real hospitality, which he also calls “welcoming home.” I believe that Unitarian Universalism can be the home at the end of many different spiritual paths for many walks of life. But first we must build a house suitable for not just our immediate family but our extended family too. We must go together to the place where we are vulnerable and lonely, then work through the painful empathy and hard change to come to the place where we can all feel welcome in the same home.

Congregation Singing:

We are working to be free
We are working to be free
We are working to be free
Hate and greed and jealousy
We are working to be free

Adult Voice - Kathy Vaughn

“We can feed our every need, Start with love, that is the seed.”

It's my experience that love or caring about our youth is the number one essential ingredient in creating a strong youth program. What I have seen is that when adults support and cherish a group of youth they blossom- be it in a congregation or in a district. Youth are then empowered to take leadership, to develop their full potential. Often at the Mountain Desert District Bridging Ceremony I hear youth saying that YRUU has made them into the young adults they are today or that YRUU has saved their lives. It takes caring and committed adults to achieve this. I know of a church that had an adult volunteer to be the Youth Advisor for a youth group that didn't exist. The adult decided to just be there every Sunday, regardless if youth came. Finally the youth began popping in just to see if she had commitment, when they found she did, the group flourished.

In the MDD we have five design teams working on youth ministry and I will speak about three of these, Resilience, Out of the Basement and Social Justice.

First an overview of the vision for youth, which is a spiritual quest. I hope we can all go on a living spiritual quest that encourages holy curiosity and lasts a lifetime. We need to help children and youth develop a spiritual discipline, which they can rely on all their lives, even though it may look different at different ages. Through fostering personal and religious resilience we can survive difficult times. To do this we must askhave we listened?..have we affirmed?.. have we encouraged? ...have we spent the time??

Our youth are yearning for more time with adults, time in their own congregations to discuss, worship, and work with adults. It may be more comfortable for some adults, but we are missing a golden opportunity by keeping our youth in the basement. How would they know what it's like to be an adult in a congregation when we haven't mentored them into the system. We need to make the investment, take the time.

In many cases we have done a good job in introducing youth to Social Justice.

In the MDD we took a multigenerational social justice trip, where people from 14 to 65 years went to the Gulf Coast to work together. We need more trips like this that open up lines of communication and establishes bonds that build community, community larger than simply youth or simply adults.

We must ask ourselves some questions before our children become youth, before our youth become young adults. How do we equip youth to cultivate and live a UU identity? Can they articulate their beliefs? Do they have a spiritual discipline? Do they have opportunities to engage in social justice? I have seen and heard youth asking for deeper experiences, in worship, in discussions. They want spiritual adventure- are we providing that opportunity?

In closing, it's essential to develop an intentional Unitarian Universalist response to the culture of fear that surrounds us. We can nurture resilience, resistance, and refusal as ways of coping with the fear, the disrespect, and intolerance that is present in our culture.

Feeding our need, takes time, care and it does take LOVE.

Congregation Singing:

We can feed our every need
We can feed our every need
We can feed our every need
Start with love, that is the seed
We can feed our every need

Elder Voice - Rev. Clark Olsen

My words here offer no grand plan, no passionate injunction. These are some very simple thoughts from one who has lived 76 years of gratitude, joy, some pain, some insistent infirmities, and many gifts from simply being alive.

You, all of us, can “build a new way.” We can build a beloved community. I’ve found through my years that the simple acts of asking questions and listening, as well as being willing to share your own thoughts, build a beloved community.

Most of us connect with others in transient transactions – with cashiers, taxi drivers, store clerks, computer assistance technicians (even from India or Canada), fellow UU congregants on Sunday morning, friends who go to the movies with you – it’s easy to connect on minimal terms, seldom going beyond “acquaintance” in our relationships.

How are you? Fine thanks. How are you?

But I’ve learned to more frequently ask questions that expand the connections. And it’s not the questions: it’s the curiosity about sharing our lives.

Over the last 30 years I’ve led many team-building programs – for corporate and non-profit groups. The Washington National Cathedral, BMW, Western Carolina Community Foundation, GM of Canada, lots of others. Some of the questions I’ve posed for reflection and sharing are pretty simple:

- What are your gifts, your talents?
- What do you value?
- What’s your purpose in life?
- What’s your vision for what you’d like your life to be like 10 (20,30) years from now?

Those aren’t bad questions for getting to know someone. You may get into a surprisingly rich conversation, nourishing a friendship. A lot of people hardly ever give thought to such questions. We may spend more time planning one summer vacation than we spend in a lifetime reflecting on those questions. I once asked those questions of some textile company managers. Afterwards one man, very upset, blurted out: “I realized that I’ve worked here 35 years, putting in 50-60 hours a week, and I’ve never before asked myself those questions.”

Those aren’t the only questions to ask. My wife says I can’t get into a taxi without learning the life story of the driver before reaching my destination. She kids me about my curiosity. But my life is enriched, and so, I hope, is the taxi-driver’s.

It can be called “appreciative inquiry.” For taxi drivers accustomed to silent riders, the opportunity to tell of their origins, their life journeys, their families, their childhood customs – whatever – can be a bright spot in their day. A conversation like that can result in special experiences for you too. Once I visited India, staying in a somewhat rundown hotel that used to be the local maharajah’s palace. My taxi driver turned out to be a son of the maharajah’s valet. At the end of my taxi ride, he invited me to breakfast the next day in his home. What a rich experience for me, especially from just asking a few questions in a friendly, interested manner.

Obviously you don’t need a taxi driver. Invite anyone into a conversation. Try not to start with the usual: Where are you from? What’s your work? What school do you go to?

Ask instead: Why do you come here? What gifts or talents can you offer others? Imagine it’s ten years from now: how would you like things to be different for you? For your family? For this community?

My suggestions for your inquiries are not important. Don’t try to memorize mine.

Make up a list of your own questions that would deepen your relationship with others. What would you like to know more deeply about yourself! Life experiences – what have been special? What did you learn? What difference has it made? What's your own vision for your life? For the world?

Make sure you stretch: reach out to diverse people. Include those who most people might try to avoid. The world is full of fascinating people, sometimes obscure to us because of their differences from us.

Recently my wife and I happened to see a documentary called “Kindertransporten” -- about the short-lived program in 1938 that filled railroad trains with German Jewish children who were transported to England, thus saving their lives from the Holocaust. Four days after seeing the documentary, my wife and I went to Norfolk VA. We were invited to stay overnight at the home of a couple in the UU church there. Arriving Saturday evening, we were met at the home by an elderly man who graciously invited us in. His wife was not yet home. So we talked. He had a German accent and some mementoes around the house that gave the impression of an unusual background. I started the conversation by simply asking: “Please, tell us something about yourself.” One short answer led to another question, with more interesting details. Well, within 30 minutes we learned that he had been one of the children on those “Kindertransporten,” who moved to England. Though he was something of a school drop-out back in Berlin, and had worked in England cleaning pigpens on a farm, by the time he was 19 years old he moved to London and was meeting regularly with a group of English intellectuals that included the famous philosopher Bertrand Russell. “I learned to ask questions,” he remarked modestly. What an extraordinary evening we had.

I have learned in my life that EVERYONE HAS AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE. You need only ask some questions with a warm, friendly manner that assures you value learning about people.

That goes for inter-generational conversations. It goes for deepening an existing friendship. It goes for discovering something important about yourself and others by meeting strangers.

It's easy. Make a habit of it.

Congregation Singing:

Peace and freedom is our cry
Peace and freedom is our cry
Peace and freedom is our cry
Without these this world will die
Peace and freedom is our cry

Donating the Tools - Congregational writing and offering of ways we can "build a new way."

India McKnight

We are indeed building a new way. As architects, we must draw the blueprint of our attainable dreams. Though they may not be drawn perfectly to scale, may they be intentional loving responses to the call of our ancestors and the faint hum of future generations. In order to build a new way, we will need tools and instruments from each of you.

As you entered you received a piece of paper on which to describe the tools you can contribute to building a new way together. Take a moment to reflect on your own gifts and offer up the tools and instruments and building materials you can contribute by writing them on your piece of paper. Ushers will collect your contributions and a selection of them will be shared with the congregation. If you do not wish for your offering to be shared aloud, please indicate so on your piece of paper. Take this time now to dream, to give, and to build together.

[Approximately 2 minutes of silence]

Invitation to Bridgers
India McKnight:

I now invite the youth, young adults, and adults who will be participating in the bridging ritual to join me on the stage and I invite the bridgers to come forward in preparation to cross the stage. As you cross, please say your name and your congregation.

[Youth join stage right; young adults and adults join stage left; bridgers line up stage right.]

Hymn: The Bridging Song
John Hubert:

As the bridgers cross the stage, we will hum the hymn. Once all the bridgers have crossed, please join in singing with the words displayed above.

[Marshal(s) on stage right shakes the hand of each bridger before they cross the stage and control the timing so that only one bridger is center stage at a time.]

[Bridgers say names]

Congregation Singing:

Ooh, take my hand
Take my hand, take my hand
Ooh, take my hand

Ooh, fill my heart
Fill my heart, fill my heart
Ooh, fill my heart

Ooh, move my soul
Move my soul, move my soul
Ooh, move my soul
Congregational Affirmation:

India McKnight:

Please join us in the congregational affirmation displayed above. The response by the bridging young adults is, 'We welcome your blessing and move forward in hope.'

Congregation:

Youth: For your gifts of fellowship and joy, we give you our thanks. For memories we will always cherish, we give you our thanks. As you grow out of the youth community, we give you our blessing, and our hope that you will remember the many gifts you have received in your time with us. We honor you.

Bridging Young Adults: We welcome your blessing, and move forward in hope.

Adults: For the rich individual gifts of your souls, we welcome you. For your questions and challenges, hopes and anxieties, we welcome you. As you join the adult community, we give you our blessing, and our hope that you may find us allies as well as friends. We honor you.

Bridging Young Adults: We welcome your blessing, and move forward in hope.

All: Tonight we honor not only a transition, but a community: a community of parents and children, and of brothers and sisters of every age; a community of our ancestors long since passed, and of our descendants yet to be born. May we all share in the love of these relationships and honor their presence tonight.

India McKnight: “Please join me in welcoming our newest young adults.”

[Applause]

Presenting the Congregation’s Offering

Scott McNeill: As India McKnight said earlier, "In order to build a new way, we will need tools and instruments from each of you." Now, we share your words and thoughts of building a new way so that all who are gathered here may create their own blueprint.

[Reading congregants’ notes]

Charge to Bridgers

Erik B. Kesting:

Good evening. I’m Erik Kesting. I serve our congregations as Acting Co-Director of Young Adult Ministries. I am honored to have been asked to give the charge to our bridgers this evening.

How we respond to the world redefines the world. How we respond to difference, to pain, to pleasure, how we respond to leadership or the absence of leadership, how we respond to the stranger and to events beyond our control. How we respond to the world around us makes a difference. Unitarian Universalism helps and inspires us to respond to the world in ways that are good, in ways that are healing and loving, in ways that redefine the world as a place of hope not despair, a place of abundance not of need, a place of safety and not violence. Unitarian Universalism makes a difference. Unitarian Universalism can help heal this world.

We have been told that we do not matter, that our environment, our bodies, and our cultures are irrelevant. We have been told that educating our children about the environment, their bodies, and their cultures does not matter, that where our food comes from and where our money is invested are irrelevant. Unitarian Universalism can help us stand up and say, “Yes! How we use or misuse our natural resources is relevant. Yes! How we care for immigrants and the homeless matters. Yes, we can make a difference! Unitarian Universalism can help heal this world.

What matters to you? What has value in this world? How important is education? How about money? How relevant is power or love? How much does generosity or kindness matter? How much do you matter? Mmmhmmm. How relevant is Unitarian Universalism? These are some of the hard and sometimes scary questions with which I hope you will wrestle in young adulthood, which is not to say you haven’t already explored them, but considering that none of us have all the answers, I hope you will continue to contend with them. The answers will not always come when you need them and when they come they may not be those for which you had hoped, but keep asking.

And if you have a crisis of faith, if you ask critically what relevance or good Unitarian Universalism has for you or for this world, keep asking. Keep asking until you remember that it was Unitarian Universalism that taught you how to ask the question.

My charge to you this evening is not so much a charge as a reminder of your sacred duty. As you stand here tonight and claim your Unitarian Universalist identity that identity calls back, urging you to help heal the world. Follow that urge. Help in your own way: ask a question, dream a dream, shake a hand, build a bridge, plant a tree! Whatever you do, let this community and all that Unitarian Universalism has given you guide you in all your doing.

Congratulations to you on this occasion of your bridging. This day and every day is yours to live. May this community and the spirit of love bless you and keep you all the days of your lives.

Closing Hymn

John Hubert: We will sing “Come and Go with Me” #1017 from *Singing the Journey* for our closing song this evening. This traditional African American spiritual was used as a marching song during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s calling all to lead in the cause of justice and truth! Please rise in body or spirit and answer this call!

Congregation Singing:

Come and Go with me to that Land
Come and Go with me to that Land
Come and Go with me to that Land
Where I’m bound (where I’m bound)
Come and Go with me to that Land
Come and Go with me to that Land
Come and Go with me to that Land
Where I’m bound.

2 vs. There’ll be freedom in that land...

3 vs. There’ll be justice in that land...

4 vs. There’ll be singin’ in that land...

Closing Words

Simon Zemlin: Our closing words are by the African American author, historian, scholar, and activist W.E.B. Du Bois: “Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season. It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year. It is today that we outfit ourselves for the greater usefulness of tomorrow. Today is the seed time, now are the hours of work, and tomorrow comes the harvest and the playtime.”

Postlude - *We Are A River*

Band:

Each day is a chance
to create a perfect place
A world for every creed and every race

We're on a journey
From headwaters we flow
Each kindred spirit we encounter helps us grow

We are a river that flows through the land
Making our way to the sea
Gathering power when hand joins with hand
Slow moving stream
Building a dream
For the world

There are times when we feel
On our own what can we do?
So many of us hold on to this view

We're on a journey
From headwaters we flow
Each kindred spirit we encounter helps us grow

We are a river that flows through the land
Making our way to the sea
Gathering power when hand joins with hand
Changing the earth
Giving self-worth
To the world

A force to reckoned with
part of nature's mighty plan
They'll try to contain us
but we'll knock down walls
break through their dams

We are a river that flows through the land
Making our way to the sea
Gathering power when hand joins with hand
Rushing along
Singing our song

We are a river that flows through the land
Making our way to the sea
Gathering power when hand joins with hand
Slow moving stream
Building a dream
For the world