

A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – UUCiP 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary  
January 24, 2021  
UU Church in the Pines  
Robert and Irene Keim

**REMEMBRANCE**

This is the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of formal recognition of our congregation as a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association in January of 1990. Let us begin by recognizing members who contributed to our lifeline and have passed on. This church had 27 founding members; they and others have contributed to the continuity and growth of this tradition in this region of Florida. From the beginning, we have gathered not just from Hernando, but also Pasco and Citrus counties.

Having only attended this congregation since around 1994, I have not had the honor and delight of knowing everyone in the lifeline, but I would like to mention a few that I have known.

- First row, first chair to the left of the speaker was the customary spot for Art Peracchio to listen carefully and offer questions of a very logical sort to the speaker.
- Second row, first chair to the left of the speaker is where Maude Ware took notes, believing that every speaker had the possibility of presenting some nugget of wisdom or truth. She and Art were noted for their generosity toward others in the congregation and their careful listening skills.
- Left side, near the piano, we often found Murray Foreman when he offered his fine Irish tenor voice to the music of our services. Murray would be especially proud of our work towards owning a building; he felt strongly that the congregation should have a permanent home.
- The Reverend Dr. Al and Eunice Ziegler joined in 1990 after he retired from the UU Church of Tarpon Springs. They brought an understanding of the long lifeline of Unitarian Universalism to our fledgling congregation. And it was Eunice who gifted our pewter chalice that was commissioned in honor of Reverend Al at his passing.
- Paul McCoy, as program chair, had the audacity to ask me to recite some of my early poetry to the congregation, which led to membership for Irene and myself in 1995. Paul's wickedly witty commentary is truly missed.
- Hilda and Keller Dunn retired from the University of Kentucky to Spring Hill in 1992. Keller, as a former professor of English Literature, hearing my first presentation, advised that I not quit my day job. A few years later after much evolution of my style, he graciously informed me that I should continue to write.

## A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – con't.

- Joanne Sutton trusted the congregation enough to share her struggles as a transgender person striving to be authentic, while keeping her job as an engineer and hold her family together. Her story had a powerful impact on our congregation!

- Joann Hettel gave freely of her soprano and artistic skills, as well as leading the congregation through the split with those who lived in Citrus county. The departing members created the Nature Coast UU Congregation in Citrus Springs.

- Cathy Sickler was a bright spark that helped our congregation host the UU Florida District Assembly at the former Pines retreat center. Some attendees remarked that they had never had such fun at a District Assembly.

- Wallace Johnston also believed in a future permanent home for the congregation, and in addition to being our unofficial parliamentarian, he and his wife Charlene organized our series of Jazz Vesper Sundays and Kwanzaa celebrations.

- Just this year, we grieve the passing of Don Durell, Sid King, Jeff Houseman and Jerry Cowling. We celebrate their time among us and miss them profoundly.

This is not a complete list, but it speaks to the diversity and richness that each contributed to our experiences. Many before us have left entertaining, enervating and inspiring legacies. We grieve their passing – each one an integral part of our lifeline.

Please take a moment to add your personal list of names of family and friends who have passed.

Also at this time, we add the over 2 Million people worldwide who have succumbed to the Corona virus to date.

“Let us say a silent prayer for those who lost their lives, for those they left behind, and for our country.”

**PICTURE:** 400 COVID Lights

**MUSIC** – [\*Wanting Memories\*](#) by Sweet Honey in the Rock

### **INSPIRATION**

The Inauguration of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., offered an opportunity to reflect on the ties that the Unitarian Universalist faith has had to the American story, and the likeness of that history in the Affirmation and covenants of our congregation.

## A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – con't.

Two Sundays ago, we contemplated our history and theology, considering the impact of deism and the Unitarian faith on the content of the founding documents of our nation, striving for that more perfect union and living into our common humanity – both familiar phrases in those documents.

In other recent Sundays, we have been reminded of American presidents and activists grounding our faith who have helped promote democracy, labor rights, the right to vote, the broad spectrum of human rights, and our work for peace.

The Prayers and Speeches last Wednesday grew out of a respect for and invocation of the history and aspirations of our nation. The Affirmation of **our** congregation was written by our charter members and was inspired by the writings of UU leaders and theologians.

We want you to listen now as we weave words of our Affirmation with words from the Prayer and Speech at the inauguration of President Biden.

### **Love is the Spirit of this church and service is its law.**

“... we come with hope, and with our eyes raised anew to the vision of a more perfect union in our land — a union of all our citizens to promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

We are a people of many races, creeds, and colors, national backgrounds, cultures, and styles, yet we resolutely commit still more now to renewing the vision, to caring for one another in word and deed, especially the least fortunate among us, and so becoming a light for the world.”

### **Our religion is based on our common humanity, our common search for meaning.**

“There is a power in each and every one of us that lives by turning to every other one of us — a thrust of the Spirit to cherish and care and stand by others and above all those most in need. It is called love and its path is to give ever more of itself.

Pope Francis has reminded us how important it is to dream together. “By ourselves,” he wrote, “we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together.” We look ahead in our uniquely American way — restless, bold, optimistic — and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be.”

### **We are respectful of what we share and of our differences.**

## A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – con't.

“... the American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us. On “We the People” who seek a more perfect Union.

We are a good people. Over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we have come so far. But we still have far to go.

I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face: Anger, resentment, hatred. Extremism, lawlessness, violence. Disease, joblessness, hopelessness.

With unity we can do great things. Important things.”

### **We hold great reverence for life and a strong belief in the power of the mind.**

History, faith, and reason show the way, the way of unity.

Let us listen to one another. Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another.

What are the common objects we love that define us as Americans? I think I know. Opportunity. Security. Liberty. Dignity. Respect. Honor. And, yes, the truth.”

### **We strive to be open caring, democratic and non-credal. Drawing on the wisdom of the ages wherever it may be found.**

“We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts. If we show a little tolerance and humility. If we’re willing to stand in the other person’s shoes just for a moment.

Because here is the thing about life: There is no accounting for what fate will deal you. There are some days when we need a hand. There are other days when we’re called on to lend one. That is how we must be with one another.

We will lead...by the power of our example.

Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world for our children? “

### **Our essence is mutual respect and sharing.**

“...together, we shall write an American story of hope, not fear. Of unity, not division. Of light, not darkness. An American story of decency and dignity. Of love and of healing. Of greatness and of goodness.

That is what we owe our forbearers, one another, and generations to follow.

## A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – con't.

So, with purpose and resolve we turn to the tasks of our time. Sustained by faith. Driven by conviction. “

### **We welcome everyone.**

As our closing benediction, consider excerpts spoken at new member celebrations and installation of our congregational officers each year.

“We are grateful for the journeys that brought you to join our church today. We celebrate the unique impacts you have already made here, and will continue to make through your presence, your gifts, and your talents.

May this congregation support you in times of trouble, and rejoice with you in times of fulfillment. May our church help to strengthen your faith, deepen your commitments, and encourage your passions.

We welcome you as a new partner in our search for truth.

We share your faith that a more just world is possible, and that people can be liberated from fear, superstition, poverty, and hate.

Your presence among us encourages us to renew our commitments, to reach farther, and to search more deeply.

So, we thank you for bringing us your spirit and your energy.”

So, then, what is this church?  
It is the people, drawing spiritual sustenance from our service, from the work we do, and from each other.

It is the people, sharing their talents and their ministry in the community and beyond.  
Without our people, we would not be a church.

## A Celebration of Remembrance and Inspiration – con't.

Without us, it is nothing, but with us, it is everything. “

“We will remember that we are the current guardians of a powerful tradition whose past is ours to stand on and whose future is ours to unfold.

May we be a source of strength and support for each other and among us create a loving, powerful and just presence in the world.”

**BENEDICTION** – [\*The Hill We Climb\*](#) by Amada Gorman