

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Church of Ellsworth
Sunday Worship Service
February 19, 2017 10:30 AM**

James Fisher, Worship Leader

Invitation to Contemplative Listening	Jim Fisher	Time for All Ages	Jim Fisher
Gathering Music	Wayne Smith, Music Director	Offering	
Welcome & Announcements	UUCE Board Trustee	Joys and Sorrows	
Opening Words and Ringing of the Bowl	Jim Fisher	Meditation / Prayer	
Prelude	Wayne Smith	Meditative Hymn: 1027 Cuando el Pobre	
Call to Worship	Jim Fisher	Readings	
* Opening Hymn: 1020 Woyaya		Musical Meditation	Wayne Smith
Chalice Lighting		Sermon	<i>Lost and Found</i> James Fisher
Affirmation of Covenant #473 (Spoken in Unison)		* Closing Hymn: 188 Come, Come, Whoever You Are	
<i>Love is the spirit of this church, And service is its law. This is our great covenant. To dwell together in peace, To seek the truth in love, And to help one another.</i>		Closing Words: 692 If, here, you have found freedom	
		Postlude	
		Extinguishing the Chalice	
		*Please stand, if comfortable to do so.	

Invitation to Contemplative Listening

Jim Fisher

We Unitarian Universalists are by and large a gregarious lot. Recognizing this, we have a tradition of greeting in the halls before the service and again for coffee and conviviality after the service. Yet there are times we ask for a pause in joyous repartee, and an inward turn for deep reflection. This is one such time. Please center your thoughts, calm your souls and enjoy the music that Wayne has prepared to bring us into spiritual congregation.

Gathering Music

Wayne Smith, Music Director

Welcome & Announcements

UUCE Board Trustee

Opening Words and Ringing of the Bowl

Jim Fisher

"Whoever you are, whatever you bring, wherever you are on your journey--you belong here because you are here, and because in this special place, in these special moments, we bid one another welcome."

(Source: First Unitarian Congregation, Toronto whose partner church is Second Unitarian Church in Budapest Hungary)

Prelude

Wayne Smith

Call to Worship

Jim Fisher

This sunny Sunday morning, I invite you on a journey,
 With deep concern and great hope some of us will embark
 To seek a new land, a home that will sustain us and our children
 Where we are prized for our unique abilities. And,
 With deep concern and great hope some of us will remain
 To welcome the traveller seeking a new home
 With great hope for the unique gifts they bring.

* **Opening Hymn:** 1020 Woyaya (<http://thebirdsings.com/woyaya/>)

Woyaya was composed as a collaboration of seven South African musicians. The lyrics were written by Annie Masembe from Uganda.

We are going, Heaven knows where we are going, but we know within
 And we will get there, Heaven knows how we will get there, but we know we will
 It can be hard we know, And the road can be muddy and rough
 But we'll get there, Heaven knows how we will get there, but we know we will
 Woyaya...

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.

Affirmation of Covenant #473 (Spoken in Unison)

Love is the spirit of this church, And service is its law.

This is our great covenant.

To dwell together in peace, To seek the truth in love, And to help one another.

Time for All Ages

Lane Fisher

I'm New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien

(...an American who lives in Maine on Peak's Island now. When she was 7, she and her family moved to South Korea, where she learned what it was like to be new in an unfamiliar land. Her parents were medical missionaries there.)

I am new here. *Class, this is Maria.*

I am new here. *Boys and girls, please welcome Jin.*

I am new here. *We have a new student, everyone. Her name is Fatimah.*

Back home [says Maria] I knew the language. My friends and I talked all day long. Our voices flowed like water and flew between us like birds.

Here there are new words. I can't understand them. The sounds are strange to my ears.

Back home [says Jin] I could read and write. I shaped the letters and stacked them like blocks into words. The words opened like windows and doors into a story.

Here there are new letters. They lie on the page like scribbles and scratches. All the windows and doors are shut tight.

Back home [says Fatimah] I was part of the class. I knew just what to do. I fit in like one of the many stars in the night sky.

Here there are new ways. I cannot see the patterns. I cannot find my place.

[The teacher is asking Fatimah's class, "What could you draw to show how we live in community?"]

Here I am alone. Here I am confused. Here I am sad.

I say the new words again and again [says Maria]. They feel like rocks in my mouth. My tongue twists and stumbles on their edges.

One day I try new words. They do not flow or fly freely. But someone understands.

[Maria says, "I can ... play soccer?" And one of her schoolmates says, "Huh? Oh, sure."]

I am finding new friends. And they are finding me.

["She's on our team," says her schoolmate. "I got it!" says Maria.]

I write the letters over and over [says Jin]. I stare at the words. I look for a way to open them.

One day I write some new letters. They are not perfect. But I can read the words. *[Cat. Tree. Run.]*

I am learning from others. And they are learning from me.

["How to spell cloud?" asks Jin. His classmate answers: "C-L-O-U-D."]

This is cloud in Korean, says Jin. "Cool!" says his new friend.

[Fatimah says] I watch the new ways more and more. I try to see the patterns. I am scared I will make a mistake.

One day I try taking part. My knees tremble, and my heart pounds. But my teacher smiles.

["I will show you my picture," says Fatimah.]

And her classmate says, "Fatimah, you're a really good artist."]

I am sharing with others. And they are sharing with me.

Here there are new beginnings.

Here there is a place for me.

Here is a new home.

Offering

Erik Walker Wikstrom

Before: It is said, “The Lord loves a cheerful giver,” yet we’ll accept from a grouch as well. As the ushers prepare to take this morning’s offering, may each of us look into not just our wallets or our checkbooks to see how much we have with us. Let us look into our hearts, as well, and see what is available there—how much love, how much generosity, how much faith, how much gratitude, how much hope—and let us take our offering from that account. If you are visiting for the first time, let the plate pass you by. Your presence is a gift.

After: For the gifts which we have received—and the gifts which we, ourselves, are—may we be truly grateful. Yet more than that, may we be committed to using these gifts to make a difference in the world: to increase love and justice; to decrease hatred and oppression; to expand beloved community; to share, and to keep sharing, as long as ever we can. Amen.

Joys and Sorrows

Each week we invite members and visitors to briefly share a personal joy or sorrow such as a birth, death, move or significant family event. If you raise your hand >>>> will bring you a microphone.

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

Meditation / Prayer

First Leap - Jim Fisher

Start with binoculars
If you don't have a telescope
Look as far as the aided eye can see
Re-focus from near to far to near to far

Reach out to the edge of the galaxy
The edge of your imagination
Where the trail dissolves into wilderness
Where your light particles have dispersed to a faint glow

There look for the faint glow of others
Reaching out beyond their limits
Leaving their rational selves
And joining the universe of dreams

The soft, comingled light of uncertain futures
Discomfort of abandoned doctrines
No dogma star to guide you
Ponder a while, then leap.

Meditative Hymn: 1027 Cuando el Pobre
A meditation on Matthew 25: 31-46.

Readings

<http://www.uua.org/worship/collections/compassion-refugees>

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

(Source: Matthew 25: 34-40 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25:31-46>)

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

(Source: Leviticus 19:33-34)

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

(Source: "The New Colossus" *Emma Lazarus: Selected Poems and Other Writings* (1883))

Musical Meditation

Wayne Smith

Sermon

Lost and Found: Identity in a Foreign Land

James Fisher

I am here to fulfill a promise I made to my country when I returned to serve in the Peace Corps Response program in 2015 and 2016:

The Third Goal: To promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

Little did I know the added importance this third goal would have in the months that have followed.

In September, shortly after my return from a 10 month Peace Corps Response position in Aracataca, Colombia, Reverend Sara Hayman asked whether I would like to give a sermon here, as I have done several times in the past. She suggested the month of February when he would be away and the theme was to be Identity. OK, I practically begged on my knees to have another chance to do this. It's a challenge and an honor to prepare and deliver a Unitarian Universalist sermon to all of you this morning.

But, what a difference the ensuing months have made. The rise of bigotry, racism and religious intolerance in America leaves me stunned. Of the many appointments and pronouncements issued by the white house, that which hit me the hardest was the ban on refugees, severe curtailment on all immigration and the very clear targeting of religion as a criteria for coming to America.

In retrospect, the trend was evident for many years, with the sudden emergence of "Patriot Groups" during the Obama administration. ([Washington Post](#), 02/17/16) The resurgence of hate groups we thought had been relegated to history.¹ The altogether peculiar birther claims against president Obama's American citizenship. Who came up with that lie? The trend of rejecting facts and discrediting science. The denial that we are changing the planet's climate, acidifying the lakes and oceans and creating environments hostile to planetary survival. The scapegoating of the "other" for job losses attributable to corporate "rationalization" of production, economic restructuring and automation that continue to eliminate blue collar and increasingly eliminate white collar jobs.

And the anger I felt at my very limited ability to change the world because that's what Peace Corps volunteers do. We change the world. Don't we?

I invite you to join me on a personal journey as a migrant to foreign lands and as a host to those that would migrate to this land. All migration is the consequence of factors that push us from where we are and factors that pull us to a new place.

Some of us are migrants of opportunity. Though we may live good lives where we are, we believe that we have abilities and potentials that will enable us to live better lives in other places. Downeast Maine has experienced decades of out-migration as our youth embark on academic and professional careers. Some return, often waiting until retirement to do so.

In extreme cases we are pushed by war, floods, drought, famine, intolerance or other pressures so great that we simply have to go, with no destination other than away. We become refugees, or people seeking refuge, humbled by our inability to survive in our native lands and often mistreated by others that do not want us in their lands either.

Most migration has a bit of each. Even in desperate situations, refugees use the information they have to choose a destination. Economic opportunity, political tolerance, distance, climate, political acceptance, family connections and a multitude of other factors enter our imperfect calculations.

¹ Very recent data from the Southern Poverty Law Center identifies three groups. identified in Maine, American Nazi, Skinhead and AntiLGBT, but there are 917 hate groups identified nationally ([Southern Poverty Law Center](#)).

Climate change has always been a factor in migration, dating back to the end of the ice age 10,000 BC, when early civilizations moved to occupy lands hitherto uninhabitable as the higher latitudes emerged from thousands of years of glaciation. The process was slow, occurring over thousands of years. The world population was estimated to be between 1 and 10 million people. In 1975 the world population reached 4 billion. It currently stands at approximately 7.5 billion. Rapid warming of the climate is creating regions of our planet that are once again uninhabitable. Vast interiors of every continent are experiencing temperature increases and droughts that are rendering them to hot for humans. Densely populated coastal areas are experiencing greater severity of storms piled upon higher sea levels and salinization of land and drinking water. Some nations are so impacted that they too are becoming uninhabitable. Climate refugees are certain to present challenges that dwarf any that we have known. Policies that encourage the use of fossil fuels, particularly coal, will contribute to the immediacy and severity of this crisis.

The ice age, climate change, refugee flows in millions, or more probably in the billions are a lot to take-in. Simplistic answers, like building walls and banning refugees are tempting, but they are based on ideology, not science, and are doomed to fail. I don't have simple answers, but I have experiences that I'd like to share. They reflect on an alternative course made up of very small actions, interpersonal interactions that are the well spring of society.

Donna Madonna and I will celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary in two weeks. We met in Miami, Florida in July, 1979 during a three-day staging for about 60 newly recruited Peace Corps Volunteers headed for three months of training and two years of service spread out across the magnificent country of Ecuador. Most of us were fresh out of college, full of excitement, ready to change the world.

Since the inception of the Peace Corps in 1961, three goals have guided the work of volunteers.

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. (Technical service)
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.



I was quite sure that the first goal, lending technical service, was the bottom line. When our projects appeared to be in ruins, consumed by drought or fall army worms, we would be content with “twoing and threeing it”.

Our program manager had the very good sense to put Donna and I in adjacent villages high in the Andes Mountains. We spent two years on foot, walking around our small villages, visiting farmers with our handbaskets of vegetable seeds, grafting tools, plans for solar showers and airtight woodstoves. We were foreigners, not much better off than our neighbors, and were received with warmth, support and deep interest in our culture. “Is it true that Americans only eat canned food?” “Is it true that Americans marry by contract?”

We baked the first pizzas, introduced coliflor verde (green cauliflower aka broccoli), hiked to the snow-capped mountains and down to the leafy jungles, ran countless plant trials, worked to reduce the use of toxic pesticides and no doubt transgressed one hundred cultural mores. In turn the good people of Pinguili and El Rosal feasted us on guinea pig in peanut sauce, mountains of rice and potatoes and large steaming bowls of Quaker Oats. Our hosts were living on the margin, with very small plots of land and a diminishing supply of irrigation. They shared beyond their means. I played on the home town soccer team (second string), we sang and danced, threw fists full of corn starch during carnival, attended mass and forgave others their trespasses as they forgave us.

I proposed to Donna on the peak of Llimpe, a relatively small mountain that divided the dry Andean plains from the steep descent to the upper Amazonian rainforests of the Rio Napo. We floated off that mountain, through years of graduate school, teaching, research, and parenting. We pursued my graduate research in Bangladesh and Donna's in Bolivia. After too many moves to count, we landed in Hancock County our home for almost two decades.

But feet grow restless and with an empty nest and the sense that I might still change the world, I rejoined the Peace Corps in September of 2015 for an 11 month Response position to facilitate the design of a new economic development program. This time I was bound for Aracataca, Colombia, birth place of Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez, and his mythical town of Macondo in Cien Años de Soledad or 100 Years of Solitude.

Heraclitus wrote, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man."

Truer words were never written. Much had changed.

My Ecuadorian village of Pinguili in 1980 had one central street, unpaved, with smaller paths leading off to homes. The population was probably in the hundreds. Aracataca in 2016 was a much larger town, with 35,000 people living in the center and another 15,000 living in peripheral areas.

There were no phones in Pinguili, Ecuador. In Aracataca you could buy minutes for your smart phone on almost every corner. In Pinguili there were no televisions. I'm not sure there was even a television signal. In Aracataca our host family had a giant flat screen TV next to our bedroom door. In Pinguili it was an event to see a car or truck come down Main Street. In Aracataca motorcycles moved in great swarms, rattle trap buses pounded over the ubiquitous speed bumps and pedestrians took great caution not to be flattened. In Pinguili we had two shops selling essentials like soap, salt, cigarettes and beer. The first supermercado arrived in Aracataca in 2016, offering multiple flavors of yogurt, cold cereal, coffee and frozen chicken.

In Pinguili we had one catholic church, visited only on occasion by a priest when funds were available. Small numbers of Pinguileños were flirting with evangelical protestant religion.

In Aracataca there was one Catholic Church and a few smaller Catholic chapels, but there were many dozens of charismatic protestant churches. I attended services in as many as I my patience would permit including catholic, Baptist, quadrangular or four square Baptist, Methodist and Pentecostal.

The Catholic services were ponderous and deliberate, following strict form including singing, sermon and communion. The priests adhered to Catholic doctrine and the measured, if not very exciting format practiced in the US.

The charismatic services lasted hours, with at least 30 minutes of singing prior to the service, often another 30 minutes of full throated calls to worship, sermons, confessions, speaking in tongues, more singing, many grand aplausos por Jesus, laying on of hands. Some of the churches were big with talented musicians playing electric guitars, keyboards and drums, some just had the drums, some were held on street corners and folding chairs. In short, these services were not unlike the catholic and charismatic services we have here. Many of the churches have partner churches in the US. As in the US, a majority of Cataqueros attend no church at all. I made many attempts to describe Unitarian Universalism, and believe I was no more successful there than I have been here. Despite my philosophical differences, I valued all of the churches in Aracataca. In a country torn by decades of civil war and guerilla fighting, the churches provided members with a sense of normalcy, support for sobriety and a reason to hope and to work for a better future. Was I pretending to believe, to be on the brink of conversion? I don't think so. I'm not certain that mattered. Everyone I met was happy to have me there.

In the 35 years between Ecuador and Colombia I had changed too. I was older, more delicate of frame and slower to learn, but more determined than ever to make use of my limited time. Rather than pursuing the recommended course of managing one or two pilot economic development projects, I took on about six, and had several more that I was desperate to try. I took on tourism promotion, small business assistance, internet

marketing, recycling, infrastructure, aceite de palma, and cacao para la paz (chocolate for peace). My age and education opened doors to teach in the community college, meet with regional leaders and still pursue the grass-roots programs that characterize the Peace Corps. With computers, internet access and much greater access to information, I was able to document what I was doing, create templates for future volunteers, maintain a presence on the internet and build critical relationships that I hope will propel future economic development initiatives.

Heraclitus also wrote, “The chain of wedlock is so heavy that it takes two to carry it [- and sometimes three.]” Living in a foreign land can strain or sustain relationships. Ours was tested sorely. Unsupportive Peace Corps policies on spousal visitation, the unrelenting heat, my very humble stipend, and precious little privacy put us to the test.

Yet, there are always compensations. We could not hike in the Andes, but we went on great bicycle adventures down mile after mile of flying-pan hot rocky roads to the foot hills of the Sierra Nevada, indigenous villages, across plantations of palm oil and bananas, to reach a favorite bakery, a cacao farm, to play music, attend festivals or simply to return exhausted and covered in dust and sweat.

While I think I was tolerated. I know that Donna was loved, deeply, by our adoptive family and many others. She took the time to be present, to join them in everyday tasks, to hang out. They loved our eccentricities and our constant mangling of costeño Spanish. One day Donna searched a barrio of Aracataca for a cousin, asking all if they knew where “Fideo” lived. People had to be amused, because Fideo means Noodle in Spanish. Our host family cousin, actually named Faride, is probably still kidded with her new nickname Noodle.

Another of my favorite memories is Donna dancing the Mapale on the street with a cross dressing hair dresser who’s shop was next door. Contrary to the images we see of anger and intolerance in the world, I believe that the world is experiencing a cultural revolution of tolerance; an explosion of good will and great excitement for the possibilities unleashed with unfettered intercultural exchange.

Goodwill, like trust, is earned. I do not doubt that while I worked at the most humble, perhaps imperceptible grass roots of Colombian economic development, the deep respect Colombians felt for the Obama administration supported my work and helped us to be a part of the Colombian experience. I think that we helped the Obama administration in our small way, by introducing Colombians to Americans that respected Colombian culture, language, arts, industry and traditions. I am deeply concerned that we are now losing ground in this great endeavor.

In 1966 Senator J. William Fulbright wrote,

“The attitude above all others which I feel sure is no longer valid is the arrogance of power, the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission. The dilemmas involved are preeminently American dilemmas, not because America has weaknesses that others do not have but because America is powerful as no nation has ever been before and the discrepancy between its power and the power of others appears to be increasing...”²

My work with the Hancock County Planning Commission and Washington Hancock Community Agency is in many ways an extension of a process that incubated on the steep slopes of the Andes Mountains, the dry decan of India, the boggy paddy land of Bangladesh, the squatter settlements of Liberia, and the hot Caribbean plains of Aracataca, Colombia. The way I approach challenges here, my heavy reliance on relationships, building trust, understanding challenges and the dreams through a local lens, is heavily influenced by what I have learned in foreign lands.

² Sen. William Fulbright on the Arrogance of Power, 1966
<http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/fulbright.html>

Kurt Vonnegut said, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."
(Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night*)

How better to discover your identity than to be yanked out of a familiar, comfortable environment and dropped into a culture, a climate, a language, a family, and a thousand other foreign stimuli? How better to find the proud and the ugly American within? How better to foster a cultural exchange, bringing the wonders of the world, back home to friends?

Through all of this I have had a debt to pay to our government, which is to say our people, for giving me the opportunity to serve in the Peace Corps. I have a far bigger debt of gratitude to the people of the developing world for their generosity, compassion, humor, tolerance and a thousand such charities they bestowed upon me. The Peace Corps experience is a cultural immersion, a chance to change language, diet, profession, lifestyle, definitions of everything and to find yourself, perhaps your new self, in a wholly different context. We may pretend to be so many things until we find truth in our souls.

May it be so.

* **Closing Hymn:** 188 Come, Come, Whoever You Are

Closing Words 692 If, here, you have found freedom

If here you have found freedom,
Take it with you into the world

If you have found comfort,
Go and share it with others

If you have dreamed dreams,
Help one another,
That they may become true.

If you have known love,
Give some back
To a bruised and hurting world.

Go in Peace.

Postlude

Extinguishing the Chalice

*Please stand, if comfortable to do so. This is your mosque, your church, your synagogue