

## JOSEPHINE GOULD MEMORIAL DISCOURSE

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"A Nice Little Parish in Ninevah"  
by Rev. Barbara Kulcher

### PREFACE

Honoured guests, colleagues, gentle-folk: as you may well imagine, the invitation to make this kind of a presentation is a mixed blessing. Though I was one of the people responsible for the initiating of this event, it was certainly not my intention to be a "discoursant." It is a great honour to have been asked, however, and to have the opportunity to share with you some of my perceptions and experiences of a different sort of ministry than that with which most of you are familiar.

This year, in October, will be the tenth anniversary of my ordination into the Unitarian Universalist Parish Ministry. Less than a year later, I embarked on the journey to Ninevah, a ministry in the wider community, and unconnected to the local parish. At that time, like Jonah, my voyage was stormy and led to a destination far from that originally intended. Which is to say that there were compelling reasons to be back in Canada rather than in a parish in the U.S. And what was available in Canada was an internship program preparatory to a very different kind of ministry. Having jumped overboard (or been pushed?), the new vehicle turned out to be rather more stimulating than I might have imagined. Still unclear about the final destination (at that point it might have been no more than a temporary aberration), the journey was informative, and I found that I changed and found a degree of healing in the process.

It is gratifying to hear that the Ministerial Fellowship Committee is exploring the inclusion of ordination to "community ministries" as well as parish and religious education ministries. While most of us in other than traditional roles are fully accepted, it will be nice to achieve professional legitimacy within the denomination.

### INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, I will be discussing the role of the minister as a professional institutional chaplain -- as a specialist in the field of institutional pastoral care (defined in the traditional categories of healing, sustaining and guiding). In a way, this invitation has encouraged me to do something I have been threatening to do for a long time -- to explore some of the history and the theology which inform and justify Unitarian Universalist involvement, in full-time ministry, in a secular institution, and to reflect on my own ministry in that light.

Some terms I may use as descriptive come from the work of Unitarian minister, Carl Wennerstrom, who died in 1963, leaving an uncompleted doctoral thesis. His work, along with contributions from others, was published in 1970, under the title Pastoral Care in the Liberal Churches. The editors of this book (now out of print) were James Luther Adams and Seward Hiltner.

Wennerstrom was not speaking just of Unitarian or Universalist churches, though at the time of his writing, the term "Liberal" had become such a social epithet, it is unlikely that anyone but Unitarians and Universalists were claiming it. But what Wennerstrom had to say applied equally well to that body of Protestantism that had been profoundly affected by the social gospel ethic and the notable liberalizing of Christian theology that developed in the first half of this century.

Socially, the church began to express, from the pulpit, its concerns about any number of social ills that came to its attention -- certainly, labour and the issue of collective bargaining was an important one. This led to the labelling of ministers as socialists or even Bolsheviks. Theologically, under the leadership of

topical sermon proponent, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and other so-called "modernist" preachers, a more liberal view of the Bible was introduced.

Seward Hiltner wrote,

Much of the liberalizing was focused on understanding the Bible. The shackles were literal inerrancy of every word in the Bible, preoccupation with various forms of otherworldliness at the price of getting on with this world, and a kind of rigid commitment -- whether doctrinal, liturgical, or personal-ethical -- which enchained the mind and prevented the encounter of Christian insight with modern knowledge.(1)

Carl Wennerstrom described a "liberal paradox" about pastoral care, which he identified as four inter-related factors, common to liberal religionists. To a greater or lesser degree, these characteristics are as consistent today as they were almost thirty years ago, and conversations with colleagues and friends in any number of other "liberal" denominations indicates that these factors remain fairly constant. While it is tempting to go into detail about Wennerstrom's paradoxical factors, which he titled: nationalism, reformism, dramatics and distance, there isn't time. Most ministers are familiar with Wennerstrom's work, so I will confine myself to sharing his own conclusions about the factors. of which he wrote,

Even in what is very best about us, we liberals too have sinned and fallen short; or more aptly. perhaps, have fallen out of the wrong side of the bed. Our rationalism has been used not just to defend reason and science and learning and inquiry, but also to defend us from feeling and involvement and emotion and concreteness. Our reformism has led us not only to construction after criticism of the status quo, but also to such a predilection for blazing trails that we are equally startled to find wholly unmet needs or needs met by the "wrong people." Our dramatics help us to stand up and be counted, and on the right issues too, but they also make us poor at following through. Our sense of optimal distance happily prevents us from equating acquiescence or resignation with justice or fulfillment. It sends us on ahead to prepare the way, to prevent, to educate, to get at root causes, to mobilize public opinion, to serve if need be, as the community's conscience. Yet our unacknowledged anxiety too often keeps us away from the places where concrete suffering is being faced or endured or encountered. (2)

#### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Historically, I have no doubt that there have been numberless religious liberals of all stripes who have involved themselves in the practise of direct pastoral care. It is sad that so few of them are remembered, but not surprising. There is, however, ample history of liberal social action, and the effectiveness of the reformers at the head of trail-blazing endeavours must be honoured and admired.

Our Unitarian Universalist history is rich with the names of men and women who practiced the art of reason; with social reformers; and with dramatic pioneers in various fields. Phillip Hewett's history, Unitarians in Canada contains a chapter titled "The Social Contribution". It is comprised of forty five pages of political and social "covered wagon" reformism -- and one cannot help but be amazed at the impact these well-to-do reformers had on their world. He comments that in Britain, the U.S. and Canada, the contribution made by Unitarians -- "to political and economic life, to social development, to literature, art and culture" was excessive for a group of such modest numbers. A factor that should be recognized is that Unitarians have, at least since the early nineteenth century, traditionally been a well-to-do, if not downright rich group of well-educated folks. Certainly, the earliest Unitarians in Canada -- people like Hincks, Molson, the Workmans, Bertram (not to mention Universalist, L.S. Huntingdon) -- were rich and very influential.

These people recognized their responsibility, and Hewett quotes John Cordner (minister to the Montreal church from 1843-1878) on the subject of poverty,

...what we have to deplore is the suffering of the weaker and poorer classes. and the prevailing selfishness of the wealthier and stronger classes...A religion so essentially benevolent as ours establishes a link between the different orders of men, the richer and the poorer, the stronger and the weaker, those who suffer and those who enjoy. And herein we may see its admirable fitness to such a world as we have. (4)

Cordner's assumption of superiority, as well as the "theology of wealth" that permeated Unitarian as well as Calvinistic churches of the day, are quite clear, but one cannot fault his observations of social reality and the responsibility of the church. Hewett notes that it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Cordner's plea, commenting that "No doubt much unobtrusive help was given that never found its way into the public records". (5) Cordner did intimate that he knew where to find resources for people in need -- but the only specific cases of hands-on involvement seems to be in reference to Unitarians Adam Ferrie and Frederick Cushing. Both worked among cholera victims at the immigration sheds in the 1840's, with Cushing succumbing himself to the disease, and losing his life. (6)

Most of us are familiar with the role of Unitarian and Universalist social reformism in the U.S. during the last century. William Ellery Channing is best known to us as the formulator of a theology of American Unitarianism, but it would be difficult to be unmoved by Channing's admonition to ministers to engage in public pastoral care. In this ordination address, he preached,

...You must not wait for the poor in the church. Go to them in their homes. Go where no other will go. Let no squalidness, or misery, or crime, repel you. Seek the friend-less, the forsaken, the desponding, the lost. Penetrate the depths of poverty, the haunts of intemperance, the strongholds of sin. Feel an attraction in what others shun, in the bleak room open to the winter's wind, in the wasted form and the haggard countenance, in the very degradation of your race. (7)

After reading this, and reflecting on subsequent models for ministry, I wondered if Channing had mistaken his destination, and offered this address to some precursors to General Booth's Army! It certainly indicates that Channing had a pastoral image for ministry. But he was also a practical man, and further on in the same sermon, he warned that the young minister should not be over-attached to this type of concrete need situation, lest he succumb "to the danger that (his) mind may be frittered away by endless details, by listening continually to frivolous communications and suspicious complaints". (8) In truth, this warning, coupled with his advice to spend a part of each day in solitary study and to reflect on the day's events is an excellent warning against clerical burn-out!

As Wennerstrom discovered (to his puzzlement and distress) no other Unitarian had undertaken to address the specific area of pastoral care from a theological perspective. Since his death in 1963, involvement in clinical pastoral education has become a requirement for many theological students (not only those of liberal religious orientation), and for every student entering the U.U. ministry. Very briefly, the intent of this kind of a program is to assist the student in the achievement of fuller self-knowledge, as well as the ability to recognize, accept and respond to personal feelings, particularly in critical situations.

Institutional ministry, in both Christian and Jewish tradition, has always been an integral part of the ministry of the church. When it became a specialized form of ministry, what happened was that many churches withdrew -- particularly from those less appealing institutions. On the other hand, ministry was extended to the growing population of unchurched, whose spiritual needs were more likely to find response from an intentionally ecumenical cleric.

The first programs of clinical pastoral education were initiated in the mid-1930's, first in the U.S., and some time later in Canada. Seward Hiltner insists,

and rightly, that everyone involved in the early development of this field of ministry was religiously and socially liberal. Responsible for the largest advances in clinical pastoral education and related disciplines in the U.S. since World War II have been Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Southern Baptists.

The pastoral care movement began in the midst of that previously mentioned period when both social and theological attitudes were becoming more liberal. Appropriately to this restless period, in 1925, a Unitarian medical doctor, Richard C. Cabot, published an article in Survey Graphic, in which he requested a "clinical year" for theological students. As a medical educator, he believed that ministers would benefit from professional experience under supervision, as did doctors. He suggested that almshouses would provide a suitable clinical setting, "on the ground that the primary need was for sheltered students to have direct contact with real human suffering".(9) As it turned out, the settings chosen were hospitals. Cabot extended his support to the experimental chaplaincy work and teaching of Russell L. Dicks, at Massachusetts General Hospital. In 1936, Cabot and Dicks collaborated in writing and publishing The Art of Ministering to the Sick, which has been, and remains, a classic in the field of hospital chaplaincy.

Cabot was, by the way, a pioneer in much more than this. As a heart specialist, he founded the clinical-pathological conference -- a less than popular concept with his medical colleagues -- in that it pointed up errors in the treatment of patients who had died, but it was a boon to medical education. He also introduced medical social work, and pioneered the ethical aspects of medicine.

The greatest and best known leader of the movement towards clinical pastoral education was Anton Boisen, a liberal Christian minister. A veteran of the first world war, Boisen worked for the Interchurch World Movement, then considered a liberal enterprise. He was stricken with a severe mental illness at that time, and confined to one of the state hospitals in Massachusetts. His hospitalization involved minimum treatment and he was fortunate to experience a spontaneous recovery. Boisen felt that his illness had led him through what was also a profoundly religious experience (though he never claimed this as normative to all mental illnesses!). He determined, as a response, to study whatever would be helpful, to try to find a position as a chaplain in a mental hospital, "and to bring small groups of theological students to study with him so that they could see the 'problems of sin and salvation' in 'living human documents' and not solely on library shelves". (10)

In 1924, Boisen offered his services as Chaplain to Dr. William A. Bryan, Superintendent of the Worcester State Hospital. Hiltener wrote, in regard to this event,

His offer was accepted. Bryan was a bold spirit. As he subsequently explained, after the Boisen movement had proved its solidity, "I'd hire a horse doctor if I thought he could help my patients". (11)

In 1925, Boisen brought in the first group of theological students, who worked as attendants during the day, and attended seminars with Boisen in the evenings. It should be noted that Richard Cabot was not supportive of training in mental hospitals (which became the site for most early training programs), because he "never accepted the psychodynamic understandings of much mental illness". (12) He was, nevertheless, first president of the Council for Clinical Training, founded in 1930.

This, then, was the beginning of the movement in the U.S. In Canada, there were ministers who were equally concerned that hospital patients receive consistent and good quality pastoral care. I know one of the several clergymen who headed for Boston or New York in the late thirties and forties to become specialists in the practise of pastoral care, and to learn how to train theological students in that field.

The Rev. Archie McLachlan began his ministry as a circuit-riding Baptist minister in Northern Saskatchewan. His under-graduate degree had made him a dedicated Freudian, and he found himself leaning towards a more liberal theology than was common in Baptist belief and practice. He and a few others, in the early 1950's,



developed the teaching of pastoral care in Canada, (following extensive training in the U.S. model), using health care facilities in Eastern and Central Canada. This Press Release indicates the commitment to ecumenism which remains intrinsic to the organization in Canada, which is now called the Canadian Association for Pastoral Education--C.A.P.E.:

"Sixty-two church leaders representing the Roman Catholic and several protestant communions met at the Ecumenical Institute in Toronto, December 15-17, 1965, to initiate a council to coordinate new ventures in ministry. Recently many projects have developed in churches, hospitals, prisons and other centres for the supervised training of clergy. To establish standards for such training the conference brought into being the CANADIAN COUNCIL for SUPERVISED PASTORAL EDUCATION. Those present included Theological Educators, Church Administrators, persons in specialized ministries and other clergy from across Canada. The conference conclusions represent more than two years of struggle to bring an inter-faith council into being (13)

Archie was elected President of that new organization and until a very few years ago, was still involved actively in the training of students. He was my supervisor for a month during my year-long internship almost ten years ago, and is now in his mid to late eighties, still very active at annual conferences, and still very interested and concerned about the discipline he helped to pioneer.

I want to refer to the extension of this limited history, as it relates to my positions in a series of provincial institutions. The Province of Ontario, some years ago, established a policy which committed it to the provision of pastoral care to individuals in institutions for which it was directly responsible. These included institutions under the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Corrections and Health. This did not include General Hospitals, though accredited hospitals have adopted standards which include the provision of this care. In order to provide professionally trained chaplains to serve in these institutions, the province allocated funds to three training centres, where C.A.P.E. model training would be offered. These centres represented the three Ministries, and funding included training costs and substantial student bursaries, with the hope that the latter would be matched (or at least augmented) by denominational funds to students.

With the deinstitutionalizing movement, institutional populations decreased, in both Psychiatric Hospitals and institutions housing the developmentally handicapped. At present, funding is being transferred to internship programs in Chronic Care facilities and new Geriatric programs.

As its advisory body, the government appointed members to what is called the Ontario Provincial Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy Services. This committee is responsible for assuring that persons of all faiths, in provincial institutions, have access to appropriate spiritual care; for screening candidates applying for training, and for supervision of assessments of Pastoral Care in provincial institutions. The committee reflects the expanding diversity of our religious mosaic, and it includes in its membership representatives of several other-than-Christian faiths.

Finally, there is a Provincial Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services who serves as liaison between the three government Ministries and the Interfaith Committee, supervises an assistant and eight or nine Regional Coordinators. In other words, we have our own little bureaucracy within the bureaucracy, and are becoming increasingly aware of the need -- even as men and women of spiritual concerns -- to know the rules when you work for a government! The formulating and writing of policies in standard bureaucratese does not come easily to many of us -- though I suspect it's easier for some denominational folks than others.

There are currently 94 chaplains employed by the provincial government, of whom 20% are women. A wide variety of denominations are represented, and include Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Roman Catholics (both priests and nuns -- as equals in ministry!), Anglicans, and many others. A Jewish Rabbi has been trained, but when unable to find a position in the Toronto area, returned to a congregation. By the

way, these programs also accept qualified persons from the U.S. Thus far, two U.U. ministers have completed internships, and I remember the time that the Provincial Coordinator asked me if I was "still not a Christian". He was hoping to find a non-Christian in the ranks, but I had, by then, declared myself! It would still be fair to say that Margaret and I are representative of a predominantly non-Christian faith.

### THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Theologically, there is much in Unitarian Universalism that authorizes and supports ministry to the broader community. Though our history and policy often seem wedded exclusively to the local congregation, and our ordination of ministers has always reflected that exclusivity, there is ample evidence of our active involvement in concerns that involve the total community -- even, and perhaps especially, the global community.

Whether theist, deist, christian or religious humanist (and I do not claim that list as exhaustive), we are a people as deeply concerned about the world as any dedicated group of Christians working to achieve the Kingdom of God. Our principles reflect our concerns, and whatever theological/philosophical/religious roots we claim or appropriate converge in our universal reverence for life, and in our claim for the dignity and worth of every human personality. Those concerns must have as their goal the ultimate reforming and restructuring of human systems that encourage repression, inequity, depletion of the world's resources and so much more evil and injustice. But they are concerns that may not ignore the plight of those who continue to suffer while the systems undergo inevitably slow change, and while new forms of evil and injustice proliferate.

Our theological ancestors in the Rakow community of Poland offered a model for living that remains unique to this day. As described by Unitarian historian, Earl Morse Wilbur,

...they considered the teachings of Jesus, and especially the moral and social ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, as ethical commands to be taken seriously, and as directions for the practical conduct of a Christian's life. (These directions included that one is)...to be good to one's enemies, not to use force or shed blood even in war, ... not to sit in judgement on others, not to indulge in luxury of dress or extravagance in food and drink, to share one's goods with the poor,...to hold no serfs or slaves...(14)

These particular directions seem to transcend changes in time and place, to be universally applicable for people of concern. Of this remarkable community, Wilbur wrote,

Not often in Christian history has a more serious attempt been made by a whole community to follow the teaching of the Gospels literally in practice, at whatever sacrifice of personal material advantages, than was made in the first half century of the community at Rakow, and the happy results of the movement attracted large numbers to join it. (15)

It is interesting to note that their basic fundamentalism excluded the necessity for evangelizing -- they were joined because of the way they lived their faith, not because of the evangelical fervor of their preachers.

As the early church struggled for survival in a sea of Roman Catholic and Protestant Trinitarian orthodoxy, few social doctrines were pronounced. Nor were they necessary, given the life-style of adherents. As the church became more worldly, adapting more to social norms, and finding a less destructive, if more argumentative theological environment, social concerns, intentions and actions became a part of the fabric of our stated theology (or the principles of our contemporary church).

Both Unitarians and Universalists found their mission in the social needs of nineteenth century North America. In fact, Western philosophy had undergone great change, and had given birth to social conscience. What had long been stated theologically (if rarely perceived as practical) was legitimized through

Enlightenment ideals that stressed the role of benevolence, sympathy and feeling; and through Romanticism, which stressed the integrity of the individual.

In terms of liberal theological attitudes, it is interesting to look at the chapter in the Wennerstrom book titled "The Doctrine of Man in Liberal Theology", written by John F. Hayward. He responds to the following speculation, as proposed by Carl Wennerstrom, who wrote (in regard to the dramatic factor that he sees as part of the liberal paradox),

I have sometimes wondered, incidentally, if this dramatic penchant for trailblazing, and this boredom with any partially established trail, may not put the liberal en rapport with the hero myths of so many cultures, in which the hero always, despite his trials and tribulations, finally slays the dragon and gets the girl; as against, for example, the New Testament parable of the prodigal son, where the son's trailblazing effort was a fiasco and his self-identity was restored only by his father's forgiveness.(16)

Noting that the modern hero may be more cerebral and less athletic than the classical prototype (I wonder if the paper bag princess would qualify?), Hayward agrees with Wennerstrom, and identifies the common element between the classical and modern heroes as "a certain courage of self-dependence and a desire to take action in every situation no matter how difficult". (17)

As an example, Hayward cites Frederick M. Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association in the late thirties. Demonstrating a reliance on youth that is an important tie with the heroic spirit, Eliot called for optimism in the face of terrible conditions, and for youth to resurrect the dreams of old men who had given up dreaming.

In a paragraph which, for Hayward, illustrates the gradual transition from liberal theism to liberal humanism, Eliot wrote,

There is, however, a third way of looking at human life and human history. This theory recognizes the part which chance plays in the actual course of events, and it also recognizes that God is the sovereign ruler of the universe; but it places the primary responsibility for human progress upon man himself, and it affirms the real possibility of man's consciously learning how to direct his own destiny so as to achieve increasingly the dreams and ideals which he cherishes (18)

While God is always around to hear our prayer, should we be partial to such activity, we are basically on our own, or as Hayward said, "the real agency of man's progress (was) increasingly understood to be man himself, through the heroic exercising of his own willing responsibility". (19) Hayward comments that Christian liberals also found their sources at the humanist end of the religious spectrum, and as a result, they also became less reliant on God, and experienced a "withering" of theological language, and the faith it implied.

This reliance upon our human ability to take initiative and responsibility in the determining of our own destiny left little room in any of our churches for the poor in spirit. As quoted by Hayward, K. Arisian wrote quite bluntly,

The liberal church is not for the intellectually or emotionally faint-hearted, for those who wish to be soothed rather than stimulated on Sunday mornings. It is not the place to come to find strength but to develop it in oneself. The primary task, then, of Unitarian humanism is to be itself, not to take cues from Christianity or from any other world religions. Nor is it the task of Unitarian humanism, as I conceive it, to provide psychological equivalents for the emotional satisfactions offered by the various world religions. (20)

That was published in 1963, and while it is certainly heroic in tone, one can only hope that we, and other liberal churches, have become more accepting of human frailty, and more tolerant of our relatedness to other faiths in the ensuing years.

If we take seriously Wennerstrom's analogy of heroism, then it becomes necessary to look at the other aspect of the classical mythical hero -- at the tragedy which inevitably was a part of myth. The Greek heroes were tragic heroes. Hayward

believes that liberal "heroism" breaks down at this point. Wennerstrom believed that liberals, in their preoccupation with the search for heroic remedies, became lost in the face of irremediable tragedy. Hayward questions any doctrine of man that "depends for its meaning and efficacy on faith in an unfailing human power to avoid or transcend every potentially tragic event by conscious planning and action". (21)

Current Unitarian Universalist beliefs are much more in tune with reality, and I suspect that liberals in general have become more aware of and accepting of the need for mutuality and interdependence as we confront our anxieties. If we, or our brother and sister liberal religionists are to survive, we need to accept that we are humanly vulnerable, and recognize that in certain situations, simple human presence is restorative in itself, quite separate from specific action programs or remedies. And in other situations, presence may be all we can offer, and while not curing the ill, it may be all that is needed.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

Because it is quite impossible to speak of a Unitarian Universalist theology, it seems appropriate, as a part of my personal reflection, to share my own theology of ministry with you. My theology is "incarnational", that is, I believe that God is encountered only in the other person, in relationship.

My role as Chaplain is one which, in a practical sense, must always oppose that which is evil and dehumanizing in the institution -- through the creative questioning of implicit assumptions. My effort is to provide a presence which offers loving respect for all persons, out of my recognition of God's image in creation; which extends understanding based on personal experience, and a pragmatic view of human possibilities; which expects and facilitates the expression of human concern and mutuality -- in other words -- calls forth the best in every person I meet.

My ministry responds to the issues of brokenness, alienation and fear, as does all ministry, but nowhere as clearly as with society's "throwaway people". Perhaps, as a minister, I have felt called to a ministry where I most vividly feel God's presence. My institutional ministry really began with my early nursing experience in a psychiatric facility, and I believe I have been drawn back to an environment where I feel most authentically human.

My model for ministry certainly draws on the example of ministry ascribed to Jesus by New Testament writers. Theologically, I am less concerned with doctrinal issues concerning the nature of God or the essence of Christ than I am with God's incomprehensible presence in the world, and the ultimate humanity of Jesus. I find no contradiction between Jesus as a reflector of God's nature and Jesus as a man living out his faith. If I describe myself as a Christian Humanist I do not believe it to be a contradiction in terms.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I feel strongly that principles of freedom, reason and tolerance must be brought to the religious endeavour of living. Those three principles are subject to faith and responsibility, so it is not strange to find that my favourite theological "maxim" comes from the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. To paraphrase -- I place myself in God's hands, and then live my life as though He were not.

Let me backtrack for a minute, before continuing, and say that my Jonah-like journey did not end at the conclusion of my internship year of clinical pastoral education. One of my own personal Ninevahs (which is to say, places I did not ever want to go) was any environment populated by persons who were mentally retarded -- this year the term is "developmentally delayed". During my youthful stint in nursing, I had encountered mental retardation, and was repelled, upset, and felt totally incompetent to provide any positive care. Translation: I couldn't fix it, change it, or encounter it in any way that made sense. I vowed never to work in that field again. And so it goes with the Ninevahs in our lives. In late 1982, I found myself cast ashore at Huronia Regional Centre, and my worst fears were realized. On the other hand, the year-long journey had included difficult lessons in the



acceptance of ambiguity, and even helplessness in some situations ...

To demonstrate the concept of incarnational theology, which I share with virtually every professional Chaplain I know, I want to share a story with you, about two young women -- I'll call them Kathy and Diane. Both were in their late twenties, both were profoundly retarded and multiply handicapped, both were incapable of speech, and both had been admitted to what was then called the Orillia School as babies. They had grown up together, and in some way that nobody was able to explain rationally, they were recognized to have relationship.

As Chaplain, I visited them regularly, and became more attached to Diane, who was slowly learning to communicate through a symbol board. Kathy had become ill, was in and out of the local General Hospital, and finally was brought back to our infirmary with a terminal diagnosis.

After consulting with the Coordinating Chaplain, I approached the Supervisors of the Unit and the Infirmary about the importance of visits between Diane and Kathy. The response was a clear "No!" with an interestingly inconsistent rationale -- it would just upset both of them and besides, Diane and Kathy didn't understand enough for it to matter.

It took a week to convince both the medical authorities and the Deputy Administrator that this should be allowed, but I finally found myself trundling Diane's wheelchair to the side of Kathy's bed in the infirmary. Their hands were placed together on the mattress of Kathy's crib, and I made sure that they had clear eye contact -- then I left them alone for about twenty minutes. The visits continued for a number of weeks, and I have no idea what went on, except that when I came back to return Diane to her Unit, I sensed a greater presence in the room -- the feeling was one I have no words to describe. But I never questioned that what was happening needed to happen, or my own mechanical role in facilitating it.

Between visits, I spoke to Diane about death, and used whatever ideas I could to help her understand what was happening to her friend. When Kathy died, I told Diane, and she threw back her head and howled. We worked through that grief without words -- with anger and laughter and hugs and sorrow -- and that experience, with many others that I was quite unable to understand, convinced me of the presence of God in relationships that are most deeply human and caring.

What I discovered, working with developmentally delayed adults, was my own vulnerability and helplessness, especially when speech is not available as the primary means of communication. Through music, puppetry and finally, clowning, I discovered how much richer existence is when I take the trouble to enter into the world of another person -- when I am able to relinquish control over the relationship. It is a very significant progression -- personally, theologically and developmentally -- to enter into what can only be called a holy place, in holy dependency. That is, dependency on God, on that which is immeasurably greater than myself.

The experience has changed its shape in ministry to prisoners, and now with psychiatric patients. What remains consistent, and forever difficult, is the need to be rather than to do. And maybe that is the difference between holy and secular space, at least it has become so for me.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to say that I believe that as a Unitarian Universalist, I am ideally suited to my ministry in Ninevah. My colleagues of other faiths accuse me of immodesty, if not outright pride in making this claim. Nevertheless, both my early experience in Religious Education, and my education for ministry, have been invaluable to me. People sometimes ask me what a U.U. has to talk about to people in institutions (when that question refers to people in prison, the underlying assumption, often voiced, is "Aren't they all Fundamentalists?"). In truth, religious discussions are just that, so long as the persons involved are willing to hear one another, and are not involved solely in convincing one another.

The principles of our faith are quite unique in attitude, towards world faiths, in openness to learning from them. While I don't fault any faith that claims the teachings of Jesus as ideal, there remains an exclusive aspect to much of Christianity that creates understandable problems for many Christians when confronted with persons of other faiths. Because of my long and intimate association with Unitarian Universalism, and in harmony with my personal Christianity, I am very much an "Interfaith Chaplain". Unlike Jonah, I have not experienced any dramatic reforms as a result of prophetic confrontation, but I believe my ministry makes a difference, and that is enough. Thank you.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. James Luther Adams and Seward Hiltner, eds., Pastoral Care in the Liberal Churches (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 224.
2. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
3. Ibid., p. 177.
4. Phillip Hewett, Unitarians in Canada (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, 1978), p. 315.
5. Ibid., pp. 315-316.
6. Ibid., p. 316.
7. William Ellery Channing, quoted by Adams/Hiltner, pp. 50-51.
8. Ibid., p. 97.
9. Ibid., p. 227.
10. Ibid., p. 231.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 228.
13. C.A.P.E. history as retrieved from past minutes by C.A.P.E. Business Manager, Verda Rochon.
14. Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarians: Socinianism and Antecedents (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945), Vol. 1, p. 361.
15. Ibid.
16. Adams/Hiltner, pp. 129-130.
17. Ibid., p. 130.
18. Ibid., p. 131.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 132.
21. Ibid., p. 134.

#### Response by the Rev. Elizabeth Strong:

Barbara, you have travelled as a Jonah from the fear of not being able to 'do' something for people who could not 'do' for themselves to where you are now, knowing that to 'be', respectfully and honestly 'be', with them is one of the great gifts of life. I rejoice at your journey.

What strange and twisted roads we often travel to learn that. And ministers, it seems, are especially prone to and adept at creating amazing obstacles to that understanding.

You are correct when you cite our Unitarian Universalist history and theology as encouragers of that 'doing' mentality. Goodness sakes how we UU's have achieved and accomplished great deeds! And oh how tough it is to be an average Unitarian Universalist, much less one of the world's throwaway people.

Ministry in ivory tower pulpits, and even television encased pulpits, are ceasing to be relevant. A theology of other worldly focus has been dramatically altered by the impact of the Social Gospel and by Clinical Pastoral Education, as you so well demonstrated. I would also add that for Unitarian Universalists, the Ministry of Religious Education made great strides in taking the focus of ministry

off the pulpit and into the teaching rooms. I like to think that we Ministers of Religious Education helped legitimize a broader vision of ministry so that now the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and the Department of Ministry are making concrete moves to formally recognize community based ministry.

At the Plenary on Ministry held in Boston last November, 60 ministers and lay people were invited to come together to look at the future direction of our Unitarian Universalist ministry. We looked at four areas. Changing Models of Ministry, which specifically addressed community based ministry. The issues included such concerns as promoting partnerships with parish based ministers and congregations, recognition within the UUA and the UU Ministers' Association, and program development by the continuing education opportunities being seen for Parish and Religious Education ministries.

Ministry of Religious Education was the second area addressed. This covered future educational degree programs in the teaching ministry, collegial and partnership models of multiple-ministry staffs, and how we value our children. The third category for discussion concerned Continuing Education for our ministry. This included CE credits, support for our seminaries and broader scopes of disciplines to study. And finally, Inclusivity in Ministry looked at how open and how welcoming we are as individuals, as congregations and as a denomination to all ages, races, sexes, economic situations, social standing and intellectual ability. It was a very stimulating and informative meeting. Each area was well represented & was given a full and undivided block of time to present the issues as they saw them and small group discussion to begin to grapple with them. The results are being prepared for reference to appropriate groups for action within the next few months.

I noted in the latest Board of Trustees packet from the UUA that the Ministerial Fellowship Committee has indeed recommended the three categories of ministry, Parish, Religious Education and Community Based, to be recognized by the UUA.

As I read your paper, Barbara, I was reminded of my seminary work in the Social Gospel. I remembered the issues and questions raised in the classroom for us to ponder, and to begin thinking about how to incorporate that into our envisioned ministries. It was somewhat like the ultimate, "So What?" I'm going to be a minister - So - What does that mean? How am I going to 'be' a minister? How am I going 'to do' ministry?

I guess that most of us began to think of what we would do. How would I do my ministry? Nice rational thinking, and easy to do in the classroom, and too often too easy to do in the Parish.

It's interesting to me to reflect on my years as a director of religious education and my years as a minister of religious education. I think some of where I identify differences comes in the area of the intellectual rationalism that defends us from feeling and involvement and emotion, and concreteness that you spoke of. You can't get away with that with children anymore than you can, as you've discovered, with the broken people. You have to 'be' there with them and for them.

When I tried on the mantle of ministry as perceived by our colleagues in the pulpit and by the congregants in the pew, I felt a distancing in the involvement I experienced. It took me some time to create my own image of what a minister was and how I, as a minister was to be. Ministry in the education wing, ministry in the prison, ministry in the hospital is different than ministry in the pulpit. And no one minister can do all or be all of these ministries. I believe that we will mutually inform one another about the gifts we bring to fully recognized and valued ways of doing ministry and of being ministers.

I want to mention one point about our Unitarian and Universalist forebears. You are certainly correct about well-to-do, and downright rich Unitarians who liberally grace our history. But, I need to appease my third generation Universalist heart and say that the Universalists for the vast majority, were rural, common folk who based their religion in faith, hope and love. And the loving God who filled their heavens welcomed all souls into harmony with that divinity at the end of this life on earth.

We knew that we would all be together regardless of wealth, intelligence, race, sex, nationality or social graces, even regardless of honesty and upright living. This God of ours made all and received all in love. It's pretty powerful theology, and I think Barbara, one that you can relate to well.

I realize that was a long mention; but that was very good for me!

I appreciated your developing the history and program of Clinical Pastoral Education. In my estimation it is a crucial and core experience in preparation for and practice of ministry. It certainly does move sheltered students into direct relationship with real human suffering. It puts us in direct experience of death, pain and loss. We look at emergency room efforts to save lives, we watch surgery, we comfort patients who fear surgery on theological levels as well as physical levels, and we stand with the families who watch loved ones suffer and sometimes die. We come face to face with our God, our faith and our source of hope. Unless you have developed an amazing defense against the reality of life and death, you will be changed by the experience of CPE.

And, Barbara, I can understand why you tried to run from the Ninevah that was to be your calling. Hospital and prison chaplaincy is a continual meeting and being with the broken people of the world. You have found within Unitarian Universalism what I believe to be its core. The universal reverence for life, and our claim to the dignity and worth of every human being. What a strong faith in that you must have.

What a strong faith in that each of us, ministers of whatever variety or lay person of whatever variety, must have if we are to be in this world as fully responsible and religious people. We are ultimately responsible for this life, this earth, this time.

At the same time as we accept this responsibility, your caution of an arrogant heroism is crucial to come to terms with. Any faith that does not embrace the brokenness of life is shallow. Any faith that does not reach beyond individual capacities and abilities is limited and shallow. It will fail in the faces of the throwaway people, the broken people, the cruel people.

I have learned, in a different journey to avoid a different form of Ninevah than you, that there does exist in this Universe a power far greater than I. You named it as the Holy Spirit. I have named it as the Collective Unconscious. Either way, we have come to dwell in peace in Ninevah and have been made whole by so doing.

#### Response by Rev. David Herndon:

Barbara, I have enjoyed your words very much, and I feel honoured that you asked me to respond.

You speak from the perspective of someone doing ministry outside a church setting. My own work, in contrast, is standard garden-variety ministry in a church. This spring, in my church, we celebrated the life and work of James Reeb, on the 25th anniversary of his death. Reeb, as you know, was the Unitarian Universalist minister killed in Selma, Alabama, while working with Martin Luther King. As I was researching my sermon, I came across a statement of the theological understanding that launched Reeb into his community-based ministry. Traditionally, the church's role has been understood as the source of sacredness -- sacredness happens in the church and then is communicated to the world. In contrast, the understanding of Reeb and others working in the wider world has been that the church's role is to point out and celebrate sacredness wherever it happens. This perspective works for me, and I look forward to the day when your ministry receives the recognition you anticipate.

In your Introduction, you point out our reluctance, as UU's, to recognize the importance of pastoral care, or more generally, direct personal involvement in troubled situations. You set the stage for your theological observations.

In your Historical Overview, you trace the development of pastoral ministry, both in the community and in the local church. I have no comments about this



section, except that I admire your scholarship and your sensitivity to the Canadian scene.

In your Theological Overview, you suggest a shifting theological attitude among us that may enable us to respond more deeply to unfortunate situations. Most of my remarks will focus on your theological concerns.

Finally, in your Personal Reflection, you presented a powerful and moving story about what I would call heroism.

Barbara, it seems to me that the central theme of your paper has to do with how our religious tradition, with all its rationalism and optimism, can make an adequate response to tragedy. And, of course, you point out that part of our task is coming to terms with the reality that our best efforts at doing things may not be adequate in the face of tragedy. In the paper, your focus is reflective, but ultimately practical; and I suspect that part of your message is that our reluctance to recognize the legitimacy of ministries outside the church has a great deal to do with our reluctance to face the tragic side of life.

In your Theological Overview, you first point out the importance of working with people in unfortunate situations even as we seek systemic solutions to such problems. I am reminded of the old distinction between the two roots of our denomination, that while the Unitarians would be signing petitions, the Universalists would be knitting sweaters. Attention directed exclusively to systemic solutions of human ills is denial, I believe, for the tragic element in life may run so deep that tragedy will always be with us. A more realistic view of tragedy might assume that there will always be people in unfortunate situations no matter how sophisticated our technology and our thinking, and thus that there will always be a place for people willing to be directly involved in soothing the hurts happening now.

You then turn, in your paper, to the motif of the hero. You distinguish between the persevering but ultimately successful hero like St. George the dragon-defeater and the promising but ultimately unsuccessful hero like the prodigal son. Your intent here is to contrast confident self-reliance with acceptance of human frailty, achievement with grace. And you make the central point of your paper when you ask what the confident self-reliant hero does when faced with tragedy that cannot be fixed, when no amount of achievement could be adequate. You suggest that we UU's identify too strongly with the confident self-reliant hero, and this symbolizes our difficulty in responding adequately to tragedy. And you suggest a little less doing, together with a little more being.

I would like to suggest that a deeper look at heroes might be helpful. The story of St. George says that he fought the dragon for three days. Exhausted and wounded at the end of the first day, St. George was sheltered and healed by a tree that magically grew up over the place where he lay. The second night the tree was replaced by a magic spring of cool water. St. George thus relied on more than his own strength. On the other hand, the prodigal son relied on more than external forgiveness, for he came to his senses and had the courage to return home all on his own. It seems to me that the archetypal hero in mythology relies both on his or her own strength and on some sort of mysterious power from beyond, just at the moment when the quest seems hopeless. Nevertheless, your point is well-taken, for the turning point in a hero story comes when the hero has exhausted his or her own strength and must become open to aid from unknown sources: the true character of the hero emerges not as a strength of doing, but as a quality of being. In her book Quest, UU minister Kathy Fuson Hurt writes:

"Challenged to prove our mettle, many of us will immediately draw our swords and stride boldly ahead, slashing at everything in sight. Such an active course is the most obvious and appealing one to take, and for the first several obstacles on the path, it works quite well. A cut here, and the doubters and naysayers are downed; a cut there, and practical considerations and financial worries disappear. Later on, however, the ordeals that the hero or heroine confronts assume a more subtle, ambiguous nature that effectively resists the blunt thrusts of a sword. Of what

benefit is a sword in coping with the dragons of fear, loneliness, self-doubt?"

"At this point in the quest our deeper heroic character emerges, as we are forced to develop an alternative to the usual active, straightforward, self-reliant approach to tests of our abilities. If myths and fairy tales of the quest are consulted as a guide, we see that our task now is to learn to be passive -- not in the ordinary, defeatist, rather sullen sense of the word, but actively, receptively, and willingly so. Setting aside all weapons and protective armor, we confront the trials set before us on the path with only our small, vulnerable, undefended self."

"Such a prescription for heroism sounds fool-hardy and sure to fail; will not the monsters gobble us up, will not the tasks prove impossible without our swords? How can we face unarmed the dragon of despair and hope to survive? The approach defies logic -- but logic alone is insufficient in a serious quest for truth. Every resource, even the illogical ones, must be utilized in this most strenuous endeavor."

"It happens that the illogic of the vulnerable, seemingly weak and unheroic approach works in an amazing way to carry us through the challenges of this second stage of the quest. Once our defenses are down and our receptivity is high, we discover that we do not have to act alone, to do it all ourselves. Mysterious powers -- whether from without or within, we cannot say -- stand ready to come to our aid in trials. And come they will, if we can only be still and receive them."

Things get turned around at that part of the hero's journey: not ascent, but descent is called for; not fighting but embracing these internal shadows is called for; not fleeing from but deliberately entering into the wilderness is called for. And when the descent has been made, the shadow embraced, the wilderness experienced, there is abundant life contrary to expectation. The book of Hosea says "The wilderness will lead you to your heart, where I will speak." Barb, it sounds to me like you have discovered that in your nice little parish in Ninevah, the place you did not ever want to go, and you discovered it especially with Diane and Kathy. Something heroic was going on there. Something in you grew large enough to embrace human frailty, something in you grew large enough to embrace ambiguity, something in you grew large enough to surrender control in that corner of the world. Personally, I would see it as Universalism in practice, Universalism understood as the acceptance of human being with all its frailness and ambiguity and helplessness in the face of tragedy just as we are.

Barb, I have no critique except to amplify your remarks and to say "be well."