

Opening Words – Rev. Debra Faulk, Don Heights

We gather at this time, in this place
We create a sacred time by our being together.
We bring our individual hopes, joys and accomplishments,
We bring our personal concerns, pain and sorrow,
Each of us bring gifts to share, wounds to bear,
Questions to challenge and wisdom to offer,
You and I come in search of truth and meaning,
ever willing to learn, ever questing for understanding,
ever healing and growing, ever inspired and seeking.

All of this and more we bring to this place
For here there is trust so we may share who we are,
as we struggle to become all we can be.
Here we gather our individual lives to create community
Here we enact compassion as we hear another's pain,
as we witness a broken world.
Here we are invited to celebrate achievements,
to acknowledge acts of courage and triumph.

Here in this place we join our voices and our effort
with each other and beyond these walls
We join with Unitarians and Universalists across this country and around the world
We add our influence to all who would work for peace, equity and justice.
It is significant that we gather at this time, in this place, to be together,
to create sacred space, to be a loving congregation.

Chalice Lighting – Rev. Shawn Newton, Toronto First

We kindle this chalice,
the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

May it burn for us as a beacon of enduring hope
for all who share our free faith, near and far.

May its light lead us ever onward to build up a better world,
knowing that we are never alone in this good work.

Jeff - Affirmation – Peterborough

Affirmation of Community

With the delight and joy of friends and family raising our spirits,
we gather here in peace.
With the awe and enchantment of creation dancing through our senses,
we gather in faith.
With the worries and woes of the world weighing upon us,
we gather in hope.
Together, with peace, faith, and hope we commit ourselves:
to strengthen this beloved community of connection, and
to build its future for those who will follow us.
Together, with peace, faith, and hope we offer ourselves:
to nurture our ties with Unitarian Universalists beyond these walls, and
to grow a wider, liberal religious movement of justice, acceptance, and sustainability.
As we have made this space and time holy by our gathering,
so let us create a planet that all may truly call a holy habitat.

Joys and Concerns – Rev. Julie Stoneberg, Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

Many of us have had the experience of showing up for a volunteer job...Habitat for Humanity, the Community Food Pantry, an emergency relief site...where we come prepared to do the work at hand, and where we are put to work with people we might not otherwise have met...working together across divisions such as religion, class, and geography. It is also a common experience to come away from such volunteer jobs having made fast friends. In this we learn that it is in the sharing of our lives...in shared labour, shared endeavor, shared concern...that we make connections.

Each Sunday in this religious community, we take a few moments to allow for sharing and deep listening...that we might know each other...that we might experience being known...and that we might flourish in our work together. I invite you now *to come to light and candle and to share something of your life with us.* (or whatever is appropriate for the community.)

Reading – Rev. Wayne Walder, Neighbourhood Congregation

We Unitarian Universalist are a fiercely independent bunch. Our history is filled with individual accomplishment. Even our insights are described personally. We say, I have a healthy skepticism, or I can speak truth to power or I hear the still small voice within, and we are often talking about ourselves. This independence has been effective in many ways and it has strengthened our personal understandings.

Yet the development of our individuality is not always helpful when we try to work together. Working together is tough. There are egos to deal with and some people just like to hear the sound of their own voice. Taking part in a “we” is something many of us find difficult, when we have been working on “me”, for a long time.

When one congregation tries to work with another, the potential problems can be daunting. How do “we” make decisions? How do “we” handle hurt feelings or stepped on toes? Who sets the agenda? Does one congregation do more work or get more credit?

In our recent past, many congregations we have quietly avoided working together. We may have forgotten how to speak occasionally and effectively with one voice.

Maybe it is time to work together again. With almost half our congregations flirting with bankruptcy, with little growth of our theology in at least a decade, with a reasonable number of our congregations confused over their mission, maybe it is time to work together, not to save the world, but to consolidate and strengthen our voice. We ignore our collective health at the peril of our very survival.

It will take time. We will need to develop some skills and trust each other. Interdependence is not a magic wand to be waved in fantasy. It is first, an awareness and then a skill.

If we want the world to change, maybe we should show the world how we are doing it among ourselves.

Meditation – Rev. Felicia Urbanski, Waterloo

By Richard Nugent, adapted by Felicia Urbanski (To be read responsively, followed by silence)

One: We are not alone.

All: We are a Community.

One: We are a community that has been created,

All: and is now creating a world different than that which we inherited.

We are not alone.

One: We are a Community of seekers.

All: Together, we are enriched by our diverse spiritual paths.

We are not alone.

One: We are a Community of believers.

All: We each have embraced Truth as we have come to understand it and experience it. We are not alone.

One: We are a Community of love.

All: We nourish and support one another in our own growth and in the development of our own ministries. We are not alone.

One: We are a Community mindful that we are a part of a larger community that encircles all of the known and unknown.

All: We are No One Thing. We are Every Thing.

One: Guided by the Light of this flame:

All: Let us respect our diversity, Let us proclaim our truth, Let us learn from each other, Let us walk mindfully along the Path of Life remembering that We are not alone, but we are together.

One: Truth is greater than the individual.

All: We are not alone. We are a Community.

Offertory Words – Rev. Laurie Thomas, London

If you have found love and acceptance here,
If you have found home here,
If you have known kindred spirits here,
Let this be a token of gratitude for our common life,
To build the common good

Closing Words – Rev. Christine Hillman, Olinda

May our hearts which beat as one to live life fully,
our minds which stretch in connection beyond our wildest expectations,
and our hands which touch and work together to craft the future
lift up the meaning, the strength and the covenant of these our Unitarian
Universalist religious communities.