

Song List

- 118 This Little Light of Mine
- 318 We Would Be One (Finlandia)
- 347 Gather the Spirit
- 311 Let It Be A Dance

Gathering music: Johanna Stacy

Announcements: Board Member

Bell: Board member

Prelude: Johanna Stacy

Introduce speaker

Call to Worship

At Sunrise

May we rise each morning
with vitality and well being.

May we partake good food,
clean water, pure air

May we gather in community
to share this great bounty.

... Come, let us worship together.

Chalice lighting

We are a Unitarian Universalist faith community. Each week we join thousands of others around the world in rekindling the steady flame of our shared faith as we light the chalice. In this precious time we gather to gaze into each other, out at the vast galaxies, and into our own depths, that by knowing the source we might make the fire stronger and yet not be consumed. We light this chalice to call us here, into this room, into this community, into this sacred place and time.

Please rise as you are able and begin each sentence with me saying, "We light this chalice." And so we say together,

Congregation: *We light this chalice*

*We light this chalice,
for the light of truth,*

*We light this chalice,
for the warmth of love,*

*We light this chalice,
for the fire of commitment.*

*We light this chalice,
As a symbol of our faith, as we gather together.*

Opening hymn:

Please remain standing and join in singing our opening hymn #18, *This Little Light of Mine*.

Welcoming visitors:

Each week we open our doors wide and welcome both old friends and new faces. Please raise your hand if you are visiting us for the first time, if you wish to and only if you wish. John will bring you the microphone to introduce yourself and tell us where you are from.

Thank you and welcome. Please join us in the community room for coffee after the service.

Reading

- 1) World Health Organization, 1947 “Health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
- 2) Daniel Callahan 1991 What Kind of Life (p. 103) “The paradox of health is that it is both acutely personal and consummately public. Its personal side is evident. Our individual bodies become ill and are threatened with death. We get sick and die one by one. The pain and suffering that accompany illness are intensely private, directly known only to ourselves and by others only through our testimony. We never feel quite so alone, so isolated, as when we are ill; our pain, anxiety, and suffering turn us in upon ourselves. We alone can find meaning or cause for despair, in the experience of sickness.

Yet health is no less public than private. Our illnesses affect the lives of those around us, sometimes because our disease is contagious, and sometimes because our private suffering can bring anguish to others and the need for their care.... While we experience our suffering alone, the love and help of others can significantly lighten its burden.”

Hymn:

Please rise now and join in singing #318 *We Would Be One* (Finlandia).

Spoken meditation

Let us gather ourselves in the spirit of meditation, for words followed by silence

Spoken meditation

Joseph Fisher Living Religion, 1993(p 234)

Give us, God of our conscience,
The intuition and the wisdom
To decide justly and to act courageously,
With confidence in the worth of our values
Without which decision and action
Can never lift the human spirit.

Silent meditation musical response: Johanna Stacy

Responsive Reading

Please remain seated and join in reading #562 “A Lifelong Sharing” by Mother Theresa.

Love cannot remain by itself
– it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action
and that action is service.

Whatever form we are,
able or disabled,
rich or poor,

It is not how much we do,
But how much love we put in the doing;
A lifelong sharing of love with others

Offering:

Commitment Margaret W. Fisher

Not very far away a homeless man and woman wander through the streets in lonely desolation.
Not very far away a child is frightened and alone, and no one hears his cry.
Not very far away sheer ignorance denies an opportunity to build a decent life, and desperation turns to crime.
Not very far away injustice born of prejudice results in ethnic epithets and bigotry,
And those who should be friends are polarized by pressures from their peers.
Not very far away the fear of violence and wars reduces hope to bleak despair.

And from the pulpit and the podium our ministers and politicians seek solutions to these ills,
And in our congregations we are in accord that something must be done:
The church should be more activist.
The government should do a better job or else stay out.
Indeed, we'll give some time ourselves and give some money, too, and hope that it will help.
The test of our commitment, though, is not the words we speak or contributions that we make,
But in the way we live our lives, in kindnesses we show, In understanding and respect we feel for
others whom we meet. Commitment comes from deep within —from love and genuine concern.

Commitment is not measured out in hours or in money that we spend.
It's not defined in caucuses or creeds,
But our commitment finds its roots in our sincerity, integrity and will.
It's not enough to speak, though speak we must —It's not enough to spend, though spend we
must —It's not enough to pray and work, to legislate and vote —Though all of these indeed we
must. For this is all consistent with our cause.

Humanity lies deep within the fiber of our being for we are one with humankind.
If there is truly meaning to our words and prayers,
Then reverence for life will guide decisions that we make
That we may find commitment in our lives and work
And help to make our dreams reality.

The offering will now be given and received. If you are a first time visitor, please let the plate
pass you by, for your presence is your gift. Let the ushers now pass amongst you.

Please join me in reading the words in the Order of Service

Congregational response: For these and all gifts of our community, we are grateful.

Joys and Sorrows:

In the life of a congregation there are triumphs and trials for all of us and for each of us. This is
the time that we set aside in our service to lift up the joys and the sorrows of our lives. Please
stand and take the microphone, introduce yourself and in very brief words tell us your joy or
sorrow.

For all we have heard and all that goes unspoken in our hearts, we light this candle.

Please join me in reading the response printed in the Order of Service:

Congregational Response:

Thus do we weave our lives together.
We mourn. We rejoice. We will remember.

Musical interlude: Johanna Stacy

Hymn

Please rise as you are able and sing #347 *Gather the Spirit*

Sermon

“Common Health”

Calling all listeners. We need you to join our dialogue on health in Maine

The medicalization of health in America has reached crisis proportions. As a nation we spend more on health care, twice as much as most developed nations, putting ourselves, our families and our nation into the poor house. Yet, the results of ever costlier health care are mixed at best. For the first time in American history our children’s life expectancy may be less than our own. Chronic diseases and their precursors including insufficient exercise, unhealthy diets, substance abuse and psychological stress are taking a toll on our lives and the nation’s fiscal solvency. Surely there is a better way.

This is Jim Fisher of the Hancock County Planning Commission and host of Common Health. I’m here to moderate. Your job is to call in with your prescriptions for healthy people and healthy environments.

This is a live show, so feel free to interrupt me at any time and share your ideas, questions and comments.

And so begins another in what has stretched out to be a five year series of monthly radio broadcasts on public health that I have moderated.

The role of talk show moderator is challenging and a lot of fun. Most of the work happens well ahead of the program, identifying a topic, maintaining a website, finding and recruiting guests, outlining a script that will propel the program for an hour, but that can and usually is dropped when callers stack up with their questions and prescriptions for a healthier society. I hope some of you will consider becoming radio talk show hosts. Some of you may already do this.

While the entire process is fun, the live broadcast is clearly a high point. President Barack Obama chronicles his youth, overcoming obstacles and mobilizing communities in “The Audacity of Hope.” For me, Common health expresses my audacity of hope as hundreds or thousands of us spend an hour engaging in dialogue about how we can make this place, our home healthier.

WERU is the “voice of many voices” The station provides me with a sandbox, a plastic shovel and 60 minutes in which to bring important issues (and some humor) to listener. If you haven’t heard the program (shame on you), I pick a topic from an endless list of public health issues such as air quality, domestic violence, hospice care and art therapy. I invite one to four guests, including some members from this congregation, I suggest what we might discuss and we go live. The many in many voices include listeners that call in during the hour and I hope others that continue the dialogue at home, work, recreation, social gatherings or in their minds. More often

than not we do not have easy solutions, but I think we need to talk through our choices and seek common ground.

While the topics are diverse, there are a few core issues that I want to stress this morning.

- I believe that our health is a common good and not a service to be sold to the highest bidder. Our individual well being is dependent upon our collective well being.

Historically we understood this as contagious disease took a tremendous toll on our common health. As epidemics like small pox, bubonic plague and influenza ravaged populations, we came to understand that solutions included improving our diet, cleaner water supplies, controlling rat populations or changing our sexual behaviors.

Medicine has also played a significant role in controlling epidemics. Medical programs, particularly immunization programs change our collective resistance or tolerance of specific diseases on a population basis. That is a great many of us need to be immunized for any of us to be protected, but our perception as shifted. Medicine is a private good. We pay for it. It is individualized. Sometimes we lose sight of the whole, our common health, in pursuit of the one.

Science has helped us to understand the root causes of contagious diseases. Whereas in a time of greater mystical awareness we might have attributed illness to the evil eye, most of us now understand that germs travel their own path quite apart from human intention. The same process of scientific discovery has helped us to understand mental health in a very different light. There is much more to be learned, but one by one we have learned to understand diseases as a natural process rather than a supernatural process.

- With some very notable exceptions like HIV-AIDS, our health challenges in the US have evolved from managing acute, contagious diseases to managing chronic diseases that have environmental and behavioral roots.
 - 1) Many of you can list the prevalent chronic diseases in America. Among the primarily physical diseases we include heart disease, diabetes, cancers of all sorts, osteoporosis, asthma and a potpourri of gastrointestinal and allergic conditions.
 - 2) Mental health is no less challenging, with chemical dependency, depression, anxiety, attention deficit, and other diseases that, like their medical counterparts, do not appear to be contagious, at least in the classical sense.
 - 3) A third category of chronic conditions are even less individualized, and take the form of social pathologies. Among these we can include violence, intolerance, racism and collective myopia.

The shift from contagious to environmental and behavioral driven chronic disease presents a number of challenging cultural and religious questions. The roots of our new epidemics most often boil down to two forms of responsibility.

- 1) Individual responsibility to eat, work and recreate in ways that do not cause undo harm. To cite two of my heroes:

Michael Pollen says in Omnivore's Dilemma, "Eat Food. Not too much. Mostly vegetables."

Richard Louv, in "Last Child in the Woods", stresses the importance of connecting with nature, of spending unplanned time walking in the woods or exploring along creek beds.

Individual responsibility is a pillar of American society. Freedom to choose includes making right choices, but also provides us with many opportunities, and it seems many incentives to make unhealthy choices.

A case in point is the pitched battle over tobacco use in America. The science is well understood and indisputable. Used as directed, tobacco is very likely going to sicken and kill smokers and people who breathe their second-hand smoke. We give people the right to enter an addictive relationship with a known carcinogen, but as our knowledge improves we look for ways to discourage public use that will harm bystanders.

Social institutions, like family, school and church help us to navigate between the sirens of temptation, between water and Coca-Cola, celery and cigarettes, long hikes and lazy boy recliners. I have seen religions of every stripe encouraging healthy choices. I have worked with catholic sisters visiting migrant farmworker camps in North Carolina to offer health screening, and I have listened in outdoor classrooms as Koranic teachers gave Bangladeshi children lessons in reading and writing, piety and sobriety.

Our church provides a place for the Loaves and Fishes food pantry, where families of limited means have the opportunity to bring home food that will meet their basic needs.

And, returning briefly to the issue of smoking, our church does not permit smoking in or near this building. We thus encourage members to quit, but we avoid ultimatums with respect to personal choice. At the same time, tobacco corporations are working very hard to encourage smoking. Their investments in addicting new smokers are far greater than our limited resources for prevention. Smoking rates in Maine were declining steadily for decades, but recent data suggest that the decline may be slowing or even reversing.

2) Our second responsibility is collective and I think creates the conditions for many of the choices we will have as individuals. Our collective responsibility is to preserve and create healthy environments, both built and natural. A healthy environment is not necessarily untouched wilderness. In fact a well designed city has many advantages in terms of opportunities to walk, conserve energy, purchase fresh foods and engage our minds in creative pursuits.

Our environmental decisions are long term, lasting decades at least, and the consequences are often poorly understood or appreciated. When we get it wrong with the environment our options change, sometimes permanently.

In recent years obesity has supplanted tobacco as public health's enemy #1. Excess weight contributes to numerous chronic diseases, most notably heart disease and diabetes. The

causes of sky-rocketing rates of obesity are well understood. If you consume more calories than you expend, then those calories are stored as fat. Fat may have been a good thing as an energy reserve for prehistoric man, but it seems we rarely need these reserves any longer.

What we chose to eat and how we chose to use our stored energy are personal choices, but consider how our natural and built environments circumscribe those choices.

How many people in this congregation walked to school when you grew up?

If you rode a bus, did the bus pick you up at your door step?

How many of you have children (or grandchildren) that walked to school or are walking to school now?

Our options, or our perception of our options, have changed. Usually reality and perceptions are both at play. The reality is that the shift of population from compact communities and cities to sprawling, automobile based suburbs and exurbs has made walking far less practical. Even where sheer distance is not limiting, the design of our communities in which the only public space is a shoulderless road feeds a dominating concern that our children will be squashed by cars or attacked by strangers as they attempt to walk to school or anywhere else. We conclude that it is better they watch television or play video games where at least we know they are safe, or we arrange for door to door delivery service, often sacrificing our own recreational time to act as a personal taxi service. Little did we realize that suburbanization is fattening.

Another unintended consequence of America's suburbanization has been the suburbanization of grocery stores. Rural areas have always have "food deserts" where healthy food supplies require a long drive for those fortunate enough to have cars. Some of Americas urban centers are also become food deserts, offering few local options for affordable, healthy food.

One thing is clear. Our decisions about our built environment are long term. We are unlikely to abandon the stock of housing built since the 1950s, even when rising energy costs challenge the viability of the private automobile economy. Instead, we are called upon to retrofit Americas cities, suburbs and rural communities to be walk-able and bike-able. This is no small task, but there is a lot of support for these efforts. I encourage you to walk the streets of Ellsworth. This small city has identified and is building dozens of sidewalk improvements to facilitate walking and thus provide choices for healthier lifestyles.

So, what is the role of our church in recognizing and improving our environment, or as I put it earlier, supporting our collective responsibility? What is the role of faith and our shared beliefs in making wise long-term decisions?

Historically Unitarian-Universalists may have had the edge among religions in America in recognizing the importance of protecting our natural and built environments. We recognize that this place, our home, is our collective responsibility. We have few illusions that somehow all problems will be made right through a miraculous intervention. If there is a flood, we are not expecting it to make all things right. But we have company. Religions, from liberal to evangelical, and certainly from Buddhist to Islam, are stepping forward with

the basic message that we must work for a sustainable planet, that health is a basic human right and anything less is a failure of conscience. The problems have become too large to ignore, as indeed have many of us.

In every church there are many bright lights and ours is no exception.

I met Pam Person before moving to eastern Maine as she pressed me, as a staffer at Central Maine Power join her advocacy for sustainable energy.

Tom Stipe turned his disability into a platform for mapping Ellsworth through his eyes and wheels. He created a map of the city that has become the organizing document for most of the current efforts to make this a walk-able (and wheel-able) community.

I don't know where to begin with Ann Ossanna. She has devoted much of her professional life to helping our neighbors ease from middle age into their senior and late senior years. At church she has helped us to recognize the fundamental importance of food and the crises of hunger felt here and throughout the world. Who else shall I embarrass? We are a remarkably public-minded group.

I will conclude with a call to action. Organizing Unitarian-Universalists is a bit like herding cats. I won't attempt to enlist you in my cause(s). Rather I will ask you to consider my bottom line. In all that we do, I hope that we will ask ourselves, "What does this mean for our common health?" Together, with a spirit of commitment, I think we can make a great difference. If we get it right, we'll also have a lot of fun.

Hymn

Please rise as you are able and sing #311 *Let it be a Dance*

Benediction

We've come to the end of our program for this month. Be sure and visit our website, commonhealth.org where you'll find helpful background on a variety of public health topics, including audio archives and a place for you to contribute questions for our future shows.

Common Health theme music was performed by Johanna Stacy.

Thanks to our guests from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ellsworth. Thanks to Jonathan Thomas for engineering and to our underwriters and members for supporting all of our sacred and secular programming.

Common Health airs on the third Wednesday of the month from 10 to 11, with support from the Hancock County Planning Commission.

Join us on September 16th for a dialogue about how health affects learning.

Thanks for listening and for your suggestions for future programs. Please stay another minute and enjoy the music, then join us for refreshments in the community hall.

This is Jim Fisher, wishing you good health.

-- Extinguish the flames --

Postlude: Johanna Stacy