

"Theology of Enough I"©
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister
March 8, 2009

PRELUDE

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 activities beyond our morning's service. Please note the announcements in your order of service. We have these additional announcements: (Read Announcements.)

(a) For important reasons, today is, once again, new member Sunday. It is a day of commitment to one another.

(b) Today, from 2-4 pm, we will have our first Small Group Ministry Facilitators meeting.

(c) We are still running about \$75 short, in our shared giving and donation to the Americares project. Please see Drew Morten (identify Drew) if you can make a contribution to meet this congregational's financial commitment.

(d) This month a portion of our 4th Sunday collection will go to support the Woodbury food bank. Please plan on making a donation toward this cause on March 22nd.

(e) The flowers this morning are given in honor of Tracy's Johnson's mother.

(f) 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.

(g) If you like to have sweets to eat and coffee or tea . . . to drink after our services, please sign up at the back table.

(h) Please meet with your committees and stakeholders prior to April 30th, so that you can complete the calendar for next year.

(i) A disclaimer: During my interview with the board for this position, I warned them that I have a bit of an evangelical style of preaching, having learned to preach with an African Episcopal minister. That means that occasionally you will hear from me a few alleluia's and amen's sprinkled in my sermons from time to time. I do this sometimes when I express feelings of joy and delight in this faith. Today, you will have the opportunity to join me in those moments of delight, as you wish . . . but it is purely your choice.

If there are any other MUUS related announcements, we ask that you line up to my left to share them now and please use the microphone."

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**

We gather this hour as people of faith,
With joys and sorrows, gifts and needs.
We light this beacon of hope,
Sign of our quest for truth and meaning,
In celebration of the life we share together.

*** HYMN #389**

"Gathered Here"

NEW MEMBER WELCOME & COVENANT

Normally, we would not have a new member Sundays back to back, but there is a special reason. Last time we welcomed new members, Mary Falcone and Sheryl Barnes came forward afterwards to tell me they were eager to join the church. Both have found here, a saving message and a welcoming community. The reason we will welcome them today, is because Mary is undergoing treatment for cancer, and it is her urgent request that she become a Unitarian Universalist before anymore time passes.

Minister:

I invite Tracy Johnson, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Mary Falcone and Sheryl Barnes, to join me.

This morning we are pleased to welcome Mary & Sheryl, 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.

***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

The Congregation: Welcome to Unitarian Universalism and to Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society.

OFFERTORY

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

We are stewards

Grateful for our liberal religious faith

Grateful to have a religious community

Helping one another – worrying about one another –

Caring for one another

Willing to work together to find our common vision as a faith community

Proud of our connectedness to one another

Grateful for our shared ministry together.

SHARING JOYS AND SORROWS**

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 Sorrows:

As we begin the sharing of our joys and sorrows, please remember to tell us your name before sharing. And, now, 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.

JOYS & SORROWS

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 WAY¹

*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: These words from Mary Oliver . . .

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert,
repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

¹ Test in gray were omitted during the service.

Tell me about despair, yours,
And I will tell you mine.

Let us hold in our hearts the joys and sorrows
of those seated here. Remembering . . .

[Insert Sorrows]

Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese,
high in the clean blue air,
Are heading home again.

[Insert joys]

Whoever you are,
no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese,
harsh and exciting ---
Over and over
announcing your place
in the family of things.
~ Mary Oliver

Amen and blessed be.

In Silence
In Song—Spirit of Life, #123

SERMON *“The Theology of Enough” Rev. Jeanne Lloyd*

Welcome! I am glad to see all you here today. I am preaching to you a sermon that I wrote two years ago. I have pulled it out to share with you, not because I am lazy, but because I think the words I wrote then, forecast where we are at now in terms of the current economy. See if you agree.

The concept of the Theology of Enough is one that has provoked me since the first time I heard of it. It comes from a book written by William Diehl, called “The Monday Connection.” It was a book I was assigned in one of my first seminary courses at Hartford Seminary about lay ministry.

Hartford Seminary is where I first started my path toward ministry. Only at that time, professional ministry wasn’t on my radar screen. What I was interested in then, was what Hartford Seminary offered:

Specifically, the development of my spiritual practice and skills as a lay person, practicing Unitarian Universalist values in the larger world everyday.

Hence, the name of the book, “The Monday Connection.” Diehl tries to shake the notion that practicing one’s faith is only done on Sundays, and usually in the pews.

He talks of his journey, of learning and empowering himself to practice his faith every day of the week, even on Mondays.

This may or may not sound like a radical notion to you. I think Unitarian Universalists may lean in this direction anyway. But, the idea of practicing your faith everyday, runs head-long into the secular world, a world where it is easier to talk about sex, than to talk about faith, and living up to one’s ideals.

One of the things that Diehl talks about is the ‘theology of enough’. You may wonder why I am using the word, “theology” in this context. It goes back to the time of Moses, to the golden calf. It goes back to a practice we human beings fall into, time and time again, century after century. You see, how we spend our time, is what we worship. Thus, if we can say to ourselves, I will be a good steward of my time and money, such that they are spent on those things that really matter to me, then what we do will be what we are.

Diehl prefaces this concept by citing a book called, “The Cynical Americans: Living and Working in an Age of Discontent” by Donald Kanter and Phillip Mirvis. They paint a

disturbing picture of how Americans have come to mistrust people in general and institutions in particular. Their broad study revealed that in the late 1950s more than 80% of Americans trusted the government. Yet barely one in four do so today. Twenty years ago public trust in business and its leaders stood at 70%; today it is only 15%. Sixty percent of Americans today believe that most people will lie if they can gain from it; and 72 % believe there is a growing loss of basic trust and faith in other people.

Cynicism is highest among those age 24 and younger and least among those over 35.

They say, “There has been an institutionalization of greed in this country.” Privately, I wonder if this is what the American Dream has come to mean? Has it turned into a belief that everyone has a birthright to get what ever they want? To spend credit cards on things they can’t afford. To buy houses, whose debt they can’t sustain. We are barraged every day by a media pushing things on us and our children.

How many here know the movie “Key Largo”? There is a scene in it that goes something like this:

The actor, Casey Robinson pounds his chest, and says, “There is only one Johnny Rocko!”

“How do you account for that?” Queries the father-in-law played by Lionel Barrymore. And, Humphrey Bogart says, “He knows what he wants. Tell him, Rocko, what you want . . . he wants more, don’t you Rocko?” “Yeah, that’s it. That’s right, I want more,” Rocko says.

Barrymore asks, “Will you ever have enough? Will you, Rocko?” And Rocko says, “Well, I never have. No, I guess I won’t. I’ll always want more.”

This is not only a consumer focused society, it is also fast becoming an impatient society, where we have gotten used to living in an “instant” world. A remote control will switch the channel a hundred times a minute. How many of us sometimes sit at the TV seaching in vain for something worth watching. Just clicking the remote, over and over again, spending our life’s moments, scrolling through images that have little if any meaning to us. I am surprised you are here, since there is no remote to switch this channel. [smile]

The fact is, not everyone is going to get the material things that they want. Not everybody can climb the slippery slope. And, for those who don’t make it, there will be a lot more disillusionment, which leads to cynicism and hopelessness.

Public cynicism is not new. It is healthy to maintain a bit of cynicism, because it presses one toward the truth. But the kind of deep pervasive cynicism in which employees don't trust their bosses, voters don't trust their elected officials, and people cease to be civil with each other, is gradually destroying the fabric of our society and will do so unless it is reversed.

You will not often hear me speak of politics from this pulpit, but, I will give you one quote from George Bush. Sr. not “W”. From his inaugural address, he said, “We are not the sum of our possessions. We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend; a loving parent; a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood and town better than he found it.”

So, what must we do? What must Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society do to leave a legacy, to leave this part of Connecticut and the larger world better than we who are sitting in the seats or standing in the pulpit, better than we found it?

The answer is simple. We must match the order of our affections, with how and where we match our time, talent, and treasure. We can do this. We have enough.

We can exert some control, over how we spend our lives. Whatever we give, if we give it together, to the best of our ability, we have enough. We have enough to live lives filled with purpose and meaning. We have enough to sustain and grow a congregation that creates and finds the time, place, and people, to help us be our best selves, to help us give of our best selves to the larger world. There is enough.

Can I hear an Amen?!

What is the order of your affections? If you were to list them, who or what would be at the top? Who or what would be at the bottom?

Do the moments of your life reflect those priorities? Are you spending the hours of your life, doing what matters most to you? In any given moment, you have choices on how that moment is spent. Spend it well, dear ones. Spend it well.

My story:

If I had asked myself this question, prior to starting seminary, I would have said, “I love my husband and son, family, weaving and probably our house.” Perhaps a few other

things. But for sure they would have been things. I, and whole lot of other people, were caught, and have been caught, in that consumer-focused society, where our behaviors are shaped to be constantly wanting more, buying more, and as a consequence investing enormous amounts of our life and energy in the possession of things. And, then we are strangely dissatisfied, when those things do not fill the hole in our hearts. Perhaps not realizing that they never could. The more we try to fill those holes with “things” the more the hole gets bigger, because it is not the right answer. And, the longer it is allowed to continue, the more likely a person will lose hope, because “the fix” is not working. Not only is it not working, but when we choose jobs focused on merely generating income so that we can buy the next possession, we get further and further away from our true selves, from knowing what it is that will sustain us, and from living a life grounded in hope.

“Before I went to seminary, I had lost my way, I had left a job that was going pretty well but paid poorly, for a job with much more prestige and better money. I thought to myself as I made this transition from a small non-profit human service agency to a large corporate one, let me see if I can play with the “big guys.” I soon found out that this new job was at a place where people were treated as machines and money was the most important end-goal, not people or mission. What I discovered, within days of arriving at that job, though I stayed there for 3 years, was that the fit was poor, and I was miserable.

PAUSE

This may sound odd to you. But, I am grateful that I made just a poor choice in choosing that job, because it hit me up side the head, and forced me to do some really hard reflection about how I spent my time and therefore my life. Before that job, I was a consumer, eager to buy the next thing that Madison Ave. would gladly sell me. Eager to spend my life earning the money to do so, eager to deposit the hours of my life into possessions that someday someone would most certainly throw or give away.

But, here is the real revelation to me. None of that self-examination would have happened, if, in my emptiness, and misery, I hadn’t gone to a Unitarian Universalist Church in West Hartford. I didn’t know what was wrong. I just knew something was wrong. Eventually, I would realize that my idealism, and therefore my heart, was broken.

I was looking for something, a place, where I could safely ask questions, that frankly scared me, a place to ask them in a safe community that encouraged idealism and my growth as a human being.

With time, and because of Unitarian Universalists like you, my soul was gradually healed. Better than healed, my soul found its voice, along with new purpose and meaning for my life. In short, I was saved by Unitarian Universalism.”²

Can I hear an halleluiah?

Did you know that 70% of visitors who seek a spiritual community that first time, are here because they too, are in a moment of crisis? I ask you, will we be the community that helps them find their heart, strength and idealism again? Will we be here to provide them that safe sanctuary?

I cannot tell you what the order of your affections are. You are the only ones that can do so. But, I might suggest you consider:

Are any of the following on your list?

A loved one or loved ones,

A cherished companion – a pet perhaps,

Friends,

Artistic or natural beauty,

A community that encourages you to live your ideals?

A community that challenges you to give something back to this world.

A community that teaches us that when we place people above poverty, caring above careerism, selflessness above self, and giving above getting, we will find our true selves.

There are many ways to give your love, and your faith, away. You can give of yourself, and your time and talents, to create a place where idealism thrives. You can, and I will say, you must, give money to also create a space, a community, where hope abounds. It is an indivisible tri-une package: Time, talent, and treasure.

One without the other weakens the whole.

I want you to imagine for a moment, that you aren’t sitting here in this congregation, right now. Instead, imagine, that 20 of you, are not living here in this part of Connecticut, but in a country, far away and remote. Imagine feeling isolated, a stranger in a strange land, perhaps living with people who did not share your view of life.

Have any of you ever been there?

² Adapted from: Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, “Theology of Enough”, April 29, 2007, All Souls Church, Unitarian Universalist.

Then, imagine, that by some miracle of luck or of Grace, the twenty of you found one another, and discovered you had similar beliefs, you discovered you were Unitarian Universalists, together, and you vowed, “Let us gather together, regularly, to be in fellowship, because we want to!” And, then after a while, you say to yourselves, “We have to find others, others who need this saving message. We have to have a place, and a way of being that is predictable and caring, that provides a place of sanctuary, that invites the stranger in.”

And, some one of you might say:

In to what?

And, another would say: to be in fellowship, to foster idealism, to foster hope. To promote reason, freedom and tolerance, in a world that is too cynical, in a world that thrives too much on the exploitation of others, in a world that is falling too much on hard times.

And, then someone would add, and . . . to help others discover the purpose and meaning of their lives, and to offer to them respect, love and compassion, just as we have found here.

And, then someone else someone older, would say, to have a place to spend our later years – a place where our lives, at the end, will be celebrated.

And, so, my friends, I ask you:

What is enough?

When will we have had enough of the hard-times?

When will we stop accepting that that is the way things must be?

When will we say, these are the things that matter to me: My soul, this person close to me, these beliefs, and, this place, that supports me in finding out what is important to me and discovering the order of my affections, that gives me opportunity to find my voice, that gives me space to struggle to say what I mean, that calls forth from me, the very best I have to offer.

Can I hear an Amen!

What is enough?

What is enough?

What can I give of my heart to the people of this faith community? What can I give of my talents to this congregation? What can I honestly afford to give this beloved community, once I’ve figured out what really matters in my life, and where those things that matter are most likely to thrive.

How much can I afford to give a Unitarian Universalist community that seeks nothing more than to give me hope for all the days to come.

How much is enough?

It is not an economic question. It is a spiritual question. Only you know. Only you know.

But, whatever you decide – your place is secure here. We want you here, and, we will celebrate your life with us, because it is the one life you have to give. Who you are today, is enough for us. Who you will be tomorrow, will be enough for us. Who you bring to this faith community next week, or next year, because you want them, like you, to live a life free of cynicism, a life that believes in dreams, and ideals, and hope.

They will be enough – just as they are and as they will grow to be.

Can I hear an Halleluiah?

Together, we have enough to make it. Together, we have enough talent to create a faithful community devoted to reason, faith, tolerance; respect, compassion and love. Together we have enough time – to be together and to do the work. Many hands will make light work.

And, together, dear ones, if we really look at the order of our affections, and adjust our lifestyles accordingly, there is enough for this congregation to grow and to blossom into a sanctuary for all who come.

Come, come, who ever you are.
And, we will honor your presence, among us.

Amen, and blessed be.

*** HYMN #347**

"Gather the Spirit"

REFLECTION & RESPONSE ***Canvass Committee, et al***

As we begin the sharing our reflections and responses, please remember to tell us your name before sharing.

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

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!

Minister: The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, M.Div., M.A.
Director of Religious Education: Denise Pedane
Choir Director and Pianist: Charlie Batchelder

* Please rise in body or spirit.

** Joys and Sorrows is a sacred time of sharing heartfelt personal experiences. Once the bell is sounded, please honor those who chose to share these very human moments.

Announcements or political statements are inappropriate at this time. When sharing, please be brief.

Please use the portable microphone even if your voice is usually heard. This will enable those behind you to hear you.

In deference to the contemplative nature of our service we ask that you use applause rarely. Please reserve applause for very special responses only.

Rev. 3 2009