

ORDER OF SERVICE - 17<sup>th</sup> January 2010

“We can be the religion for our time”

WELCOME

CHALICE CMC

What is this light, the one we set in our chalice? It is the:

Light of faith

Light of freedom

Light of reason

Light of tolerance

Light of god

Light of love

Light of peace

Light of hope

Light of the light of the world

May its flame never falter in our hearts and minds.

**INTROIT    PURPLE    148    SPIRIT OF LIFE**

CALL TO WORSHIP      CMC

To worship is to give wordless expression  
to all that our simple human minds cannot express in words.

To worship is to gather together with our hopes and fears  
Believing that together we will achieve great things in small ways  
To worship is to find wonder in the unfurling of a leaf from its bud  
in the beautiful scent of a summer rose  
and the smile of a child.

Come, let us worship together.

**HYMN      PURPLE      13      BRING FLOWERS TO OUR ALTAR**

PRAYER - CMC

In light of the terrible effects created by an earthquake in Haiti, and of the number of people hurt and even killed by the current icy weather, let us begin our time of reflection and prayer by bringing into our hearts and minds all those who are living in a state of fear, hunger, pain, and sorrow. We live in an often difficult world in which the unexpected may explode into any of our lives, bringing with it devastation and despair. Let us spend a few moments in silence.

----- silence -----

Gathered as we are in the Spirit of Community,  
Let our thoughts of comfort and compassion enfold all who are in need.  
May we give thanks for this blessed community  
For the strength it lends to all in its circle,  
May we give thanks for our lives  
For all it brings to us.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory  
For ever and ever, amen.

READING – taken from the first article in UU World by the new UU president Rev Peter Morales. Fall 2009 edition

*I have been reflecting on the election and what it means for all of us. This presidential campaign, through long and arduous, did what election campaign should do in a democratic faith. It created a space for discussion and reflection about who we are and where we are headed as a religious movement.....Our delegates did not so much decided between two people as between tow futures. I founded my campaign on the conviction that Unitarian Universalism has the potential to become a religious movement that includes far more people and that we can have far more*

*impact in the world. I spoke recently about growth as a moral imperative akin to feeding the hungry.....*

*The message of the election is clear: We Unitarian Universalists want our movement to change. We want to embrace the possibilities inherent in these uncertain times. We are not reconciled to being a declining part of American religious life. We have too much to offer. The world needs our prophetic and compassionate voice..... The challenges before us are daunting. These are difficult economic times..... The true challenges before us are spiritual. The first great test for us is whether we are willing to let go of those things in the past that no longer serve us.....in order to embrace the future. We must not let fear paralyse us. The second great spiritual test for us is relational. Can we open our hearts, our lives, our doors, and our congregations to the.....seekers looking for a religious home? Ultimately the test is whether there is enough love in our hearts. Love reaches out. Love is vulnerable. We must dare to love.”*

**HYMN      PURPLE      196      WE’LL SING THE FAITH, WHICH GIVES  
US CONFIDENCE**

STORY – CMC This little light of mine.....

The argument had been going on for so long, it was difficult to remember how it had all started, save by reading the agenda which stated the meeting had been called to figure out how to light up the garden for the night party without using electricity and so grasp the nettle of a decision the committee made some time before to do all in its power (no pun intended) to support the growing global need to reduce electricity consumption and set a good example to the neighbourhood; but how to achieve such a well meaning end was the problem.

Fred suggested lighting a bonfire fire, but Ann pointed out that this could be dangerous, and Tony would certainly not be happy with the resulting black hole in the lawn, nor would the judges in the Cumbria in bloom competition who were due the following week. The novel idea of rushlights also fell on the sword of health and safety. Buying a number of glo-sticks seemed reasonable for a while till Jo said she thought they were impractical and expensive, and Don pondered how much energy had gone into the making of them and the same went for solar lights and what happened if there hadn’t been enough sun to power them?

Sighing, Michael went to make another pot of tea and Marjorie looked pointedly at her watch, muttering about dogs needing to be walked. It seemed impossible to find a solution – but the committee were determined to find an answer before going home, there just had to be a good way to light the garden without spending a fortune or using electricity, nor posing a health risk.

The noise of the tea cups rattling on the tray Sue carried to the table roused Celia who had been sitting quietly in a corner with her eyes closed (some said she had been sleeping, but she said she had been meditating on the problem). “I’ve had a thought” she said. “More tea Vicar” joked Vera, passing her a cup. “thanks” said Celia, sipping gratefully.

“And this thought is?” said John bringing the meeting back to some semblance of order.

“Ah” said Celia putting the cup down “Well, as I was.....meditating, a little song came into my head and I thought, I’ve got one of those wind up torches, the ones that never need batteries and a wind up lantern I got for Summer School, not so romantic as candles but less messy, has any one else got one? I just thought that if we had enough we could hang them from the trees and the bird feeder and so on and so long as we all keep an eye on them and wind them up regularly, we could light up the garden at no extra cost and there would be no safety issues and so long as we all take responsibility for the lights they will all stay pretty well lit all evening.”

“I think John and I have one in the car” said Katie and I keep one in the kitchen just in case of power cuts.

“I have one by my bed” said Marjorie

“I got one for Christmas last year” said Michael, “you’re welcome to borrow it.

Jayne smiled, “It could work, my boys have one each for reading in bed, and Alex keeps one in his tool box - how many is that?”

And work it did, the night garden party worked wonderfully, the Westmorland GAZETTER picked up the story and the attendance was splendid.

And the song in Celia’s day-dream? This Little light of mine....

## ADDRESS

This year Sally gave me a couple of UU World magazines in which tales of the recent election, not of the US President but of the new UU president, Rev Peter Morales. His belief and his campaign slogan was “We can be the religion for our time”. He says “I believe it passionately. Together, *Together* we can transform and revitalise our faith. Give me your hand. Let’s get busy.”

This chapel’s Growth and Renewal Group will meet again, tomorrow I think, to continue its thinking about, well, growth, and renewal, of this chapel and its congregation. Inspired by last year’s General Assembly Meetings, it has already brought to birth, new wayside posters and is in the labour throes of changing the way into this chapel, the appearance of the gateway from the outside and the archway inside, with new colour, new signs, and artwork. I am thrilled by this burgeoning of enthusiasm for this place, just as I am constantly delighted by the continuing maintenance of those things which have been tested by time and remain a positive function of this community in the work of the coffee morning team and the Women’s League and the work of Committee members and Trustees. Together these various elements come together to create a thriving, forward looking group of people with its feet firmly planted and its head thrusting excitedly towards the sky. Reading the words of Peter Morales I found myself inspired to consider what our Unitarian faith is and could be. I believe it to be a wonder-full faith, open, malleable, movable, it is free-flying, it is not anchored in ancient ideas, it has promise, and it has purpose, and I want to say “let’s take our courage in our hands and make use of it”.

One of the things that sometimes concern me about Unitarianism in Britain is that for so many of us it is primarily a refuge from the world. A place we come to simply to seek peace. Too often it is an almost secret faith we share, we don’t broadcast our faith in case we have to defend it against the dogma of other faith or no faith! But while it is and should be a place we can relax for an hour or so a week it is also a place where we meet with people who will be more interested in our doubts than critical of them. We come here to seek signposts on our lone spiritual journey - and all of that is fine, all of that is good, but the question is, once we have found our spiritual refuelling station, what then? As spiritually refuelled individuals, how are

we changed and what effect does that change the way we live our lives and respond to the world.

Let me share with you some of the things Peter Morales has said – I think they have meaning for us too, not just for our US cousins. He calls for change in the Unitarian Universalist movement. He calls the movement to adapt to an increasingly multicultural society. He said he wants to see our faith become much more open to others ways of expressing the same fundamental values. He calls its membership to consider what it means now and what it could mean. He says this:

*The true challenges before us are spiritual. The first great test for us is whether we are willing to let go of those things in the past that no longer serve us. We must learn to “do church” and our associational life in new ways. Change can be hard. The familiar is comfortable. In the coming months and years we must remind ourselves that we are the spiritual heirs of people who were willing to leave the past behind in order to embrace the future. We must not let fear paralyse us.*

The true challenges before us are spiritual. Here in this chapel we face the same spiritual challenges as our community changes, they are much the same changes that have been happening over decades, the spiritual challenges of merging and reforming the theological and philosophical make-up of our community. We address them every week as we favour hymn books! We are a group of people with often very different ideas about worship, prayer, words, tunes, forms.....How much more difficult then to address them face to face with each other. How much more difficult still if we are to go out into the wider community not with a “message” a “gospel” but with an open mind seeking to listen rather than inform? I have in mind one of the suggestions found in the, may I have a minor moan here, much unused suggestion box in the lobby. The suggestion is that at some time during the warmer months we conduct a service outside the chapel grounds, in Market Place. Here’s the question, what would you want to have said in the open air, to whomsoever ventured to stop and listen? How would you want it said?

This is the great spiritual challenge, to ask the questions of our selves, of each other, and have the courage to go out with our differences, with our doubts and remain

positive. We live in a world, at least in the west, where everywhere we look things look the same. In our high street we can buy the same style in almost every shop, in our supermarkets we can find the same provisions, in our places of entertainment we can find the same acts. More and more, it seems, we are being urged to be the same, fit into neat spaces – do you remember the song, from the 60's I think, “Little boxes, little boxes, all made out of ticky-tacky; and we all live in little boxes, and they all look just the same.....” Well, let's buck the trend, we don't all have to be alike to care for each other, we don't all have to believe the same things to carry the same purpose. But having got here, found a home here, what then. Is that it? I hope not, but what comes next how do we get from here to out in the Market Place?

Peter Morales continued his vision: *The second great spiritual test for us is relational. Can we open our hearts, our lives, our doors, and our congregations to the millions of seekers looking for a religious home? Ultimately, the test is whether there is enough love in our hearts. Love reaches out. Love is vulnerable. We must dare to love.*

Do we dare to love? Do we dare to be loving of our neighbour enough get out in the Market Place and dare others to be different with us? Do we dare to love enough to challenge the sameness we find all around us, the sameness that ostracises those who would be different? Do we love enough to dare to make a difference?

Historically this chapel and its congregation are not strangers to change. During the ministry of Caleb Rotherham junior, we broke away from Presbyterian non-conformity to become an avowedly Unitarian congregation. We can but imagine the strength of character and purpose of the people who worked and worshipped here then, the long journey towards the decision to instigate that enormous change, to break away from the safety of the known, to stand apart, what must have been the elation and the fear running hot and cold through the hearts of all who stayed here. That same minister Caleb Rotherham stood strongly against the slave trade, with those who sought change in a society that thought little of enslaving others, and I doubt he stood alone without at least some of his congregation behind him. These changes were wide ranging and I am sure were hard to endure, but they did and we

have inherited their legacy. This denomination has changed radically since that time, and here in this congregation we see the strands of change, from being wholly bible based to a faith that embraces a vast range of religious belief.

This year 2010, we have other changes planned, physical changes, new colours, new signage, and paintings to illustrate our faith, words to engage and hopefully draw in seekers of a different way. We will open our doors to new ways of engaging in spiritual practise, and theological discussion. Let us make these changes with courage, optimism, love and good will. Let us be positive, let us allow our faith to act through us that our way might be seen in positive and attractive action. Let's learn to "do" church and our everyday lives differently, if only a little bit. Let us gather our spirit, harvest our power, and bring the separate flames of our individual faith together to create more heat and more light and more energy to work with love and faith together. I agree with Peter Morales, I believe it passionately. Together, *Together* we can transform and revitalise our faith. Give me your hand. Let's get busy

AMEN

**HYMN      PURPLE      43      GATHER THE SPIRIT**

OFFERTORY

NOTICES

BENEDICTION CMC

As we leave this place let us do so with strength, courage and hope

Ready to continue the journey of our faith.

amen

**HYMN      *This little light of mine - ACAPELLA***

This little light of mine, I'm goin' to let it shine (x3)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.