

"Restless Beauty" ©
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister
September 13, 2009

*"Wandering love, I come back with this heart both fresh and wearied, belonging to water and sand, to the dry spaces of the foreshore, to the white war of the foam."
~ Pablo Neruda, "On the blue shore of silence, Poems of the sea"*

PRELUDE¹

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

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 signed our guest book in the entryway, please do so before you leave so that we may send you a newsletter listing our activities. Newcomers may look for people with gold nametags. These are members of the Membership Committee, and they will be happy to answer any questions you may have. If you have been attending our services for a while and would like to join the society please see a member of the Membership Committee.

Our time together continues with coffee, tea, and conversation after the service, and we invite you to join us.

Later in the 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."

"You may have noticed that we have a camcorder set up to record parts of today's service. Please be assured that Announcements, Joys and Sorrows, and Personal Reflections will not be recorded."

So that we may maintain our spiritual space, please set your cell phones to worship mode.

The flowers this morning are given in honor of _____. 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.

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

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

"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. I have these additional announcements: (Read Announcements.) 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."

"Here end this morning's announcements."

"Since our Sunday services offer a variety of worship experiences, from ordained clergy as well as lay speakers, we encourage you to come back often.

SOUNDING OF BELL

And, now: I invite everyone to relax your body, come into this natural space in beauty & light. 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.

*** CHALICE LIGHTING & OPENING WORDS**

Before the Beginning¹

Unknown to us, there are moments
When crevices we cannot see,
Open for time,
to come alive,
with beginning.

As in autumn a field of corn knows
When enough green,
has been inhaled from the clay,
and under the skill of an artist,
breeze becomes gold in a day,

When the ocean,
still as a mirror of a sudden
takes a sinister curve
to rise in a mountain of wave
that would swallow a village.

How to a flock of starlings
Scattered, at work on grass,
From somewhere, a signal comes
And suddenly as one, they describe
A geometric shape in the air.

When the [congregation] becomes still
And the . . . silence [deepens],
In that slowed holding, the [spirit]
Hovers nearer, then alights
On the wings of breath
Poised to soar into song . . .

¹ O'Donahue, John. **Conamara Blues**. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001, 11.

*** HYMN #100 "I've Got Peace Like a River"**

*** 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 basket pass them by, you are our guests today."

We have now come to a time when we each have the opportunity to share in the responsibility for the financial support of the life of this society. From your trust, your enthusiasm, your hope, your love, concern and resources, give as you are able, know that your giving is accepted with thankfulness.

WATER COMMUNION

Today is a special day for us. It is the day we return from the summer, and form our faith community once again, stronger than ever before. You are invited to share with us water from your favorite place or summer respite, sharing with us, in 1-2 words, its source. If you didn't bring water or forgot to, please feel free to pour symbolic water from the pitcher to tell us of a favorite summer place.

Please form a line that comes forward through the center aisle and return to your seat by the side aisle. All of you, whether you have brought water today, or not, are welcome to take home with you some of our consecrated water after the service is over, using your own vessels or these small bottles.

GATHER WATER

***COMMUNAL BLESSING OF THE WATER**

Please rise in body or spirit.

Together we bless this water that comes from all over the world and from many places in our hearts, saving it for special occasions and rituals throughout the church year.

Together let us read the insert in your Order of Service:

Source of all life, that draws us from the womb, calls us from the ocean, and renews life eternally . . . we ask your blessing on this water, even as we bless this water by the sharing of our words, experiences, joys and sorrows. May it be blessed by the spirit that dwells within our hearts and our beloved community.

And now let us sing the children on their way.

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.*

You may be seated.

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 microphone."

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.

"Please wait for the microphone so that all will be able to hear."

INSERT SORROWS & JOYS

"Many joys and woes live in the heart, and we recognize their presence, even as they are offered in silence. Now our circle has been drawn larger. May it increase forever more."

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

In Words

In Silence

In Song—Spirit of Life, #123

SERMON *"Restless Beauty"* The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd

Not surprisingly, I was thinking about water this past Friday morning, as I sat gazing from my office window at the pond outside our home. I had been drawn to, called toward, scenes of beauty this past summer, beauty that very often included glimpses or wide open gazes of lakes, rivers, seashores and oceans. I had looked out across a 10 mile lake in Maine where we always camp and watched loons swim nearby. I sailed in a cat boat with my husband and a friend on the bay, gazing back to shore to see the magnificent rise of the mountain above the village. Yes, I am drawn to water. Not just to water, but to that meeting place where the water and the land meet. The threshold between here and there, the pregnant tidal shore of each new beginning.

PAUSE

It is my custom to write my sermons and put the service together on Friday mornings. I find it does no good to rush my muse, to try to force her to write on Monday or Tuesday, as my organized and efficient mind would prefer. No . . . she must have her baking time, her stewing time. She must dilly and dally, collecting thoughts through the week, to deliver them gloriously, if not somewhat in disarray on Friday. Leaving me with the pleasure and anxious burden of sorting through her freshly strewn array of ripe and blossoming thoughts and metaphors.

PAUSE

This past Friday was rainy, and while preparing to begin my task, I picked up a book of poems by Pablo Neruda, called, "On the blue shore of silence, Poems of the sea."² For the first time, I read this poem, "The Poet's Obligation."

² Neruda, Pablo. *On the blue shore of silence, Poems of the Sea*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2003, 45. With translations by Alastair Reid and paintings by Mary Heebner.

"To whoever is not listening to the sea this Friday morning, to whoever is cooped up in house or office, factory or woman or street or mine or dry prison cell, to [them] I come, and without speaking or looking I arrive and open the door of [their] prison, and **a vibration starts up . . .** vague and insistent . . . a long rumble of thunder adds itself to the weight of the planet and the foam . . . the groaning rivers of the ocean rise . . . the star vibrates quickly in its corona . . . and the sea beats, dies, and goes on beating.

So, drawn on by my destiny . . . I **ceaselessly** must listen to and keep the sea's lamenting in my consciousness. I must feel the crash of the hard water and gather it up in a perpetual cup so that . . . wherever those in prison may be, wherever they suffer the sentence of the autumn . . . I may be present **with** an errant **wave** . . . I may move in and out of windows, and . . . hearing me . . . eyes may lift themselves, asking . . .

"How can I reach the sea?"

And I will pass to them, saying nothing . . . the starry echoes of the wave . . . a breaking up of foam and quicksand . . . a rustling of salt withdrawing itself . . . the gray cry of sea birds on the coast.

. . . [Through] me, freedom and the sea will call . . . in answer to the shrouded heart."

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

The shrouded heart. To me, the word 'shroud' infers a cloak . . . a veil.

Something shrouded is, in my mind, hidden from view . . .

perhaps a secret even to ourselves.

PAUSE

Do you know what, very often, is the number 1 charge is to a minister when they are ordained or called to minister to a congregation? Any guesses?

It is: to practice "self-care".

I wonder how many of you grew up with that spoken phrase and meaning imbedded in your mind?

Anyone?

It is, for me, a recent concept and took some struggle, sometime still does, to integrate into my life.

I think, perhaps, it is a concept that many of us,
all of us,
give too little attention,
too little thought.

For some of us it seems selfish to practice self-care.

We shudder thinking about how some of our parents might have raised an eyebrow and look disapprovingly at us . . . thinking that the practice of self-care is the epitome of self-absorbed slough and laziness.

I don't know about you, but I would like to be a good person.

Yes, I want that.

It seems to me that a good person is someone who takes their responsibilities seriously. They commit to things . . . to people . . . to principles . . . to the future of our children.

These are, to me, the marks of a good person,
a good human,
a loving person,
a giving person.

All these responsibilities to which I know we are deeply devoted make for a lot of rushing around and busyness.

A lot of tasks.

Lists that are long . . . starting in the morning . . . crossing things off during the day . . . only to start again the next morning.

There is satisfaction from getting things done,

crossing things off the list,
knowing that it is by our presence that others are sustained and dreams . . .
are sometimes realized.

It matters to us, that we make a difference in the world, **and**
the world continuously calls us forward to make those many, many, many contributions,
on and on and on.

It is as though we are pushing a giant wave up against a giant rock. We are pushing,
pushing, pushing, and sometimes we don't know enough to stop and take care of
ourselves.

Sometimes we don't have the good sense that water has . . . which is this:

water always seeks equilibrium.

Do we?

I think too often we utterly forget that we need to rest and take care of ourselves and . . .
. we need to let others do so as well . . . if we want to sustain them.

PAUSE

In my leave for study time this summer,
my time for reflection and self-care,
I was moved to read the book called, "Beauty, The Invisible Embrace" by John
O'Donohue.

Few books in my life have changed my life.

This is one of them.

John O'Donohue writes,

"From source to sea [a river] is one flow;
nowhere does it pile up.
Nowhere does the water break to leave an empty space.
From source to sea, it is one unbroken song of flow . . . ever changing yet
always one . . . Its journey is always out of silence, and this silence dwells
deep in the river too.

If only our lives could achieve, or indeed **allow**, such grace and elegance. If we could **but** find a **rhythm of being** which could balance a contemplative grace, a poetry of motion and an **accompanying** stillness and silence, our **pilgrimage** through this world would flow in beauty through the most ragged and forsaken heartlands of confusion and dishevelment.

[The river] gives itself to the urgency of becoming but **never** at the cost of disowning its[elf] . . . It **engages the world** while belonging **always secretly** [to] its memory and **still strives forward** into the endless flow of emerging possibility.”³

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

Engaging the world . . . holding secretly to our timeless selves . . . while still striving toward our emerging possibilities . . . this is **indeed . . . a rhythm of being**.

PAUSE

O’Donohue continues, “The ocean remains **faithful** to the land, it always returns . . . When the tide goes out, the seashore is exposed, its eroded stone pockmarked and chewed by the tide. Between tides, the line of fragmented shore seems vulnerable as though exposed in an **arrested posture** from which it **cannot stir**.”⁴

I call this a “threshold of vulnerability”.⁵

He says, “It is reminiscent of edge-lines in your life where fluency **abandons** you. In such times of emotional devastation, the woundedness and fragmentation stand out, naked and exposed.

The natural ease of rhythm seizes up.
Each gesture, thought and action has to be deliberately willed.
Everything becomes extremely difficult.

³ O’Donohue, John. **Beauty, The Invisible Embrace**. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005, 114.

⁴ O’Donohue, John. **Beauty, The Invisible Embrace**. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005, 116.

⁵ Rev. Jeanne Lloyd.

What you would have accomplished without the slightest thought . . .
now becomes an action that seems impossible.

Yet hope whispers that the tide always returns.

Transfiguration graces you gradually.

You stood exposed and atrophied, unable to move in the grip of pain;
even the ground was naked and broken beneath you.

Now gradually fluency returns. You recover your spontaneity and a new
buoyancy raises you up and your heart is again relieved and glad

as when the ocean returns along the shoreline

and everything becomes subsumed in the play and dance of young
waves."⁶

PAUSE

Lives well lived, seek balance. They find equilibrium. They return to the shore, just as
assuredly as they go out to sea, into the world. Too often we forget to come home to
ourselves, to tend the fires of our souls, to find, once again the source of our inspiration
so that we **can** go out to sea again.

And so I charge you, dear members of this beloved congregation:

Take time,
grab time,
seize time,
wrestle it away from the chores,
the responsibilities,
and yes,
even the people (from time to time).

Put aside precious moments of silence and solitude to fill the wellsprings of your soul
and ignite the fires of your love for yourself, **others** and **this very precious earth**.

⁶ O'Donohue, John. **Beauty, The Invisible Embrace**. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005, 116.

Do so, so that you,
we,
may stand **again**,
refreshed **again** to love **again** fully, in the moment.

Do so, so that we may, **once again**,
give out of the deep wellsprings of ourselves,
give of ourselves to that which draws the best out **in each of us**,
to another person,
to one's passion,
to one's art,
to life itself,
to the loving arms of the invisible embrace of beauty.⁷

PAUSE

These final words, again from Pablo Neruda. A poem called "**Here, There, Everywhere**".

"Now the earth is spinning round me,
dizzying me,
like metal at the sound of bells.
Now **I have all I have loved** within my little universe,
the starred order of waves,
the sudden disorder of stones.
Far off, a city in rags calling me,
poor siren,
so that my heart can never, no, scorn its weight of obligation,
and I with sky and poems **in the light of all I love**,
poised here, [hesitating],
raising the cup of my song.

Oh dawn, breaking out of the shadow and the moon in the sea,
I always come back to your burning salt.
It is your solitude **always** which moves me and,
back once more,
I don't know who I am.

⁷ O'Donohue, John. **Beauty, The Invisible Embrace**. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005.

I touch the hard sand . . . I look at the sky . . . I walk without knowing
where I'm going . . . **until** out of the night . . . **indescribable** flowers rise
and fall[.]

[In] the salty air of the coast
the stars quiver.

Wandering love,
I come back with this heart both fresh and wearied,
belonging to water and sand,
to the dry spaces of the foreshore,
to the white war of the foam."⁸

"Let us look for **secret things** somewhere in the world,
on the **blue shore of silence** or where the storm has passed . . .
There the faint signs are left . . . coins of time and water . . . debris . . .
celestial ash and . . . the **irreplaceable rapture of sharing** in the **labour of
solitude** . . ."⁹

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

May each of you discover that **rhythm of being**¹⁰ that allows you to **both** leave the shore
and to return again,

a life balance creating a spirit of **beauty within** that sustains you . . .

at every threshold of life.

May it be so.

Amen & Blessed Be.

* **HYMN #1064** "**Blue Boat Home**" (*Singing the Journey' Hymnal*)

* **EXTINGUISHING OF THE CHALICE**

"Please join hands for the extinguishing of the chalice."

⁸ Neruda, Pablo. *On the blue shore of silence, Poems of the Sea*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2003, 25.

⁹ Neruda, Pablo. *On the blue shore of silence, Poems of the Sea*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2003, 37.

¹⁰ O'Donahue, John. *Beauty, The Invisible Embrace*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005, 114.

"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

¹As a courtesy to all gathered here today, please silence your cell phone.

* 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. 9 2009