

Transcript 02-06-2022

00:15

you

00:45

uh

01:14

um

01:58

so

03:36

good morning welcome to the unitarian universalist church of utica

03:41

i'm jeff chard if you are joining us for the first time we do this most every sunday morning

03:48

you'll find a link in the chat to let us know more about you i hope you'll find us eager to

03:54

connect during and after any service this is a church where all are welcome all faith traditions

04:04

all gender identities doubts convictions sorrows joys every part of your whole self is welcome here

04:14

our congregation acknowledges that uu utica is situated on the ancestral lands

04:20

of the oneida nation a founding member of the houghton ishoni or iroquois confederacy means

04:29

people who build a house on this land in this church we are people who build a faith community

04:42

let us open our hearts and minds to the experience of community and the wisdom

04:48

of love as we listen to our opening hymn fire of commitment

05:04

from the light of days remember

05:14

hearts and spirits into faith set free from fear

05:36

on our

05:51

and our future can begin

06:02

from the stories of our

06:17

liberty

06:44

then our promise finds fulfillment and our future can begin

06:59

from the dreams of youthful vision comes a new prophetic voice which demands a

07:10

deeper justice built by our carry

07:27

and our passion

07:42

they're

07:47

and our future can begin

08:02

our chalice lighting this morning is from james bela blake love

08:10

is the spirit of this church and service is its law this is our great covenant

08:18

to dwell together in peace to seek the truth in love and to help one another

08:44

the learned philosopher and theologian groucho marx famously said i refuse to join any club that

08:53

would have me as a member and yet here we are not a club but a church most of us are members

09:07

of this church a church that doesn't tell us who to believe in or what to believe in an odd kind

09:15

of church i've often said i'm not a member of any organized religion i'm a unitarian universalist

09:26

in the absence of doctrine in the absence of creed we're not here for absolution we're not

09:33

here to get right with god with an eye toward the afterlife so why are we members of this club

09:43

i've asked that question over the years today we discuss with three milestone members

09:51

it seems that if there is a common thread a reason that most of us hold in common

09:58

it is a shared sense of community a longing for belonging

10:05

it is likely that the things we individually believe make our community more homogenous

10:11

than many of our extended families most of our co-workers even some of our closest friends

10:19

i looked up groucho's religious background he was born into a jewish family but for most of his life

10:26

he was not a practicing jew he could have been a unitarian universalist surely he could have been

10:33

a member of our club anyway today's service is not about groucho it's about some folks

10:40

who are members of our club this morning we will celebrate some of our milestone members

10:49

here is katie spires chair of membership to do the honors kitty

11:02

good morning and thank you jeff for that lovely introduction

11:05

as most everybody knows i'm katie spyers and i'm the chair of the membership committee

11:10

and i want to thank you for joining us this morning whether in person or on zoom

11:15

to honor our members who have who are celebrating milestones in their membership here at uu utica

11:21

first i'd like to honor our one-year members we have alex jackson who is right

11:27

here with us helping out with tech thank you alex and dana levadotti thank you dan

11:35

next i'd like to honor our 10-year members melissa barlett also joining us here at

11:41

church this morning serena butcher ken drake and sam westmoreland thank you all

11:52

and we have one 50-year member this year to honor elaine griswold elaine uh thank you

11:59

for sticking with us for so long and we hope that you have many more happy years with us thank you

12:07

melissa we are honoring our legacy members today and it turns out that this is your 10th year

12:18

as a member of uu utica what was it that brought you to this church so i was a uh floating

12:27

unitarian for a number of years so i found uh nigerian universalism in college which actually

12:33

was in meadville pennsylvania so if you're going to find you use finding it in the original home

12:38

of the meadville lombard theological school is actually kind of cool um so i went when i was

12:44

in college and then when i went to grad school i fell down the slippery slope of uu and joined like

12:49

17 different committees and went to vespers every week um and so from there i just kept finding uu

12:56

churches everywhere i went so when i came here it was pretty clear that i was going to go to at

13:02

least one of them and i was aiming for for utica so i think i i probably went to a service within

13:09

the first like two weeks of moving in and probably attempted to join the choir immediately after that

13:14

because that's kind of my thing so and i've been so i've been coming ever since i don't remember

13:19

when i actually signed the membership book usually i give myself a couple of months but so

13:25

it probably must have been pretty close to to this time about 10 years ago because i've been in utica

13:31

now for 10 and a half years yeah that would be 10 years that's what we've got in the membership

13:37

ledgers anyway do you have any early recollections of the church first impressions maybe

13:50

um i don't know if i have too many early recollections i always kind of like

13:55

like you you people and always feels like a place to be for me so i've never had a major

13:59

issue it tends to be a walk walk-in you go oh yeah i know you use stuff although i do remember that

14:04

you all found out i had done a significant amount of uu stuff in other places and immediately

14:10

started kind of being like oh you might know something what do you think of this and would you

14:15

like to join this and i don't remember how quickly you got me on the board but it was very fast

14:22

you have a strong recollection of any particular thing during the past decade

14:29

oh i've got a couple of those um i know one of the things that i i thought was really cool that

14:35

we did was when we brought that whole tibetan buddhist uh like thing into the sanctuary and

14:41

had the monks and had all of these like dead boost ashes hanging out with us and people came and we

14:49

did a lot of really neat stuff around having that i think that was the kind of experience you don't

14:54

get a lot of in in different places so that's one of the things i thought was really great i think

15:00

one of my other favorite things that we've done over the years although it's been cut a little bit

15:04

off with the pandemic the last few years uh is our peace caroling that uh dem hagambo started that

15:11

one time i think the very first time it was like let's sing carols on the steps of munson williams

15:17

and somewhere along the line it was melissa you can sing real loud you want to come lead us

15:23

it was very very informal the first time and then we got better and i built a song book

15:28

and we did a lot more stuff with it but i've always enjoyed doing that and i kind of hope

15:32

that when we come around this year we finally get to pull it back together

15:38

okay where do you see in-person church going is there ever going to be are we ever going to

15:46

be back to where we were you're uh you're a scientist so that's reason i'm asking

15:53

i do think we're going to get back to where we were i i think that you know we're definitely

15:58

going to people are want to be with other people and we're already starting to get the

16:03

point where people's risk levels have gone down enough that they're much more willing

16:08

under pretty much every circumstance and i think people are sort of like

16:11

really hungry to get back where other humans are so i think that a lot of people will come

16:16

but i think we're probably going to keep a lot of what we've learned through this pandemic

16:20

like having the ability to put our services in multiple places so that those who are impaired

16:25

for other reasons can also join us and not just in spirit and so i think that's gonna be great

16:31

i don't know how quickly all this will come around um i'm honestly kind of hoping pretty fast that

16:36

the rate everything is moving now but you never know microbiology is always a little up in the air

16:44

aside from that do you have a a particular hope or goal for utica going forward i think we've

16:54

taken some really great steps towards doing more uh social justice and racial justice work

17:00

like directly with our community and i really like to see us continuing to take steps on that

17:05

working with uh the local utica community members and leaders and finding ways that we can be

17:11

helpful and not just like oh we would like more members but that we want our community to thrive

17:17

not necessarily that we're looking for people but we're looking to make connections with even other

17:22

church groups and things like that to learn more and to have a like more vibrant overall community

17:28

and so instead of just being the little brown church that people occasionally are like oh

17:32

yeah we remember you it's like oh yeah you're the folks who and we can actually make that connection

17:39

okay dr melissa barlett we appreciate your service over the last 10 years and your fellowship and we

17:50

congratulate you and all of us for you being a member for the past decades thanks melissa

17:57

thanks jeff it's been fabulous and i plan to keep it going

18:26

and drifting but the clouds are lifting don't give up you'll have somewhere to turn

18:37

i'll be your candle on the water

18:44

till every wave is warm and bright

18:48

my soul is there beside you let this candle guide you soon you'll see a golden stream of light

19:02

a cold and friendless tide has found you don't let the stormy darkness pull you down

19:15

i'll paint a ray of hope

19:21

circling in the air

19:33

i'll be your candle on the water

19:48

here's my hand so take it look for me reaching out to show as sure

20:01

i'll never

20:07

i'll never let you go

20:31

we are recognizing some of our milestone members this morning and ken drake
you've

20:40

been a member of uu utica for 10 years does it seem like 10 years uh no it doesn't jeff

20:51

uh what brought you to you utica

20:56

number of years ago when i uh was uh a member of uh no church at the time uh kind
of uh um just um

21:11

not not affiliated with any religious

21:15

organization at all my wife and i would have frequent discussions and i would bring up

21:22

my interest in unitarian universalism which i had either read something about or seen
something in

21:28

the newspaper perhaps an article about it and uh she got tired of hearing me uh say
that i

21:34

was going to check it out she said well why don't you go go go go find a church and i
just

21:42

happened to uh read about the church in utica and i decided one sunday morning to
uh take the plunge

21:51

and what what do you have a passion in a particular area

21:57

um i would say that uh it's as far as a passion and any kind of a um a religious um

22:09

significance would be the fact that i i just believe in

22:14

um humanism to the point where i believe that that humans

22:19

um have the power to solve their own problems and they aren't doing a very good job
of it

22:28

okay do you have one strong positive memory of the church that you can describe to us

22:42

i think the uh the first day that i walked through the doors was was the most uh um significant

22:49

moment for me i uh i came into the church when reverend lucy was was the minister and um

23:01

despite what others may think i i had a almost an instant um

23:09

attraction to her i found her very interesting and

23:12

not only that but she when as soon as i entered the building she was there to greet uh

23:19

individuals that morning and i happened to be one of the lucky ones the new newcomers and uh

23:25

and that was a that was a good moment for me but yeah you may not remember i think you were

23:32

you were one of the first five people i i met at the church and and your daughter stephanie um

23:41

the two of you were amazing you know we talk about being a welcoming congregation

23:49

if you hadn't been a welcoming congregation

23:53

the day i entered the building i would not be with you today oh well that's great to hear

24:00

and you're pretty heavily involved in social justice right now what kinds of uh initiatives

24:10

uh currently i'm most involved in trying to solve some problems in the educational realm you know

24:20

there's our public school systems are highly segregated when we talk about systemic racism

24:31

the public schools are a reflection of the larger society students and in school some school

24:38

districts across new york state and across america just just do not have the same opportunities as

24:46

other children because of funding issues demographics economic opportunities

24:54

just the wealth of a community

24:58

determines the kinds of schools that uh you're going to find in in that

25:04

region so that's combined with my work at uu utica i'm involved with a retiree council

25:15

of new york state united teachers i've been a member of of that organization for

25:21

well since i retired in 2004 so i've had a long time interest in trying

25:27

to right the wrongs in in terms of how children are educated in new york state

25:34

okay well what would you say might be your hope for the future of uu utica

25:45

uh that's an interesting question um i really believe that there was a an opportunity when

25:52

we were in a one of our many transition phases when reverend eve was here because i i really

26:00

really thoroughly enjoyed her ministry um

26:04

she uh i think was on our church was on the way of of attracting a younger uh

26:13

the younger uh population you know i think she really related well to the youth of the church

26:20

at the time and i just felt that there was this was an opportunity for the church to get

26:24

uh you know to attract new members particularly young members who would be very enthusiastic about

26:32

um you know serving the community um with the absence of that right now um we have an older

26:42

group of people that seem to be uh passionately involved in social justice and trying to keep

26:49

you know that that flame alive in uh older individuals not that it can't happen it's just you

26:56

know something that i'm i'm concerned about you know um yeah so i think it's just a matter of uh

27:04

you know we we need we need to attract individuals and coincidentally there was a recent article in

27:12

the new york times that talked about um the fact that they're excuse me in the washington post that

27:20

uh addressed the issue of uh non-affiliated uh members of society people the nuns they call them

27:27

or they're you know they're just there's so many people in this world that are that may perhaps be

27:35

good members of a church community but they're not affiliated with any right now and if if any church

27:42

could appeal to the person who like myself was seeking something different and looking

27:48

for meaning looking for more meaning in my life spiritually and in terms of social justice issues

27:54

um you know this is a golden opportunity to for us to to advertise the existence of the

28:03

uu church of utica and to welcome as many people into the door through the doors as we possibly can

28:10

that's that's the nuns n-o-n-e-s not n-u-n-s right that's very correct jeffrey thank you

28:18

well you hit the ground running here you've been a board member

28:22

board president uh you're you're the chair of the social justice initiative right now and uh

28:31

we all thank you and honor your ten years and appreciate your contributions ken

28:39

well i'm very glad to uh to uh be a part of this interview today and and uh thank you very much

28:46

jeff for the opportunity community means strength the words of starhawk from dreaming in the dark

28:56

we are all longing to go home to some place we have never been

29:01

a place half remembered and half envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time

29:09

community somewhere there are people to whom we can speak with passion

29:15

without having our words catch in our throats somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive

29:22

us eyes will light up as we enter voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own

29:30

power community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done

29:39

arms to hold us when we falter a circle of healing a circle of friends somewhere where we can be free

29:53

membership chair katie spyers will now recognize our 50-year plus legacy members

30:08

again jeff so now we will honor those members who have been with us

30:14

for 50 years and more more than 50 years so first we on the list we have randy becker

30:21

many of you know then there's nancy bender sally carmen fred carncross

30:33

howie schaefer jane heumann who is the who who has

30:39

been the member for the longest of any of us and is one of our oldest members

30:44

and beryl smith thank you all for making us a part of your life and staying with us for so long

30:54

we honor one more member yet only one more member it only happens twice a century

31:01

and it is elaine griswold who has been a uu utica member for 50 years

31:10

elaine we're talking to you especially today because you've been a member of uu utica for

31:18

the past 50 years 1972 was the year that you became a member does it seem like 50 years

31:31

um no it doesn't seem that long and yet when i think of all the people then

31:40

yes they've been a lot they've been 50 years plus in the number of people that i've known and loved

31:48

in this congregation 50 years ago you would have been at the church in oneida square yes

31:56

what are your memories about the oneida square church um we had a a school for that was

32:07

that used our sunday school rooms uh it was like a i think maybe a nursery school or something

32:13

or it was kind of an experiment in in that but mostly i remember the falling plaster and the co

32:24

in the the organ in the sanctuary in the falling plaster from the ceiling and you

32:33

mentioned the people who who are some of the people you recall bill and gladys becker

32:40

jay and verna carncross joan and bill garner um bob and ethel schaefer hank and judy bartosik

32:51

i think i can stop there is there is there one memory or set of memories that that sticks out

33:00

uh from your 50 years of being a unitarian universalist utica member

33:10

one memory um

33:13

of fellowship fridays at bartosix but also uh singing to uh bob schaefer's uh

33:25

player piano singing show tunes with other people from bob uh at bob schaefer's player piano

33:35

okay what is your hope for the future of the uu church in utica

33:44

that it will always be there for people who need

33:54

support and reassurance when they look at the larger questions of life

34:05

i think that would be it that it would all it would always be there there should be some

34:09

avenue for considering the larger questions okay elaine we thank you so much and value

34:17

your friendship and your membership over the past 50 years thank you you're welcome

34:27

it is now time for our offering we know that our financial contributions to this congregation

34:33

come from sacrifice and hard work we are so grateful for this and

34:37

commit together to ensure the funds we gather collectively do a greater good

34:42

for ourselves and our world than they could have done alone may there be an offering to

34:47

sustain and grow the life and mission of this congregation may we give in love and in hope

35:50

do

37:11

our benediction is by j e abernathy jr love is our greatest purpose we affirm that love

37:22

is our greatest purpose accepting one another is the truest form of faithful living

37:29

the search for truth is our constant star we pledge our hearts minds and hands

37:36

to challenge injustice with courage to find hope in times of fear

37:44

and to live out our unitarian universalist values every day as a beloved community

37:52

thus do we covenant with each other and with all that is sacred in life

38:01

now we will extinguish our chalice please join in with the words on the screen

38:07

we extinguish this flame but not the light of truth

38:12

the warmth of community or the fire of commitment these we carry in our hearts until we meet again

38:33

sometimes in our lives

38:56

i'll be your friend

39:12

please swallow your pride if i have things

40:07

somebody to

40:20

i just might have a problem that you'll understand we all need somebody to lead on

40:48

if there is a load

41:19

not strong i'll be your friend i'll help so just

