

Justice Sunday 2013 Worship Resources

By Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh

Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh is editor of the forthcoming anthology *The Joy of Just Eating: Food for Personal, Public, and Planetary Well-Being*, featuring essays by luminaries like Bill McKibben, Frances Moore Lappé, and Saru Jayaraman. Over 400 UU congregations have participated in the “40/40/40 for the Earth!” and other food campaigns he has overseen since 2008, leading to the UUA adopting the “Ethical Eating” statement of conscience in 2011. Millspaugh now serves as co-minister in Winchester, Mass., and as the director for congregational development for the UUA’s Clara Barton and Massachusetts Bay Districts. He and his partner, Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh, impatiently look forward to the joy of introducing their one-year-old son to a world of scrumptious food.

Sample Worship Service and Sermon

By Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh

Note: All suggested numbered hymns and readings are from *Singing the Living Tradition*, unless otherwise specified.

Centering Thoughts

“One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.”

—Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, *Pavarotti, My Own Story*

“Sex is good, but not as good as fresh, sweet corn.”

—Garrison Keillor

Call to Worship

By Rev. Erika Hewitt

As we enter into worship, put away the pressures of the world that ask us to perform, to take up masks, to put on brave fronts.

Silence the voices that ask you to be perfect.

This is a community of compassion and welcoming.

You do not have to do anything to earn the love contained within these walls.

You do not have to be braver, smarter, stronger, better than you are in this moment to belong here, with us.

You only have to bring the gift of your body, no matter how able; your seeking mind, no matter how busy; your animal heart, no matter how broken.

Bring all that you are, and all that you love, to this hour together.

Come, let us worship together.

Chalice Lighting

#459, “This is the mission of our faith,” by Rev. William F. Schulz

This is the mission of our faith:

To teach the fragile art of hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

Responsive Reading

#588, “To Loose the Fetters of Injustice,” from Isaiah 58¹

Introduction

Our reading from world religions, #588 in your hymnal, comes from the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Isaiah. In the days leading up to this passage, the Hebrew people have celebrated holy days of fasting. But even as the people fast and observe other religious rituals, they act without regard for the oppressed and the downtrodden among them.

When the people find that God does not respond to their food rituals or their self-effacing rites, they become confused. In the passage just preceding our reading, the people ask the prophet, Isaiah, why God rebuffs them. God says through the prophet in effect, “Do you think I am pleased by your symbolic displays of piety, bowing down your heads like reeds, and lying down in sackcloth and ashes, as meanwhile you exploit others as if *their* welfare were less important to me than *yours*? Is that what you call a day acceptable to the Lord? Such fasting dishonors me and my creation.” God’s words continue in responsive reading #588. God says the following.

Reading

Is not this the fast that I choose:

*To loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see them naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

*Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;*

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,

*You shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.*

Hymn

#134, “Our World Is One World”

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Reading

“The Ethics of Eating Local Are Complex,” by the UUA President’s Advisory Committee on Ethical Eating (PACE)

Adapted from the UUA study guide *Ethical Eating: Food & Environmental Justice*, available online at <http://ethicaleating.uua.org>.

Many environmentally-minded people seek to reduce their personal impact on the earth by eating sustainably. But the issues involved are complex, and sometimes counterintuitive. Take ‘eating locally.’ As much as possible, locavores center their diets on food grown within a 100-mile radius of where it is sold and consumed.

On the one hand, ‘eating local’ keeps consumer dollars in the local community, which also strengthens also relationships among neighbors. Eating locally channels more money directly to farmers, as less money is spent on processors, marketers, and intermediaries along vegetables’ typically 1,500-mile supply chains. Shorter food routes put less carbon into the air, thereby contributing less to global warming.

Yet eating locally may not be as beneficial as it may seem. In eating locally, one can subsidize factory farms, pesticide-intensive crops, and farms with exploitative labor practices, all of which can and must be local to somewhere. If you compare the environmental impact of organic tomatoes raised in a local greenhouse to tomatoes shipped from a distant area with a warm climate, you’ll find that local tomatoes can use up twenty percent more resources, because of the energy inputs greenhouses require.

And it gets even more surprising. Driving an average car just three miles to and from a farmers’ market releases as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as shipping seventeen pounds of produce halfway around the world.²

So what does this mean for those who take the ethics of their food choices seriously? [Significant pause.]

Here ends the reading.

Sermon

“The Joy of Just Eating,” by Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh

Note: This sermon is longer than necessary, in order to allow worship presenters to select passages and customize to their particular service and congregation.

So many mysteries surround food. Of all the ways we relate to nature, eating is the most intimate. Food is material substance of this planet you lift into your mouth’s embrace, to absorb into your own being. Food’s energy fuels your every movement and powers consciousness itself — every thought, perception, and feeling you will ever have. No matter your religion, age, intention — no matter who you are — each day through food you live your interconnection with other people, animals, nature, the entire interdependent web of all existence. So many mysteries

surround food, so many paths we could embark on this morning. Here, now, is the food mystery that I chose to begin our considered reflection.

A man walks into a doctor's office. He has a cucumber up his nose, a carrot in his left ear, and a banana in his right ear. "What's the matter with me?" he asks the doctor. Shaking his head, the doctor replies, "You're not eating properly."

Well, that was a food mystery easily solved. But other food mysteries are more difficult to fathom. For example, if you eat equal amounts of pasta and antipasti, will you end up just as hungry as when you began? Was Woody Allen right when he said New York restaurant food has two big problems (first, it tastes terrible — it's poison — and second, the portions are too small)? And finally, why does a typical American breakfast ask for only a day's effort from the chicken but a lifetime commitment from the pig?

Hmm, that last food mystery wasn't as funny to all of us. We joke about food because we take food so seriously. What to eat. What to say or do before eating. How to eat and with whom. We each grow up with our own set of food rules.

[Speaker shares brief personal reflection from childhood on what and how to eat; e.g., Rev. John Millspaugh shares his recollection: "I was raised Methodist in small towns of Minnesota and Missouri, so I ingested whole the Midwestern Methodist codes about eating. What to eat: casseroles, hot dishes, potato salad, and lime Jell-O[®] with little brown wrinkly bits of unidentifiable canned fruit quivering inside. How to eat: pause and thank God for life, creation, the many hands that brought this bounty to the table, then finish what's on your plate. Volunteer at the soup kitchen once a year."]

Whatever food rules you were raised with, things have gotten more complicated since childhood. We've learned our personal food choices have global reach. Further, we've learned the incredible range of teachings about food. This isn't some new trend. For thousands of years, what and how we eat has been seen as an essential part of how we live our spirituality and ethics, according to any world religion worth its salt.³

Just like there is no single Unitarian Universalist set of answers to religious questions, there is no single Unitarian Universalist way to eat. Religiously, we prefer to have a menu of options and enjoy the feast. But that doesn't keep us from engaging with food justice questions. Since 2008, over 400 of our congregations have made a point of studying food justice. At the behest of those 400 congregations, in 2011 at our national General Assembly, UUs adopted a Statement of Conscience inviting us all to examine the moral and environmental dimensions of our contemporary food choices, for the sake of personal, public, and planetary well-being.

The Statement of Conscience reads in part, "Our [UU] Principles call for recognition of and respect for the other. As we search freely and responsibly for truth, meaning, and spiritual wholeness, we will make a variety of individual choices about food . . . [and apply] our Principles to our food choices. What and how we eat has broad implications for our planet and society. Our values, Principles, and integrity call us to seek compassion, health, and sustainability in the production of food we raise or purchase."⁴

Tens of thousands of UUs have embarked on a journey the UUA calls “ethical eating” and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, or UUSC, calls “choosing compassionate consumption.” Both processes invite us not into common answers but into common engagement. As UUs we will arrive at varying answers and approaches. The point is not to agree with one another, but to take seriously our responsibility to examine the spiritual, ethical, and environmental questions involved in our interdependent lives.

So, talking about food on Justice Sunday, I’m tempted to trot out tropes like “You are what you eat” or “We need to put our faith into action,” or suggest that our core values are worth sacrificing for. But in fact, I’m going to do the opposite. In this sermon, I’ll argue for three counterintuitive ways of thinking about UU food spirituality.

First: It has been said you are what you eat. Today I tell you, you are *not* what you eat.

Second: It has been said, “Put your faith into action.” Today I encourage you, when it comes to food, take your faith *out of* your actions. Take it out!

Third: Many have tried to persuade you that eating well means following food rules. Not just any food rules — *their* food rules. Today I tell you that UU food spirituality is instead based on the joy of just eating. We should eat whatever makes us happy.

And people say that our religion isn’t rigorous! Well, it is in its own way, and I intend to show that today. Having trouble seeing the rigor? Hear me out.

First: You are *not* what you eat. Focus your mind’s camera on Springdale, Ark., and zoom in on the Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center, a tiny nonprofit organization mostly run by volunteers. The Workers’ Justice Center is just a few blocks away from the biggest meat and poultry company in the world, Tyson Foods, Inc., which annually nets \$25 billion in sales. You don’t have a wide-angle lens large enough to take it all in, so pan back to the Worker’s Justice Center. Zoom and notice that the center is supported by our UUSC as part of their Choose Compassionate Consumption campaign.

Tyson’s corporate practices have enormous impact on human rights — not to mention climate change and animal welfare — and generally not for the better. Conditions for workers are beyond challenging. Imagine working on an assembly line, or rather a chicken disassembly line, of a corporation that slaughters and processes about 6 million chickens, 50,000 pigs, and 25,000 cows each year. Sorry, I misread that; it’s each month. Each week? Let me check here. Oh, got it. It’s each day — 6 million chickens, 50,000 pigs, and 25,000 cows each day.

Most slaughterhouse line workers are women, and most are people of color. Slaughtering and processing animals’ bodies using sharp butchering equipment at high speed on disassembly lines is dangerous, unsanitary work. In a survey, two-thirds of all workers in poultry processing plants report suffering from job-related illness or injury. Imagine if two-thirds of the people in this sanctuary were suffering from a job-related injury or illness. Poultry workers’ injuries and illnesses are often due to a combination of inadequate safety measures, high line speeds, and the

repetitive and rapid nature of disassembly line work. Almost a quarter of workers report repetitive motion injuries. Yet in April 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture proposed letting individual poultry line speeds increase from 140 birds per minute to 175 birds per minute.⁵

Now you get an idea of why UUSC is in Arkansas, working to improve conditions, working to force employers like Tyson to respect human rights. In support of UUSC's work, today, as consumers and religious people called to make compassionate choices, it's worth considering reducing the money we channel to industrial animal agriculture. Though UUSC and its partner organizations struggle mightily — and with success — the industry continues to have a deplorable record of abuses to animals, the environment, and humans.

How might choosing compassionate consumption affect the food you put on your table?

Each of us will make different decisions, based on our own right and responsibility of conscience.

My point is this. *You* are not what you eat. In this interconnected world, *I* am what you eat, *we* are what you eat. Worker's lives are affected by what I eat, and Earth's climate is what we all eat. We like to think that what we eat is our own business. It is a spiritual awakening to realize that you are not what you eat. *We* are what you eat, all of us. As those great philosophers known as the Beatles put it, "I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together."⁶

In our chalice lighting, UUSC President Rev. Bill Schulz said, "We must hold the whole world in our hands." Every time we pick up a piece of food, we already do.

Let us pause a moment in silent reflection. [Pause for 30 seconds.]

First, we are what you eat. Second, it has been said, "Put your faith into action" — but I suggest we take our faith *out* of action, perhaps entirely. Consider Ms. Saru Jayarman, author of a book released in February of this year called *Behind the Kitchen Door*.

In September 2001, Jayaraman was 27, had never worked in a restaurant, had no understanding of how they were run, and had never given it a moment's thought. But a few weeks after the twin towers of the World Trade Center fell, a fellow union organizer called, asking the young woman if she could help pull together the 250 workers displaced from the restaurant, called Windows on the World, at the top of one of the towers. She said "Yes, of course," and the restaurant workers immediately welcomed her into their community, inviting her to attend the memorial service for 73 of their coworkers who had died when the towers fell. At the memorial service, the owner of what had been Windows on the World promised to hire back the surviving workers when he opened a new restaurant and to pay them a living wage. The workers were much relieved, as only 20 percent of restaurant jobs in New York City paid a living wage. But months later, when the new restaurant opened, the owner refused to hire most of his former workers.

They were jobless and heartbroken many times over. Jayaraman had little idea how to move forward. With one of the Windows headwaiters, she founded a group called the Restaurant

Opportunities Center (also known as ROC [pronounced like “rock”]) and organized a vigil — a protest — outside the new restaurant on its opening night. After the restaurant received bad press as a result, the owner agreed to hire back almost all the workers.

Jayaraman couldn’t believe it had been so easy. Restaurant workers began calling from all over the city. Could she help them too? She had achieved what she had set out to do. She had no strategic plan, no remaining organizational mission, but suddenly anything seemed possible. She took faith from her successful action. She began to feel that if she could get the owner of an internationally known restaurant to do the right thing, perhaps she could change more of the restaurant industry for the better.

Jayaraman began to learn more about restaurant industry. How restaurant workers earn, on average, less than \$13,000 annually. How servers, 71 percent of whom are women, are nearly twice as likely as the general workforce to need food stamps.⁷ I hope the irony doesn’t escape you — restaurant workers are twice as likely to need to use food stamps as the general population.

Perhaps even worse, only 20 percent of restaurant workers report being allowed paid sick days. To keep their jobs, they need to work while sick. Jayaraman writes in *Behind the Kitchen Door*, “We don’t just find workers serving while sick and a few bad apple restaurants. We find these workers everywhere. . . . the National Restaurant Association [the NRA] has been spending years lobbying to [block] restaurant workers from winning paid sick days. . . . So ironically, employers in *the one industry* in which we as customers would *least* like to see workers working while sick are the same ones leading the charge against *any* kind of paid sick days legislation.”

In the fall of 2012, Jayaraman’s Restaurant Opportunities Center won a major victory for restaurant workers at Del Posto Restaurant. The settlement agreement includes paid sick days, new procedures for human resources, and over a million dollars of unpaid back wages. Like many ROC victories these days, the campaign was covered in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*.⁸

In the beginning, put on the spot by a reporter, Jayaraman might not have been able to offer the best working definition of human rights. She didn’t have an economic model to propose for American restaurants. She could not have elegantly articulated the aspects of her spiritual convictions that led her to take action. Had she waited to find a faith to put into action, she might have *never* taken action. It was *through* taking action that she became clearer on what she had faith in, who she was, and what she stood for.

So don’t wait around until you have faith to put into action. Better to take the risk of action, then take faith from — or out of — your action. That can give you faith to do more.

Give it a try yourself. The next time you go to your favorite restaurant, talk to the server, the manager, the owner. Ask about paid sick days. Ask if they receive the tipped minimum wage, currently just \$2.13 for tipped workers. Let them know you want to patronize restaurants where the human beings who work there have paid sick days and receive a living wage. You don’t have to have it all figured out before you begin. Just take action, and take faith out of your action.

Let us pause a moment in silent reflection. [Pause for 30 seconds.]

So first, we are what you eat. Second, take your faith out of action. Third, wave goodbye to food rules. Food spirituality is about the joy of just eating, and you should eat what makes you happy.

There's a difference between what gives you pleasure and what makes you happy. It's easy to confuse pleasurable mouth sensations with deep happiness. Both are good things. But pleasure fades, and as anyone who has overindulged can tell you, it can lead to regret. Happiness, on the other hand, is "satisfaction that continues to be satisfactory."⁹ What if we ate for our own happiness, joy, fulfillment — to bring about deep satisfaction that continues to satisfy?

When it comes to food, our society is speeding along various tracks right now. Various futures are competing to come into being. We vote for one of those futures every time we spend money, by reinforcing the systems that will bring those futures about. Some of those futures further degrade people who are already burdened, multiply the suffering of animals who are already live in misery, and further exploit natural resources that are already destabilized. Other futures begin to build the world we dream about, where rights are respected and creation is honored.

Imagine what it would feel like if every time you sat down to a meal you felt you were contributing to a better world.

Imagine what it would be like to let go of hard and fast food rules, and instead experiment with what choices makes you happy.

Imagine eating in a way that not only expressed your spirituality, but deepened it — that honored the values you long to serve, three times a day.

Imagine that the next time you encounter someone with vastly different beliefs about food, it's not a chance to tune out or to battle, but rather a chance to deepen your understanding and evolve your own convictions. Because, as Universalist minister Clarence Russell Skinner wrote in 1915, our current comprehension "is not a tombstone marking the resting place of truth, but is rather a milestone on the long arduous journey to the truth."¹⁰

Like any other aspect of the religious life, our relationship with food isn't about defending our current understanding, but is about being open to learning, taking our own questions and confusion seriously rather than setting them aside, caring enough to take the step or two that feels most approachable, and cultivating the will to keep at it over years and decades of lifelong learning. I'm speaking of the spiritual virtue of humility, wherein we take seriously our life experiences, what we've learned to this point, and what we can teach others, even as we take equally seriously others' life experience, what they have learned, and what they have to teach us. Humility of this kind leads to satisfaction that continues to satisfy. It feels good. It sets a welcome table where all perspectives are invited, and all people and all creation are cherished. A welcome table. An age-old religious concept.

The idea of the welcome table began in the Jewish tradition of the Seder table, which leaves one seat empty for Elijah or the stranger. In the Christian tradition, the welcome table began with Jesus dining with prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, and other social outcasts — you know, *those* people, people we might be nervous to share our dinner table with today. Jesus's critics understood that when he sat down and ate with society's outcasts, he was doing something radical, something dangerous to the status quo. When you invite "*those* people" to the table, "*those* people" aren't "*those* people" any more. They are "my people," "our people," "us." During the long decades of slavery in this country, enslaved people, understanding the power of the welcome table, composed a hymn that in a few minutes we'll sing, a song imaging a heavenly reign of justice and freedom, where all are welcomed as equals.

In our Unitarian Universalist tradition, what would it mean to set the welcome table? Literally what food would you lay if you knew a migrant laborer or farming family would be joining you for the meal? Would you choose food processed by workers paid less than a living wage, whose work exposes them daily to avoidable safety hazards? Surely not. What would it mean to set a welcome table where not only you and your family would feel welcome and cared for by your choices, but workers too would feel their inherent worth and dignity respected? Where the earth, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field would feel part of the beloved community? What would your home table look like if it stood as an altar to your deepest values?

For myself, if I'm honest, I admit I don't know if there's a final answer to that question. But I know it's incumbent that we *ask* that question.

And I know why we're asking the question, even if we arrive at different answers: so that someday we can look at the tables spread before us in our own homes and say, "This expresses my values and my spirituality, my compassion, my respect, my reverence for the Earth — and reinforces them, brings me back to my spiritual center, three times a day."

And I know *how* to ask that question — with humility and openness to learning, in community.

We're in this new religious moment as Unitarian Universalists. Call it choosing compassionate consumption, call it ethical eating. I think of it as the joy of *just* eating.

We're in a new conversation as UUs, in the spirit attributed to Hungarian Unitarian Francis David, who may have said, "We need not think alike to love alike."¹¹ Trying one another's favorite foods, asking "Why do you make the food choices you make?" and sitting at one another's feet in humility. Taking children on field trips nearby organic farms, complete with a tour, conversations with the farmer about the challenges she faces, samples of the farm's produce, and a few seeds to plant at home. Going on shopping excursions with local activists bravely traversing the aisles of a local grocery store, explaining products' origins and the future we vote for when we buy them. Planting a summertime garden on the congregational property here and inviting members of the large community to join in the work and enjoy the harvest. Gathering to watch movies, read books, host forums, write letters, go out to restaurants, lobby the legislature. See the insert in your order of service and look for the table at our fellowship hour today to learn about upcoming ways to participate. For us as individuals and as a congregation, this could be a lot of fun.

And yet, fun as food justice work can be, it has serious implications. Whether or not *you* participate matters. Not just for you, but for all of us, and for people around the world that you will never meet.

Eating is a daily human delight with worldwide implications for issues Unitarian Universalists deeply care about: the environment, immigration, labor practices, climate change, animal rights, fair trade, world hunger. As we sang today, “Our world is one world, what touches one affects us all.” In our infinitely interconnected natural world, there is no such thing as an isolated event. So just as it matters what we *do*, it matters what we *eat*. It matters that eating less meat in your diet would make more of a difference for climate change than would switching to a hybrid car.¹² It matters if workers receive paid sick days and access to health care. It matters if the food we are eating was harvested, processed, or served by people being paid less than a living wage.

It matters not just because you are what you eat. But because *we* are what you eat, and *you* are affected by what *I* eat, and *what* we eat can make a better society not only here but throughout the world. It matters because taking action gives us faith. It matters because in a world too full of food rules and saccharine pleasures, there is a deeper joy to be discovered, the joy of *just* eating, eating what makes us truly happy. It matters because it shifts our sense of self — from isolated, passive consumers to active citizens shaping the marketplace, as we express and evolve our spirituality. That’s the power of the plate, the power in your hands, three times a day. Take up the power that you are given, the power to bless the world. Shalom, salaam, namaste, blessed be, and amen.

In celebration of the future we create together, let us join in singing.

Hymn

#407, “We’re Gonna Sit Down at the Welcome Table”

Benediction

#693, “Wise Planting,” by V. Emil Gudmonson

And now, may we have faith in life to do wise planting that the generations to come may reap even more abundantly than we. May we be bold in bringing to fruition the golden dreams of human kinship and justice. This we ask that the fields of promise become the fields of reality.

² Andy Jones, *Eating Oil*, Sustain & Elm Farm Research Center, London, 2001, Case Study 2.
http://www.sustainweb.org/chain_fm_eat_asp

³ These world religions ask different questions and arrive at different answers. For example, in the responsive reading, we encountered the Jewish teaching admonition to share our bounty with the downtrodden. Hindu teachings encourage believers to treat the body as a temple and not pollute that temple for the sake of passing pleasure. Christian traditions encourage gratitude at every meal. Muslim scriptures charge adherents to hold political structures accountable for equitable food distribution. Buddhist sutras reveal that animals raised for food deserve as

much compassion as any other creature that walks on the ground or flies through the air. Many indigenous traditions ask that spiritual people take no more from the earth than we need. These are just a few of thousands of examples.

⁴ UUA 2011 Statement of Conscience: Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice. Available from <http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml>

⁵ See Helena Bottemiller, “Advocates Ask USDA to Halt Poultry Inspection Plan: Plan jeopardizes worker, food safety, groups say.” *Food Safety News*, September 21, 2012. Available from <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2012/09/advocates-ask-usda-to-halt-poultry-inspection-plan/> .

⁶ John Lennon, “I Am the Walrus,” *Magical Mystery Tour*, 1967.

⁷ Food Chain Workers Alliance, *The Hands that Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers Along the Food Chain*. June 12, 2012; available from <http://foodchainworkers.org/?p=1973>

⁸ See, for example, Jeff Gordinier’s “Del Posto to Pay \$1.15 Million to Settle Workers’ Suit,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 2012. Available from <http://dinersjournal.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/24/del-posto-to-pay-1-15-million-to-settle-workers-suit/>

⁹ “Happiness is satisfaction that continues to be satisfactory.” A.J. Ayer in Mark Kingwell’s *The Pursuit of Happiness: Better Living from Plato to Prozac*. New York: Crown, 1998, pg. 11.

¹⁰ Clarence Russell Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism*. (New York: Universalist Publishing House/Murray Press), 1915, pg. 9.

¹¹ He may also have not said this. See <http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/229844.shtml>.

¹² *New Scientist*, “It’s better to green your diet than your car.” Issue 2530, 17 December 2005, pg. 19. Available from <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg18825304.800>.

Sample Worship Service Elements

Prepared by Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh

Note: All suggested numbered hymns and readings are from *Singing the Living Tradition*, unless otherwise specified.

Centering Thoughts

“One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.”

—Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, *Pavarotti, My Own Story*

“Sex is good, but not as good as fresh, sweet corn.”

—Garrison Keillor

Alternatives

“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.”

—Reinhold Niebuhr

“Humans are part of the web of life. What we do to the planet, what we do to other species, and what we do to other people, we end up doing to ourselves.”

—John Robbins

Call to Worship

By Rev. Erika Hewitt

As we enter into worship, put away the pressures of the world
that ask us to perform, to take up masks, to put on brave fronts.

Silence the voices that ask you to be perfect.

This is a community of compassion and welcoming.

You do not have to do anything to earn the love contained within these walls.

You do not have to be braver, smarter, stronger, better

than you are in this moment to belong here, with us.

You only have to bring the gift of your body, no matter how able;

your seeking mind, no matter how busy;

your animal heart, no matter how broken.

Bring all that you are, and all that you love, to this hour together.

Come, let us worship together.

Suggested Hymns

#134, “Our World Is One World”

#407, “We’re Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table”

Alternatives

Labor and Agriculture:

- #69, "Give Thanks"
- #71, "In the Spring with Plow and Harrow"
- #207, "Earth Was Given As a Garden"
- #333, "Alone She Cuts and Binds the Grain"
- #355, "We Lift Our Hearts in Thanks"
- #357, "Bright Morning Stars"

Nature and the Earth:

- #21, "For the Beauty of the Earth"
- #53, "I Walk the Unfrequented Road"
- #163, "For the Earth Forever Turning"
- #175, "We Celebrate the Web of Life"
- #203, "All Creatures of the Earth and Sky"
- #1064 *Singing the Journey*, "Blue Boat Home"
- #1067 *Singing the Journey*, "Mother Earth, Beloved Garden"
- #1073 *Singing the Journey*, "The Earth Is Our Mother"

The Goal of World Community:

- #220, "Bring Out the Festal Bread"
- #276, "O Young and Fearless Prophet"
- #277, "When We Wend Homeward"
- #298, "Wake, Now, My Senses"
- #305, "De Colores"
- #406, "Let Us Break Bread Together"
- #1014 *Singing the Journey*, "Standing on The Side of Love"
- #1016 *Singing the Journey*, "Profetiza, Pueblo Mio"
- #1056 *Singing the Journey*, "Thula Klizeo"

Suggested Opening Readings and Chalice Lightings

- #459, "This is the mission of our faith," by William F. Schulz

Alternatives

- #417, "For the beauty of the Earth," by Barbara J. Pescan
- #430, "For now the winter is past," from Song of Solomon 2
- #432, "If someone would scatter seed on the ground," from Mark 4
- #439, "We Gather in Reverence," by Sophia Lyon Fahs
- #451, "Flame of fire," by Leslie Pohl-Kosbau
- #453, "May the light we now kindle," from Passover Haggadah

Today, we light our chalice flame for the beauty of this earth, and for the wisdom to use its blessings for peace and justice.

—Anonymous

We light this chalice for the nourishment of our beings
For the food that feeds our bodies
For the food for thought that feeds our minds
And for the food that feeds our spirits,
The light of our shared time together.
—LoraKim Joyner

As surely as we belong to this universe...to this Earth...
We belong together.
We join here to transcend the isolated self,
To reconnect, to come to know ourselves.
To be at home, here on this Earth, on this planet,
Sustained by the sun, awed by the stars,
Linked with each other.
Come, let us worship together.
—Margaret Keip

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a [person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he [or she] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope; and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.
—Robert F. Kennedy

We light this chalice with hopes for a bright future.
May our children, their children, all children
Intermingle their laughter through the world.
May they be as the rainbow
Color and hope for the coming dawn.
—Reena Kondo

Prayers

“Prayer of Dedication,” by Alan Paton, author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*

O God, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others;
Open my ears that I may hear their cries;
Open my heart so that they may not be without succor;
Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger
of the strong; nor afraid to defend the poor because of the
anger of the rich.
Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use
me to bring them to those places.
And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day
be able to do some work of peace for thee. Amen.

“Prayer of the Farm Workers’ Struggle (in English and Spanish),” by César E. Chávez, founder of United Farm Workers (1927–1993), © César E. Chávez Foundation

Show me the suffering of the most miserable; so I will know my people’s plight. Free me to pray for others; for you are present in every person. Help me take responsibility for my own life; so that I can be free at last. Grant me courage to serve others; for in service here is true life. Give me honesty and patience; so that I can work with other workers. Bring forth song and celebration; so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow; so that we never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice; for they have given us life. Help us to love even those who hate us; so we can change the world. Amen.

Oración del Campesino en la Lucha (en Inglés es Español)

Enséñame el sufrimiento de los mas desafortunados; Así conoceré el dolor de mi pueblo. Librame a orar por los demás; Porque estas presente en cada persona. Ayúdame a tomar, responsabilidad de mi propia vida; Solo así, seré libre al fin. Concedeme valentía para servir al prójimo; Porque en la entrega hay vida verdadera. Concedeme honra z y paciencia; Para que yo pueda trabajar junto con otros trabajadores. Alumbranos con el canto y la celebración; Para que levanten el Espíritu entre nosotros. Que el Espíritu florezca y crezca; Para que no nos cansemos entere la lucha. Nos acordamos de los que han caído por la justicia; Porque a nosotros han entregado la vida. Ayúdanos a amar aun a los que nos odian; Así podemos cambiar el mundo.

Responsive Readings

#588, “To Loose the Fetters of Injustice,” from Isaiah 58

Alternatives

#461, “We Must Be Saved,” by Reinhold Niebuhr

#512, “We Give Thanks This Day,” by O. Eugene Pickett

#515, “We Lift Up Our Hearts in Thanks,” by Richard M. Fewkes

#558, “For Everything a Season,” from Ecclesiastes 3

#560, “Commitment,” by Dorothy Day

#567, “To Be of Use,” by Marge Piercy

#568, “Connections Are Made Slowly,” by Marge Piercy

#576, “A Litany of Restoration,” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley #593, “Liberation Is Costly,” by Desmond Tutu

#643, “Shout for Joy,” from Psalm 65

#654, “Impassioned Clay,” by Ralph N. Helverson

#656, “A Harvest of Gratitude,” by Percival Chubb

#668, “Faith Cannot Save,” from James 2

Closing Words

#693, "Wise Planting," by V. Emil Gudmundson

Alternatives

#648, "Beginners," by Denise Levertov

#691, "Gardeners of the Spirit," by May Sarton