



# CUF Links

The Monthly Newsletter of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship  
*A Welcoming Congregation*

- a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist association -

**November, 2010**

## **SUNDAY SERVICES**

held in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30 a.m.

### **11/7 Bill Sasso: "Holding Values and Building Bridges"**

In the wake of the week's elections – whatever their outcomes – we face the ongoing tension between two important moral duties. How do we hold and honor our values, while "building bridges," that is, creating relationships with those holding values other than ours, in order to achieve any progress? What might we find as we explore beyond the edge of political compromise?

### **11/14 "A Citizen and a Soldier"**

Three members of our congregation who have served in our military – Jack Stewart, Charles Ruffner, and Chris Vine – will share their reflections on how their understanding of citizenship has informed their service in the military, and how their service in the military has changed their understanding of citizenship. Bill Sasso will coordinate this service.

### **11/21 Thanksgiving Bread Service**

This annual Fellowship tradition continues, as our children join us for our pre-Thanksgiving Sunday service. Come and be part of the celebration, as we share bread that has some form of special meaning to us in the spirit of the Thanksgiving holiday. Bill Sasso will coordinate this service, and if you would like to volunteer to bring bread, please contact Astrid Mosely. There will be no live announcements in the service – please make sure to get your info to Russ Trimble so it can be printed in the order of service!

### **11/28 Christine Bauer and Friends: "Gay Pride Revisited"**

Our recognition by the Unitarian Universalist Association as a "Welcoming Congregation" means that we have committed ourselves to celebrate the lives of all people and welcomes same-sex couples, recognizing their committed relationships and to work to promote justice, freedom and equality in the larger society. As part of our ongoing Welcoming Congregation initiative, Christine will lead us in completion of our special recognition of Gay Pride.

**And coming up . . .**

### **12/5 Bill Sasso: "Blessings of the Season of Darkness"**

(Our children will be with us in the opening of the service)

## OPEN MINDS

This presentation/discussion program meets at **8:45 a.m. each Sunday** in the Commons Area. Topics “To Be Announced” in weekly bulletins. Contact Terry Elliot at [elliott1@wildblue.net](mailto:elliott1@wildblue.net) if you would like to lead one of these Sunday discussions, or for more information.

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## THE MINISTER’S MESSAGE



### Gratitude and Beyond

In the season of Thanksgiving, in the time of harvest and autumn’s extravagance, and in awareness of the winter soon to arrive, perhaps a sense of gratitude is natural. It feels natural to me, and I give thanks for the sheer gift

of human consciousness, which I know I have done nothing to deserve.

I give thanks for this amazing universe, for the stunning clarity of the stars in November’s night sky, for the delicate pink of the sunrise reflected on the morning clouds, for the ingenuity of nature as it sustains our lives and so many others here on this nurturing, fierce, and beautiful planet. I give thanks for my breath, visible as its moisture clouds in the morning’s chill air. What have I ever done – what could I ever do? – to “deserve” these blessings of nature?

I give thanks for those who love me, for those who care about me, and for those who hold me in their hearts during my times of need. I give thanks for those who stand by me as companions in my difficult moments, as well as those who share their joys and their sorrows with me, that I may serve as their companion. I give thanks for those who

say “yes” when I ask for a favor or for support, and for those who say “no” when they know they cannot and should not say “yes.” I give thanks for those who show up and for those who reach out. I feel a deep gratitude for these people, whose lives and actions weave new strands and repair those broken in the interdependent web of which we are all a part.

May we recognize and celebrate these, and so many other blessings in our lives, gifts that we can sometimes take from granted! Life’s generosity with its blessings can be amazing, and the only response that I can suggest, beyond thanksgiving itself, is to be as generous as we can with that which we possess. As individuals, and as a faith community, may we enter these many cycles of sharing and receiving.

There are, of course, difficulties, disappointments, and frustrations in our lives. We cannot always find something within them for which to be grateful. But even as we acknowledge that our lives are not perfect, may we celebrate this Thanksgiving season with a deep sense of gratitude, and thank each other for the gifts that we receive.

Yours in the spirit of gratitude, Bill Sasso

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## FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTOR

“I’m OK with things not going according to plan.” Many people have heard me say that, and some just roll their eyes, and others make a point of telling me how annoying it is to hear. But you see,

at least in my head and heart, I secretly qualify that statement...I’m OK with things not going according to plan, as long as it results in something more meaningful, beautiful, useful, fun,



exciting – something that planning probably wouldn't have accomplished.

You all have done it, taken a wrong turn and seen something cool that you didn't even know was there. Don't get me wrong, planning, and working with

others to fulfill a goal or make a difference is really important to me, and I spend a lot of time and energy working on plans. My point is that it's sometimes hard to see the really big picture, and to foresee all the connections that result from taking the wrong, instead of the right, step. The limit is that we just can't see the future, but we do have a little control over our attitude about the unplanned.

The May 08, 2009, storm wasn't in my plans, but in the long run I am so much better off. Couldn't have imagined it at the time, but things just kept falling into place...my going to visit Argentina, and learning so much more about my neighbors, is a direct result of the storm. So, for me, this time of year gives me a chance to be thankful for all the things one would normally be thankful for, but also, I'm thankful for the unexpected.

Out of the tragedy of the 2008 shooting at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, came "standing on the side of love." This movement is sponsored by the UUA, and seeks through activism, networking, and organizing to

counter fear with love, and to influence public attitudes in a positive and compassionate manner. You've probably seen the yellow t-shirts, and you can learn more by going to [standingonthesideoflove.org](http://standingonthesideoflove.org). I doubt anyone immediately foresaw this fantastic movement at the time of the shooting, but I'm sure a healing attitude had a lot to do with its creation.

And while I am deeply saddened with the rash of recent suicides of GLBT youth, I am nevertheless thankful that much discussion and action is taking place to attempt to make schools and workplaces safer for GLBT children and citizens. We have an opportunity to speak about justice and compassion, and to do something to make a better world for everyone, and I'm excited about the possibilities.

Sometimes we need the unplanned, to get us out of a rut, to give us enough discomfort to try something new and different, to make us stretch. And maybe, sometimes, the unplanned can really give us a reason to be thankful, to help us be humble, to realize that we can't always control everything. And while you are adjusting to the unplanned, unexpected, and un-asked for, remember that your children are probably watching how you respond...they are learning by watching you. What a wonderful teaching moment for you!

With best wishes,

Roy Sumner

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## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, Sunday, December 12, following the service



As we have for the last few years, at the December Congregational Meeting we will focus on the future of the Fellowship. Preliminary plans include a progress report on the implementation of four new Communications Committees, a progress report on the work of the Building and Grounds Planning Committee, and a progress report on achieving the goals and objectives in our 2006 - 2011 Strategic Plan. The newly revised and more user friendly Building Use Policies will be introduced.

Each step of the way, the impact on our budget will be considered as projects and plans are discussed. In addition, plans being made for the 2011 Stewardship Campaign will be

shared.

Light refreshments and childcare will be provided.

Please plan to attend, your participation is important. Cathy Kline, President, Board of Trustees

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## **ZAMBIAN HOSPICE PARTNERSHIP**

ZAMBIAN PARTNERSHIP UPDATE: (2003-presently continuing):

2009-2010 has been a busy year for the Zambian HIV Partnership between CUF, Hospice of Southern Illinois, and Ranchhod Hospice and Orphan Care in Kabwe Zambia. Activities involved donations, packing and sending almost 100 boxes of supplies during the fall of 2009. MANY, MANY persons from CUF and the community participated in this major endeavor.

The Orphan School Fees Program continues to seek sponsors to pay only \$55.00/year for the fees for the orphan children who are entering 1st grade and continuing throughout elementary school. Allida Plumer of Hospice of Southern Illinois manages this project. Please contact her at [aplumer@hospice.org](mailto:aplumer@hospice.org).

Nightgowns, dolls, underwear and toys continue to be collected by Debbie Czarnopys/White...many items made or donated by fellowship members and other church groups around the U.S. Debbie sends these items to our partners in Kabwe. As discussed at our recent Zambian Partnership meeting, the knickers (underwear) part of the nightgowns and knickers program has been lagging a little behind. So, the next effort will be to collect men's and women's underwear (briefs for both) for shipment, or monetary donations for same. They should be cotton material for the Zambian climate. Sizes can range from mostly small and medium to a few large. Concerning the doll project, a pattern that can be used will be made available at the Zambian display area by the CUF office, or it can be emailed to you. Any pattern is acceptable, however. Decoration is strictly optional. Small beanie babies ship well and are also welcome.

Kate Heist has donated the use and time at her "sewing workshop" where members of CUF have gathered to sew nightgowns.

Fundraising opportunities, concerts, auctions, the Alternative Gift Fair, individual donors, the annual yard sale etc.... have allowed us to send over \$6000.00 to Ranchhod for food and medical supplies for the patients at the hospice and in the outreach villages.

Allida Plumer and Debbie Czarnopys-White traveled to Zambia in the spring, and Carla Feldhamer and her sister, Mimi Gingold, visited in September.

Carla and Mimi spent 2 weeks in September helping to establish a Library/Literacy Center and provide staff training regarding its use. Carla also reported growth in several areas, especially The Family Planning Center and Home Based Care Services.

FUNDING for all services is becoming more and more difficult for all AIDS service programs in Africa. I was continually reminded of the importance of Our Partnership.

Carla was able to purchase new tennis shoes for all of the day care children (close to 130 children), thanks to generous donations by friends and CUF members prior to her trip.

Income-generating groups have spread to several of the out-reach programs. Any donations of yarn, fabric, sewing, knitting needles, and/or crochet hooks would be gratefully appreciated and will be distributed among the three Granny groups whose members support extended families.

### **FINANCIAL DONATIONS TO THE ZAMBIA PARTNERSHIP:**

If you make a financial donation to the partnership, checks should be made out to The Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship. The memo line should say "Zambia Partnership". If the donation is specifically for the Nightgowns and Knickers program, be sure to also put that on the memo line. Debbie Czarnopys-White will use that money to purchase underwear and materials for making nightgowns for the patients and dolls for the orphans. General Donations will be sent to Ranchhod Hospice and Orphan Care, to provide food and medical supplies. For clarification, you may contact Carla Feldhamer at 618-201-4947 or [hospice88@aol.com](mailto:hospice88@aol.com).

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### **CHARLES DARWIN BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION PLANNING**

It's time to begin planning for Charles Darwin's 202nd birthday celebration next February, something truly evolutionary for participants of all ages! The Humanist Forum invites anyone in the CUF community to join the Program Committee in planning a celebration in honor of someone whose legacy seems to shine more brightly as time goes on! Please see Bob Camp or Jo Ann Nelson if you are interested in helping to make such a celebration happen.

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### **NEW HUMANIST FORUM**

.New Humanist Forum meets at Noon, Sunday, November 21: **"Challenges to Education: Freedom from Tyranny" - Panel Presentation**

The effort by neo-fascists and other detractors to assault and destroy public education in America's schools is alive, well, and thriving. Public schools have long been the whipping post for those with an elitist social agenda, counter to inclusive open democratic process. This will be a panel discussion – the panel will include Harland Taylor, Jo Ann Nelson, Nick Eastman, and Bob Camp. Each will share their perspectives, insight, and personal experiences as professional educators who support public education.

Recommended background reading for the discussion, which follows the presentation, is "Death and Life of the Great American School System", Diane Ravitch (Google for synopsis, or read Nation Magazine archive: Diane Ravitch). Bring a snack to share with the group (optional). Contact [joannnelson1928@gmail.com](mailto:joannnelson1928@gmail.com), or Bob Camp at [terrinina@gmail.com](mailto:terrinina@gmail.com) for additional information.

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### **A BIG WELCOME TO OUR TWO NEWEST CUF MEMBERS!**

**Amber Beyke**  
of  
**Carterville**

and

**Marigem Emde**  
of  
**Paducah**

## CUF REGULAR PROGRAMS & MEETINGS

**WOMEN'S GATHERING NOVEMBER – NO GATHERING**, due to the Annual Women's Retreat held Nov 12,13 and 14. **In December, Women's Gathering will be held Wednesday, December 15 at 7:00.** Come help make plans for another successful year of Gatherings; help decide when they should be held, and participate in a discussion of possible program ideas! The program in December will be holiday memories, singing our favorite holiday songs and maybe more. Contact Cathy Kline at [klinejc@earthlink.net](mailto:klinejc@earthlink.net) for more information.

**SISTERHOOD OF STITCHERS** *This group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m., in the Commons area.* All are welcome, from persons learning knitting or stitching crafts to those well practiced and knowledgeable. Come to work on your projects, learn from others, share your ideas, and enjoy the camaraderie! For more info, contact Pam Jacobini at [PJacobini@siumed.edu](mailto:PJacobini@siumed.edu) or Gloria Smiley at [smileyspins@yahoo.com](mailto:smileyspins@yahoo.com).

**CUF DRUMMING GROUP** *This group meets on the third Saturday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the Commons.* **Meets this month on November 20.** For more information, contact Debbie Czarnopys-White at [bdcw@frontiernet.net](mailto:bdcw@frontiernet.net), or call 787-2929.

**MINDFULNESS MEDITATION** *This group meets every Saturday in the Fellowship Commons from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.* If there are other activities scheduled in the Commons, we meet in the RE area. For more information, contact Joy Price at 457-2405 or [joyfully2356@yahoo.com](mailto:joyfully2356@yahoo.com).

**BUDDHISM STUDY & PRACTICE GROUP** *This group meets every Sunday in the Fellowship Commons at 7:00 PM.* **PLEASE NOTE EARLIER START TIME!** Insight Meditation, study, and discussion in a free flowing format. Everyone welcome. For more info, visit [www.shawnee-dharma.org](http://www.shawnee-dharma.org) or contact Jo Kilmer at [kilmer@shawneelink.net](mailto:kilmer@shawneelink.net).

**DREAMWORKS** *This group meets the first Sunday of each month in 06 (RE wing) at 12:00 noon.* **Meets this month on November 7.** We will have a brief discussion on "nightmares" and Jeremy Taylor's view of these, and will then share and contemplate our dreams in a non-threatening, comfortable, and we hope enlightening manner. For more information, contact Nillofur at [cadfael07@yahoo.com](mailto:cadfael07@yahoo.com) or Janet at [jea49@Care2.com](mailto:jea49@Care2.com).

**PSI SYMPOSIUM** *This group meets the second Sunday of the Month in Room 06 at Noon.* **Meets next on on November 14.** We start at noon with light refreshments. Please bring a dish to share. For more info, contact Mary Campbell at 521-0851 or [mspurple1999@yahoo.com](mailto:mspurple1999@yahoo.com).

**ROUNDTABLE READERS** *This group meets on the fourth Sunday of the month after the Sunday Service at Noon.* **Meets this month on November 28.** We will discuss the N. Y. Times #1 bestselling novel The Help, by Kathryn Stockett. Set in a Mississippi town in the early 1960s, it is an ultimately hopeful tale of "Skeeter," a young white woman, and three black women employed as maids who all work together clandestinely to solve the mysterious disappearance of Constantine, the beloved maid who raised Skeeter, crossing traditional lines to do so. Please address questions or send book suggestions to Janet Levie at [jmlevie@frontier.com](mailto:jmlevie@frontier.com).

**SCIENCE IN SOCIETY** *This group meets some Fridays of the Month in the Fellowship Commons at 5:00 PM.* Contact Gina Paul at 351-1064 or [rpaul@siumed.edu](mailto:rpaul@siumed.edu) if you have questions.

**VIDEO CIRCLE** *This group meets on the third Friday of each month in the Fellowship Commons at 7:15 PM.* **Meets next on November 19.** Movie selection to be announced. Free popcorn! Contact person is Amy Weber at [amyweber1@msn.com](mailto:amyweber1@msn.com).

**UNITARIAN FOLK ORCHESTRA** practices at 10:00 a.m. Saturdays, at the Fellowship. For info contact Bill Sasso at [bsasso@juno.com](mailto:bsasso@juno.com).

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**CUF LINKS HARD COPIES** are available at the Fellowship on the visitor table.

**Deadline for December CUF Links: Thursday, November 24.**

Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship,  
105 N. Parrish Lane, Carbondale, IL 62901

618-529-2439 [www.cuuf.net](http://www.cuuf.net), [carbandleuu@verizon.net](mailto:carbandleuu@verizon.net)  
The Rev. William Sasso, Minister

*"We aim above the mark  
to hit the mark."  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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At the request of Fellowship member Carla Feldhamer, we are printing here an excellent sermon by our UUA President, Rev. Peter Morales, given at the Church of the Larger Fellowship in Boston:

## RELIGION BEYOND BELIEF

By REV. PETER MORALES, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

In the congregation I served in Colorado, and as I have traveled across the country, I have heard hundreds of stories of people who came to Unitarian Universalism as adults. We come to liberal religion by different paths, leaving behind a religion that no longer made sense to us, or seeking out a religion that would offer more depth than our consumer-oriented secular culture, or following our Unitarian Universalist upbringing into a search for greater depth. Yet there is one basic notion that almost all of us share with the most conservative, reactionary and fundamentalist religious extremists. It is an idea that we also share, ironically enough, with hard-core atheists who are opposed to all religion. Almost all of us have accepted the notion that religion is about what we believe. The first question most people ask about a religion is, "What do they believe?" So we get questions like, "So what do you Unitarian Universalists believe, anyway? Is it true you can just believe anything you want?" When someone asks us what Unitarian Universalists believe, we tend to give answers that are long, vague, and tedious. We aren't comfortable with the question. We squirm. We fidget. We struggle. Often we talk about what we don't believe.

The trouble is that we treat the question "What do you believe?" as an obvious and natural question. After all, religion is about what we believe, isn't it? No! No. Religion is not about what you or I or Baptists or Catholics or Jews or Muslims or Hindus believe. I would even go a giant step further: Belief is the enemy of religion. Let me repeat that: Belief is the enemy of religion. Perhaps I should explain.

We are so immersed in a culture that views religion as a matter of what people believe that we think this is the way it has always been. It isn't. All of this emphasis on what someone believes is actually very modern and very Western. No one objects to calling Buddhism a religion. Yet Buddhism has no theology at all in the way we use the word. Buddhists don't believe anything, at least not anything that is a set of

propositions. Buddhism doesn't even have a god in the usual sense.

Jews have never had anything like a creed, a statement of belief. Ironically, Jesus, about whom there are all sorts of creeds, probably never encountered a creed in his life. The whole idea of a creed would have been foreign. Jews did have a definite sense of God, to be sure. However, the key to the God of the Jews is that he had a covenant with the people and gave the Hebrew people the law. The Hebrew scriptures never show any interest in what people believe. The scriptures show a lot of interest in what people do. They are supposed to love God and obey the commandments. The great prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Amos, Ezekiel—were concerned with justice, compassion and being faithful to the covenant. They had no interest in doctrine. The early Christian communities, while they did show more concern with what people believed, actually tolerated a lot of variety.

Islam, the next great religious movement, also has little theology. Its statement of faith is that there is no god but God and that Mohammed is his prophet. This is a way of insisting, as did the Jews, that there is only one God. And this is another way of saying that we all owe allegiance to a common source; we are all one people. The great emphasis in Islam is with what the faithful are supposed to do, not what they are supposed to think.

All the emphasis on religion as belief does not come on the scene until much later. It started with the Catholic church and its creeds, but it really got intense with the Reformation. All of this emphasis on religion being about believing the right things is really a modern development. Even the whole idea of belief has gotten twisted. The word used to be used in a very different way. "Belief" once meant "what I give my heart to" or "what I commit myself to." Belief was linked to emotion and action. Belief did not mean agreeing with a set of metaphysical or theological propositions.

Actually, even in religions that emphasize belief, beliefs change over time. It is no longer heresy to believe that the sun is the center of the solar system. Today the Catholic church accepts evolution. So one can be a faithful Catholic today by believing what a Catholic would have been excommunicated for believing a few centuries ago. Lots of American Protestant churches once taught that slavery was God's plan. Even in the religions that care the most about what people believe, beliefs change. Yet the religion goes on. So a religion is not simply what its followers believe.

I want to make a more radical point. The point is that religious belief is actually the enemy of religion. Every major religious tradition seeks to impart a sense of wonder, mystery, awe and humility. Belief systems stop this cold. Belief systems start where our thinking stops.

Once we think we have explained it all, once we think we have all the answers, our minds close and we become arrogant, belligerent and defensive.

Just look at what happens when a belief system takes hold. What follows can be truly horrible. First, we categorize everyone who does not agree with us as either ignorant or evil. If we have the truth and are certain we have it, then our task in life becomes spreading this truth. Our task also becomes defending the truth from all of those who disagree. Believers have enemies everywhere. The world becomes a battleground. This is the world of Muslim fundamentalists blowing up innocent people and of Christian fundamentalists trying to criminalize gays and lesbians. This is the world of John Calvin burning Michael Servetus alive because Servetus did not agree with the doctrine of the Trinity. This is the world of the Spanish Inquisition. Once a religion becomes an all-encompassing belief system, murder will surely follow.

Believers are dangerous. They always have been. So, if religion isn't really about what we believe, then what is it about? Can we be religious without a belief system? I am convinced that religion without belief is true religion. Religion that is focused on belief is a dangerous corruption of true religion.

Religion without belief is not phony religion. It isn't fake religion or pretend religion or partial religion or religion lite. The problem with asking what someone believes is that it is the wrong question. True religion is about what we love, not about what we think. True religion is about what you and I hold sacred. The practice of true religion is faithfulness to what we love. The key religious questions you and I must answer are these: What do we love so much that we are moved to tears? What gives us unspeakable joy? What gives us peace beyond understanding? What do we love so much that it calls us to action? What do we care about so deeply that we willingly, enthusiastically, devote our lives to it? When we focus on what we truly love, we ask life's essential questions. We ask questions like, "How shall I live?" When we ask the question together in community, it becomes, "How shall we live together? What shall we do together?" When we

focus on what we truly love, we discover something wonderful: we discover that we love the same things. We realize that we need one another. We want to be compassionate and gentle with one another. We want to raise children who are kind, content and responsible. We want a place where we can come together to remind ourselves of what is truly worthwhile. That is what worship is—it is literally an affirmation of worth.

And we want to make a difference in the world. We are not content to be a club. We know there are hundreds, thousands, of neighbors who love what we love. And if they love what we love, they have the same religion we do. We open our hearts and our doors to them. Religion beyond belief is the religion millions of people long for. It is religion that transcends culture, race and class. It is religion where we can grow spiritually, a religion where we can forge deep and lasting relationships, a religion where we can join hands to help heal a broken world.

The central issue before us as a religious movement is not to decide what we believe. That will just set us to arguing among ourselves until the theological cows come home. (Trust me, the theological cows have been gone for millennia and they're not coming home in our lifetime.) No, the central issue before us all is whether we will accept the challenge to become a religion beyond belief. We live at a time when religious tribalism kills people every day. Fundamentalists try to force their beliefs on others. Millions upon millions want no part of that kind of religion.

Yet the options offered by secular consumer culture are empty. People know that consumerism is a false god. Modern society, with its mobility, has eroded the network of relationships that gave people a deep sense of belonging and transcendence. Rigorous studies in social psychology show us that modern Americans are the most emotionally isolated people who have ever lived. People, millions of them, seek a religious community where they can nurture relationships, raise children, deepen spiritually, and serve a mission that is worthy of their highest ideals.

What these millions are seeking is a religion beyond belief. We can be that religion. We can feed the starving multitudes. This is our challenge in each and every congregation in our Association. Just as we are relational creatures who need one another to become our true selves, so too do our congregations need one another to become a powerful force for compassion and justice. There is so much more we could be doing.

This is our spiritual and religious challenge: we must know what we love, and then we must let that love guide us. This, my friends, is true religion. It is not really religion without belief. It is religion beyond belief. It is a religion to be lived and experienced. This is the religion our world so desperately needs. This, I am convinced, is what we are called to be.