

“Environmental Justice I: The Air We Breathe”©
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Settled Minister
May 4, 2014

“People don’t get all the connections. They say the environment is over here, the civil rights group is over there, the women’s group is over there, and the other groups are here. Actually all of them are one group, and the issues we fight become null and void if we have no clean water to drink, no clean air to breathe and nothing to eat.” —C. Tucker

SOUNDING THE GONG

WELCOME

Good Morning. Welcome to the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society affectionately known as MUUS. My name is The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, and it is my privilege to serve this congregation as its settled minister.

At this time, please silence your cell phones.

Children are welcome to join our religious education program or stay in the service.

Later, newcomers will have an opportunity to introduce themselves and we hope that you will do so.

Let us begin our service.

CHALICE LIGHTING (*The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith*)

OPENING WORDS

“Come, come, whoever you are;
Man, woman, parent, child
Whatever your religious journey,
Whatever your skin color,
Whatever your abilities,
However you identify yourself
Whomever you love-
You are welcome here this morning.
You are welcome at our table.

You are welcome in this religious home."

***HYMN 317 "We Are Not Our Own"**

COVENANT (adopted 1997)

Let us remind ourselves of those values that bring broader purpose and meaning to our lives and guide us as we try to live faithfully with one another and in the larger world. Let us say together the words printed in the Order of Service. (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.

SONG (*seated*) "*May You Nurture The Children*"

*May you nurture the children,
May you nurture the children,
May you kindle their spirits,
Illuminate their hearts.*

CHILDREN'S BLESSING & PARTING

To our children everywhere, here and far away, known and unknown, we say to you: take all the love, hope, joy and peace that you find and let it shine out to everyone you meet. It is a blessing both to you and to the world . . . The children and their teachers may head to their classes now.

HONORING OUR JOYS AND SORROWS

Each Sunday we take time with one another to share our personal joys, sorrows, and challenges. There are many ways to honor our joys and sorrows. Sometimes we share words, sometimes we share silence. We do this in the sanctuary, the safe container, of a covenantal community. In a moment, I will invite you to acknowledge a joy or sorrow that you are feeling right now. As you center yourself on what is in your heart, you may come forward to light a candle . . . or . . . remain seated, lighting a candle in your heart or mind, for someone or something resonating deeply for you in this moment.

[SINGING BOWL]

And, now, relax your body, bring your mind and your heart into this space of community, faith, reason and love. Take these moments to center yourself . . . breathe deeply.

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

"If you wish, you may now come forward to light a candle."

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

In words

"Being the Resurrection"¹ [Victoria Weinstein](#)

The stone has got to be rolled back from the tomb again and again every year.
Roll up your sleeves.

He is not coming back, you know.
He is not coming back unless it is we who rise for him
We who lay healing hands on the reviled and rejected like he did
on his behalf --
We who rage for righteousness in his insistent voice
We who love the sinner, even knowing that "the sinner" is no farther off than our own
heartbeat

He will not be back to join us at the table
To share God's extravagant banquet²
God's love feast, *all are invited, come as you are*
And so it is you and I who must feast for him
Must say the grace and break the bread and pass it to the left
and dish up the broiled fish (or pour the wine) and pass it to the right.

¹ <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditations/5690.shtml> May 2, 2014

² Rev. Lloyd does not spell out the word, "G*d," because the term is loaded with many misconceptions and preconceptions. That which is the spirit of life and community, the spirit of love and death, the spirit of humanity, cannot be relegated to one three letter word. Rev. Lloyd invites others to reconsider the meanings of this word, and, to contemplate whether it is a noun or verb. Is G*d Love? The reader is invited to expand their vision and understanding . . .

And treat each one so tenderly
as though just this morning she or he made the personal effort
to make it back from heaven, or from hell
but certainly from death, to be by our side.

Because if by some miracle (and why not a miracle?)
He did come back
Wouldn't he want to see us like this?
Wouldn't it be a miracle to live for just one day
So that if he did, by some amazing feat
come riding into town
He could take a look around and say
"This is what I meant!"

And we could say
it took us a long time...
but we finally figured it out.

. . . let us live to make it so.

You are the resurrection and the life.

In silence

In song: Spirit of Life #123

**"Spirit of Life, come unto me
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me."**

SERMON “Environmental Justice I: The Air We Breathe . . .” Rev. Lloyd

One of my favorite passages in the bible is I Corinthian 13. You remember it, I’m sure. It’s the one often used at weddings, and takes great pains to define love in its largest and best sense.

13 “If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men [and women] or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship [so] that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.³

But did you know there are two versions of this famous passage? These words are attributed to the apostle Paul, the disciple who never met Jesus while he was alive, and “covers the subject of love [that he thinks] . . . [that the Corinthian]

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13> 5/2/14

Christians [in particular] **should**⁴ have. In the original Greek, the word ἀγάπη [agape](#) is used throughout.⁵

However, when it was translated into English for the King James bible, the word love became the word “[charity](#)”.

“13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”⁶

It doesn’t ring quite the same, does it? And, truth be told, the word love is preferred by most other translations, both earlier and more recent.⁷

What I like about this passage is the humility woven throughout the text. It reflects an author (whether it is Paul or not) who doesn’t have all the answers, but knows that we are called to do more than we can imagine in the name of agape, that larger sense of love. It is, I believe, a larger love that has little to do, with what we understand the word “charity” to mean today.

I especially like the passage, “When I was a child, I reasoned like a child,” with the implication that as a mature adult, I now reason differently. Growth and self-awareness are assumed. Now, I see things more clearly, I see the complexity of the world, I see that truth is rarely static, I see the shades of gray and the intersectionality of a variety of forces that shape our lives together.

Such is the reason I want to talk to you today about environmental justice, what it means and why it matters. This is such a large topic, that I could easily create a year long course and still have more to say. But, today, I want to get across the big picture of

⁴ <http://www.craigkeener.com/tag/1-corinthians-13/> 5/2/14

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Corinthians_13 5/2/14

⁶ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13&version=KJV> 5/2/14

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Corinthians_13 5/2/14

environmental justice and its place in our lives. On May 18th I will continue speaking on environmental justice as it relates to hunger and Unitarian Universalists.

Let’s start with the word “environment”. There is an old metaphor that talks about the relationship between a fish, and its fluid environment, water. The thing is,

Fish don't know they're in water.

If you tried to explain it, they'd say, “Water? What's water?”

They're so surrounded by it, that it's impossible to see.

They can't see it until they get outside of it.⁸ (And, if they get outside of it – it could be dangerous couldn't it?)

Likewise, we can't always see the air we breathe, and by air, I am not really talking about that special mix of oxygen and nitrogen that we breathe . . . I'm talking about the culture we live in, the assumptions we make, the lens through which we see the world, and the invisibility of the cultural norms that allow us to blindly exploit the environment in such a way as to place at a disadvantage of those with less choice and power.

Environmental justice is not just about “saving the planet”. It’s not just about enjoying a lovely walk in the seasons of the year. It’s not just about gardening or hiking or cleaning up a river because she is our mother earth and deserves that much. There is more to environmental justice . . .

The UUA offers many certificate programs that raise the bar for those congregations committed to changing the culture in which they live, committed to understanding and changing the very air they breathe. One such certificate program is the Welcoming Congregation process that credentialed this congregation as committed to welcoming those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual. Another program is the UUA’s Green Sanctuary program that certifies congregations who are actively seeking to come into an accountable relationship with the environment and the very people who suffer injustice when the environment is abused. Like Paul, this program raises the bar to both the heights and depths of love, of agape, emphasizing our need to **shift from charity to solidarity** by consciously moving away from charity and toward thinking and working

⁸ <http://sivers.org/fish> 5/2/14

with local groups that are negatively impacted by environmental abuses.⁹ Like the air we breathe and the water fish breathe, the Green Sanctuary program names that “[when working for] environmental justice, there is no less insistence that the planet and its extraordinary diversity be honored, supported and restored; but environmental work must be grounded in the realities and in collaboration with those people most marginalized in our cultures.”¹⁰ It plainly states that “environmental issues are inextricably linked to the crises of racism, classism and other forms of oppression.”¹¹

PAUSE

This thinking isn’t original to Unitarian Universalists. The U.S. EPA defines Environmental Justice as:

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of [governmental] programs and policies.”¹²

According to Frederic Beaudry, who is “is an assistant professor of environmental science, a wildlife biologist, and a science writer with interests in a broad range of environmental issues,”¹³ “Environmental issues have profound effects on the living conditions of people worldwide. Billions of people face food and water shortages due to global warming[. And,] climate change creates more refugees than war . . . they are called environmental refugees.”¹⁴

In terms of human health¹⁵ he further provides evidence that:

- Nearly a Quarter of All Disease [is] Linked to Environment

⁹ <http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/program/steps/justice/290976.shtml> May 2, 2014

¹⁰ <http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/program/steps/justice/290976.shtml> May 2, 2014

¹¹ <http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/program/steps/justice/290976.shtml> May 2, 2014

¹² <http://www.environmental-justice.org/whatisej/whatis.html> May 2, 2014

¹³ <http://environment.about.com/bio/Frederic-Beaudry-124275.htm> May 2, 2014

¹⁴ http://environment.about.com/od/healthenvironment/u/what_is_at_risk.htm May 2, 2014

¹⁵ http://environment.about.com/od/healthenvironment/u/what_is_at_risk.htm#s4 May 2, 2014

- Cleaning the Environment Could Save 13 Million Lives Annually
- Malnutrition, Pollution and Population Growth Increase Deadly Diseases

In terms of Our Food Supply:

Environmental factors affect the quality and availability of our food.

- Global Warming Creates Food Shortages for Billions
- Worldwide Hunger and Food Insecurity [Have Risen] Dramatically
- [Public policy] Make[s] Unhealthy Food Cheaper Than Healthy Food

And, in terms of our drinking water ...

[Changing] temperatures, wind patterns and pollution affect natural water sources, [making it more and more difficult for people around the world [to] [find] drinking water--or any water at all. In other countries, water is plentiful but not safe to drink. He cites articles titled:

- Global Water Supply [Dries] Up as Population Grows and
- A Billion People Worldwide Lack Safe Drinking Water

Friends, I think it's time.

I think we're ready to broaden our understanding of the issue of injustice as it relates to food insecurity and hunger. I think this congregation has a variety of people in it who are ready for the challenge of wrangling with our place in the system of environmental injustice and how it affects hunger. I think we are ready to look for and seek the connections between hunger and race/ hunger and class/ hunger and crime.

There are connections of the mind to be made there. Connections of the heart. Connections that expand the meaning of charity to a broader meaning of love and humility.

PAUSE

There are a number of questions (to which I don't have the answers) that haunt me. When thinking about our own focus on food insecurity and hunger in the greater Tribury area, I have to wonder if the food we eat and the water we drink is effected by the

invisibility of abuse that our environment suffers? Fertilizer may help things grow, but used unwisely it can also kill things. Where is fertilizer and insecticides dumped in our neighborhoods? Who among us has the option of acquiring food or water that is untainted? Who does not? In short, where does the issue of hunger fit in, in this larger issue of environmental justice? And, what would we have to do, as a congregation, to take stock of and engage the larger environmental justice issues that ultimately promote food insecurity amongst citizens who, for survival reasons, have no capacity to leverage a “change of venue.” Who gets to have a choice in these matters and who does not? Does this choice fall along race and class issues? Does institutional oppression of one sort or another create barriers to health? I think so. And (here’s a suspicion that I can’t prove it right now), I think environmental injustice occurs not just in Waterbury or Danbury or New Haven, but also in the agricultural and suburban fields of our local villages. I think we, as a congregation, and perhaps as a community, do not know yet know how environmental injustice creates countless problems in our community, differentially, for different people.

The causes of environmental justice run every which way. It is hard to see, it is the air we breathe, that we are part of, and to which we sometimes succumb. It is humbling to think we are a part of the problem.

How to recognize it when it happens? It’s a hard task. Harder still, when we ignore it. The first step is to go looking, go searching for the broad systems and policies that are creating environmental justice in our communities and world. The second is to accept that we are inextricably part of this system of oppression. And the third is to hold ourselves accountable, knowing that each day, policy makers ranging from those at the top level of government and in big corporations, to those at state levels, to food and water handlers at local levels, to those of us here, they/we decide what comes into our personal home, our spiritual home, and our community home. And, each of us decides how we dispose of those things we consume and its impact on the larger world. We are a part of the large whole whether we realize it or not.

I invite you to take up the mantle of making informed decisions, to hold ourselves more accountable than before, and to work with others to make a collaborative difference. We as decision makers participate in a system of agriculture and food & water distribution that favors “the haves” over the “have nots.” I challenge us to take a look at our principles and find one that does not call us to work toward environmental justice and equity for all people. Even the more subtle ones rest on human rights. Let us put

ourselves on the right side of history and humanity. Let us find ways to do for others, what we would hope for ourselves.

Today is an opening opportunity to begin to think about environmental justice and our place in it. Today is just the beginning. If you are interested, let me know.

May it be so.

OFFERTORY "We Are . . ."

As the book of Deuteronomy says:

"We drink from wells we did not dig; we are warmed by fires we did not kindle." (Deut. 6.11)

Let us be sufficiently broad in our vision to know that our gifts today, support tomorrows we will not see. Today, half the collection will go to local community justice projects. Please give generously.

PASTORAL REFLECTION

**Spirit of Light and Energy
by Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, 2007**

Spirit of Light and Energy,

How shall we live these precious moments of life?
What would you have us know?

And, the Spirit of Humanity says,
"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

I say, "So simple. Of course. But, what else? Is that all?"

And, the Spirit says, "Is that all, you say?
Is that all?"

Do you see yourself in others eyes?
If you do, you cannot stand still,
You must not distract yourself with the busyness of life and thereby
fail to bring purpose and meaning to your life.
You cannot choose to separate yourself from the people.

There is no place for disconnection
from this precious,
fragile
world.
Except by your choice.

And, the Spirit asks, again, "Do you see yourself in others eyes?"

If you do,
you will grow and learn and be changed
by others who seem different
but whose eyes are like yours.
Whose eyes show an inner soul,
show an inner light and spirit,
. . . like yours.

If you do,
their right to dignity becomes your right to dignity.
Their need becomes your need.
Their need for change becomes your need for change.
Their back-against-the-wall place
because there is no other place to be,
becomes your place.
A place where you,
nevertheless,
still have choice:
the choice to lend your will,
heart,
strength and power
to actively resist
barely visible systems
of oppression.

It is your choice and your doing to decide whether you
will choose to struggle free of systems
that count on the probability
that you will allow things
to go on just as they always have,
lured by distraction
from the true course and meaning
of your life . . .

And, the Spirit asks, again, “Do you see yourself in others’ eyes?”

If you do,
you will cultivate the power of an expanding heart
that ministers to and receives the ministry of shared justice work
with others;
A life of ministry where you can no longer resist the call,
though it would be easier and perhaps saner to do so.

This is the time.
You are called forth to an expanded vision of ministry
in the larger word
because it is the morally correct thing to do.
You are called to live your life to its highest principles.
You are called to make sacrifices.
You are called to change your own way of being
in order that others may live justly.

And, the Spirit asks, “Do you see yourself in others’ eyes?
Are you willing to lose your life so that you may save it?”

And, I say, “But this is hard work.
There is too much risk.
I may lose . . . too much.

And, the Spirit says, “Acts of love and compassion
for one another
are the only ways
to find and redeem your true yourself.

This is your life’s call.”

And, so the question you must answer is:

“Do you see yourself in others’ eyes?”

And, if the answer is yes,
please say, “I do!”

***HYMN 131 “Love Will Guide Us”**

***EXTINGUISHING OF THE CHALICE** *(please join hands)*

“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. We extinguish this flame, but not the power and meaning of our covenant, calling us to our highest ideals and ways of being with one another. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. Let the congregation say: AMEN”

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS and VISITORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Settled Minister: Rev. Jeanne Lloyd
Director of Religious Education: Denise Pedane
Music Director: Bob Werme

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

* Please rise in body or spirit.

Please reserve applause for very special responses only.

Rev. 4/13