

**“Living with Regrets & Sorrows” ©**  
**Mattatuck UU Society**  
**The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister**  
**October 30, 2008**

**CHALICE LIGHTING**

**PRELUDE - A TIME OF MEDITATION**

In the spirit of peace, we invite you into silence and quiet reflection while we listen to the prelude.

**\*CHALICE LIGHTING<sup>1</sup>**

Holy and beautiful the custom which brings us together, In the presence of the Most High: to face our ideals, to remember our loved ones in absence, to give thanks, to make confession, to offer forgiveness, to be enlightened and to be strengthened. Through this quiet hour breathes The worship of ages, The [holy] music of history. Three unseen guests attend, Faith, Hope, and Love:  
Let our hearts prepare them place.

- Robert French Leavens

**OPENING – Light large candle for ritual (placed on table with table cloth on it)**

**\*RESPONSIVE READING #634 “On Turning” (adapted) by Jack Riemer<sup>2</sup>**

Now is the time for turning.

The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red and orange.

The birds are beginning to turn and are heading once more toward the south.

The animals are beginning to turn to storing their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds, and animals, turning comes instinctively.

But for us turning does not come so easily.

It takes an act of will for us to make a turn . . .

It means breaking with old habits . . .

It means starting all over again; and this is always painful.

It can mean saying, “I am sorry.” It means recognizing that we have the ability to change.

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<sup>1</sup> UUA Hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition.

<sup>2</sup> UUA Hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition.

These things are hard to do. But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever in yesterday's ways.

[Spirit of life,] help us to turn – from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith.

[Spirit of Community] turn us around and create in us a sense of wholeness and purpose. Revive [us], as at the beginning.

ALL: [May we] turn toward [one another], for in isolation there is no life.

### **HYMN 123: Spirit of Life**

#### **HOMILY: “Living with Sorrows & Regrets”**

We have just passed the Days of Awe, the period between Rosh Hashanah on September 30<sup>th</sup> and Yom Kippur on October 9<sup>th</sup>, the beginning of the Jewish New Year 5769. These days mark a period where one reflects on one's life in fasting and prayer.

They are days of penitence that lead up to the Day of Atonement that is Yom Kippur. It is the holiest day in the Jewish year because it is a time to reflect on what our relationship has been and could have been with that Mystery of Life that grounds our lives. It marks a time to reflect on what our relationship has been and could be with others in our lives. In honor of this tradition, we mark this moment in time as one where we can reflect on the difficulties of the past year in this congregation, and begin work anew to build bridges of trust with one another.

Our Universalist heritage calls us to believe that the Spirit which is the breath of life, which some call God, will never cut us off, and will always seek reconciliation with us, if, likewise, we practice forgiveness with others.

We are thus called to offer forgiveness to ourselves or to others who by some manner or means have become distant or alienated from us.

That forgiveness may not always be received, but in the offering it is possible for you to be released from a prison of regret. It is the act of trying to forgive that holds the possibility of release from regret.

The practice of forgiveness is at the heart of the concept of atonement. Atonement means to be reconciled to another. It is at-one-ment. It requires we take action to remove the barriers of silence or lack of attention that stand in the way of being with

the other. Whether that other is the Ground of all Being, Spirit of Life, that which you may call, “God,” or whether that other is another being, or whether that other, is yourself, estranged from yourself.

## PAUSE

Each of us has known, at some point in our lives, betrayal and pain. Sometimes it is rendered by someone else. Sometimes the source of that pain comes from ourselves, when we do things that even disappoint us.

The pain of anger, disappointment, hurt and grief, are not easy emotions to sit with. Most people will not choose to acknowledge them, let alone explore their meanings. Most people choose to bury them deep inside themselves, so deep that sometimes, they are unknown even to them. Even though, unconsciously, those feelings may shape how we relate to ourselves, others, the world, and even that which is the Mystery of Life.

Very often these painful feelings caution us to guard against risk, to keep safe in all situations, and to beware of people and events that may shatter our porcelain enclosed hearts.

Thus, feelings of disappointment in ourselves or others, sometimes harden the heart and make us unable to open ourselves to new possibilities.

This hardness of the heart comes from thinking we must deny or bury the pain. It comes from our unwillingness to shed tears that are needed to open the heart, once again. Tears that will ultimately dry, once they are allowed to fall.

Forgiveness does not lie in turning away from anger, or denying outrage at the wrongs and indignities of life. It comes instead from acknowledging these things, and putting love into action either to forgive yourself or another, or to remedy a larger justice issue.

It comes from finding that soft spot within you that is still open to hope, faith, and love. Finding that small part of you that wishes for something different, either for yourself or for others.

“True forgiveness is an act of hope – at once an act of defiance and an act of affirmation. It is not an attempt to see good, it is an attempt to create good.” It is upon that hope, that faith in yourself and others can be built.

Faith in the unknown and unseen, faith that there is something out there, that calls us to do more, to be more, within ourselves for this community, and in this world.

Let your legacy be one of hope, love, and forgiveness. Let your legacy be one of Love put into action.

And, so we say, “I will not be swallowed up by the past.”

Repeat after me.

“I will not be swallowed up by the past.”

“I will not be swallowed up by the past.”

May it be so.

#### **AN INVITATION FOR REFLECTION**

Our simple ritual of atonement is marked by an invocation, a period of 3 minutes of silence during which you may write down or make a mark symbolizing your regret, and finally, the release of the symbol of your regret.

You are invited to call to mind that separateness, that hurt, another person, or yourself— and hold it or them, or yourself in the light of forgiveness, if that is possible.

We will now pass out the slips of paper for your writing.

And, now for the invocation . . .

Spirit of Life and that which calls us to good . . .

We are at this moment seeking healing from pain and sorrow that comes from love lost, conflict, illness, misunderstanding, regret, anger, grief, and sources unnamed. We seek healing for our lives, each other, and this community.

Together, let us:  
Take back our hope.  
Take back our love.  
Take back our faith.

We turn to each other.

And, by turning, we put love into action, to create wholeness in our lives, and for our world.<sup>3</sup>

May it Be So.

### **RELINQUISHING OUR REGRETS<sup>4</sup>**

You are invited to participate in an ancient ritual where your written regrets are burned in fire and then immersed in water. As you approach the chancel and return to your seat, please do so in quiet reflection.

Now is the time for turning.

You are invited to come forward in silence with your intention to release yourself or another from the bondage of resentment, anger, envy, pettiness, hate, fear.

Bring your written intention for forgiveness and release it with your heart.

Let it catch fire, the smoke rising like our prayers for turning.

Then release into the waiting water, whatever written remnants are left of your regrets, sorrow, or pain.

Come as you are ready. And then return to your seat in silent meditation.

### **\*Extinguishing the Chalice (Read in unison) #636**

O Source of peace,  
as we extinguish this chalice,  
lead us to peace,  
a peace profound and true;  
lead us to healing,  
to mastering of all that drives us to war within ourselves  
and with others.  
May our deeds inscribe us  
in the Book of life and blessing, righteousness and peace.  
O Source of peace, bless us with peace.

### **Hymn No. 354 “We Laugh, We Cry” (1<sup>st</sup> verse)**

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<sup>3</sup> *Those who go on fretting about repentance, torturing themselves with the idea that acts of penance are not sufficient, withhold their best energies from the work of reversal.” Only action can reverse regrets. (Martin Buber)*

<sup>4</sup> [adapted liberally from the work of Rosemary Lloyd & Stephen Kendrick] with permission

