

Order of Service
Sunday, July 22, 2007
"Are There Limits to Inherent Worth?"
by Lorene R. Hales
with Maryanne Dengler, Lay Leader

Welcome and Announcements

Music Prelude: "We Are..." , Ysaye M. Barnwell

Opening Words "We Are ..." , Ysaye M. Barnwell
with Lorene and Maryanne reading:

L: For each child that's born a morning star rises and
sings to the universe who we are.

M: We are our grandmother's prayers and we are our
grandfather's dreamings,
we are the breath of our ancestors, we are the
spirit spirit of God.

L: We are mothers of courage and fathers of time, we
are daughters of dust and the sons of great visions,

M: We're sisters of mercy and brothers of love; we
are lovers of life and the builders of nations,

L: We're seekers of truth and keepers of faith, we
are makers of peace and the wisdom of ages.

M: For each child that's born a morning star rises and
sings to the universe who we are.

Chalice Lighting:

We light this chalice to celebrate the inherent worth
and dignity of every person; to reaffirm our
covenant to move beyond mere tolerance of each
other to a place of full acceptance of the unique

value each of us brings to this world as we journey together towards spiritual wholeness.

We light a second candle in unity with our partner church in Korispatak, Romania, whose members represent a part of our spiritual heritage and are fellow travelers on this journey.

Reading: from Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men by Joan D. Chittister

" The riddle of human existence haunts the history of philosophy. The earliest pagan philosophers wrestled with the topic. Whole philosophical schools formed around the question of how human beings came into existence. For some, creation implied an outpouring of creative energy, an emanation of the creative force, an expression of the god-force itself. For others, the explanation was that we were created out of nothing since the divine force could not be lessened and still be divine. In Scripture, however, the answer is a far cleaner one. However we are made, Scripture teaches, we are made 'in the image and likeness of God.'" We are, all of us, in other words, sparks of the divine. We are all fragments of the face of God. We are each a particle of eternity. We are, together and alone, *expressions of the divine in time*.

The ideas overwhelm. If Scripture means what Scripture says, then *humanity is nature alive with the energy of God*. Human nature is more than nature; it is *divine presence and eternal possibility* in embryo. The concept charges our ideas of life and human community

with new meaning. If we are all made in the image of God, *if we all spring from the expression of the divine, then every human being born brings an intuition of God to us.* The ideas fix the heart in a kind of perpetual awe... We are, if we are to take Scripture seriously, surrounded by the presence of God in one another. The implications of that kind of theological world-view turn the social system upside down. *If we are all words of God, then we all have something to say.* We are all a message to the rest of the world of the nature and mind of God. *We are all expressions of divine presence, of divine hope, of divine truth. We are all meant to be word to one another. ...*

The world needs respect for otherness, not simply patronizing approval. The world needs the voice of otherness in order to hear the cries of the whole human race. The world needs the presence of otherness to redeem it from the headlong plunge for profit, power, comfort, control, individualism, and dominance (*values driving Western society today*) that sears its soul and gives the lie to a spirituality of the fractional."

Song: #1008 "When Our Heart Is In A Holy Place"

Sermon: "Are There Limits to Inherent Worth?"

Part I: What is Inherent Worth & Why Do We Struggle with It? In his book, Our Seven Principles in Story and Verse Kenneth W. Collier speaks of the Greek word *telos* which is defined as a sort of force which causes forward movement and provides an impetus and sense of direction to a process or toward the achievement of a goal, a causation which allows for development to occur.

In his mind, our "statement of religious principles is a kind of moral and spiritual *telos*." (p.14) Allowing their guidance in our process of "unfolding as spiritual beings" (p 14) requires that we reflect on the meaning of the principles to understand the wealth and depth of substance each offers as a guide on our spiritual path. I personally love that "the inherent worth and dignity of all people' is the first principle as I think that it provides a foundation of support for all the others. If we cannot first believe in our own inherent worth and dignity, then how can we hold value for right relationship in the world and support the interdependent web of all existence? The statement of principles is a living document requiring that we continue to evaluate it in terms of our increasing understanding of ourselves as well as the world around us. It is not a document written on tablets of stone which can be read once with an "I got it" and then placed on the shelf as a holy relic. In fact, the UUA reviews them every so many years with the intent to assure ongoing relevancy for life and spiritual growth in our world today. The Commission on Appraisal is currently seeking input as part of the review process of Article II of our Bylaws, which is the statement of our principles and purpose, and you can learn more about this by going to the website www.uua.org/coa.

The concept of inherent worth and dignity of all people was first advocated for by William Ellery Channing, a Unitarian in the nineteenth century, speaking in opposition to the strongly held Calvinist belief that we are fundamentally weak and wicked creatures. Instead, Channing contended, we house a spark of divinity within us and are engaged in a spiritual process whereby we

strive for perfectibility. The Universalists also took the position that whatever God created was, by virtue of that creation, good and believed that all people would attain salvation based on the goodness and love of the Creator towards his creation.

Over the past century the notion of inherent worth and dignity as a theological position evolved, due to the influence of the Humanists, toward an ethical position. Instead of referring to the concept of the divine within it sets a framework for living ethically in relation to each other with an emphasis on the *individual* as holding worth. In The Seven Principles in Word and Worship, Sarah Lammert, a UU minister, views the result of this evolution in meaning as being two-sided. As she states, "On the positive side, this means that we strive to affirm and respect differences, fueling our commitment to a faith that rejects oppression of all kinds. But, on the negative side, we have made something of an idol of the individual. We mistake the affirmation of individual worth and dignity for a kind of defensive arrogance about our particular point of view." (p.7) She then quotes Robert N. Bellah, a sociologist, from his address to the 1998 UUA General Assembly in which he said, "We are born helpless and dependent, and only through the love of others will we ever become autonomous selves. If we are fundamentally relational creatures, as I think both biology and sociology affirm, then ontological individualism, religious or secular, is simply a mistake, but one with enormous cultural consequences with which Americans in particular will have to deal." (p.9)

Why do we struggle with the concept of inherent worth and dignity? I suppose because the struggle engages us in basic questions of the meaning of life: Who am I as a human being, and what is my core nature? How am I to be in relationship with the other - whether that be individuals, society at large, and, possibly, the force behind all creation? How am I to be in relationship with the universe?

As you contemplate a tidy answer to all this, let's reflect again on Bellah's words as a reminder that we aren't in the process alone: "We are born helpless and dependent, and only through the love of others will we ever become autonomous selves." Please stand in body and/or spirit and join me in singing hymn

Song: #1012 "When I Am Frightened"

Part II: Are There Some People Who Lack Inherent Worth?

Is the principle of inherent worth and dignity overstated? Surely there are some people who display such negative characteristics that we can exclude them. I know what Ken Collier would respond, since he so kindly wrote it down:

" Consider, then, the first of these Principles: that we affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. It does not say the inherent worth and dignity of people with whom we happen to agree or whom we like. It says every person. It does not say the inherent worth and dignity of like-minded people, or people who

are willing to enter into rational, civilized discourse with us. It does not say people with whom we may disagree but who are honorable and as genuine in their beliefs as we are in ours. It says *every person*. We are called to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of people whom we thoroughly dislike, people whom we find obnoxious, obstreperous, overbearing, and frightening; people whom we find abhorrent and whose beliefs and behavior we find disgusting; even people who would deny, silence, or destroy us. This principle calls on us to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of *every person*, and it does not admit exceptions.

This is a tall order. 'Every person' includes the people we love and the people we dislike. It includes the oppressed and the oppressor. It includes the victim and the perpetrator. It includes the Jews of Central Europe as well as Hitler. It includes the bully down the street who terrorized us when we were children. It includes the child molester, the battering husband, the abusive, alcoholic, the drug dealer, the crack house operator, and the gang members. It includes everyone." (ps 12-15)

As Ken says, "This is a tall order." It is very difficult to accept that the more heinous criminal we can call to mind has the same worth and dignity as the most

benevolent person amongst us. But, the Principles are not meant to be easy, feel good statements upon which we can reflect with smug self-righteousness about how saintly we move in the world ... at least compared to those other folk we encounter. Instead they are meant to provide stimulus to move beyond our comfortable ways of encountering the world and its inhabitants without basking in the presence of those we like and ignoring or reviling everyone else. We are pushed to explore and develop the fullness of our humanity, to experience conversion, as it were. In the words of F. Forrester Church: "conversion means awakening: opening our eyes, looking out with new wonder upon the creation, becoming not someone other than ourselves, but more fully ourselves." (Our Chosen Faith, p. 11). In speaking of Jesus, he said, "Jesus' life was not special because he was more than human or other than human. It was special because Jesus fully realized the promise of his humanity." (p 16) We are called by our Principles to fully realize the promise of our humanity and it's relationship with all aspects of creation.

The word 'inherent' means that we have worth and dignity as a part of our fundamental being - there is nothing we can do to gain it nor anything we can do to lose it. It is simply an essential part of who we are. However, we need to make a distinction between who we *are* in the world and how we *act* in the world. We do not always act from a fullness of humanity but make bad choices that are ultimately harmful to ourselves and/or to others. Reflect for a moment on those instances when you've intentionally said or done something to someone that was meant to inflict, at least, emotional pain; how

about those times when you might have been derogatory or ridiculing toward or about someone who expressed an opposing point of view. Have you ever told a joke that was at the expense of someone else and they weren't really laughing with you? When walking down the street have you encountered a homeless person or a beggar soliciting funds and refused to meet their gaze or acknowledge their existence but passed quickly by keeping your eyes averted and refusing contact? I'm always amazed and disappointed when I read letters to the editor or listen to talk radio and the writer/speaker responds to an issue by attacking the character and intelligence of the person with whom they disagree instead of addressing the issue itself. They attempt to rob that person of their inherent worth and dignity by means of belittling them and dismissing their ideas. Read the bumper stickers on the cars you follow down the road: how many of them are put-downs of someone or a group of people trying to pass as humor? I think humor and laughter are important components of healthy living but not when it's achieved by maligning someone else. I'm sure we could take a half hour and each of us could easily think of dozens of examples of when we've acted from a less than ideal position in life. Remember, our Principles are process-oriented and that implies 'over-time' ... they are not goals we can achieve perfectly in this life. We don't need to look to Jeffrey Dahmer, Hitler, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, or Osama bin Laden to experience people acting without regard for the inherent worth and dignity of others but that does not mean their actions give us permission to deny their inherent worth and dignity.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we must ignore bad actions on the part of people but we need to address the action and hold them accountable for *it* rather than denigrate the core of their being. If we wanted to judge *certain* people as lacking in inherent worth and dignity what guidelines can we use? Where are the boundaries? Isn't this what Hitler did - decided who was 'worthy' and then tried to annihilate everyone else? Isn't this what George Bush and his administration are doing - deciding who has worth and dignity and attacking everyone else? Isn't this the story of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Darfur? How do we decide who has inherent worth and dignity and who doesn't? Do we look at their actions? In the story "Les Miserables" that was how justice was meted out. Valjean (Valjon) was sent to prison for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread. It didn't matter that his family was starving and he was trying to save his niece from death. In the eyes of his jailer, Javert (Javer), he was a common thief and, therefore, had no worth or dignity. Upon leaving prison he resorted to stealing some silver from the Bishop who has given him a meal and a bed. It is only because of the Bishop's belief in Valjean's inherent worth and dignity and the subsequent actions that demonstrated his belief and kept Valjean from being returned to prison that he was able to have a *conversion/awakening* looking out with new wonder upon the creation and becoming more fully himself. He couldn't do it alone ... it took someone else showing him the way. What other criteria can we use to determine that someone has worth and dignity? Does it depend on how they function in society - that is, value-added dignity? In that case, can we lose our inherent worth and dignity

if our circumstances change or from birth we are unable to fill a normative role in society?

Many years ago I did volunteer work at Fircrest School in north Seattle which is a state run institution for persons with severe physical and mental disabilities. To this day I remember clearly many of the children with whom I worked: little Elizabeth with her beautiful dark eyes, shiny black hair, and wonderful smile who would silently reach out from her bed to be held whenever I came near her. Pammy would be put in a rolling walker and would try mightily to come to me from the far end of the room (think converted barrack) working her way up the aisle between the beds. Unfortunately, she had no control of direction and would bounce off the beds as she struggled to get to me laughing and drooling the entire distance. Sweet little Johnny had been born normal but at about the age of two his stepfather picked him up by his feet swinging his head repeatedly into a brick wall causing severe brain damage. My special guy, Woody, suffered from extreme autism and would sit and beat himself repeatedly or bang his head harshly against the wall if left alone or without a football helmet to protect him. Roxanne, with her extremely thin, misshapen body would perch on the top of a counter for hours not moving with her body twisted into an unbelievable pretzel shape, usually with her hand in her mouth and a finger up her nose. Ron was a hydrocephalic whose head was almost as large as his body was long. He would lie in bed and I was told that he couldn't hear, taste, feel, see, or smell. Would these children have inherent worth and dignity and what criteria would you use to make that determination? I know not everyone would think so. I

took Rusty, a young boy who had Mongoloidism (Down's Syndrome), out for a day's adventure. We stopped at Northgate Mall to buy him some clothing to wear as the clothes he was wearing were very shabby. He was so excited while trying on pants and shirts and then extremely fascinated with the escalator in the store repeatedly attempting to go up the down escalator. At one point a woman shopper passing by made the comment: "Children like that need to be put in an institution not be out here in public where others have to see them."

Most of these children were born with their particular handicaps, as we called it then, but how about people who start out life so-called normal but either through choices they make or for no fault of their own become other than what they were? A few months ago *Sixty Minutes* produced a segment on hospitals which were discharging patients who couldn't afford to pay, sometimes before they were healed or well, and have them driven to the skid row section of town where they were dumped out alongside the street. Sometimes they only had the hospital gowns they were wearing. Most of them people were old or affected by long-term alcohol or drug abuse. Michael Moore references this situation in his movie "Sicko" (in my mind a "must see" and showing at Cinema 9 for another week). He asks the question: Who have we become as individuals and as a society that we would treat people like garbage to be dumped on the street because they couldn't pay for their health care? What about people who suffer from mental illness and act in inappropriate manners or are a threat to others? We are seeing an increase of this now in the Vietnam vets who held it together all these years but are now

becoming paranoid schizophrenics and so on. Have these people lost their inherent worth and dignity? What happens if we find out we have Alzheimer disease or some other dementia and in the later stages of the disease no longer appear to connect with the world in the same manner we did pre-disease. I've heard family members say, "This is not my mom/dad as I've ever known them. It's like someone else has taken over their body." Can we lose our inherent worth and dignity?

Personally, I believe, along with Ken Collier, that we ALL have inherent worth and dignity and that since it is an innate part of our character we cannot lose it or have it taken away. Every person, regardless of how they act in life, still carries that 'divine spark' within and it cannot be destroyed, perhaps only denied by the person him/herself. Our first Principle affirms this for everyone, always. I wonder if part of the reason that we want to deny some people these qualities is because we feel we've been treated badly at times without being able to defend ourselves or retaliate and now we think, "Here's one person who's getting what he/she deserve." Or, maybe someone has acted in a way that frightens us and we want to lash out in reaction. Perhaps part of the fright stems from the fact that we recognize, privately, our own weaknesses and there is residual guilt as well as a fear that, given the right circumstances, we might end up the same way. So we try to set ourselves apart from these people by insisting on our own inherent worth and dignity while denying theirs...we are different, we are innately superior. In order to truly accept others and allow them to be where they are on their spiritual path, clumsy and mistake ridden as they might be at times, we

need to go beyond fear and anger and allow ourselves the same respect we would give others. That is, we need to be able to forgive ourselves for our mistakes and, only then, can we truly forgive someone else their mistakes. We are a work in process not a completed, polished product. So, in a spirit of reconciliation with ourselves and each other, and recognizing the worth and dignity innate to each of us, please join me in body and/or spirit in singing hymn

#1037 *We Begin Again In Love* Your part is the response to the narrator: "We forgive ourselves and each other. We begin again in love."

Song: #1037 "We Begin Again in Love"

Maryanne narrates; congregation sings response:

- For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference... (*We forgive ourselves and each other. We begin again in love.*)
- For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible...
- For each time we have struck out in anger without just cause...
- For each time that our greed has blinded us to the needs of others...
- For the selfishness that sets us apart and alone...
- For falling short of the admonitions of the spirit...
- For losing sight of our unity...
- For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle which have fueled the illusion of separateness...

Part III: How Do We Manifest the First Principle on a Daily Basis?

How can we live this Principle on a daily basis?

First, I want to emphasize what I said earlier that accepting another's inherent worth and dignity does not mean that we turn a blind eye to inappropriate actions. The Jeffrey Dahmer's of this world need to be put away from society for its safety. Their inherent worth and dignity does not give them license to harm another. Likewise George W. Bush needs to be confronted on the consequences of his decisions that affect world relations and are causing great harm to people at home and abroad. The fact that he can legally cause great harm does not make it anymore acceptable than the harm caused by the person acting outside the law. That person who causes disruption in our gatherings must be confronted in a respectful yet firm manner. This is why ministers have found it necessary, on occasion, to tell a person they must leave the church for the good of the whole. Sometimes Unitarian Universalists make such an effort to be tolerant as a showing of their belief in the individual's inherent worth and dignity that they fail to separate *being* from *acting*. We don't want to hold anyone accountable for their actions if it means unpleasantness and discomfort in our relations. We're uncomfortable so we avoid the situation by hiding behind a false interpretation of the first Principle. But if we insist on avoiding conflict over issues then we are not living out our Principles. Remember the goal of the Principles is to cause impetus for forward movement and allow for spiritual development to occur. I am very impressed that the UUA at General Assembly provides a strong

demonstration on how this can be done. They have established a 'right relations committee' the members of which are available for people to discuss issues that have occurred for them at the GA. These issues are then brought forward to the entire assembly with a reminder of how to resolve the problem from then forward. One example involved persons in wheelchairs not being able to have their attendant sit with them because someone else sat in the seat next to the wheelchair space. The issue probably seemed small to many people but to the person in the wheelchair it was a reflection of not being valued equally to everyone else. A larger issue involved an occurrence from last year's GA where a group felt that music that was significant to their cultural background was misappropriated and misused by musicians at the GA. Feelings ran quite strongly on this topic. A group of involved persons from both sides of the dispute got together over the course of the year to address the issues raised and to listen to each other's point of view. This year at GA they came back and reported on the work they had done to resolve the issue. This is a prime example of publicly demonstrating how we live in right relation with each other and affirming each person's inherent worth and dignity. This could have resulted in a heated screaming match with bad-feelings, resentment, and anger being the final outcome. Instead a willingness to confront each other in a respectful manner allowed for a satisfactory conclusion.

In the words of Tom Owen-Towle, in his book Freethinking Mystics With Hands:

“ The call to tolerance can evoke another demon. Counterfeit acceptance degenerates into *anythingarianism* (Jonathan Swift's term) when intolerable behaviors and conditions, whether in society or our local churches, are permissible, even justified. In the name of so-called tolerance we put up with despicable human conduct and pervasive human misery. We lapse into lassitude. Tolerance becomes a disguise for indifference!

But let us be neither lulled nor fooled. We can't engender justice without also being intolerant of injustice, we can't dignify freedom without eradicating slavery, we can't applaud beauty if we are rationalizing ugliness.” (p 34)

We need to be honest with each other and point out in a respectful manner when someone is acting in an inappropriate way. Don't just turn a blind eye and say, 'Oh well, that's how they view truth.' Be willing to enter into discourse where there might actually be disagreement. Just because I think something is right does not make it so ... and if I'm conducting a responsible search for truth and meaning then you show your acceptance of me and your belief in my inherent worth and dignity by engaging me honestly in that process and I'll do the same for you. Neither of us might change our minds ultimately but we will have had the opportunity of becoming clearer in our own thinking by virtue of the process. We need to learn to not just 'tolerate' but truly 'accept' one another's different spiritual paths and allow everyone respectful expression of their belief in our services whether it be earth-centered spirituality, atheism, Christian-based, or

any of the other spiritual groups represented in this congregation - and that includes the language they use to express that belief.

In order to enter into respectful discourse successfully we should be willing to continue learning how to improve our compassionate or non-violent communication. This skill requires a lifetime of practice and serious intent on our part. A few years ago we had an incident of people not knowing how to disagree with each other over an important congregational issue and the situation turned nasty with name-calling and harsh words spoken. It continues to amaze me that nobody was willing to step forward and say, "This is not appropriate. We are not being respectful of each other nor are we listening to each other. We say we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person but our actions are speaking the contrary much louder." One of the results of that meeting was that some members left the church and it took years for the healing process to occur. Another result was that we wrote a covenant of right relations to guide us in future relationship.

I bring this up because I think it is a prime example of how we are in spiritual process and we need each other to continue to move forward. It is important that we be willing to be critical at times while doing so in a manner of respect. If you truly believe in my inherent worth and dignity you are not going to stand quietly by while watching me go off on some outrageous path.

Living out the Principles on a daily basis means we must go beyond the walls of this sanctuary or this religious community. Here is where we can practice the skills we need to use in the larger world. We must be

willing to confront wrongfulness wherever we find it. There are some things we simply cannot tolerate and, therefore, we must act on them. I think that action needs to be on a personal level, which many of us are adept at becoming involved in many social issues: the soup kitchen, the food bank, anti-war efforts, health care reform and so on. However, I also believe that our voice is stronger in the world when we take a stand as a Unitarian Universalist *group* to speak out on certain issues. We need to get beyond the idea that just because someone, some few people, in our congregation might disagree with an issue that the entire group is then prevented from taking a group action. Being a Unitarian Universalist does not mean that we must only act if we have 100% consensus which is almost an oxymoron for UUs. My personal thoughts on an issue, despite my inherent worth and dignity, should not stop the larger church body from taking a public stand for justice, compassion and equality in the world.

If we truly believe in the inherent worth and dignity of each person then we must be willing to go beyond our comfort zone to interact with persons outside our normal range of experience. By coming to know and understand each other better we can more strongly affirm the values of this Principle and will be better able to address issues of justice, compassion, and equality in the world. When is the last time you invited someone to your house who was not 'just like you?' For instance, if you're white, and most of us are, when have you invited someone of color or from a different ethnic background over for coffee or dinner. If you're straight have you ever invited a gay person into your social circle? Conversely, my gay and lesbian friends

how often do you step out of the 'gay ghetto' to socialize with others? A common complaint of single people, whether by virtue of never being partnered, having been divorced or widowed, is that they are dropped from contact with married couples and find themselves isolated socially. When have you invited a single person to take part in an activity with you and/or other couples? Next time you're down town and a homeless person or beggar addresses you take the time to stop, acknowledge them, and speak a bit with them, you might be surprised how much alike we all are. To promote inherent worth and dignity means to go beyond our comfort zones to learn more about 'the other' and to grow from mere tolerance to true acceptance of them.

In conclusion I offer you these final words and a poem by Ken Collier :

"Sometimes affirmation and promotion require nothing more than listening and agreeing, or no more than a friendly disagreement, an intellectual conversation. Sometimes it requires me to hold myself in respectful opposition to someone and to speak truths that are painful to others or myself. Sometimes it requires me to hold people accountable for their actions, and sometimes it requires me to do things that are difficult and painful but ultimately healing. Sometimes it requires that I go in harm's way and take risks for myself and others. Sometimes it even requires me to hurt someone. And probably more often than I like to admit, it requires me to change my behavior, my way of

living, my way of thinking about things. It
requires me to admit that I have been wrong."
(p.17)

"The Chalice of the Heart"

" A mother holds her baby to her breast and
smiles,
And her baby stares deeply into her eyes.
He reaches his hand lightly up to her
ebony chest;
He lies in her dark arms, bathed in love
that runs
Like warm, sweet milk filling his round
belly,
Filling his growing heart, flowing into him
Yet never emptying the chalice of her
heart.

Two gray-haired lovers walk beside the
sea,
Hand in hand, like a couple of teenagers,
Lost in the silent language of hands
And glowing eyes and hearts beating
together,
Lost in the silent, mysterious language
That speaks the pain of the heart and
heals.
Two loving women walk beside the sea.

There is a light that burns deep in the
chalice of the heart,

And so powerful is that light that it
illuminates the soul
And sparkles in the mind and dances in the
eye.
One ray of this light can leap from the
heart,
Can join with another, can reveal the
mystery of love.
For worth knows worth, and light knows
light,
And love dances between heart and heart.

Even though darkness deepens without
end,
Leaches into the heart, reaches poisoned
fingers
To snuff the light and murder the flame,
To still the dance and blind the sparkling
eye,
I believe that the light will never go out;
I believe that the chalice cannot be
emptied;
I believe that love merges from dignity,
And merges with dignity and returns in
dignity." (pgs. 24-25)

So be it. Blessed be.

Candles of Joy & Sorrow / Offering

Song: "Get Together",
sung & played by

The Youngbloods
Cliff & Chere Periera

Congregation Sharing

Closing Words

hymn: #313 O What a Piece of Work Are We

(words by Malvina Reynolds)

M: " O what a piece of work are we, how marvelously wrought,

the quick contrivance of the hand, the wonder of our thought.

Why need to look for miracles outside of nature's law?

Humanity we wonder at with every breath we draw.

But give us room to move and grow, but give our spirit play,

and we can make a world of light out of the common clay. "

snuff the candle as Lorene says:

L: As you leave here today may the internal light of your spirit shine brightly in the world.

Closing Song: #1053 "How Could Anyone"

Pianist: Raven Sanders

Flower Arrangement: Chere Pereira