

Cultivating Abundance

First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY

October 7th, 2018 at 10:30am

Prelude *Tak (Thanks)*, by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

[Howard Spindler]

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. However long you have been coming and however long you plan to stay, we welcome

you. Whether you are feeling weary, energized, angry, grateful or some other kind of way, we welcome you here this morning. It is good to be together.

Announcements [Tim Mullins]

“Good Morning!” (wait for response)

I am Tim Mullins, a member of the Board of Trustees.

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. This allows us to connect with you if you are interested in learning more about our

congregation and its programs. We also invite you to join us for refreshments following today's service in the Clara Barton Lounge. There you'll find some friendly people at our welcome table who can answer any questions you might have.

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

Adult Education – *Learning To Be a Human Being* – The 16 people I've never met who have taught me the most. A theme-centered small group led by Lew Ward-Baker. If you're interested and can make a commitment, come to an organizational gathering after church today from 12:15

pm until 1:00 pm in the Youth Room (2nd floor by the stairs).

An invitation for Visitors – If you're a First Universalist visitor and are interested in learning more about our church and its Unitarian Universalist traditions, please join us for an orientation session we call *UU and You* immediately following today's service. This brief overview includes Unitarian Universalist history and principles, and the story of this congregation.

The Ministerial Start-Up Workshop Weekend is October 12 and 13. This Friday, we will have a potluck dinner to tell some of the stories of First Universalist Church.

Saturday is a workshop for church leadership. Childcare will be provided for both events.

The New York State Convention of Universalists conference and annual meeting will be held in Syracuse on October 19 and 20. information about the conference is posted on the bulletin board outside of the church office. Please contact Nancy Gaede for details about the website.

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

[Tim Mullins]

I invite you in this moment to just think of one thing you are grateful for. [PAUSE]

One of the great joys of being a part of this community is the connections we make with one another. So, let's join in greeting one another. If you would like to share what you are grateful for with your neighbor, we can fill the sanctuary with gratitude at the start of our service. So, let's welcome each other here.

Opening Hymn *#1000 Morning Has Come*

1 Morning has come, arise and greet the day!
Dance with joy and sing a song of gladness!
The light of hope here shines upon each face.

May it bring faith to guide our journey home.

2 A new day dawns, once more the gift is giv'n.
Wonder fills this moment shared together.
The light of peace here shines upon each face.
May it bring faith to guide our journey home.

3 Open your eyes to see that life abounds;
Open hearts to welcome it among us.
The light of love here shines upon each face.
May it bring faith to guide our journey home.

Call to Worship *A Place of Belonging and Caring*
by Kimberlee Anne Tomczak Carlson [Rev. Lane]

It is not by chance that you arrived here today.
You have been looking for something larger than yourself.
Inside of you there is a yearning, a calling, a hope for
more,
A desire for a place of belonging and caring.
Through your struggles, someone nurtured you into
being,
Instilling a belief in a shared purpose, a common yet
precious resource
That belongs to all of us when we share.
And so, you began seeking a beloved community:
A people that does not put fences around love.
A community that holds its arms open to possibilities of
love.
A heart-home to nourish your soul and share your gifts.

Welcome home; welcome to worship.

Chalice Words *words from Lena Lund Shoemaker
of the Danish Unitarian Church (the International
Council of Unitarian Universalists Global Chalice
Lighting for October- read in UU churches across the
world this month.)* [Rachel Irato]

Let this flame symbolize the divine spark of light
embedded in all living beings.

May its flame lead us to greater knowledge and tolerance.

May its warmth lead up to deeper love and compassion.

And may its light lead us toward greater wisdom and
understanding.

Yes, each one of us is but a tiny flame.

But together we can enlighten the world!

Testimony

[Rachel Irato]

I attended my first-ever Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in June, 2014 at Providence Rhode Island. My mom had called me earlier in the year asking if I wanted to go and of course I jumped at the chance. So she signed me up and we made a family trip of it; me, my sister, my mother, AND my grandmother road-tripped 6 hours from Lancaster, Pennsylvania to Providence. I was prepared for the workshops, the music, and the activism. I was NOT prepared for the Call to Ministry. During the Closing Ceremonies I am on stage with the GA Choir in front of easily a thousand people. As I watched the Ministers' Choir that was performing with us, a small voice whispered in my brain "that is going to be me someday." Excuse me? Let's evaluate for a second; I am 20 years old, I have not yet

finished my bachelor's degree, and now I am supposed to become a minister? Are we sure about this? Yes? Positive? Okay, let's figure this out.

Mid-August 2015 I move to Rochester and into the Student Apartments at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. I am now “on my own” for the first time in my life and I am terrified. Well, time to go make some friends. So I shopped around a bit for a church. First stop: First Unitarian Church of Rochester because I knew Eileen Casey-Campbell, a student at CRCDS, would be there. It was not a bad experience, but it did not give me that “YES” feeling. The following week I came here, to First Universalist. I sat over there (gesture Stage Right) and I got that “YES” feeling I had been looking for. During the time where we greet our neighbors Eileen Fernandez introduced herself to me and afterwards at Coffee Hour introduced me

to about 10 other people. I really felt like I could be at home here. By December I had joined the Choir and MOCHA. The following year I became a Children's Worship Assistant, and on February 19, 2017 I signed the Membership Book with my Mom witnessing. This year I am happy to serve as a Worship Associate and honored to share my story with you.

I have been on an incredible journey the past few years and the love and support of this community has been an instrumental part of my spiritual development. Thank you, all of you. As Rev. Lane says, it is good to be together.

Affirmation of Faith

[Rachel Irato]

Please rise as willing and able 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 [Rachel Irato]

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

[**Rachel Irato**]

Consider generosity and what it means to give of what you have. This community does so much for us. Our church provides a place to come together in joyful celebrations and difficult times. First Universalist Church is a beacon for justice and healing in downtown Rochester. This congregation is a space where all are welcome, regardless of how they identify. Isn't that worth giving to? Isn't that worth supporting? We collect this morning's offering as a symbol of the love and support you all hold for this

community. If you are a guest here this morning, please allow the love of this community to hold you, as you are our guest, and allow the basket to pass you by. This morning's offering will be gratefully given and received in gratitude. Thank you.

Offertory *I Dream of a Church*, by Mark Miller (b. 1925). [Howard Spindler]

Message for All Ages “Yes, Let’s!” [Rev. Lane]

One of my good friends, Deborah, taught me a great game I’d like to invite us to play this morning. And I’m going to need your help, young ones. The game is called, “Yes, Let’s!” With this game, someone makes a suggestion for something to do and we all say a resounding, “Yes, Let’s!”

and then we do the thing they are suggesting. Now, normally this game is played in a space with lots of room for movement, so this morning, we will need to think of things folks can do from their seats or standing up in place. We wouldn't want to have too much fun in church, now would we? So shall we try it?! (Yes, Let's!)

Let's put our hands up in the air and wiggle our fingers!

Let's puff out our cheeks real big like this. (blow out cheeks)

Let's move our head side to side.

Any other suggestions for things to do? (Take about 3-5)

Now, there is an inverse part to this game. It's a time when we can try on the words, "No. Never." So for each suggestion that is made, we will all respond with, "No. Never." And then we will absolutely not do the thing that is suggested. Pay attention to how this one feels in your body and in your heart.

Let's have a dance party!

Let's pretend we are eagles and fly through the air.

Let's puff out our cheeks like this.

Let's wiggle our shoulders a bit.

Any other suggestions for things to try? (Take about 3)

Did this game feel different to you? How? I say we play just a quick round of “Yes, Let’s!” to recover. What do you think?

Let’s make silly faces.

Let’s give a great shout of, “Yippee!”

Let’s stomp our feet.

Any other suggestions?

As we embrace on ever-expansive yes with one another, we say yes to life, yes to love, and yes to the moment at hand- whatever it presents us.

As our kids make their way to their Sunday School classrooms this morning, we will sing them out with our song, “Sheltering Arms of Love.” And today, let’s honor and acknowledge that shelter by reaching out our hands to our neighbors to create shared sheltering arms of love.

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 *Halling (Norwegian Dance)*, by
Edvard Grieg [Howard]

Joys and Sorrows [Rev. Lane]

And we drop one final stone into the bowl for all the joys and the sorrows of our lives that go unspoken, kept in the silent sanctuaries of our hearts this morning.

Pastoral Prayer [Rev. Lane]

How is your heart today?
Take a moment and just allow yourself to feel it,
To feel all of it,
Hold your hand over your heart and allow the emotions to come as they will.
For many here, this has been a couple of weeks full of rage,

As we see the ways stories of survivors of sexual assault
and rape are dismissed again and again,
Some of us may feel weary- oh not this again or haven't
we already been here?

Some of us feel numb, overwhelmed by it all,
Some afraid of what the future might hold, afraid from
times past and afraid as we look ahead,
Some of us feel truly helpless, wondering what can be
done.

Whatever you are feeling, wherever you are, allow the
walls to come down,

Allow the emotions to rise up and move through you.

Breathe through it all.

Breathe.

Breathe.

Breathe.

Let us take a moment for quiet reflection with one another
to just sit with whatever is coming up for us.

[Rev. Lane to ring the Singing Bowl.]

[PAUSE for silence]

[Rev. Lane to ring Singing Bowl a second time.]

Hymn of Contemplation *#18 What Wonderful
Love Is This*

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what
wondrous love is this, O my soul? What wondrous love is
this that brings my heart such bliss, and takes away the

pain of my soul, of my soul, and takes away the pain of my soul.

2 When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
when I was sinking down, sinking down, when I was
sinking down beneath my sorrows ground, friends to me
gather'd round, O my soul, O my soul, friends to me
gather'd round, O my soul.

3 To love and to all friends I will sing, I will sing, to love
and to all friends I will sing. To love and to all friends who
pain and sorrow mend, with thanks unto the end I will
sing, I will sing, with thanks unto the end I will sing.

Reading *words from Ralph Waldo Emerson*
[Rachel Irato]

“Miracles have ceased.” Have they indeed? When? They had not ceased this afternoon when I walked into the woods and got into bright, miraculous sunshine in shelter from the roaring wind. Who sees a pine-cone, or the turpentine exuding from the tree, or a leaf, the unit of vegetation, fall from its bough as if it said, “The year is finished,” or hears in the quiet piney glen the Chickadee chirping his cheerful note, or walks along the leaf promontory-like ridges which like natural causeways traverse the morass, or gazes upward at the rushing clouds, or downward at a moss or a stone and says to himself, “Miracles have ceased”?

Centering Music

Folksong, by Edvard Grieg

[Howard]

Sermon

Cultivating Abundance

[Rev. Lane]

Emerson- ever the optimist, isn't he?

This morning, as we played the game, "Yes, Let's!" we began to feel in our bodies what abundance can be.

Abundance is an expansive view of the world, a way of living that embraces the radical yes, a way of thinking that encompasses both/and. When we were able to say, "Yes, Let's!" how did it feel to you all? (PAUSE for responses.)

How about when we said, "No, Never"? How did that feel? (PAUSE for responses.)

In my mind the “No, Never” is a scarcity mindset. It is the place we can go to when we are afraid there will not be enough to go around, when we are afraid we might not be enough. Scarcity comes out of a sense of fear, whether rooted in reality or not. It is often a fear born out of past experiences, times when we have been hurt or we have learned our lesson never to do that thing (whatever that thing is) again.

We can think abundantly and embrace abundance around any number of things- money, resources, time, creative exercises, work, family life- the list could go on. To get to a place of abundance, to this mindset, can be a soul-stretching, heart-stretching, mind-expanding exercise for us.

What a week to be talking about abundance. When I put this worship topic to paper this past Fall, no one could

have predicted the weekend we would be having. This is a week when many folks are hearing a big, “No, Never,” as Dr. Christine Blasey Ford came forward to testify about her experience of sexual assault in the discernment process to vote in Brett Kavanaugh as our next Supreme Court judge. This has been a week where many have rallied and called and raged and reached out to friends for support. Fear is right on the surface. Fear that the same thing that has happened in so many instances of rape and sexual assault will happen again- the person who perpetrated the assault will get away with it, will not be held accountable. And the person who bravely came forward to report her experience will be ignored or dismissed or not believed or even mocked. What is playing out on our television and computer screens is a

large scale version of a “No, Never” that has been happening in the lives of many for so long. Too long.

How can we speak of abundance in a time like this? Is it enough to quote Emerson about stepping outside to view the beauty of the world, to be in touch with the vast expanses of creation? I resist the urge this morning to fully deconstruct Emerson’s home life, where he was often supported by women cooking food and doing his laundry while he was out on Walden Pond. And I resist it because he has an important point for us this morning.

We have to still embrace the beauty and the vast abundance of it in our world, while hurting at the same time. We have to be in a place of expansive kindness in the midst of collective rage and feelings of betrayal. We have to embrace it all right now.

And we embrace it all right now because that is the biggest, “Yes, Let’s!” we can say. That is the biggest yes to life, to not shut down out of fear and a mindset of scarcity, but to sit in the deeper emotional location of embracing the fullness of this moment, the fullness of our feelings.

As I sat in despair yesterday morning, wondering about the state of our country and the world we live in, really sitting in a scarcity moment, I read important words from adrienne marie brown (a community organizer and activist). They helped me to sit with more of a both/and approach, so I thought it would be important to share her words with you all. She writes, “I want to share that I believe it is a victory that the attention of the nation was on this hearing, and that this brilliant woman stood in her dignity and told the truth. Now everyone has to face it... the landscape of this long war against patriarchy and rape

culture is changed by her advance, by this battle.” Truth is being told. And it is everywhere. We come from a place of abundance to see the many people coming forward to share their stories on social media and in the news.

Stories of not reporting with the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport or stories of sexual assault and rape with the hashtag #metoo and even stories of perpetuating patriarchy and rape culture with the hashtag #itwasme. There is an abundance of these stories being told in ways they hadn’t been before. Something has shifted. Can we say, “Miracles have ceased”?

Abundance is a state of mind and heart that takes intentional cultivation. In this culture in the United States and the Western world, we have so many ways of thinking either/or. You are a man or a woman. We are Black or white, rich or poor, disabled or temporarily able-

bodied. Either you are on one side or the other- with us or against us. Embracing a perspective of both/and can be a huge challenge, especially when we are a country divided in one of the most explicit ways I have known in recent memory.

In times of fear, this kind of either/or thinking is particularly convenient. It breaks the world down into easy-to-understand labels, so we don't have to go deeper than what we perceive on the surface. And I use the word "we" here intentionally because I am not above this way of thinking. I am not above anxiously attempting to find a box or a label for something or someone I do not initially understand. This is a culture we are all steeped in and a part of.

To cultivate heartspace for abundance, we can embrace the both/and nature of the world. So many of the people

around us live in the both/and of gender, embracing non-binary identities, transgender and gender non-conforming expressions. Those of us who identify with the gender we were assigned at birth also embrace some of the masculine, some of the feminine, and some parts of our identity that don't really fit into either. We live in a multiracial world, where folks hold multiple racial identities. The locations where we can embrace both/and thinking are endless in our lives. We live in a time full of visible and even not-so-visible abundance.

Acknowledging this abundance takes practice. It is a lens through which we see the world, so we have to try it on and make adjustments to how we look at the world day by day, moment by moment. Just like a new pair of glasses, there is some adjusting time and we will only learn by trying it on. There is no time like the present to

begin. Think of a place in your life where you could be thinking more expansively. It might be an instance where you have said “No, Never!” A part of your life you feel inflexible about, fearful of, or you just find yourself embracing either/or thinking. Think of a place of either/or in your days that could use a bit of both/and. Think of a place where you can embrace a bigger yes!

Hold this thought or this situation in your mind and heart and sit with it for a moment. What might be a different perspective on the issue? Are there other shoes you can put yourself in? Is there an opportunity to be grateful for what you are learning or for a part of the situation you had not thought about before?

Imagine if we took this time for reflection in our everyday lives. Imagine if we could regularly practice this in meditation or just in a small pause in your day, a time

to breathe when things get heavy or feel stressful. A time to look at things from a different angle, to expand our perspectives.

In my life, I know that gratitude has played a huge role in seeing things more abundantly. Each morning and each evening, I give time to think of the things I am grateful for in that moment and throughout the day. It helps me to reflect on the things I was not able to see before. It's a way to mentally do what Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests- to marvel at the wonder of each day, to acknowledge and honor all the beauty that surrounds us, this creation of a day that starts anew each morning. In gratitude, we acknowledge all that we receive. And it can begin anywhere. As we sit here now, our bodies are supported by pews built by other folks, cared for by generations of people who have passed through this place,

cared for by some of the people sitting in this room right now. We breathe in air cleaned by plants, provided by an Earth that cares for us in so many ways. It can start right where you are at any given moment. There is so much to be grateful for. And gratitude helps us to expand our thinking, to stretch our hearts ever-wider.

As I think through the stresses of this past week, I am so grateful for the fact that I do not feel alone in having a hard time witnessing patriarchy and witnessing a decision that flies in the face of many of the experiences of survivors of rape and sexual assault. I am grateful for the stories. I am grateful for the many folks who have reached out to me and to one another for supportive conversation. Just yesterday, I witnessed a conversation amongst a group of women just sitting the next table over at a restaurant where I was having lunch. People are

sharing with one another their struggles. And I am grateful for the friends that invite me to think more expansively about this situation, to embrace the learnings, to put myself in different shoes of seeing the shame of folks who regret the wrongs they have committed and feel there is nothing they can do to repair it. I am grateful for a faith and a society that tells me no one is beyond transformation and healing, even those that I am extremely angry with right now. I am grateful to be able to feel both compassion and righteous anger at the very same time. Miracles have ceased. Have they indeed?

Cultivating abundance is more than a thought exercise. It is also an action exercise. We can take action to trust that the abundance will be there. I think about this particularly when I think of giving of my resources- time and money. In those moments when we feel inspired to

give, doesn't it feel good when we follow-through and affirm that instinct? I know the opposite feeling of when I have wanted to give and that "No, Never" voice comes into my head. Do you have enough money? Do you have enough time or energy to volunteer for that thing? It always leads to this feeling of a missed opportunity. And when I honor the impulse, when I embrace the feeling of abundance and give, I have never regretted it. Somehow or another, the universe finds a way to hold it all.

As we go into this next week, seek the voices of abundance in your life. Take time to reflect on the both/and of our world. Say, "Yes, Let's!" more often to opportunities or suggestions that come into your life. Sit in gratitude for all you experience. May the abundant nature of our world hold you and hold it all.

Amen. Blessed be. May it be so.

Closing Hymn *#347 Gather The Spirit*

1 Gather the spirit, harvest the power. Our sep'rate fires
will kindle one flame. Witness the mystery of this hour.
Our trials in this light appear all the same.

Gather in peace, gather in thanks. Gather in sympathy
now and then. Gather in hope, compassion and strength.
Gather to celebrate once again.

2 Gather the spirit of heart and mind. Seeds for the
sowing are laid in store. Nurtured in love, and conscience
refined, with body and spirit united once more.

Gather in peace, gather in thanks. Gather in sympathy now and then. Gather in hope, compassion and strength. Gather to celebrate once again.

3 Gather the spirit growing in all, drawn by the moon and fed by the sun. Winter to spring, and summer to fall, the chorus of life resounding as one.

Gather in peace, gather in thanks. Gather in sympathy now and then. Gather in hope, compassion and strength. Gather to celebrate once again.

Benediction [Rev. Lane]

Postlude *Grandmother's Minuet*, by Edvard Grieg

[Howard]

Extinguishing the Chalice