



101 Reasons I'm a Unitarian Universalist

*A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE
Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga
February 17, 2008*

HYMN 389, Gathered Here

MINISTER. Good morning. Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Jeff Briere; I'm the minister of this congregation. Let's begin our service with Hymn 389, "Gathered Here."

ANNOUNCEMENTS & GREETINGS

Maddie. Our worship service will begin shortly, but first, here are a few announcements: Our religious education program is led by

Jamie Sullivan. Please see Jamie or me and we'll tell you how you can help make a difference. After the service today, please join us for a time of fellowship and conversation. Fellowship events are organized by Adam Couch and he could use your help afterwards to clean and straighten up the place. We had the carpet cleaned this week, and your assistance in keeping it clean is appreciated.

The choir is back to rehearsing on Thursday night, Spirit of Life meets Thursday night and Wednesday Night Out is at Pizzeria Venti on Frazier Avenue. At 2 pm today, right here in the sanctuary, Steve Hollingsworth and George Olin will be joined by several other musicians and singers in a presentation of music by Brahms, Schubert, Joplin and others. See Steve or George for more information.

Looking ahead, Bnai Zion Synagogue is hosting their annual Brotherhood/Sisterhood Shabbat on the 22nd. You are invited to an excellent shabbat meal and services. The sign up sheet is posted on the door next to the kitchen. We'll send it to the synagogue tomorrow, so this is your last chance to register.

The choir is hosting a coffeehouse on Sadie Hawkins Day—that's the last day of this month. It happens right here in the sanctuary on February 29th, beginning at 7 pm. Please dust off your kazoo, your bagpipes or your washtub bass and come out to this coffeehouse and entertain us with your unique talents. Or dust off your applause-makers (your hands) and support those who entertain you. Carl Hansen is taking names and arranging the event, so see him to register your act. Singers, poets, actors, jugglers, sketch artists, youngsters, oldsters—everyone is invited, no matter what your talent is. Whatever it is that you do that no one else can do, we want to see it. The theme of the evening is love—in all its glorious variety. This event is definitely family-friendly.

A complete listing of announcements is included with the bulletin and is available on our web site. The best way to find out what's

going on around here is to receive weekly announcements via e-mail. To do that, please see Chris in the office. I invite you now to extend a hand of warmth to two or three people near you. And make a special effort to find someone you don't know and make that person feel welcome. So please rise now and greet your neighbors. *[Meet & Greet]*

[Chime] Thanks so much for joining us in worship today. We hope you find the service rewarding and that you leave here inspired and uplifted.

- Please note the emergency exit over here to my right,
- now is the time to put your cell phone in "Worship Mode,"
- childcare for the young and the restless is available downstairs in the nursery,
- and the arm chairs here in the Sanctuary are for those who need a little support when standing.
- If you have a particular joy or sorrow or something you'd like added to the prayer of the people, please clearly write it on an index card and drop it in the basket back there. You may sign it or not, as you wish.

The membership committee took over the kitchen today and prepared a nice reception for our new members. Pat O'Brien and Elaine Hill baked the best cupcakes in Tennessee, so we hope you can join us after the service. For a prelude, Kate chose a piece by Michael Scott. This is "Open Roads."

PRELUDE: Open Roads

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

In the light of truth and the warmth of love,
we gather to seek, to sustain, and to share.

STORY: Stick Together

There once was a woman who had three children. Her name was—mom.

The eldest child was a boy and he was named after his father, Lawrence. Everyone called him Larry. The middle child was a girl and she had long curly hair, so everyone called her Curly. The youngest child was also a girl and her name was Mo-rine. Larry, Curly and Mo-rine.

Now mom loved her children very much. And the children loved mom. But the children didn't like each other very much. As a matter of fact, they argued a lot. Larry fought with Curly, Curly called Mo-rine nasty names and Mo-rine threw things at Larry. It was not a pleasant scene.

Now mom was worried about her kids. What, she thought, would become of my family? I have spoken to each of my children, I have told them that it's important to live in peace. But they will not forgive and forget.

One day, mom got an idea as she rested on the couch. She called her children to her side and asked the eldest to bring a bundle of sticks. Like this.

"Now, children," she said, "I want you to break this bundle of sticks in two."

Larry grabbed the bundle and said "Stand back, everybody. This might get messy." He put one hand here and the other hand here and he tried to break the bundle in two, but he could not.

Curly said, "Gimme the bundle, you weakling. Who can't break a bundle of little sticks in two?" She put one hand here and the other hand here and she tried to break the bundle in two, but she could not.

Mo-rine said, "Excuse me, you two weaklings. Lemme show you how it's done." She put one hand here and the other hand here and she tried to break the bundle in two, but she could not.

"Now untie it," said mom. "Each of you take one stick and try to break it." The kids had no problem breaking the sticks in two.

"You are like these sticks," said mom. "If you stick together, no one and nothing can hurt you. But if you say ugly things to each other, if you fight and if you throw things at each other, you will only break yourself."

What's the moral of this story? *Stick together.*

So. In order to stick together, what would you have to do? Forgive each other. Say, "I'm sorry." And mean it.

What can you do together that you cannot do if you are apart? Play a game.

OFFERTORY: Miss Emily's Attic

I have a musical question for you this morning: What's the difference between two-four and four-four?

In 2-4, there are two beats to the measure. Kate could you demonstrate that for us?

In 4-4, there are four beats. Kate could you demonstrate that for us?

You can play the same melody in each time signature, but the feeling is different; I like to think that 4-4 gives you a little more time to appreciate the music.

While drumming with Jimmy Lunceford's band, Jimmy Crawford

had a difference of opinion with arranger Sy Oliver. Sy liked a two-beat feeling and wrote directions on the drum part for Jimmy to stay in two on the ride-out chorus of his arrangements. Jimmy preferred a four-four beat when the band began to ride out, and ignored Oliver's instructions.

After the band played, Sy collared Jimmy and said, "Why don't you play in two there? What's wrong with two-beat?"

Jimmy answered, "What's wrong with two-beat is, there are two beats missing!"

We'll collect the morning offering now, for the support and ministry of this church and the children may give their offering now. If you see any beats missing in the plate, well, you have my permission to add in as many as needed. As always, the Dolores Wood-Louis Wilhoit Memorial Food Bank is happy to accept your donations of non-perishable food and household items, and the collection basket for that is by the front door. And thank you very much for your generosity. If you wish to light a candle of personal joy or sorrow, you may step up here and Mary will assist you.

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

Spirit of life and love, we are profoundly thankful for the blessings we experience everyday. Would that we recognize what is truly valuable to us every day and be thankful for it. Kate, please lead us in our hymn of thanksgiving. The words are in your program.

Oh, we give thanks for this precious day,
For those gathered here and those far away,
For this time we share with love and care,
Oh, we give thanks for this precious day.

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.

We are saddened by the news of Ricardo Cruz's death. He was brother to Rebecca Cruz and friend to all. Rebecca went to Murfreesboro earlier this week to be with her family and Jeff Styles took her boys up there Friday. She may not want to talk right now, but a card would certainly be appropriate. You can send the cards to her at the address of Leslie Walters in the directory.

In these moments of silence, let us hold close to our hearts all those who suffer in this world, especially those who suffer the wrath of natural forces and those who suffer the fallout of war.

Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

ROGER. Today our community is enlarged in number and in spirit by several people who join us. If you would please look at both sides of your insert and note your part in this welcoming ceremony. New members, please step forward as I call your name and line up along the wall over here. And bring that insert with you.

Christian Corey
Crystal Parker
Carl Hansen
Nancy Beel
Time Kleve
Patricia Allen

Jan Allen
Tim Trussell-Smith
April Trussell-Smith
Daniel Wilson
Renee Lindley

[After they are assembled, to them.] Today, you enter a community of people who believe that we never stop growing, that we are fragile human beings who learn best from each other. We do not have all of the answers, but here you find people who live joyfully and creatively

in the gray area. Here you will find comrades and compatriots in your search for justice and peace. Here are links to the interdependent web of life. We welcome you as members of this religious society.

CONGREGATION: We rejoice when you walk with us in our quest for community, justice, and love. Your presence encourages and strengthens our communal life. We accept our responsibility to include you in this free and open church.

ROGER. We invite you to join us in our pursuit of justice, to share our spiritual journey, to challenge us and to reflect on a life lived fully. We ask you to walk with us in freedom, trusting your instincts and reason, sharing your hopes and fears, your joys and your sorrow. As Margaret announces your name, please sign your name in our Registry of Members, and stand next to her on the opposite side of the sanctuary.

MARGARET. *Freedom Riders* is her favorite, but movie-holic **Crystal Parker** says she likes just about all movies. She works as a bartender at a billiards club, so she does not attend the Pagan Group as often as she would like. Crystal's grandparents went to a very conservative university and religion seemed to be about death and going to hell or not going to hell. She comes to this church because religion is not shoved down her throat.

Christian Corey works at Convergys. His hobbies are playing guitar, drawing, video games and listening to CDs of which he has many. He attends the Pagan Group. Christian enjoys being in a church environment that is nonjudgmental. He likes the laid-back atmosphere at our church.

Carl Hansen is married to Ginny Stone. He has two adult children who live in Virginia. He enjoys cooking, singing—he is a welcome addition to our choir—and acting. In 2006 Carl and a friend did a night club act as Nick and Nora Claus. Yes, that's Santa Claus and

wife. Carl describes himself as a fugitive Episcopal priest. He wanted to study for the priesthood, but his supervisor refused to recommend him, he said, because Carl could not suffer fools in silence. He does not expect to have that problem here.

Nancy Beel and Tim Kleve moved here from San Diego where they attended a Unitarian Universalist church. Tim says its nice to have four seasons again. He is originally from Ohio. Tim teaches math at Baylor School. He enjoys golf and biking. Nancy enjoys crafts; she has just added knitting to her skills. She enjoys reading poetry and writing it, too. Nancy is an ex-Catholic who finds us nonjudgmental. Tim feels comfortable in this church because we are welcoming regardless of belief systems. Nancy and Tim are hoping to become foster parents soon as they were in San Diego. Today is Nancy's birthday. Happy Birthday and welcome.

Jan Allen and Trish Allen are sisters from Collinsville, Alabama. That's about 73 miles from here, according to Google Maps. After their father's death a counselor told Jan and Trish to try to get out in the community more often. They attended several church services but found there was too much emphasis on hell and blame. They looked on Craig's List and found Unitarian Universalism. And this church was the closest one. Jan and Trish say it is well worth the 90-minute drive to attend our church. They want a church that is about improving oneself, not one that worries about everyone's sins and shortcomings. Jan is very interested in photography and likes to surf the Internet and write fiction. Trish likes to read mysteries and is committed to supporting animal rights. Both enjoy fishing and hiking.

April Trussell-Smith and Tim Trussell-Smith are recent college graduates who have been married about a year and a half. Tim has decided to study for the ministry and is busy completing applications. I hope everyone heard his inspiring talk two weeks ago explaining why he wants to study, live and work within the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism. Although April started religious studies at

Wake Forest, she decided to pursue an advanced degree in English. She teaches English at Miller-Motte Technical College. Our welcoming and reception of Tim and April is bittersweet, for we know they will leave us in the fall. They are looking for a place with schools where both can pursue their goals.

Daniel Wilson is interested in learning about many things: books, computers, mechanical things, cars. He is a movie fanatic. He dabbles in music as a sound tech. Daniel's grandfather taught him that knowledge is power. He hopes to go to college and study medicine. Daniel says he is a devout Christian, but he comes to this church because it is a comfortable place where he can talk to anybody. There are diverse viewpoints, but all are treated equally. People listen to each other and exchange ideas.

Renee Lindley is from North Carolina and has been a Unitarian Universalist for about ten years. She is an account executive with an office machine company and lives in Cleveland with one of her two adult children and two puppies—a Great Pyrenees and a Husky. Renee likes to cook a variety of dishes and watches the *Food Network* for ideas. She describes herself as an avid reader who is seeking to evolve spiritually. She has been reading the series of books by Neale Donald Walsch called, *Conversations with God*.

MINISTER. I welcome you to our congregation. I charge you to hold our religious society close to your hearts and work to keep it vibrant and meaningful to you, for this church can only be what you make it. I charge the congregation to accept our new members with joy and embrace them as you now do one another, for they are now truly one with us. I charge us all to treat each other with compassion and understanding, for only with love will we survive.

NEW MEMBERS. We accept membership in this congregation as a gift as well as a responsibility. May our connections be strengthened day by day and year by year, and may the web of community be enhanced as we nurture and challenge one another.

ROGER. On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, I welcome you into membership and full participation in this community. We hope to earn your trust and come to know you in true religious community.

CONGREGATION. We welcome you to our midst in the spirit of freedom. May your days among us be long and full; and may we prove worthy of your trust as we travel together.

MINISTER. I encourage all new members and anyone interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism and the history of this church, to register for UU 101, which will be taught by those famous UU junkies, Daidee Springer and Steve Hollingsworth. Class meetings are Tuesday evenings in March and the sign-up roster is on the minister's office door.

HYMN 318, We Would Be One

SERMON: 101 Reasons

Ever since President Clinton was impeached because he was less than forthcoming about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, we have not lacked for jokes about interns. It was my misfortune to start my internship in the final year of the Clinton presidency, so I heard several of those jokes—which I will not repeat here. My internship was a good one, and I thank the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale for putting up with me for a year and helping me to understand ministry better.

The process of finding an internship is not easy—or it wasn't in those days. I hope the seminaries and the churches and the Unitarian Universalist Association have brought some order to what I thought was a free-for-all. There is a lot of freedom in this religious tradition—too much freedom in some places, in my opinion. You would think that the UUA would try to place interns, or assist in the

process somehow, but such is not the case. So everyone studying for the ministry is “free” to find the internship he or she desires. The process is chaotic, and to this wanna-be minister, it was intimidating.

Not many congregations can afford to pay an intern, and very few have the desire to help train an intern. Settled ministers are not always keen on having an understudy. Adding supervisory duties to a minister's already-full plate is dangerous. An intern committee has to be appointed, and we know how hard it is to find volunteers for committee work. Many conditions have to be met for an internship to be productive.

In 1999, I was in a fix, because I could not find an internship. A friend suggested that I call Ed Searl, the minister at Hinsdale, so I did. I don't know where I found the temerity to ask him to supervise me, to pay me, to guide me and to put up with me, but I did. And he agreed, God bless him. I don't know why he trusted me, a stranger, with his congregation, but he did. It was my great good fortune to hang out with him for a year and learn what I could about church administration, pastoral care, preaching and leading the spiritual life of the congregation.

Ed is a writer, and he wrote these books. He also wrote half of this book. This is *101 Reasons I'm A Unitarian Universalist*. He wrote half and I wrote the other half. We published it on an office copier eight years ago. It's a slim little volume containing 101 different tidbits that pertain to Unitarian Universalism. There's some history, some biography, some sociology, some denominational stuff, some humor, some personal anecdotes and a little sex. It's not heavy reading and you could probably plow through it in one sitting.

Our stewardship campaign will begin in about a month, and to get it off to an early start, I will present a pre-publication copy of this book to the first ten people who renew their pledge today. If you increase your pledge, I will autograph the book and inscribe it to your satisfaction.

I say pre-publication copy, because this book will soon go national. Ed called me the other day and asked if I had the original file because he wants to publish and distribute it nationally. So before it's available to the general public, Ed and I thought we should give you a sneak peek, a preview of the contents. In about an hour—Hinsdale is on Central Time—Ed will read a few passages from this book, and in a few minutes, I will read from this book. It seems to be a good way for our new members to learn a little bit about this thing we call Unitarian Universalism.

The book is not laid out in chapters or anything like that. It's a series of 101 paragraphs, fifty by Ed and fifty-one by me. See if you can identify the writer.

One reason I am a Unitarian Universalist is “Deeds, Not Creeds.” This expression probably originated in the first half of the 20th century, and, like all quips, it doesn't tell the whole story. But it tells enough. It suggests that Unitarians were more interested in making the world a better place than making their place in the world to come. To coin another phrase, they tended to put more faith in action than action in faith. Today, Unitarian Universalism is a non-creedal faith. We have no profession of belief required for membership. This opens up the entire history of the universe for our inspiration and guidance. It also leaves us with a horrendous burden. How to make sense of it? A creedal faith purports to order the world for you. But as far as I'm concerned, I'd rather have the puzzle than the answer. [JB]

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgender rights belong to a general greening of American culture and society in the post-WWII era. Our denomination led the way among religions to affirm these rights. Unitarian Universalists resolved at the 1970 General Assembly to end discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals. In 1975, the UUA created an Office of Gay Affairs. Beginning in 1989, The Welcoming Congregation program has led congregations through a process to explore overt and latent homophobia and to create a culture of openness and acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered

persons. [ES]

By the way, we should be proud that Dolores Wood led this congregation through that process and that we are a Welcoming Congregation.

Another reason that I am a Unitarian Universalist is that I am fascinated by the difference between the cultures of the two UU churches in my home town. One church had a Unitarian heritage and the other was Universalist and their cultures had not changed since the 19th century. Today they are both UU churches and although they are less than a mile apart, they don't interact as much as you might imagine. The culture of their founders lives on. I concluded that the Unitarians were cerebral and the Universalists were emotional. That thought has occurred to many people and you can find ample evidence in the literature of both churches of a dichotomy between mind and body, between piety and practice and between salvation by love or by character. Thomas Starr King observed that “The Unitarians think they are too good to be damned by God and the Universalists think that God is too good to damn them.” I feel truly fortunate to draw on the power of the head and the strength of the heart as I live out the tradition of Unitarian Universalism. [JB]

Another reason is that flowers in the chancel area or on the altar was not looked upon favorably by Protestants of the 19th century. They saw flowers in the church as a form of paganism, which was a cipher for the so-called corruptions of the Catholic church. The Unitarian minister Theodore Parker gathered in the 1840s and 1850s the largest congregation in North America, received the humble bouquets his congregants presented him. Rather than put them out of sight, Mr. Parker placed these flowers in front for all to enjoy. Herewith started the custom of flowers in Protestant churches. Artful flower arrangements continue to be a signature of contemporary Unitarian Universalism. [ES]

Another reason is that at some point, you have to let go of the

establishment or join it. For William Ellery Channing and the liberal Christians he represented, that moment came on May 5th, 1819 at the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore. Channing agreed to preach at the service and his sermon, “Unitarian Christianity,” defined Unitarians as separate from the orthodox in several important ways that remain with us today. Channing presented these points as held by his liberal colleagues: an interpretation of the Bible guided by reason and science, the unity of God, the rejection of the Trinity, a belief in the unity of Jesus and a disavowal of his dual nature, the moral perfection of God, the mediation, but not atonement, of Jesus and the virtue of love for God and others. The sermon was published within a month and it is reputed to be most widely read American publication of its time. [JB]

Another reason is that the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, in 1971, published excerpts of the Pentagon Papers, a top secret account of how the US became ensnared in the Vietnam War. A Justice Department injunction and a Supreme Court decision put these publishers at risk. Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska released the Pentagon Papers as official communication to his constituency. Mr. Gravel sought a publisher to publish the papers and only Beacon Press—the publishing house of the Unitarian Universalist Association—was willing to take the risk. They published in September, 1971 the Senator Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers in four volumes. The Justice Department lost interest in prosecuting Beacon Press and Mr. Gravel when Watergate turned Richard Nixon’s administration upside down. [ES]

Another reason is that we aren’t done yet. That’s a phrase you hear now and again. We aren’t done yet. But when have you heard that in reference to religion? Unitarian Universalism isn’t done yet. We talk about a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. A search. An on-going organized plan to find something true and meaningful. And when we find that true and meaningful something, there will be another search, because there isn’t only one true and meaningful thing out there to find. We aren’t done yet. [JB]

But we are done with this service, or almost done. Right after the service last week, Daidee told me that I forgot to extinguish the chalice. I’m sorry. Old habits die hard. Let’s extinguish it now. The unison reading is in the bulletin.

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

We extinguish this flame,
but not the light of its truth
the warmth of this community
nor the fire of our commitment.
These we carry in our hearts
and share with all the world.

POSTLUDE: We Shall Go Out With Joy