

“Making Peace with the Dragon”©
(The Meaning of Money in Our Lives)
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister
February 22, 2009

PRELUDE *“Etude in C Major” - Felix Le Couppey*

CALL TO GATHER

Come, Come Whoever You Are, #188

Come, come, whoever you are;
Man, woman, parent, child
Whatever your religious journey,
Whatever your skin color,
Whatever your ability,
Whomever you love-
You are welcome here this morning.
You are welcome at our table.
You are welcome in this religious home.

Good Morning! Welcome to the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, or more affectionately known as MUUS. I am the Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, and it is my great pleasure and privilege to serve this congregation. We welcome all of you.

If you are a newcomer, and haven't yet signed our guest book in the entryway, please do so before you leave so that we may send you a newsletter listing our events. If you have questions about Unitarian Universalism or are thinking about joining this congregation, we invite you to join us for coffee/tea after our service today and to speak with me or a member of the Membership Committee who wear gold nametags.

Later in the worship service newcomers will have an opportunity to introduce themselves, and we hope that you will do so. It is optional, but we would like to give you a proper welcome.

To parents, children are always welcome to stay in the service, or join the other children in our religious education classes.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important parts of our community life are the invitations we give to one another for events beyond this morning's service. Please note the announcements in your order of service. If there are any other MUUS related announcements, you are welcome to share them now.

I have these additional announcements:

- (a) Today is new member Sunday. It is a day of commitment to one another.
- (b) After the service today, at 1 pm, we will have our 2nd workshop on "the Meaning of Money in Our Lives." We will take what we learned in our first workshop, and what we learn in the service today, to discuss what pragmatic actions this congregation may want to do, to address the economic and spiritual impact of the current recession.
- (c) There is a growth plan meeting immediately after the service in the minister's study.
- (d) There will be an adult education class on Nietzsche, conducted by Jack Lander and Mary Lohman on March 8, after the service.
- (e) Also, on March 8th, from 2-4 pm, we will have our first Small Group Ministry Facilitators meeting.
- (f) The flowers this morning are given in honor of Christine Thomas and Peg Molina, who are joining the congregation today.
- (g) I want to invite you to consider make an offering of flowers for this sanctuary for various Sundays throughout the year, in honor of a special event or in memory of a loved one. If you sign up at the back table, we will be able to share the memory of the event in the Order of Service.
- (h) If you like to have sweets to eat and coffee or tea . . . to drink after our services, please sign up at the back table.
- (i) Please meet with your committees and stakeholders prior to April 30th, so that you can complete the calendar for next year.

And, now: "I invite everyone to relax your body, come into the room in spirit & mind. Take the next few moments to focus on your breathing. Breathe deeply. Relax. We welcome you into this place made more sacred by your presence."

SOUNDING OF BELL

- **CHALICE LIGHTING & OPENING WORDS**

Jane Ranney Rzepka¹

When all is quiet and we are small and the night is dark, may we hear the tender breathing of all who lie awake with us in fear, that together we may gather strength to live with love, and kindness, and confidence.

* **HYMN #289** *"Creative Love, Our Thanks We Give"*

NEW MEMBER WELCOME & COVENANT

(see insert)

Minister:

I invite Tracy Johnson, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Anita Winchester, a Member of the Membership Committee, Polly Curtis, Peg Molina, and Christine Thomas to join me.

This morning we are pleased to welcome Polly, Peg, and Christine, who have expressed their desire to take the next step in deepening their relationship with Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, that of joining the Society as a member. Since 1980, people have been called forth to sign this membership book over and over again. By that act, they have formed and continue to form a community of religious tolerance, reason, and love.

President, Board of Trustees:

This public act is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to one another. As you sign the Membership Book, we pledge our support to you on your personal spiritual path and we look to you to further strengthen this community with your active contribution of your time, treasure and talents to the life of this congregation. If you are ready to join this congregation, please step forward to sign the Membership Book.

Signing the Membership Book

President, Board of Trustees:

Let us pledge ourselves once again, to one another by re-committing ourselves to our Mission Statement.

¹ <http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/closings/submissions/5387.shtml>

***ALL: MISSION STATEMENT**

We, the members of Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, covenant to:

- celebrate diversity as a strength,
- nurture one another's spiritual growth,
- inspire ethical action,
- and work for positive change in this world.

Guided by our collective inspiration, we invite each other to participate fully in congregational life and to grow and learn together in faith and love.

Gifts in Remembrance of this Joyful Occasion

Minister & President of Board of Trustees: Welcome to Unitarian Universalism and to Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society.

OFFERTORY "*I Know I Can*" - Jeannie Gagne

As we take our collection, we invite first time visitors to let the plate/basket pass them by, you are our guests today.

Let us now take an offering to sustain and strengthen this [congregation], which is sacred to so many of us; [this] community of memory and of hope, for we are now the keepers of the dream. (Braddock Lovely)

WELCOMING VISITORS

If you are visiting for the first time, or have come back after a long time, or if you are still getting to know us, we would love it if you would introduce yourself to us. It is purely optional, but we'd like to give you a proper welcome. Please raise your hand so we can bring you a mic.

Let the congregation say, "Welcome!"

And, now for our Joys and Concerns:

If you woke this morning with a sorrow so heavy that you need the help of this community to carry it; or if, in the spirit of thankfulness, you woke with gratitude in your heart that simply must be shared, now is the time for you to speak.

INSERT JOYS & CONCERNS

May all that is shared at this time be seen as holy.

Ring bowl.

Many joys and woes live in the heart. We recognize their presence, even when they are offered in silence. We hold these spoken and unspoken joys and sorrows in tender care in our hearts and by this community.

May it be so.

SINGING THE CHILDREN ON THEIR WAY

*As you go may joy surround you, as you go, go in peace;
know our love is with you always, as you go, as you go.*

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

In Words

In Silence

In Song—Spirit of Life, #123

SERMON

***"Making Peace with the Dragon" ("The Meaning of Money in Our Lives")
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd***

Before we go further, let me identify, that the purpose of this service is to make an effort to come to terms with the emotions that are rising around the current economic crisis. Whenever we try to unravel these sorts of things in the context of a worship service, it is possible for someone here to be overcome by one's own emotions. So, while I want you to be able to participate, I also don't want you to feel unsafe or feel that you are without support. It is therefore OK, at any time for you to "pass" as we engage this topic. And, if you need to, it is OK to leave the service. If you do, please know that either John Cummings or Kate McKinney will follow you, to make sure you are OK, and to help you return to this community afterwards. Later, if you want, I encourage you to call me, so that we can talk about your feelings. Rest assured that this service is designed to leave you with hope, though we may have to reflect on some uncomfortable feelings first.

Let us begin.

Let me ask you, "how many of you have, at some point in your life, suddenly or regrettably found yourselves out of work?"

“How many of you have had truly radical life changes because of a sudden loss of income, things such as moving your home, pulling your child out of college, reluctantly accepting a job at half the pay you once had, and so forth . . . ?”

We are not alone, are we?

For my husband and I, the first time it happened was in 1980, when my husband’s cohorts showed up for work one day, only to find the door locked, in Deer Isle, Maine. The bank had warned this firm of architects and landscape architects to not build a new building to house the firm. They had suggested that, alternatively, the firm move the increasing numbers of staff into a rented trailer. Instead, a new custom designed building suitable to a Downeast architecture firm was built. As the recession hit, the firm went bust, and the partners never told the staff they were going under. They claimed more projects were coming in . . . up until the day, the doors were locked.

Newly married 9 months before, we moved lock, stock and barrel, to Connecticut, into my husband’s parents’ home, until we could get new jobs and get back on our feet in a land far stranger to us than our beloved Maine.

I am sure that any number of you have similar stories. Such dramatic and unwelcome change often inspires fear. The anticipation that something like this might happen, causes significant anxiety and stress. Anxiety, fear and anger are emotions that are rooted deeply in the reptilian part of our brain. They are primitive emotions that have their place from time to time, inspiring fight or flight responses. So rooted to our instinct for survival, they tend to take control of the reasoning part of the brain. And, if we can’t name these emotions and put them in their proper perspective, we cannot help but yield control of our lives to these highly reactive and often short-sighted emotions that can erode our capacity to reason, and place us in a perpetual state of stress and generalized anxiety. This place of pervasive anxiety is not a healthy place to live.

We are living in a time when this type of generalized anxiety, anger, and fear are becoming pervasive in people’s lives. The emotions, particularly anger, anxiety & fear, pervade the news reporting, further instilling these emotions even deeper in the people’s psyche. When these types of emotions pervade our lives in this way, it erodes our confidence in the economy (and others) and reduces our collective capacity as a society to properly respond to the crisis in ways that are helpful to ourselves and to one another.

That’s my story.

PAUSE

Now, let’s think about where you are at.

In your Order of Service, you will find a pen, an index card and a post-it note. Take the pen, and at this time pull out **the index card**. (Show the index card.) I’m going to read to you, some of the emotions that were expressed in the workshop we did a month ago about how we are dealing with this financial crisis. Listen to my words carefully. When you hear a word that resonates specifically for you, write it down on the index card. Be selective, there are many words.

- Anger, whether it be generalized anger or specific anger at greed, at people we blame, or at people who blame.
- Anxiety
- Betrayal
- Confusion
- Loss of control
- Depression
- Fear
- A desire to say, “Just fix it!”
- Frustration
- Grief
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- A feeling of inadequacy or incompetence that, deep down in our heart, we know isn’t true or deserved
- Inertia
- A feeling of injustice
- Resentment
- Stolen identity
- Stuckness
- Surrealness
- Vulnerability
- Who’s in charge!?!
- Wild swings of emotions, happy vs. sad, up & down
- Shame
- Sinking
- If another emotion has come to you, please write it down.

PAUSE

Now, I will come to you to collect your card. If you want it back later, put your name on it.

[Collect cards.]

There are times in our lives that it is healthy to name an emotion, and then, to deliberately and consciously "put it away" as in this box. When you do so, you are not getting rid of them, and you are not denying them. But, you are likewise, not letting fear, anger and anxiety take total control your life. Placing them figuratively or actually in a box, where you may choose to take them out and recognize them from time to time, is appropriate. Ultimately, the degree to which you let negative emotions run your life is up to you.

[Place box on the table at the front of the sanctuary.]

PAUSE

There is a phrase that goes, "What doesn't kill us, makes us stronger." My husband, adds, "or just hurts a lot." However, there are few things in life that don't have some kind of silver lining.

So, I want you to take the next couple of minutes to think about the opportunities that come at moments such as these. There are a number of them. If you are having trouble thinking of any, take a look at our principles on the wall. What new opportunities come to your mind or heart?

When something comes to mind, if it does, write it on the post-it that is attached to your Order of Service. Only write down 1-2 words each to remember those opportunities.

You now have a choice. If you would like to share your discovered opportunities publicly, please form a line, and we will give you a chance to do so in a minute. For those of you who do not want to share them publicly, please pass them to me.

[Collect "silent" opportunities, and have someone post them on the pulpit. While people are sharing their opportunities publicly, light a candles for each opportunity shared. When all the opportunities are shared, step back and take notice of the candles lit and the brightly colored post-its of opportunities on the pulpit.]

[Observe in silence, and then lift the box while silently catching people's eyes.]

At our workshop a month ago, someone observed the following: Negative emotions can drag us down, like a spiral going downward. We can get stuck in them. In this community, you have the opportunity to develop your spiritual muscle to move from a place of stuckness to a place where you can control your emotions, and reason about the opportunities that do exist. This congregation is the safe place where you can transform yourselves by doing the spiritual exercise to reframe the issues that threaten to take control of your lives. This is the place where you can work with others to develop the spiritual muscle to survive these times.

We are not alone. Repeat after me.

We are not alone.

We are not alone.

A Prayer for Desert Times by Margaret A. Keip²

The journeys of our lives are never fully charted. There come to each of us deserts to cross -- barren stretches -- where the green edge on the horizon may be our destination, or an oasis on our way, or a mirage that beckons only to leave us lost.

When fear grips the heart, or despair bows the head, may we bend as heart and head lead us down to touch the ground beneath our feet. May we scoop some sand into our hands and receive what the sand would teach us:

It holds the warmth of the sun when the sun has left our sight, as it holds the cool of the night when the stars have faded. Hidden among its grains are tiny seeds, at rest and waiting, dormant yet undefeated.

Desert flowers. They endure. Moistened by our tears and by the rains which come to end even the longest drought, they send down roots and they bloom.

May we believe in those seeds, and in the seeds within us.

May we remember in our dry seasons that we, too, are desert flowers.

Amen.

*** HYMN # 391 "Voice Still and Small"**

REFLECTION AND RESPONSE (congregation)

*** HYMN #360 "Here We Have Gathered"**

² <http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/meditationsand/submissions/5488.shtml>

*** CLOSING WORDS**

Please join hands for the extinguishing of the chalice.

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. Let the congregation say: AMEN!

*** EXTINGUISHING OF THE CHALICE**