

Peace Within, Among, and Between
First Universalist Church of Rochester
December 2nd, 2018 @10:30am

Prelude *Kaddish, by Maurice Ravel* [Glenda
Brayman, Soprano and Brock Tjosvold, piano]

May his [God's] great name be exalted and sanctified in the world which He created according to His will. May He establish his kingdom, during your days and during the lifetimes of all the House of Israel speedily and very soon, and say, So be it. Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded, be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, above and beyond all the blessings, hymns, praises, and

consolations that are uttered in the world. We say, So be it

Words of Welcome [Rev. Lane]

Welcome to the First Universalist Church of Rochester, where we are nurturing the spirit and serving the community. Whoever you are, we welcome you. Wherever you come from, we welcome you. Whomever you love, we welcome you. Wherever you find peace and wherever you lack peace, we welcome you. We welcome all of you. It is good to be together this morning.

Announcements [Karen Ruganis]

“Good Morning!” (wait for response).

I am Karen Ruganis, a member of the Board.

I extend a warm welcome to our visitors and guests. It is a special pleasure to welcome those visiting with us for the first time. If you have not done so already, we invite you to fill out the Visitor Response card found on the back of the Joys and Sorrows card inside of your Order of Service. This allows us to connect with you if you are interested in learning more about our congregation and its programs. If you would like to learn more about First Universalist Church, we are hosting a UU and You session today at 12:15pm in the Sanctuary. We also invite everyone to join us for refreshments following today's service in the Clara Barton Lounge.

Please see your insert for an outline of today's service, along with some information on our upcoming activities and events;

Interfaith Chanukah Reception: Join First Universalist community members at Temple B'rith Kodesh's Interfaith Chanukah Reception on Thursday, December 6th at 6:00pm for treats, songs, and getting into the Chanukah spirit!

Shopper Elves for RAIHN Needed! Our congregation has adopted a family of four for Christmas – a Dad, two daughters and a Grandma. All we need now are folks willing to shop and wrap the gifts by December 14. If you can help, please contact Marti Eggers.

Music Sunday is next Sunday at 10:30am. Come to enjoy a solstice cantata, “Remember the Dark,” composed by Unitarian Universalist musician David Glasgow. The cantata tells a moving story about trying to hold it all together in this busy season and finding peace in relationship with one another.

December's Social Justice Second Sunday- Chronic Homelessness

On December 9th, the Homeless Heartbeats Social Justice Circle will lead an educational forum on Chronic Homelessness. This will take place in the Sanctuary after service at 12 noon. Speakers will include Lois Baum, and guests Andy Carey and Mike Gill.

Out of respect for the worship service that we are about to

share, please be sure that your cell phones are turned to worship mode. Thank you.

Welcoming Each Other [Karen Ruganis]

Whomever you are, we welcome you. Wherever you come from, we welcome you. So, you are invited to turn to your neighbor and offer a word of welcome this Sunday morning. Please reach out to people you don't already know or those you do not know well.

Opening Hymn #168 One More Step

Please rise in body or in spirit as we sing our hymn #168, "One More Step."

1 One more step, we will take one more step, 'til there is peace for us and everyone, we'll take one more step.

2 One more word, we will say one more word, 'til every word is heard by everyone, we'll say one more word.

3 One more prayer, we will say one more prayer, 'til every prayer is shared by everyone, we'll say one more prayer.

4 One more song, we will sing one more song, 'til every song is sung by everyone, we'll sing one more song.

Call to Worship [Rev. Lane]

Until there is peace for us and everyone,
We gather again here this morning.

Until there is peace for us and everyone.
We peer inside to see where personal peace can be found.
Until there is peace for us and everyone,
We continue to reach out to our neighbors.
Until there is peace for us and everyone,
We build a beloved community one conversation, one
connection, one action, one moment, one day at a time.
Come, let us worship together this morning.

Chalice Lighting and Chalice Words [Janet
Clarke-Hazlett]

Will _____ please come forward to light our
chalice? [Pause until they are finished.]

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.

By Lindsay Bates

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.

To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth,

To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.

To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.

May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

Testimony

[Janet Clarke-Hazlett]

I do not dwell on the past. When my turn came to offer my testimony on the importance of Unitarian Universalism and First Universalist in my life, I was determined to stay in the here and now. I am all about

being in the moment, the here and now. But, as I began to write this, I realized that my journey to Unitarian Universalism starts with events that took place 20 years ago, and so I need to go back there. But I should start by stating: I am a Unitarian Universalist and I am an atheist. I have not always been an atheist. In fact, I can point to the particular time when my "conversion" took place. It was almost exactly twenty years ago, when over the course of 4 months, my life was rocked by so much loss and pain, I wondered how I was going to keep going. The condensed version: My marriage ended; I was the victim of a violent crime; my appendix ruptured causing sepsis that had me on IV antibiotics for almost two weeks; my mother suffered a debilitating stroke that left her paralyzed and unable to recognize anyone; my house was burglarized and every item of monetary value I owned was taken; and,

in an almost biblical finale, my house was infested with an enormous swarm of yellow jackets, requiring the service of men in hazmat suits who drilled holes in walls, ceilings, floors, everywhere, to kill the invaders, leaving my kids and me the task of vacuuming up literally thousands and thousands of yellow jackets corpses. It was at this point that my then-13-year-old son said to me, "Mom, it feels like we are living in a vortex of doom." Indeed. So much loss. But the final loss was a bit more subtle, and took longer to sink in. That was the loss of my belief in God. At first I thought I was just angry and bitter about the events that had transpired in such rapid succession. We were active members of a liberal Christian church on East Avenue, and I kept going, kept taking the kids to Sunday School, continued as a lay reader. But one Sunday, I found myself choking over the Nicene Creed, and the next time I

was assigned to read scripture during the service, I balked. I couldn't do it. I wasn't having a crisis of faith, I genuinely did not believe in the existence of god anymore. I had become an atheist, although I was reluctant to use that word for some time. In any case, I lost my faith in god, thereby losing my church community, my connection to people and activities that had sustained me for years. That was very painful.

I studied Buddhism, I took up meditation, I found atheist groups, and I talked to friends. But I didn't have a spiritual community, and I missed it. Then, as we have heard in so many of the testimonies this church year, a friend said, "Come to church with me." That is how I found Unitarian Universalism, not here, but at First Unitarian Church. I took an introductory class and

learned UU history. During the next class we were introduced to the 7 Principles and I waited for the part in which I would be told what I would be expected to believe, but instead I found the 3rd and 4th Principles: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations, and A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. No dogma, no creed, freedom to seek. I could be accepted in a faith community, as an atheist. I learned that "challenge" and "nurture" could be two sides of the same coin. What a gift! Five years ago, I was drawn to visit First Universalist. Soon, I was attending regularly, I found meaningful ways to participate, I felt nurtured and challenged by this church and its mission, and I became a member of our beloved church family.

I do not believe in "god." But I do believe in "good," and this congregation is overflowing with goodness.

Affirmation of Faith

[Janet Clarke-Hazlett]

Please rise in body or in spirit for our affirmation of faith and remain standing as we sing our doxology.

Love is the doctrine of this church;
The quest for truth is its sacrament,
and service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace;
To seek knowledge in freedom;
To serve humanity in fellowship;
To the end that all souls shall grow into harmony
With the source and meaning of life:

Thus do we covenant with each other and with all.

Doxology [Janet Clarke-Hazlett]

From all that dwell below the skies
Let songs of hope and faith arise.
Let peace, good will on earth be sung
Through every land, by every tongue.

Offering Words [Rev. Lane]

Around a month ago, I sat down with our Board President, Nancy Gaede, to for our regular monthly check-in. She began our meeting by letting me know that this church has a tradition of dedicating one offering in the month of December to bonuses in support of our staff.

I love this about all of you. In giving this morning, you acknowledge that hard work our staff does year-round, the many tasks that are seen and unseen. Your gifts honor the many hours our Minister of Lifespan Faith Formation, Rev. Michelle Yates, spends considering the spiritual lives of our littlest members. Your gifts honor the painstaking and hard work for our sexton, Brandon Fagan, who is consistently making sure this church is clean and running as well as it can. Today, you give to the fabulous women who provide childcare for our youngest members, Carol Williams and Sundae Hodge. This staff makes so much happen week in and week out, including really stepping up this week to offer support following the sudden departure of our Office Administrator. So, this morning, in this season of generosity and giving, I am asking you to support our staff. And I share deep

gratitude with you for all you are able to give. If you are a visitor here with us for the first time, feel free to allow the offering basket to pass you by. You are our guest this morning. An offering for the good works of this church will now be gratefully received. Thank you.

Offertory *Peace by Howard Hanson* [Brock]

Story *What Does Peace Feel Like? By Vladimir Radunsky* [Elizabeth Osta]

Hymn of Affirmation *Sheltering Arms of Love*

Beneath our arms, we shelter you,
you warm our hearts as you pass through.
May our love guide you as you go,

to help you learn and help you grow.

Musical Interlude *Peace Piece by Bill Evans*

[Brock]

Joys and Sorrows [Rev. Lane]

[Rev. Lane to read Joys and Sorrows Cards]

And we drop one final stone into the bowl to represent all the joys and sorrows left unspoken in the silent sanctuaries of our hearts. May all be held in the heart of love.

Pastoral Prayer [Rev. Lane]

I invite you now to draw inward in a spirit of self-examination and inward listening.

Breathe deep and just listen with me.

What is your heart saying?

What is your inner-knowing speaking?

This is a listening that doesn't just happen with ears,

It's about listening with the heart,

Listening with the soul,

To your own inner-workings, your own depths.

Hold in your heart's eye someone you have been caring for this week,

It can be someone you are worried about, someone who has asked for your care, someone who you are connected to in a compassionate way.

Hold them in your heart and silently send them a wish for happiness, well-being, and ease.

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be at ease.

Now turn your heart's eye to someone you have been angry or upset with.

It can be someone who you felt harmed by, it could be someone you have shut out, it could be someone who has shut themselves away from you.

Hold them in your heart and silently send them a wish for happiness, well-being, and ease.

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be at ease.

Bring your attention to those sitting around you in this very room- the people next to you, the people sitting across the room.

Expand your heart to hold them all.

Hold them in your heart and silently send them a wish for happiness, well-being, and ease.

May we be happy. May we be well. May we be at ease.

And finally, we turn our hearts to the world, expanding out to the city of Rochester, the state of New York, the country we live in, the various creatures and people that inhabit the world.

Hold them in your heart and silently send them a wish for happiness, well-being, and ease.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be well. May all beings be at ease.

Hymn of Contemplation
Breathing

#1009 Meditation on

Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe Out.

When I breathe in, I breathe in peace
When I breathe out, I breathe out love.

Reading [Janet Clarke-Hazlett]

Words from Saint Isaac of Ninevah

Be at peace with your own soul, then heaven and earth will be at peace within you. Enter eagerly into the treasure house that is within you, you will see the things that are in heaven; for there is but one single entry to them both. The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is

hidden within your soul...Dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the stairs by which to ascend.

Centering Music *L'enigme eternelle* by Maurice Ravel [Glenda Brayman, Soprano and Brock on piano]

Sermon *Peace Within, Among, and Between* [Rev. Lane]

Just to have a brief confessional moment with you all this morning, my sermon title today is not one I thought up myself. For the last five years, I have been working on a project with a fabulous preschool teacher named Jen Bojanowski. We struck out to create a kind of UU kind summer camp, like Vacation Bible School, but minus the Bible and some of the cheezy themes. Instead, we sought

to hand over and explore one of the most central Unitarian Universalist values with our kids- peace. We called it Peace Camp. And we led them on a journey each week of discovering peace within themselves through articulating their identity and embracing a spiritual practice. We explored peace amongst each other with activities that asked us to get vulnerable and helped us learn to navigate conflict. And we sought to create peace between communities by building our own peace village, explicitly naming bullying in our own contexts, and exploring peace in the natural world. Sounds like a great adult camp, doesn't it?

I learned so much from these kids. Each week would begin with the book Elizabeth read this morning, where we got to explore peace through the many senses and

experiences we had. I learned from them how to name when I am hurting. I learned about trying new activities, even when I didn't like them. I learned kids and adults can both struggle against and embrace meditation. And I learned no life could be free from conflict. When we talk about peace, that is not the ideal. The peaceful ideal is to accept that conflict will happen and learn how to talk our way through it in ways that are restorative and that honor the perspectives of all who are involved. To embrace peace within ourselves, among our friends, and between communities takes intentional time and attention. We will never do it perfectly, but that doesn't mean we should ever stop returning there throughout our days and hours, in our interactions and in our internal lives. If these 5-11 year olds could do it, I think we in this room can give it a try.

When I breathe in, I breathe in peace. When I breathe out, I breathe out love.

Will you take a peaceful breath with me?

Deep (or perhaps not so deep) within ourselves, I believe each one of us desires peace. An inner stillness, a place of calm and comfort, a lifting of tension, a way of living. Deep within ourselves, we each have the capacity for peace. We each have this ability to enter eagerly into the treasure house that is within us, to access this place of feeling and knowing peace. It takes us intentional practice to get there. It takes consistent reminders for some of us to embrace an inner stillness.

To feel peace within ourselves is to experience a freedom from disturbance, a quietness, a tranquility. As I was seeking out definitions for this over-used word, I found I loved this one best, for it uses the word freedom. Inner peace brings about a freedom from the things that disturb us- the busyness, the anxious ways of thinking, violence, the incidents that nag and keep nagging at our brains. To experience that quiet and tranquility, we must be liberated from the ways our culture and our society continually disturbs us.

We have an invitation this morning from an ascetic saint, Saint Isaac of Ninevah, to draw inward to find this peace. In his tradition, he talks about salvation of the soul through cultivating inner-peace and a deep sense of self-knowledge. And this seems to me to be a very Unitarian

Universalist thing. We seek peace inwardly so that we are able to create peace outwardly. Both are interrelated. And both call us to be our best selves. Whether you believe peacemaking brings about a better connection to the divine or to human community or to a deeper love or a greater good. Creating peace within ourselves takes intentional cultivation, intentional time to explore our inner-workings, our souls. To develop inner-peace can come in the form of meditation or prayer or walking or journaling- any activity that invites you to quiet your thoughts and just be. It is something we must seek, not something that just comes to us without being invited or beckoned in.

When I think of moments of feeling peaceful in my life, the theme that continually comes is acceptance of what is

going on in the present moment. I have to tell you all that this week has been rough for me at times, but yesterday was a beautifully peaceful day. And what changed? What changed was I was able to be more in the moment, appreciating what was around me, not focused on the future or stuck in the past. I first received a message in the morning readings I do. I've been reading this poet recently, Dane Kuttler, a Jewish woman who writes poetry that speaks to justice struggles out of primary texts from her religious tradition. The poem I read yesterday went like this, "Sometimes love is too much. Sometimes light is too much. In those times, curl into the dark and know that light waits. It is the most stubborn, insistent returning. It will come, whether you bring it or not." [REPEAT]. And it was just this moment to accept what is. To accept that this has been a tough week, to curl into the

dark, and to know that the light will come, to know that this too will pass, to know that peace can and will return. In moments when we are seeking peace inside of ourselves, it is good to remember that whatever is happening that is painful or whatever has happened is in need of acceptance in order to move through it. I heard some of that this morning in Janet's testimony and really appreciated this reminder from her.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

From this sense of inner peace, we are able to be in peaceful relationships with others. It is a part of our deepest calling, our affirmation of faith, our covenant that we recite weekly to dwell together in peace. Peace in our relationships can look any number of ways, but mostly

means navigating through conflict rather than resisting it, being thoughtful in our relations with others, and maintaining connection in the midst of challenges.

We are in this time period of winter holidays, where all are encouraged to embrace peace AND I cannot get the image out of my head of folks trampling each other to get to a Black Friday sale. It is such a disconnection. How do we engage in peace with our neighbors when it is hard to feel inward peace? When we are stressed out, feeling pressure to do so much, to do the most! I am not here this morning to add another thing to your list, but rather to offer the gentle reminder that we are more easily peaceful in our relationships when we are caring for ourselves. Taking a deep, peaceful breath when we are in the midst of stress can be a lifesaver. Taking intentional time away

from the busyness to care for ourselves helps not only us, but it helps us better live with the people around us.

As I said before, peacefulness in our relationships does not look like the absence of conflict, but rather it's about how we work through conflict and get back to a place of tranquility. This can look like acceptance of the other person's perspective, even if you do not agree with it. Working through conflict towards peace takes lots of listening. Allowing room in your life for a different opinion, even if it is not the one you hold. Peace in our relationships is the opposite of just letting things go to maintain equilibrium, though I guess that can be a good strategy too. Peace is about seeking understanding with someone when you have a disagreement, so you can know where the other person is coming from. In moments of

conflict, get curious. Wonder where that person is coming from. In moments of misunderstanding, get curious.

Love will guide us, peace has tried us, hope inside us will lead the way.

As a community, we are committed to peace. It is one of the many sources of motivation for our social justice work- to build the peaceful world we dream about. We hope for peace to come in the future and so we seek to build the vision we heard earlier in Elizabeth's story- a vision of what peace looks and smells and feels like. Each time we show up to a protest or an action, we are seeking that peaceful world for all, knowing we are not yet there. Issues of privilege and power-over and oppression seek to move us away from peaceful coexistence.

Peace in community does not come without challenge. It is not this simple, passive way of being, where all is smooth and calm. No. Peace is something we often have to struggle for on a systemic and cultural level. Creating peace in communities looks like hard conversations, policy changes, restorative work that seeks to repair the harm done by groups and individuals. It is messy. It is not the kind of sparkly-letter-ornament peace that is often advertised in this season.

In this Peace Camp with these kids, we built these peace villages, where they would team up with kids they didn't know to create one whole village, with different teams assigned to different corners of the room. They had to share supplies. They had to share space. They had to

communicate. The creativity was amazing. And the conflict was intense. In each situation, every year, they sought connection and had a hard and messy time getting there. I am sorry to say there were a few tears shed in the creation of these peace villages. But in the end, they were creating this vision we all desire- a vision of a world that embraces peace. It all starts in a little village.

Let there be peace on earth. The kind of peace that begins in each one of us. The kind of peace that asks us to be better neighbors to one another. A peace shared amongst communities and groups that is messy, yet still holds onto that future vision of a world where fear and hatred and violence will cease. A peace that brings about authentic relationship and true freedom.

Let this be the moment now. Let this be the beginning.
Let us dwell together in peace.

Amen. Blessed be. May it be so.

Closing Hymn *#132 Love Will Guide Us*

Please rise in body or in spirit.

1 Love will guide us, peace has tried us, hope inside us will lead the way on the road from greed to giving. Love will guide us through the hard night.

2 If you cannot sing like angels, if you cannot speak before thousands, you can give from deep within you. You can change the world with your love.

3 Love will guide us, peace has tried us, hope inside us
will lead the way on the road from greed to giving. Love
will guide us through the hard night.

Benediction [Rev. Lane]

Extinguishing the Chalice [Janet Clarke-Hazlett]

Postlude *Yuzin by Yann Tiersen* [Brock]