

“Changes of the Heart & Mind”©
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister
Denise Pedane, Director of Religious Education
Charlie Batchelder, Choir Assistant
January 11, 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.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

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. I have these additional announcements :

(Read Announcements.)

If there are any other MUUS related announcements, you are welcome to share them now (look for people to raise their hands. Have them use the portable microphone.)

(1) There will be a visitor/membership orientation session from 1-5:30 pm on Saturday, January 24th, here at MUUS.

(2) 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.

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

(3) On Saturday, February 7th, we are sponsoring here a Small Group Ministry workshop, conducted by Rev. Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, to help establish here at MUUS broad congregational support and resources for these covenant groups, designed to give members opportunities to explore that which is intimate and ultimate in our lives. We are encouraging all members to come, especially those who wish to learn how to facilitate these covenant groups.

Here ends this morning's announcements.

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**

These words from Tim Haley

Amid all the noise in our lives, we take this moment to sit in silence –

To give thanks for another day;

To give thanks for all those in our lives who have brought us warmth and love;

To give thanks for the gift of life.

We know we are on our pilgrimage here but a brief moment in time.

Let us open ourselves, here, now, to the process of becoming more whole – of living more fully; of giving and forgiving more freely; of understanding more completely, the meaning of our lives here on this earth.¹

May it be so.

*** HYMN # 6** *"Just as Long as I Have Breath"*

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 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)

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS**

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

¹ Source, 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection,
<http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/openings/submissions/5144.shtml>, January 10, 2009.

Ring bowl

Sharing of Joys & Concerns

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] These words from Rebecca Edmiston-Lange:

Mindful of our highest aspirations,
Bound by common faith and purpose,
And, yet, beginning with ourselves as we are,
Let us take one more step, together,
 in our unending quest for dignity, justice and love.²

We hold in our collective hearts the concerns and joys expressed today:

INSERT JOYS & CONCERNS

Let us hold these joys and sorrows, named and unnamed, in the embrace of this community, knowing that it is who we are together, in joy and sorrow, that sustains our spirits, individually and collectively.

Let us spend the next few moments, in silence reflection.

[In Silence]

[In Song] Spirit of Life, #123

May it be so.

² *Rebecca A. Edmiston-Lange* <http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/closings/submissions/6029.shtml> January 10, 2009, **Source:** 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection.

SERMON *"Changes of the Heart & Mind"*

The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd

Many of you know that I was raised in a military family. An Army brat. My life began in 1953 at Ft. McClellan, Alabama, and from there we traveled to Indian Springs, Nevada; on to La Rochelle and Poiteirs, France; and back to Ft. McClellan. After that to Knoxville, TN; Edgewood, MD; and then Monterey, Daly City, Presidio of San Francisco, and San Francisco, California.

After living 11 places, in 1963 we headed back east to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas; then Ft. Detrick, Maryland; and finally, Springfield, Virginia where I graduated from high school. By now we had lived in 14 places. After high school I went to college and graduate schools in Knoxville, Tenn.; Blacksburg, VA, and Radford, VA. Employment and marriage brought me to Bucksport and Blue Hill, Maine; and, later to Guilford, Northford, Simsbury and Canton, CT. A total of 23 homes in 55 years.

Yes, I am familiar with change and chaos. And, after entering adulthood, I unconsciously perpetuated change, because that was all I knew as normal. I was addicted to change by the way I had grown up.

PAUSE

Very often we do not realize the systemic structures in place, in our families and in our culture, that hold us in place, keep us doing the same old thing, and without opposition, control who we are. These structures create a powerful web from which we, very often, cannot get perspective. We are not just "too close to the trees to see the forest," we are the trees, we are the forest. And, calling on will-power to change things, in such instances, by itself, and without perspective on the larger system of which we are a part, is irrelevant and usually doomed to failure.

It becomes self-defeating when we try to change our habits, when they are caught up in the habits and systems of others. We cannot do it just by the force of our own sheer will. We need other strategies to help us change ourselves and the world.

Last month, this congregation voted to pursue and grow through the milestones that would promote developmentally healthy growth. You voted to do things to help it mature into its next stage of development and to make it sustainable and inheritable to the next generation of seekers. But, growth means change and change is something with which we often have a love/hate relationship. Better that we should name that now, than be surprised when it comes up later. ☺

You see, accomplishing milestones does not happen easily, whether at a personal level or a congregational level. There is an organic quality to it, that is difficult to name or control, when we choose to do it to ourselves, for ourselves.

Change imposed upon us by forces beyond our control, is actually easier to do, than change we impose upon ourselves. It is easier to react than to be proactive. For example, the weather is getting colder now, unless you want to freeze, you now wear coats and turn on the heat. Other forms of forced change are less easy to accept, but still just as non-negotiable, such as the loss of a loved one. Painful, but still reactive. We have no choice but somehow to adapt – or said another way, to change.

Self-change, where *we* control whether we will change or not, is somewhat harder. With self-change, we are the driving engine. If we let up, the engine stops, and the movement toward growth and health stops. Not only that, but if we fail to get perspective on the larger system, that holds our habits in place, our own desire to change ourselves or society, cannot get traction. We have to have perspective on the larger system that reinforces how we behave, in order to free ourselves from those systems that reinforce our bad habits.

From liberation theology, we learn that true change, requires ongoing reflection and action on the part of each of us, whenever we are working to change something about ourselves, or the larger world. This action-reflection process is an ongoing, cyclical process, that spirals upward. It allows and even encourages errors as we act. From *reflection* about those errors and erroneous assumptions about what will work or not work, we learn. It is through our shared reflection on our actions, that we learn how to more effectively change ourselves and unjust circumstances . . . before we then act again. Through this process of action and reflection, we change from the person and people we were, to the people we hope to be. When we decide to be proactive agents of change, engaged in action and reflection, engaged in learning, we learn things that inform our minds and hearts, we learn new things about others, we learn new things about ourselves, we learn our strengths, we learn our weaknesses. We learn how to nourish our spirits and the spirits of others. Learning & growth require change. Change requires learning & growth.

You have asked me to join you in your ministry, to help you grow into your next developmental stage as a congregation. We are thus beginning a process of living into and through several developmental³ milestones designed to help you, as a congregation, move from where you have been, to where you want to be.

The milestones you face will be challenges designed to create a wholesome and healthy congregation that creates safe sanctuary for a people seeking to live lives of integrity by Unitarian Universalist principles. They are milestones that represent a period of “tilling the soil” that is necessary in order to prepare for a time of growth.

³ Weston, John H. “The Interim Opportunity.” (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association) October 18, 2008
><http://www.uua.org/documents/westonjohn/interimopportunity.pdf><

However, I am not only speaking of the change it takes to create a healthy and wholesome congregation. I am also talking about what it takes to inspire individuals to create healthy and wholesome lives. There is, within each of us, within each of you, a spirit that always calls us to health and wholeness, light and life, even when our conscious mind ignores the spirit's voice. It calls us to growth and therefore change, even if we do not listen.

Creating a sanctuary where people can gather the strength and support to change themselves, is what we are here for. For someone to recognize a need to change, and then begin the process of self-change is not easy. There is no quick fix. Self-change requires work, commitment, and perseverance. It requires support from others. It requires forgiving ourselves when we slip. It requires a stable community, where we can get back on track to change ourselves, over and over again.

You may have come here today, listening to that spirit within, to find out how to change a habit that is ruining your life and/or the lives of others. It will not be easy, and, as I said, there is no quick fix, but if that is why you are here, I can recommend to you a process that is thoroughly researched, based in science, and called the "Transtheoretical Approach to Change."

I just call it the "change process" because its focus is on the process, rather than simply action. It is grounded in action and reflection, and therefore grounded in a relational theology (though the authors would not know this).

The process is explained in a book called, "Changing for Good,"⁴ written by James Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo Diclimente. In it they identify six stages related to any major act of "self-change" where you, as opposed to forces beyond your control, act to change a habit that threatens the quality of your life. What makes this change process different, is that it is focused on matching particular strategies to specific stages in the process of change, in order to promote success.

Through research, they have identified that there are six stages of change. Think of them as points on an upward spiral of transformation. The stages are: Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance, and Termination. A seventh action within the process, is Recycling, where you may return to a previous level of change.

[Refer to handout. Ask members of the congregation to contemplate silently where they are, in these stages, for a particular habit they want to change.]

⁴ Prochaska, James O.; Norcross, John C.; Diclimente, Carlo C. ***Changing for Good, The Revolutionary Program that Explains the Six Stages of Change and Teaches You How to Free Yourself from Bad Habits.*** (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1994).

Each stage of the Change Process is described by William Kirby,⁵ as follows:

Precontemplation – [there is] no thought of changing, now or later. Others who care about us may repeatedly urge us to take action on our problem but at this stage, we are deaf to their pleas.

Contemplation – [here we are] thinking about changing, about why [we engage in a] bad habit, [about] what its payoff is. [This time of contemplation brings] both the rational mind and the emotions into play to move yourself to a commitment to change.

Preparation – [during this time we] remove temptations, plan how action will be taken, arrange support and understanding from family, friends, perhaps a support group. [We arrange] substitutes for the missed habit or activity or substance . . .

Action - the stage most of us picture, actual practice of the new way of being.

Maintenance - . . . [During the maintenance stage we are alert and] . . . prepared to recognize a lapse and [to] take immediate action [so that we may maintain our changed way of being]

Termination - depending on the desired change and the person, total termination of the problem behavior may not occur. Instead, there may be a lifetime of careful maintenance. In other cases, the problem is conquered and temptation to renew the poor behavior ceases. The authors state that confidence that one has really succeeded peaks after a year but that temptation continues for two or three years.

(Recycling – [is the movement] back to one of the previous stages) . . . It is entirely possible for a person to fail at one stage or another, only to make a second or subsequent [attempt] that succeed. "The change process is seldom linear. It is a spiral through the six stages of change including periodic and expected recycling through prior stages. Self-changers recycle several times before fully succeeding."⁶

To these six stages, they apply specific and defined strategies (which you can read in their book, "Changing for Good"). "Their underlying thesis is that if you understand where you are in the change process *you* can [then]:

⁵ Kirby, William H. "Prochaska's Changing for Good." 18 Oct. 2008
<<http://www.uwsp.edu/education/wkirby/ntrprsnl/procha.htm>>

⁶ David, Levy. "Changing for Good," The Positive Workplace Alliance. 2006. 18 October 2008
><http://www.positiveworkplace.com/files/Abstract%20Change%20Prochaska.pdf><

- 'create a climate where positive change can occur,
- maintain motivation,
- turn setbacks into progress,
- and make new beneficial habits a permanent part of your life."⁷

"The key is to use the right strategy at the right time."⁸

It would take me much longer than I have today, to describe the process in greater detail. But, I wish you to know:

- that for those who want to change, there is good research out there on how to do it;
- that it isn't a quick fix;
- that you don't have to depend on trial and error, to accomplish your goals. That it probably requires of you more than you would like. And, perhaps, most importantly, that change includes the process of recycling. That means that change is actually reinforced by the process of returning to an earlier version of ourselves, to start again. Not to start again, from scratch, but to start at an earlier and *understood* place of reflection. Permanent change is most likely to happen when we reflect on what has worked, and didn't work, and then start the process again at a stage where we have been successful before.

I think that this quality of "starting again" is the essence of our spiritual practice as Unitarian Universalists. We are always called to learn and to grow. We are always called to change by living into the people we hope to become. We are always called to live our highest aspirations and ideals with one another and in relationship with the larger world.

I invite you to repeat after me.

Now is the time.

Let us start again.

Now I will begin once more.

Let my mind focus once again.

⁷ David, Levy. "Changing for Good," The Positive Workplace Alliance. 2006. 18 October 2008
><http://www.positiveworkplace.com/files/Abstract%20Change%20Prochaska.pdf><

⁸ David, Levy. "Changing for Good," The Positive Workplace Alliance. 2006. 18 October 2008
><http://www.positiveworkplace.com/files/Abstract%20Change%20Prochaska.pdf><

Let my heart be called to healing and forgiveness.

Let our spirits be grounded in resolve.

May it be so.

REFLECTION AND RESPONSE (congregation)

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

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