

**“Resurrecting Life”©**  
**Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT**  
**The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister**  
**April 12, 2009**

*To whom do we pray? Is it to a G\*d above, or the soul within? Is it for ourselves or for others?*

**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.

**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:

- 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.
- This month a portion of our 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday collection will go to support the Woodbury food bank. Please plan on making a donation toward this cause on April 26th.
- Next Saturday, at 9:30 am, we will hold the memorial service for our friend, Mike Boyen here at MUUS.
- The flowers this morning are given in honor of the family of Marilyn Aligata. Please consider making 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. You can sign up at the back table.
- On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, we will be having the last new member orientation for this church year from 9:30 – 12:30 am. We invite anyone who would like to know more about Unitarian Universalism and/or who might be thinking about becoming a member to join us for this orientation class.
- On Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, join us here at 10:30 am, so that we can car pool to the Audobon Center at Bent of the River, to worship by the Pomperaug River and celebrate Spring's arrival!
- If you like to have sweets to eat and coffee or tea . . . to drink after our services, please sign up at the back table.
- Please meet with your committees and stakeholders prior to April 30<sup>th</sup>, so that we can complete the calendar for next year.
- A warning: There may be a few "hallelujah's & amens" today ;-). It is your choice as to whether you choose to share these moments with me.
- Tomorrow is Founder's Day for this beloved congregation. It is the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. During the Seder on Thursday, we have the wonderful opportunity to view a DVD that Ed Edelsen made of pictures from all those years. How lucky we are to have this record of our history. Thank you, to Ed, and to all who contributed pictures for your anniversary. Can I hear a hallelujah!?!

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**

Blessed is the fire that burns deep in the soul.

*It is the flame of the human spirit touched into being by the mystery of life.*

It is the fire of reason; the fire of compassion; the fire of community; the fire of justice;  
the fire of faith.

*It is the fire of love burning deep in the human heart; the divine glow in every life.*

~ Eric A. Heller-Wagner

**\* HYMN #108     *“My Life Flows on in Endless Song”***

**\* COVENANT** (in unison)

*Love is the spirit of this society.  
Dwelling together in peace,  
Seeking truth,  
Helping one another,  
Serving human needs,  
Honoring the Earth and all that is,  
This is our covenant.*

**OFFERTORY**

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

Let there be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place which is sacred to so many of us, a community of memory and of hope, for we are now the keepers of the dream.

~ Brandoch L. Lovely

**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!"***

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.

INSERT JOYS & SORROWS

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

**STORY FOR ALL AGES**      *Denise Pedane, DRE*

**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

We hold within the sacred arms of this community these sorrows and joys.

INSERT SORROWS & JOYS

To whom do we pray? Is it to the G\*d above, or the soul within? Is it for ourselves or for others?

Often - most often it is a lament of silent anguish that is inexpressible while we are lost in emotion.

We pray to ourselves, to our communities, for others, and to that Mystery that holds life together.

We pray that the future will bring more peace to this world, not just for us, but for our children, and our children's children.

Not just for them, but as justice for the work that people have done in the past to bring health and wholeness to this world.

Not just for the blessed but for the tormented who cannot see and do not know a better way.

We pray for forgiveness for all that we have not done - but could have done to build community.

Not just the global community, but the community in our back yard.

We pray for healing, and for understanding.

We pray for joy that comes at the expense of no one.

We pray for the laughter of children and elders, joined with ours.

We pray for wholeness.

In Silence

In Song—Spirit of Life, #123

**SERMON**      *“Resurrecting Life”*      **Rev. Jeanne Lloyd**

I wonder if you realize that we, as Unitarian Universalists can be resurrected? I wonder if you realize the fact that we can is symbolized by the flame surrounded by two circles.

Some years ago, when I was working in a particularly difficult and politically sensitive situation, I found myself getting tossed and pulled by different personalities and circumstances. I recall one day, someone saying to me, “You really have to be centered, in a situation like this.”

Now I think most of us think we know what it means to be centered, but at that moment, I wondered if I did, really? What did this word “center” mean? when one is in rough seas? It’s a question I have pondered off and on since then . . .

For me, the answer comes by way of relational theology. To me words like “The Divine”, “The Holy,” “The Sacred” reflect not an identity, but a process of being in relationship with each other. You may feel differently, but whether you see something special - or sacred if you will – in each other’s faces, or in an identity that rests in your heart and surrounds you, authentic religion reflects those ideas that keep you most centered during troubled times . . . that keep you most whole.

As you know, I was raised all over the world. Consequently, though my parents were Presbyterian, my view of that which is holy was broader than theirs - and less easy to contain. When my husband who was born UU and I first started attending a church the minister asked us to draw a picture of G\*d. I had never been asked to do this before . . . and was surprised at the thought of having to come up with such a symbol. I was more surprised when my simple drawing revealed simply a circle . . . the whole.

I was even more surprised when my husband independently drew a circle as well. That was the first time that I realized we were connected in ways I did not yet understand.

I also remember when I first entered seminary, one of my assignments was to write a letter to G\*d. While I was working at the computer on this assignment, my husband came in, saw the date on my letterhead, my salutation, “Dear G\*d,” and some of the content with which I was struggling. He looked at me then, incredulously, and asked, “Do you actually have the address?”

*Sometimes, I wonder how a G\*d that lives outside me, above and beyond might describe his or her divine connection to me. I can just imagine an e-mail I might receive on my*

*computer someday while in the midst of turmoil. The message would start by saying, "Good Morning" in the subject line. Then I imagine it would go on to say, "It's me, the Lord your G\*d, (with a little smiley face next to it ;-)."*

*"Today I will be handling all of your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help. You may let go of the outcome. DO NOT attempt to resolve it. Kindly put it in your ATG (assigned to G\*d) folder." "It will be addressed in MY time, not yours. Once the matter is placed into the box, do not hold on to it or attempt to remove it. Holding on or removal will delay the resolution of your problem."*

*He might go on to write, "Because I do not sleep nor do I slumber, there is no need for you to lose any sleep. Rest my child. If you need to contact me, I am only a prayer, thought or e-mail away."*

*"Love eternally,*

*The Lord your G\*d@cyberspace.com*

*PS . . . Please forward these instructions to all my other kids on your address list.*

Wouldn't it be grand if we had such easy access to that kind of omnipotent G\*d? Only a click away? Such thinking however, takes us, at least initially, in the wrong direction. It suggests that The Holy - whatever that means to you – is outside of us, ready and able to fix things affecting us from the outside.

But, in actuality the centeredness we seek describes something internal, inside myself. Something deep inside myself. My most intimate self. Some would say my soul.

William Ellery Channing spoke about the spark of divinity that exists in each of us, and about our need to fan that spark within each of us.

A spark of divinity. I think that being centered has something to do with that flame, that spark of sacredness that we see in each others eyes, those eyes that can speak of the depths of one's soul.

PAUSE

To feel that depth, that connection to the soul, to that which is Holy, creates a plumb line that can hold us centered, in our universe when times are troubled.

PAUSE

So think of our Unitarian Universalist symbol. The flame with two circles surrounding it. Imagine that flame as yourself, and your relationship to that which you deem Holy. You might even imagine it as the place where Life is held in all its splendor and tragedy.

PAUSE

As I have thought about this, however, I have realized that Life cannot for long hold itself centered, by itself in this present time alone. There are others that hold Life, that hold us, and help us “keep our center.” Others on whom we rely, whether we realize it or not.

They are the ones that see the sacred in us: our friends and family, neighbors, and even strangers, those that by their connection to us, create a circle of sacred space around us. If you consider that through Channing’s eyes, our truest “call” from the Divine, is to support and nurture the spark of divinity within each other, then we are indeed centered when we are in relationship to that which is holy and by our relationships to each other.

*Can I hear an Amen!?*

PAUSE

Those who fan the flame, that is to say, those who connect with us in the depths of our souls, help us become a soul grounded in love. If the flame represents our soul and Life itself, then one circle represents our present day circle of love from those who hold us in their care.

Now, if our centeredness is so dependent on our connection to our souls and to others then it is easy to see why, when loved ones are lost, or when we feel alienated from Life itself, it feels as though our world has shattered. Sometimes it feels as though our own identity has been shattered. It feels anything but whole.

PAUSE

The whole is not about me or you. It is about us - and that space between us where we meet. The loss of someone in whose flame we ourselves drew sustenance, must affect

our sense of wholeness. We were one - our identities are caught up in each other. We cannot sustain that former identity without the Other. And, our own identity IS changed – when a piece is lost. And, so we grieve not only the person - but who we are NOT anymore.

PAUSE

So, we have the flame and one circle that forms community - that helps us keep our center. But that is not all we have.

For several years, now, I have been researching my family history. Its been a journey well worth the effort. In the process I have not only discovered the stories of those souls who brought life to me, I have made stronger family connections with those still living, and new connections with family I never knew.

And, though an only child, suddenly, I am not alone. And, I know it. I have come into right relation with my grandparents and theirs before them. I have a sense of what their values were, and how they lived their lives. They are present in my life. I know better now their trials, heartaches, and dreams. I understand better now the character traits that keep showing up generation after generation. Through this research I discovered what the family had long forgotten: that we had been Quakers for over 200 years. We had left Wales to escape religious persecution. And, that every generation, has had ministers in it. And, though no longer Quaker, every generation of Lloyds still has ministers in it. I have 3 cousins who are ministers. I thought that fact odd before I understood our history. Now, in true Presbyterian fashion, I think it's predestined. Not necessarily by a G\*d in the sky, but by the character traits and values passed down from one generation to another.

Who knew?!?

So, I suggest to you that there is a second “circle of love” held through time by ancestors of yesteryear, of whom we may only dimly be aware. Their presence in the past makes for my future and I am simply and indisputably bound to them. And, in so being, I am once again centered. Centered by the second circle.

So think about our center flame, grounded in the Holy, surrounded by a present circle of love, and by a past circle of souls who by their existence made our existence possible.

We are grounded three dimensionally.

What this means, is that we, in the present day, become the circle for other's whose flames we may light, ignore or extinguish. We are the living circle that becomes the reflection of other's identities.

Our absence or presence in this world makes a difference - it creates wholeness or destruction. The collective WE becomes the circle that promotes fair and equitable treatment of others . . . or it doesn't. Through our respect for the individual, freedom of consciousness, and open mindedness, we hold the power to help others ground themselves.

We are the ones who offer resurrection to others by embodying the Sacredness of Life that we feel within ourselves, and holding that flame out to others.

We need not wait for an afterlife to be redeemed so that we can be in relationship with Divine Mystery and others. It is available to us now in that moment of mystical union when we are reconciled to ourselves, to the experience of Grace in our lives, and to others. We are redeemed when we are "reawakened" or resurrected to Life. Our salvation comes in those many moments in this lifetime when we are in full and right relationship with ourselves and with others who hold us now, or have held us in the past.

We are resurrected to life each time the spark of divine from someone else finds its way into our soul. And when that happens, they will be of us, and we in them, and we will be resurrected to life, together.

**Can I hear an Halleluiah!? And, Amen?**

**\*REFLECTION AND RESPONSE** (congregation)

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

**\* HYMN #354**    *“We Laugh, We Cry”*

• **EXTINGUISHING OF 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!

**Sounding of Bell**

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, state your name, and speak directly into the microphone. 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.

This congregation is one of over 600 U.S. Unitarian Universalist congregations that has completed an education-study program leading up to a democratic vote to become a UUA certified “Welcoming Congregation”. As such, we specifically welcome and support bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgendered people and other people in search of a spiritual home and community.

Rev. 3 2009