

Worship Service

Allen Ave. Unitarian Universalist Church

April 7, 2019

Thought for Contemplation: "Spending hopefully so that we can live abundantly....Congregations courageous enough to invest in their internal and external communities thrive." -Valerie Ackerman

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice to remember that there is:
Enough love in our hearts to overcome hate,
Enough forgiveness in our hearts to build bridges of connection,
Enough wonder in our hearts to appreciate our blessings,
Enough fullness in our hearts to share them wherever we go.

Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP Blessing adapted from a Jewish Prayer Book

May the doors of this house be wide enough
To receive all who hunger for love,
all who are lonely for friendship.

May its threshold be so low that it be no stumbling block
To young feet, or old feet,
or broken or tired feet.

May this house welcome all who have-
cares to unburden,
hopes to nurture,
prayers to whisper or sing.

As it has welcomed us, each one,

may this house be a home for all
who would enter-
with doors open wide
and windows shining welcome.

HYMN *We Sing of Golden Mornings* #44

CHILDREN'S TIME *Rev. Anita*

Can you remember a time when you saw that someone needed help, and you helped out?

How did that feel? You were generous with your time.

Can you remember a time when someone didn't know how to do something you knew how to do and you were able to help them? Maybe with their homework...or learning to ride bike?

How did that feel? You were generous with your talent, sharing what you could do.

Can you remember a time when someone couldn't do something they needed or wanted to do because they didn't have the right thing with which to do it? Like maybe they wanted to draw a tree but didn't have a green marker, and you lent them one? Or they needed a pencil, or a snack, and you shared yours?

How did that feel? You were generous and shared your treasure.

It feels good to be generous, doesn't it? And it feels good to be in a community of people who are generous, who will share what they have with you when you need it.

That's what we do here in church. We share our time; we share our talents, and we share our treasure, our money, each putting in what we can, so that we can all have the things we need.

Pretty good, isn't it?

Song (seated) *Go Now in Peace* #413

(Children are invited to go now to their program)

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

JOYS AND SORROWS

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

PERSONAL TESTIMONY Christine Wirth 9 a.m.;
AnneMarie Catazano 11 a.m.

ANTHEM

ON STEWARDSHIP Tim Vogel

CONGREGATIONAL STEWARDSHIP COVENANT (insert)

OFFERING

HOMILY

We Are One

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

Mom, Mom! Guess what I did!

I still remember that phone call like it was yesterday. My daughter was about 20, probably a junior or senior in college.

I could hear the excitement in her voice- it radiated through the phone.

Mom, Mom! Guess what I did!

“What? Won the lottery? Got engaged?”

“NO! NOOO!! I just called and made a pledge to public radio!”

I could not remember when I had last heard her so excited. She was positively joyous.

She couldn't stay on the phone-had to get to class or something, but we did exchange a few words about it. What was clear, was that she found the experience empowering and validating. She was a participant. She was a player. On the field of real life and grownups, she had staked her claim. She had something to offer.

I will tell you, it isn't that often that as a parent I receive such a clear and transparent validation of a successful transmission of values. It wasn't something we had ever talked about- supporting public radio. I wasn't even sure if she knew that I supported public radio. But she understood the relationship between the existence of something that embodied a core value to her life, and her meaningful participation in sustaining it. She was happy. I was proud.

Many ministers and congregants groan when they know that Stewardship Sunday is coming up. I was at a meeting this week made up of people from various congregations. I mentioned that I needed to go home and start working on my sermon. "It's Stewardship Sunday," I mentioned as an aside.

"Oh," said one gentleman across the table from me, nodding knowingly. "The Sermon on the Amount." Everyone chuckled.

"Not really," I said, and left it at that.

But I meant it. Stewardship Sunday is not about the amount. Surely it has implications and consequences that impact the amount, but that is not what it is about. Not for me. It is about Stewardship.

Each Sunday we say here, at Allen Ave. UU Church, that we walk with care on the earth. Why? Why do we say it every Sunday? Repeat it, as though maybe, we might have forgotten? Maybe. Say it as a

reminder, like the reminder about turning off your cell phones?

Maybe. Say it because it sounds so nice, conjuring up bucolic images of green pastures and still waters? Maybe. And probably a little of all of those. But I do not think those are the real reasons why we say those words every Sunday, those explanations I just mentioned, are talking about conveniences. The real reason we say them is because they express core values, values we hold in common, values around which we are in covenant, values we promise to protect and inhabit to the best of our ability. And we listen to them every Sunday as we slip, which we inevitably will, to call us back to those values, that we might be recalled to building our lives on sound foundations, on values that will create health and resiliency in us and our communities, as we face this world of unending challenges, and parades of temptations to exchange our lives and their worth for baubles and trinkets.

Isn't that interesting. Our core value, here at A2U2, is Stewardship. Stewardship of the earth; stewardship of the resources that are within our control, stewardship of the deep resources that are the wellspring of life and love and nurture of all that is to come after. Our core value, here at A2U2 is the nurture of all that is to come after. Our core value, here, at A2U2, it turns out, is the generous heart, for what else is it that cares for the earth after we are gone, that cares for the people, after we are gone, cares for the creatures with whom we

share it, and sustains the institution that passes those values on, generation to generation?

Every Sunday we teach our children that we are “the church of the loving heart.” What does that mean? Why is it so important that we teach it to our children? Because the loving heart is the generous heart, the inclusive heart, the embracing heart, the heart that wants all to be well, all to be cared for, all to be cherished. The loving heart is the generous heart, the core value with which we raise our children. It isn’t always clear, what that looks like, in real life, in real time. But sometimes something happens that makes it clear, clear as day. I heard about one such day a few years ago when I was free and able to be a visitor in a church near where I live. This is what I heard:

The church was gearing up its Annual Stewardship drive. They had gone over the names of the members of the congregation and were making some guesses about how much they could realistically raise.

They came upon the name of one woman who was a single mother of six children. They were aware that she put \$10.00 in the plate every week. She was one of those they would have identified as an appropriate recipient of money from the Minister’s Discretionary fund. They talked to the minister and

asked him to speak with the woman, to suggest to her that it was not necessary that she put so much money in the plate every week. The minister agreed to do so.

The minister went. After explaining the situation to the woman, he gently suggested to her that she did not need to put so much money in the plate.

“Reverend,” she said, “Please do not take away my one experience of dignity each week.”

Her one experience of dignity each week. This woman knew that when she put her contribution in the plate, she was embodying her core values; she was being her truth. Her stretch was her living statement of faith about what was important. And by living her values, her truth, she was a participant, an invested player in the nurture of those values and the actions those values generate. Because she did what she did, the places where we live would be in some small way, a little kinder, the earth would be more fair, and the generous hearts more generous.

Why do we each stretch, to put as much of ourselves into this church as we possibly can, in time, in talent, and in our treasure? Because we want to walk with care on the earth, we want to affirm the worth and dignity of every person, we want to experience the truth of

our interconnected web of existence, we want to teach it to our children. We want to share the joy we have known, that all might feel the love of the generous heart that remembers that truly we are one. And we want it passed on, from generation to generation.

Amen and blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *We Would Be One* #318

BENEDICTION

CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated for the closing music)