

Hope is Giving Eyes to Sorrow

—Harry B. Scholefield

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
November 13, 2016
Revs Paul Beckel and Tessie Mandeville

Do not take offense, even when it is offered.

—from the Zen tradition

To criticize is not to reject. This point must be emphasized, for it is the dividing line between the free mind and fanaticism. It is the doorway to a universal religion that rigorously seeks the truth, and yet is also inclusive and welcoming to all.

—Rev Ken Patton

WELCOME

Welcome to Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship. All who come in goodwill are welcome here. And that may be more than you expect. So make some room.

BUF WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE

Make some room for the left out.

Make some room for the angry.

Make some room for not knowing how to make room.

Make room.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE—Ro and Carl

#443

We arrive out of many singular rooms, walking over the branching streets.

We come to be assured that brothers and sisters surround us, to restore their images on our eyes.

We enlarge our voices in common speaking and singing.

We try again that solitude found in the midst of those who with us seek their hidden reckonings.

Our eyes reclaim the remembered faces; their voices stir the surrounding air.

The warmth of their hands assures us, and the gladness of our spoken names,

This is the reason of cities, of homes, of assemblies in the houses of worship.

It is good to be with one another.

BUF COVENANT

Love is the spirit of this fellowship and service gives it life. Celebrating our diversity, and joined by a quest for truth, we work for peace, and honor all creation. This is our covenant.

WELCOME

Paul: Good morning. I'm Rev. Paul Beckel

Tessie: And I'm Rev. Tessie Mandeville. We welcome you to Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship. We are glad you're here with us today because it is good to be together.

Paul: Today we make room for each other, and we make room for the possibility of resolve and reconciliation, not one or the other, but both, resolve *and* reconciliation. Adjustment and courage and new doors into the lives of those with whom we've been out of touch.

Tessie: Even the happy today might be unhappy that, in Bellingham at least, happiness could be looked upon with suspicion. Political minorities among us could be wary or even absent, wondering if their liberal religious community, which is not the equivalent of a politically liberal organization, wondering if it can be a congenial place...not just a place of guarded tolerance but mutual support.

Paul: I think mutual support, actually, is something reasonable to hope for. Engagement, at first, is going to be difficult. I think it should be a goal. But mutual support, I am confident, is instinctual in our day-to-day practices of neighborliness and family.

Tessie: So, let this house be a sanctuary...whoever you are, wherever you are from, you are welcome here.

Paul: As we worship and as we mingle together today, seeking unity on matters of public policy may not be the best use of the moment before us. Perhaps, and I'm not suggesting that this is easy, but perhaps what this moment offers us is an opportunity to step back from the passion to persuade, and open ourselves instead to some risks of relationship.

Tessie: So today we make room for each other, not because of our position on candidates, but because of concern for issues, and for the democratic process, which we state as one of the key principles we affirm and promote as a congregation.

Tessie: Let's join together in our Gathering Songs...

GATHERING SONGS *Voice Still and Small / There is More Love / My Life Flows On*

CHILDREN'S FOCUS *The Wolves Within* Esther Acosta, adapted

A child told her grandfather about her anger at a schoolmate who had done her an injustice. Grandfather said: "Let me tell you a story."

"I, too, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down and does not hurt your enemy. It is like eating rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die. I have struggled with these feelings many times.

It is as if there are two wolves inside me: one lives in harmony with all things. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way.

The other wolf is full of anger. When he does not know what else to do, he fights. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great.

It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for they both try to dominate my spirit."

The child looked intently into grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The grandfather solemnly replied, "The one I feed."

CHILDREN'S BLESSING

Deep peace of the running wave to you / deep peace of the flowing air to you / deep peace of the shining stars to you / deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & GREETINGS

REFLECTIONS—Paul

Nanette Graham, a longtime member of BUF, died this week at age 96. Nanette was a great spirit with a wild streak, a light heart, and initiative. A few decades back, when she moved to San Juan Island, she not only established her own business, but founded a Unitarian Fellowship as well.

She was born the year women were given the right to vote. Or, I'm not sure what the correct verb would be for that sentence. It's pretty condescending to say women were *given* the right to vote. But it's not like women just got up one day and seized the right to vote. Seventy five years of organized politicking and rabble rousing preceded the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Generations of leaders, and countless allies, carried that flame.

The generations of hard labor that led to suffrage were not characterized by long-suffering, at least not as I interpret that word, which too much suggests accommodation or resignation. In my mind there is a significant different between that old fashioned virtue, usually associated with femininity, and some other virtues, related, but *more appropriate for today*: resistance, persistence, and resolve.

The classic history of Unitarianism, written about 75 years ago, at the end of two dense volumes, summed up the centuries of our movement with three words: freedom, reason, and tolerance. Good stuff. But an important aspect of our heritage, and our future is missing in that list. As you go out today I suggest that you carry forth the Unitarian values—well, the human values—of the suffragettes who made this week possible: freedom, reason, tolerance, *and work*.

You might object: but we *have* worked, we have evaluated, and donated, and posted, and cajoled, and voted. What do we do now? I don't have a quick answer to that, but I do have an idea of where to look for guidance. We can listen to and learn from those who have long known persecution, despair, disenfranchisement...and determination. We can lean into the work that already has momentum.

We do not have to start from scratch. We can lean into the progress of courageous individuals and powerful groups made up of humble committed citizens. We can, and we must, do this work, if we affirm and promote freedom, reason, and tolerance.

Not that it's humanly possible to grind on forever without relief. And so it is good to be together. And from time to time it will be good to be alone. It will be good to be wherever we need to be to reflect, recalibrate, rebuild and remember both the principles, and the people, for whom we make room.

INTERLUDE *Meditation on Breathing*

When I breathe in I'll breathe in peace/When I breathe out I'll breathe out love....

GUIDED MEDITATION—Tessie

Kristi Nelson is the Executive Director of a Network for Grateful Living and in her blog she writes:

To love in the face of fear is bold. To love in the face of hatred is courageous. To make the choice to love even more deeply and widely in the face of moments of anguish is a heroism of the heart that may be our only hope to heal this world...And so, aching and stretching for some form of healing, I know that the only choice is to muster my courage and rally my hurting self enough to love, still – and to love big.

Love is a verb – it wants to be active. It wants to be witnessed, felt, demonstrated, shared, flung and sung from treetops and from the bottom of our toes. Love does not want to be subordinate to grief and hurt – it wants to be part of it, it wants to be known as the cause of it. Love longs to be woven into the entire emotional fabric of our lives – winding and revealing itself alongside every thread that is not love. This big, messy, beautiful tapestry of our hearts is the truth.

[Today, let us] pledge to be bewildered, with love. To feel vulnerable, with love. To be heartbroken, with love. To be afraid, with love. To be shattered by love. And to keep listening deeply into it all, trying to know what is called for; what I—with my big, strong, broken heart—can do to help heal our broken world.

Please join me in a Grateful Living Practice:

STOP: Let yourself become quiet in the midst of all that is unfolding around and inside you. Let yourself take a few breaths to help anchor your awareness in your body. Exhale deeply with an awareness of how your breath renews you in every moment...

LOOK: Gently notice all that is working in your body as you breathe. Notice what you are feeling and thinking and practice holding it compassionately instead of with any idea that it should be different. Practice becoming a welcoming home for your emotions right now. Just greet each feeling and thought and let yourself be grateful for how alive you are through the fullness of whatever you feel. Be gentle with yourself.

GO: Consider, even if your heart feels broken, in what ways and with whom can you show up with an open heart today? Think of who could use your reassurance or connection. Sometimes, in our heartbreak, we shut ourselves off from those we love the most. Can you open your heart a bit more and let yourself connect?

If your heart felt the least bit heroic or bold today – even for a moment – what might it do? What might it say? Is there something that you might need or want to write that would help? Is there some way that you are moved to help make the world a bit better today? When we feel disempowered, it can be very powerful to take a small action to advance our values. What a great day to make a difference with your care...

Let us close this time of meditation with a quote from the lesbian poet, author, and activist, Adrienne

Rich who says:

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those who, age after age,
perversely, with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

MUSICAL MEDITATION Andrea improvisation

RESPONSIVE READING Ginny/Rick “We Need One Another” #468

READING 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of earthlings or of angels, but do not love, I am like a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I can predict the future and fathom all mysteries but do not love, I am nothing. If I give all I have to the poor and give my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing, and neither does anyone else.

Love is patient, and kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It ...protects ...trusts ...hopes ...perseveres.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. As I matured...I, well, matured.

In times of plenty, and in times of distress, we have many virtues to choose from the greatest of these is love.

WOMEN’S ENSEMBLE *I Have a Million Nightingales* Linda Hirschhorn

I have a million nightingales on the branches of my heart.
I have a million nightingales on the branches of my heart.
Singing freedom, freedom, freedom.
Singing freedom, freedom, freedom.

READING—Crystal “Election Promises” Rev Mark Belletini

[The polls, open Tuesday, have closed for now,
well, some of them.]
[others, I believe are open every day]
Every hour. Even here. Even now.
Right now I am going to vote
for the robin's egg sky,
the vanilla clouds,
the purple shadow spreading
under the ginkgo tree,
I am going to vote for tulips and redbuds.
I am going to vote for love
that does not have

to run in someone else's circles
in order to be love.
I'm going to vote the homeless into homes.
I'm going to vote the uneducated into
classrooms
that teach them in the way they learn best,
not the way that would be most convenient.
I'm going to vote the sick into healing.
I'm going to vote the lost into belonging.
I'm going to vote, right now,
for the right to dream of a world
where the word politics

doesn't stop me in my tracks,
and where the word honor still
has a few good meanings left.
I'm going to vote right now
for the power of free people
to actually be free,
no matter who they are,
no matter who has abandoned them,
no matter who hates them.

I actually am going to vote for love,
I am going to vote for truthfulness as the norm,
not the exception .
I'm going to vote for a world
that doesn't vote for killing, control and
swagger,
I'm going to vote for you.
I'm going to vote for me.
Right now. Right here. Silently. But for real.

SHARING OUR GIFTS

Nocturne in B-flat minor, Op. 9, No. 1 by Chopin.

READING—Sara, Anastacia, Carolyn, Heidi “Today I Rise” Amelia Dashwood

SENDING SONG *Filled with Loving Kindness* #1031

RESPONSIVE READING #521

May I be no one’s enemy and may I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides.

May I wish for every person’s happiness and envy none.

May I never rejoice in the ill fortune of one who has wronged me.

May I, to the extent of my power, give needful help to all who are in want.

May I never fail a friend.

May I respect myself.

May I always keep tame that which rages within me.

*May I accustom myself to be gentle and never be angry with others
because of circumstances.*

May I know good people and follow in their footsteps.

ANOTHER SENDING SONG *Spirit of Life* #123

BENEDICTION

The words of John Murray, who founded the Universalist movement just as the U.S. Constitution was being written:

Go out into the highways and by-ways. Give the people something of your new vision.
You may possess a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it in order to bring more light
and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women.
Give them not hell, but hope and courage;
Preach kindness and the everlasting love of God.

CIRCLE ‘ROUND FOR FREEDOM