

## In Service to Holy Disruption – Ingathering Service

September 9, 2018

Theodore Parker Unitarian Universalist Church

### WELCOME

Come, come, whoever you are—you are welcome here!

No matter your age, your size, the color of your eyes, your hair, your skin—you are welcome here!

No matter how you came here,  
if you came alone, or with others—  
you are welcome here!

No matter whom you love, or how you speak, or whatever your abilities—you are welcome here!

Whether you come with laughter in your heart, or tears in your eyes—you are welcome here!

If you come here with an open mind,  
a loving heart, and willing hands,  
then you are indeed welcome here!

By Melanie Morel-Ensminger

### OPENING WORDS

RIVER CALL, by Manish Mishra-Marzetti

Between rocking the boat  
And sitting down;  
Between stirring things up,  
And peaceably going along,

We find ourselves  
Here,  
In community.

Each called  
From many different journeys,  
Many different life paths,  
Onto this river road.

Some are here  
Because the rocking of  
The boat  
Has been too much:

Too much tumult,  
Too much uncertainty,  
Too much pain.

Some are here with questions  
About where the boat is going;  
How best to steer it;  
Where this journey ends.

Others are here  
As lovers of the journey,  
Lovers of life itself.

Here in front  
Beside  
Behind

Each a passenger;  
Each a captain;  
Doing the best we can.

“Rest here, in your boat,  
With me,” the river calls

“Listen to how I flow,  
The sound of life coursing all around you.”

Let the current  
Hold you,  
Let the current  
Guide you;  
The river that gently flows  
Through your soul,  
Whispers:  
“Come, let us worship.”

**STORY FOR ALL AGES**

Higgins, the drop in the bucket (who is determined to make a difference)

**Story #2**

About finding quarters in a change machine, and not being sure what to do with them!

**READING**

Entrance

(After Rilke)

Whoever you are: step out of doors tonight,  
Out of the room that lets you feel secure.  
Infinity is open to your sight.

Whoever you are.

With eyes that have forgotten how to see  
From viewing things already too well-known,  
Lift up into the dark a huge, black tree  
And put it in the heavens: tall, alone.  
And you have made the world and all you see.  
It ripens like the words still in your mouth.  
And when at last you comprehend its truth,  
Then close your eyes and gently set it free.

~ Dana Gioia ~

*(Interrogations at Noon)*

## **SERMON**

### **In Service to Holy Disruption**

The Rev. Anne Bancroft

Good morning! It's so nice to be back together again! I feel like I have a thousand things I want to share with you – and ask you about.

I want to tell you that today is what we used to call a multigen service, but now we will call an All Congregation service – and if you need to wiggle, there are things to do in the narthex so you don't have to leave the building! We can still be together, and you can still wiggle or lie down flat on the floor if that is how you listen best! This morning, we are all together.

I want to tell you how grateful I am to have our new DRE, Aoife, and our affiliate minister, Jolie, joining our staff this year; and how glad I am that Michael and Yukiko and Laura and the choir are all with us; and I want to mention how fun it is to have our drummer, Henry, here. Henry will be with us more often this year – I'm excited about that!

I want to remind you that a worship service is an **EVERBODY THING** – what we might call a collective experience – which means **YOU** and **YOU** and **YOU** are a part of it as we all search for moments that touch us, that make us laugh, or shiver, or cry – moments that make us think “Oh! I didn't know that!” ... it's kind of a crazy world out there ... let's be especially glad to be gathered today.

And, I want to know from each of you ... how was your summer? And, what are you carrying in your heart with you into the new season? To work or to school or to a new activity? How is it with your spirit today?

And, I want to offer to each of you, as I want you to offer each other in this beautiful space, just a moment of peace. Let us breath that in together.

We are gathered in this amazing sanctuary – but we ARE also the sanctuary FOR each other. And Michael – will you lead us in that song? *Make us aware we are a sanctuary – each made holy and loved right through. With thanksgiving, we are a living sanctuary anew.*

Here, within these walls, is the time and place to know what we feel; to think about what we're afraid of; this is the time and place to remember what we need, and what we need to ask for. Jolie read us a poem earlier: it's here we are invited to open the "... eyes that have forgotten how to see, from viewing things already too well-known," and we look not just at what's around us but what's inside us to find a new way of seeing, a new way of being, a new vision maybe ... more open, more honest, more generous, more kind.

Sometimes I think that could take more than an hour!

I saw a funny post on Facebook by my friend, Mariama – who is a minister of color, a black woman. She was watching Aretha Franklin's Funeral service – an 8½-hour affair for the Queen of Soul. Mariama said it was an amazing service – "the fullness of the Black church tradition on display."

She said the hats were wild and the songs started with long descriptions called sermonettes; that 2-minute speeches were mostly 8 minutes and that the gospel music was awesome. She also said after about 4½ hours, every time they show white folks on the screen they seem to be checking their watches and wondering why the ACTUAL order of service didn't match what was printed in the bulletin.

Does that feel familiar to anyone here?? Do you sometimes feel impatient in church? Or maybe today, if you found yourself looking at your Order of Service, it's because they are such a beautiful lime green?! This is new for us – we're trying some different things. We'll call that a holy disruption! That is two big words for a new color and shape for our Orders of Service!

Today we have been sharing our waters – and we're talking about holy disruptions. What are those, and why are we talking about them?

A holy disruption is when something happens that makes you stop ... and try to figure something out. Like Higgins, for example. Higgins is going along, merrily on his way ... when he notices the world around him is not right – everything is dry and lifeless. And from somewhere, Higgins got an idea, a dream that he could make it better.

THAT is a holy disruption! And we're talking about them because they happen to us all the time and we need to remember they're really important to pay attention to – even when they're just small ones, like my finding 2 dollars and 75 cents and needing to figure out what to do with it.

Holy disruptions are things that wake us up! Hey, sleepy-head ... something is wrong over here ... something needs your attention?!

There are just two things I hope we leave here thinking about.

1. The first is the need to listen.
2. The second is the need to act.

Did any of you ever see the movie “A Knight’s Tale”? It’s pretty fun, actually – I recommend it. But the part I want to describe today is when the main characters are traveling together and come across a guy walking along the road (old road) – with no clothes on, no shoes, dirty hair ... and they say “hey, what are you doing?” and he says he’s trudging ... just walking because he can’t think what else to do. He lost all his clothes in a bet . . . he’s not thinking anymore, he’s just doing ... trudging.

Sometimes we all get stuck trudging ... just doing our routine, whatever it is. Get up; brush teeth; eat breakfast; go to school; come home; do homework; eat dinner; go to bed ... trudging.

And then something happens ... HOPEFULLY something happens. We feel something, we notice something, we hear something ....

I was listening to something about prayer the other day – the person was saying that when we pray, we’re often talking so much (even in our own heads) that we forget to listen, and somebody said they heard a voice that said, “Shhhh ... stop talking so you can hear how much I love you.” (Well, actually they said, “shut up,” but I don’t like that so much.) Shhhhh ... stop talking so you can hear how much I love you.

We all need to hear that, don’t we? THAT’S ALSO a holy disruption!

So ... first. Stop trudging, and listen. There is likely a kind of voice, a message in your heart and soul that needs to be heard. Water the plants, it says – figure out how. Don't take that money, it says – it's not yours.

Do you know, I ran into somebody in my family and I told them about the quarters and they say, "Wow – Aunt Anne – you're WAY overthinking that!"

Not so much. I think those small things need our attention. It's like scraping your knee, getting a paper cut. They help us practice how to take care of ourselves so we'll know what to do with the bigger things when they come along, like climate change or paying for college. The little problems are small reminders about big values, because the second thing is ... when you hear that voice or feel that something is not quite right ....

You have to DO something! That's what a holy disruption is, too! It's not just that you notice. It's that you change what you were doing in order to take care of what startled you.

HEY ... Do you wonder where Higgins got his dream? I wonder that. Where do our dreams come from? Our ideas? Are they only from ourselves?

Sometimes I think they are what we might call GOD MOMENTS – moments when things come together and offer us a challenge or a puzzle – and they're not always the things we want to be challenged by, but they move us to a new place, and we're not making them up ourselves, so I sometimes call them God moments because I have a hard time coming up with other words.

If that works for you, I'm happy to share it. But I know many of you also have your own words for those times.

Rumi is a poet that many of us love. He offers the poem, *The Guest House*. Like the river that is always taking in new things, we are taking in new things ....

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

Higgins' guest was a dream of making the world more green again. He welcomed the dream, like a guest to his home, and made it happen!

When have you been inspired like that? Does it feel like a God moment to you? Or as a chance to welcome a guest?

The other day, driving home and listening to the radio, I learned that Cory Booker, who is a senator from New Jersey, is a vegan. It surprised me! It disrupted me! I don't imagine our governing folks in Washington, D.C., to be vegans ... for me it was a holy disruption because it has inspired me to consider that choice for myself again, knowing as I do how our consumption impacts the world at large.

Make us aware we are a sanctuary, each made holy, and loved right through. With thanksgiving, we are a living sanctuary anew.

Every day, a new.

In this new year, friends, let us live into the new ... let us grow in our ability to pay attention to the holy disruptions around us, even the smallest ones. Let us get better and better at being people who have a vision that invites the unknown, every guest. Let's keep building a community that is creative, and imaginative, and brave together. There is so much that needs our attention.

Tonight, our Jewish friends will be celebrating Rosh Hashanah, the new year. A very wise man named Abraham Heschel said it is a time when we are asked to remember that "each one of us participates in creation every single day, when we make a choice about how we want to live in the world."

Let us be people who take on the holy disruptions, who live in service to them, every single one, with gusto –  
listen for the God moment, or the guest ... the inspiration; ... and act on its behalf.

And the world will be better for it.

Shhhh. Listen. I'll stop talking so you can hear how you are loved.

Amen, friends.

Let's sing together.