

Sample Worship Service

Guest at Your Table

Celebrating
human rights
partnerships



Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Chalice Lighting

By Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern

May this flame be for us the beacon of truth, guiding us safely out of storms of confusion and illusion.

May it be the chalice of mystery, coming from we know not where, disappearing we know not where, yet with its beauty reminding us to abide in beauty.

May this flame be for us the hearth fire of home, welcoming us into the warmth of family and friendship.

May it be the warmth of compassion, inviting our hearts to open to everyone's story.

May it be the burning brand of justice, leading us boldly toward a better world.

Hymn

Singing the Living Tradition, #134, "Our World Is One World"

Alternative hymn:

Singing the Journey, #1023, "Building Bridges"

Activity for All Ages

Materials

Two national or world maps: a political map (showing national boundaries) and a topographical or physical map (without those boundaries). The political map should be in color.

Instructions

Show everyone the political map. Ask, "What is this I've got here?" Someone will say "a map" or "a map of the world."

Then ask: "Can you show me where we are on the map?"

When they find it, say: "Wait a second. That's blue [or whatever color appears on the map]." Look around. Ask, "Is everything here blue [name color identified before]?" They will respond, "No!" Continue: "Oh, okay, just checking. Who sees another country or state they know?" Do the same thing, joking about the color and asking if it's real.

"Now, I'm seeing some lines on this map. Can anyone explain what these lines are?" Point to a boundary line that's a river. Someone will answer, "a river," or "the line between ____ and ____."

Point to a boundary that is clearly not a river or any other readily identifiable physical feature (e.g., the eastern border of Utah). Ask: "What about this one? Is that a river?" Go with the answer "no." Continue: "So what's that line mean, then?" Someone will say it's the line between two countries or states.

"So we're blue [or whatever color was identified] and there's a line between ____ and ____ [name the two states or countries]. So if I went to that border, I'd see a line there, with blue [or whatever color it is on the map] on one side and yellow [or whatever color it is on the map] on the other?" Someone will say, "No!"

"Oh, okay. No, right, those colors aren't really there on the ground. But the line is, right? The line is really there, right? I could see it drawn in nice thick marker between ____ and ____ [name the two states or countries]?" Go with whoever says no.

"No? Hmmm. So what does that line mean again?" Wait for answer.

Bring out the other map (the one without political boundaries).

Say, "Here's another map of the same place. See, you can tell it's the same place." Point out evidence that it's the same

place, showing identifying features such as nearby lakes or a distinctive land mass shape. Continue: “But this one doesn’t have any lines on it.” Let that sink in; accept any comments that are made.

Ask the group, “Which of these maps is real?” They may choose one or the other, or say “both.” Just repeat and accept the variety of answers.

End the activity by thanking everyone for taking part.

Reading

“Declaration of Interdependence”

By Melanie Bacon¹

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

That all life is interconnected, and endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights and responsibilities,
That among these are presence, compassion, and the pursuit of happiness.

That to secure these rights and responsibilities,

We open our minds and hearts to the needs of others, and our own true needs,
We hear the sound of the living universe in our ears, and add our voices to the song,
We live every moment with awareness of the purity and power of existence.

And for the support of this Declaration, we pledge to each other our love and our breath,

For the freedom of the one is the freedom of the all, and the pain of the one is the pain of the all;
The breath of the one is the breath of the all, and the breath of the all is the breath of God.

Sermon

“The Web of Love”

By Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern

Who here used to think that the colors on the map told us what colors were really on the ground?

I never did, but I used to think that the lines on the map told me which country was on which side of the line.

Then I saw some old maps that had those lines in different places. Like an old map of Europe that had the Austro-Hungarian Empire where another map had Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, and other countries. Then there was yet another map that had Slovakia and the Czech Republic in place of Czechoslovakia — another line drawn that hadn’t even been there before.

You might notice that while UUSC’s Guest at Your Table program features people from different parts of the world, the posters and the pictures in the stories don’t show maps. They show us faces instead.

A philosopher named Emmanuel Levinas said that most philosophy began with the wrong question. It started with: “Who am I?” But he said that that wasn’t the first question at all. Where we begin, as we make our way through life, is by seeing another’s face and recognizing in it one’s own. More basic than the question “Who am I?” is “What is the relationship between me and this other, this face I behold?” It’s several months before

newborn babies are interested in mirrors. But well before that, they are fascinated by other people’s faces — sometimes even before they can focus their eyes. It is as if we know from birth that our connections to other people shape us and make us and are us.

[Refer to Guest at Your Table poster.]

What is the relationship between these faces — the faces of our guests — and my own? Looking into another’s face, I can see laughter, age, youth, interest, anxiety, curiosity.

Let’s all take a few moments now to contemplate these faces. You or someone in your family has a booklet or handout with the same faces on it. Let’s look at the people, steadily, with open eyes and hearts, right now.

[Wait for 30–60 seconds.]

To look into another’s face is to recognize the essential absurdity of those lines on the map. What does it mean that some of these faces dwell within some of those lines and other faces dwell within other lines? What significance can it have, in comparison with all that is within these eyes and these smiles?

Some of you may be sci-fi fans. Every once in a while you might wonder if the people of another planet, millions and millions of miles away, might now be on a five-year mission to explore strange new worlds and seek out new life and civilizations. If they came here, what would they see? No lines between this spot of land and that one a few miles away. Just a blue-green sphere, gently misted with clouds of water vapor, spinning in the light of a youngish sun. And when they met the people, they would surely regard us as all one people. One species of earthlings. Terrans.

They would probably be astonished to learn about the imaginary lines. They might be confused when they learn that the people within these lines are suffering from a famine, while the people within those other lines over there have so much food that they’re throwing it away. They might ask, “Why don’t you just redistribute the food to where it’s needed?” We’d try to explain, “Well, national sovereignty . . . different economies . . . um.”

That all makes some kind of sense when you see the lines on the map. It doesn’t make so much sense if you look at the lines of the faces. When Levinas counsels us to begin with the face, he is asserting something very simple that we know to be true: we are all connected, inextricably, inseparably. Anything that tells us otherwise is an illusion.

There is a word for the illusion that we are not connected: alienation. Karl Marx used it to mean the way we feel like we are enemies with people who are actually very much like us. “Alien” means someone who is foreign, someone who is a stranger, someone who is not part of the community.

And of course, “alien” is also the word for a being from another planet. When we experience alienation, we think like people who aren’t even from this planet: as if we are totally separate from these Earth people, not affected by them, having no effect on them.

When we forget our interconnectedness, we separate ourselves from our community. We feel alienated. It is a sad and a destructive feeling.

One opposite of alienation is connection.

Another opposite is Unitarian Universalism. Knowing that we are all a

¹Included with permission of author, who can be found online at melaniebacon.com.

unit, unified in *unity*, is part of being Unitarians. Knowing that we are *universally*, all, connected and intertwined, is part of being Universalists. The web is one, and it connects everything. It has *unity* and it is *universal*.

How about that! We've got the cure for alienation! There are no aliens here. Just us human beings. As long as we apply the cure.

The cure has a name. During immigration actions with Standing on the Side of Love, a UUA campaign with which UUSC sometimes collaborates, the T-shirts Unitarian Universalists wore earned us the nickname "the love people." Isn't that great? Don't you want to be a love person?

When you say, "This is the country where I was born, so I'm connected to people who moved here last year," you're being a love person.

When you say, "I eat in restaurants, so I'm connected to the people who work in them," you're being a love person.

When you say, "I'm a worker, so I'm connected to the workers of Arkansas who are struggling for fair treatment," you're being a love person.

When you say, "I breathe the air of this planet, so I'm connected to the people growing their crops in Haiti sustainably, to support the health of the earth," you're being a love person.

Love is the antidote for alienation. Love is the cure.

The kind of love we're talking about is the kind Jesus meant when he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." It's not about being in love with your neighbor, being fond of your neighbor, liking your neighbor, even feeling respect for your neighbor. It's not about *feeling* at all. It's about *knowing* that we are not separate. The fact of our being neighbors, of our sharing this town or this country or this small planet, of our being parts of the same interdependent web, makes us one. Love is knowing that and acting upon that knowledge.

Love is also about honoring each person's fundamental rights as a human. And doing what we can to ensure that every person has access to those rights and can harness their power to live thriving, fulfilled lives. This kind of love transcends borders and leaps over boundaries.

The work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee isn't charity. It isn't crisis relief. The fundamental task of UUSC, its *raison d'être*, is to show us each that we are all connected, that the barriers we erect between us are fictions, and that we must all work together toward our mutual liberation. When we know this, we can't help acting on it. That's empowerment.

UUSC helps us realize that we're part of an interdependent web of existence. And Unitarian Universalism is about that exact same thing.

And do you know why our religion counsels us to respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part? Because that's what being alive is all about: deeply knowing that we are part of an intricate, interwoven net of being. Knowing that we have a place amidst all these others who are *not* "other." Feeling the tug when another person laughs, or works, or worries, or sings, or suffers, and knowing that they feel the tugs we make on the web as well. That is love.

When we can't take a single step or a single breath without being aware of how others are walking with us, breathing with us, then we leave alienation behind. We reach a place of solidarity and stop being aliens here on

this earth. And in that moment, we know we are fully alive.

So may it be, for you, for each of us, always.

Offering

Albert Einstein wrote, "A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of [others], living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving."

With gratitude for the labors of others and the fruits of our own labors, we seek to give in the same measure as we have received. We will now receive, and give, our offering.

Hymn

Singing the Journey, #1014, "Standing on the Side of Love"

Alternative hymns:

Singing the Living Tradition, #368, "Now Let Us Sing"

Singing the Living Tradition, #299, "Make Channels for the Streams of Love" (sing all three verses, then repeat verse 1)

Chalice Extinguishing and Benediction

Adapted by Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern²

As we extinguish our chalice, let us rise as we are able, take hands as comfortable, and speak together our words of blessing of each other and the world:

Go out into the world in peace
Be of good courage
Hold fast to what is good
Return no one evil for evil
Strengthen the faint-hearted
Support the weak
Help the suffering
Rejoice in beauty
Speak love with word and deed
Honor all beings.

Amen.

Author biography

Amy Zucker Morgenstern has served the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto, Calif., as their parish minister since 2003. She was previously the minister in Rutland, Vt. The world's need for more love and justice called her into ministry and remains at the heart of her vision of the UU faith. A long-time and enthusiastic supporter of UUSC, Morgenstern is particularly passionate about the issue of human trafficking and is a leader of the UU Abolitionists, a new organization devoted to involving Unitarian Universalists in the movement to end modern slavery. Her writing has been published in the Skinner House collection *Coming Out in Faith* and has garnered several sermon awards. She writes about matters of religion, politics, art, and culture on her blog, sermonsinstones.com. Morgenstern lives in San Francisco with her wife and daughter.

²Amy Zucker Morgenstern, "New-to-us benediction," *Sermons in Stones*, October 12, 2012, accessed August 12, 2013, <http://sermonsinstones.com/2012/10/12/new-to-us-benediction/>.