

DECEMBER 2016

SOUNDINGS



Unitarian Universalist
Church of Charlotte

DISCOVER DEEPER SPIRITUAL MEANING

Depth through reflection

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Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte Winter Solstice Service, 2014
photograph by Nancy Pierce

*Deep peace, a quiet rain to you;
Deep peace, an ebbing wave to you. . . .
Deep peace, pure red of the flame to you;
Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you;
Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you;
Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you . . .*

— FIONA MACLEOD
FROM "THE DOMINION OF DREAMS UNDER A DARK STAR"



The Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte is to inspire children, youth and adults to discover and articulate deeper spiritual meaning evidenced in lives of integrity, compassion and stewardship of the earth.

La mision de la iglesia Unitaria Universalista de Charlotte es inspirar a los niños, jóvenes y adultos para que descubran y articulan un significado espiritual profundo, evidente en una vida de integridad, compasión y en el manejo de los recursos de la tierra

“BACKING INTO PACIFISM”

by Bill Gay



Bill Gay

In the early 1980s, the U.S. government’s policy shift toward developing first-strike nuclear weapons swept me into personal and professional protest. Soon, as a result of Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of “glasnost” (openness), I was able to travel to the Soviet Union and work with philosophers in Moscow on issues of preventing nuclear war and advancing peace. For

over a quarter century—through the dissolution of the Soviet Union and emergence of the Russian Federation—I have continued this contact, publishing articles and books with these colleagues, returning regularly to Moscow, and hosting visits here. At the same time, at UNC Charlotte each year for over twenty years I taught an undergraduate class on “War, Peace, and Justice” and offered graduate classes on “Linguistic Violence” and “The Philosophy of Social Justice.” I have also tried to practice these values in my relations in my family and in my interactions with others.

Along the way, my concerns have broadened from trying to reduce the likelihood that nuclear weapons would again be used—or even that yet another war would occur—to better understanding the alternative goal of positive peace (the absence of war and presence of justice) and the methods of nonviolence. During my journey, I have found myself “backing into pacifism”—a phrase coined by my friend and colleague Duane Cady. At first I was simply opposed to nuclear weapons and their use. Gradually, I came to oppose all wars. So, upon reflection, I recognized I was a pacifist—I had backed into pacifism. In studying pacifism, I also learned that pacifists are not passive (allowing violence and injustice to be inflicted on themselves and others). Pacifists are activists: pacifists actively seek nonviolent resolution of all types of conflicts.

Many people believe pacifism and a commitment to nonviolence are naïve, ineffective, and morally suspect. My life’s work, along with that of many others over countless generations, contributes to the reasoned and

informed presentation of the rigorous methods, proven successes and moral superiority of nonviolence. The logic of violence and war is to inflict pain—ever greater pain—in the hope that others will submit to you. As pacifism and nonviolence demonstrate, the imposition of another’s will over us need not lead to yielding one’s spirit. Even if peace and justice are not achieved for centuries, the spirit of freedom and passion for justice will not be extinguished. Our job is to side with the victims, to heal where we can and resist where we must.



mixed medium art, by Patricia Raible

Peace is possible. So, as I learned from Immanuel Kant, we have a moral duty to seek to advance peace. I recognize the many challenges. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his essay “The Giant Triplets of Racism, Extreme Materialism, and Militarism,” warned that these vices plague American society and almost all others. We actually have giant quintuplets when sexism and homophobia are added—and, unfortunately, the list goes on. Our responsibility, however, is simple. Silence is violence—too many people fail to speak out against injustice; their silence and inaction allow violence to continue. Peacemaking occurs between silence and violence. We can break the silence that festers in so many places without turning to violence.

My view of peace is also spiritual. The gift of life needs to be cherished, and we need to improve the conditions of life for victims of injustice and violence. Working for peace is a spiritual practice that enriches our own souls and those of others—advancing “liberty and justice for all” in the truest sense of these words.

PEACE

by Carol Hartley



Carol Hartley

I used to believe that peace is a human right. Now, the more I think about it, I see that peace is also a luxury for the few, denied to many. Just look at my own family. The last member of my family to see active military combat was my great-great-great grandfather who served in the Revolutionary War. No

one in my family has been engaged in active combat or harmed by war, in about 250 years. How rare! How did we escape this? It was not intentional pacifism. It was the benefit of color, economic status, education, geographic location. My ancestors were book-binders, weavers, store clerks, and bankers, living in peaceful, politically stable countries.

My father was drafted after World War II had ended. He served two years as a file clerk. As a result, he was able to use the GI bill to go to college. Daddy enjoyed a privilege many of his fellow draftees were denied, some from his hometown of Washington, DC, because of their lack of education and the color of their skin. For Korea and Vietnam, my family members were all either too old, too young, or too female to serve. When our son Patrick turned 18, I genuinely forgot that he had to register with the Selective Service. I also knew that registration was a formality, since the draft was eliminated when I was nine. It's unlikely that our son will have to don a uniform and learn how to use a gun.

I see now that my class and race and education have isolated and insulated me from war, kept me in a bubble of safety. Not just from military action, but also the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Poverty”. I've lived in safe places my whole life. Safe and protected, where I lose sight of the reality that stalks so much of the world. I breathe peace in like air, not thinking about the mix of oxygen and nitrogen that keeps me alive. I hadn't appreciated how easy that is for me. No wonder I think of peace as a right—I'm so used to it. I can sleep through the night in my own house, on a quiet street. Peaceful. I have a good job in a quiet office, in a well-maintained building during regular business hours. Peaceful. It's a short walk to my car in a well-lit parking deck. Peaceful. The walls of my bubble obscure my view of the experience of others. After the Charlotte protests, out-of-town family checked in to make sure we were OK. The protests were a ten-minute drive from my house, but it might as well have been ten miles, or a hundred. I was not there.



photograph by Nancy Pierce

I have come to new acknowledgement of this immense privilege, this gift of peace around me. I feel disappointed in myself. I feel guilty, a little angry. Why did I not see this sooner? I was able to live in the bubble so easily, for so long. How will I keep from slipping back into complacent acceptance?

Then I remember the saying, “If you want peace, work for justice.” In a more

just world, there would be more peace, more stability, more safety. A safe place to sleep, the security of food and clothing, a steady job, a supportive learning environment. All my life, I have taken my peace for granted. Now that I understand just how much I have benefited, I feel an obligation to do what I can to help create a more peaceful world for others in return.



Jay Leach

Peace is a song that starts deep in the silent recesses of the soul, wells up through an oft-battered heart, and finds its way into a throat tight with tears:

Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on Earth a peace that was meant to be . . .

Peace is a solitary walk in the woods on a drizzly afternoon, the muted sun yet insisting its way through the gray shroud, the all-but-silent dripping from leaves weighted with wetness, the pond dimpled with drops.

Peace is a sidewalk handshake and a one-armed hug, the generous embrace of a colleague on a night of upheaval, the steady shared confidence that ours is a mission prompted both by unrest and by our service to a common call from respective religious traditions with so many differences and something even more essential at their core.

Peace is a melodic moment to exhale and recall, an interlude in a memorial service in which the full beauty of a life well-lived comes quietly back into memories deeply private yet widely shared, the awareness of a life's arc that found its finish allowing grief to walk through the valley of the shadow of death hand-in-hand with gratitude.

Peace is a night-lighted scene of utter serenity, the deep sleep of an infant at last quieted and calm, a steady hand still patting a quiet rhythm on a soft and swaddled back, no longer in an effort to solace the little one but because of the deep desire to linger one more long moment in a cocoon so far from the demands of the day.

Peace is a prayer, not asking or insisting, informing or asserting but simply opening one's soul to possibility, listening deeply and without judgment for that still

small voice of blessing, of summoning, of assurance, of possibility, the spirit's invitation to enter into the fullness of one's being without fear or equivocation.

Peace is a hard-won compromise, a tenuous compact hammered out on an anvil of determination that what is cannot continue to be, that the pathway toward a shared future must be cleared step by challenging step, with trust its tentative guide leading away from conflict and chaos and toward, not harmony, but a willingness to find some mutually acceptable course of things.

Peace is a soft-lit room, chairs askew, those called together by concern, disbelief, and deep, deep grief standing now, encircled, arm-in-arm, leaning into and on one another, while singing, tenuously but with conviction

I am open and I am willing

To be hopeless would seem so strange . . .

Peace is the twinkling of a city's lights from afar, a distant view into the cacophony down below, the chaos quieted and ordered into something strangely beautiful,

even awe-inspiring, the frenetic comings and goings transcribed into a still and steady imagining that all may yet be well.

Peace is a pause, unexpectedly apprehended in a casual stroll through a museum's galleries, the turning of a corner that presents a canvas before which one almost wishes to bow in homage, a sense of wonder and amazement and deep, deep appreciation as more and more of the meaning

comes forth and then recedes again in a mystery for which there are no words.

Peace is a song, a photograph, a poem . . . Peace is a memory, an imagining, a sense of trust . . . Peace is a fleeting hope, a lasting determination, a momentary glimpse, an underlying rhythm . . . Peace is . . .



photograph by Jay Leach

Our spiritual journey begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. We invite parents to use the material presented in LET'S DIVE IN! to engage their children in this journey.

RABBIT AND WOLF

by Belinda Parry

A rabbit and a wolf ran into each other in the woods.

“Excuse me!” the rabbit said.

“My apologies,” the wolf replied, and they both began to walk away.

A gopher saw the whole encounter and whispered in the rabbit’s ear, “Are you going to let him get away with that? He nearly crushed you!”

A coyote fell into step beside the wolf and said confidentially, “You let him off way too easily. If he’d gotten in my way like that, I would’ve eaten him!”

The wolf turned and looked back at the rabbit, who was also looking at him. “See?” said the coyote. “He thinks he’s better than you ‘cause you apologized instead of showing him who’s boss.”

The gopher said, “They think they rule the forest and can just push us littler animals around.”

The wolf said to the coyote, “Maybe you’re right, but I had a big breakfast and I’m not hungry right now.”

“Okay,” the coyote said. “How about tomorrow? Can we teach him a lesson tomorrow? I have some friends who would help.”

The wolf shrugged. The coyote assumed this meant yes and ran off to gather his friends.

The rabbit said to the gopher. “They’re so much bigger than we are. What could we even do anyway?”

“I’ll take care of it,” the gopher answered. “I know lots of other little animals who would be very willing to form a Little Animal Army and take back the forest with us. We’ll do it tomorrow.” And he ran off to gather his friends.

The rabbit didn’t really want to gather an army and start a forest war, though. He had been perfectly happy with the apologies he and the wolf had given each other. And the wolf had certainly enjoyed his fair share of rabbit dinners in the past, but he kind of liked this rabbit. It felt good when they were respectful to each other. Neither one was sure what to do.

The next morning, the gopher went looking for the rabbit and the coyote went looking for the wolf. They

found them in the same place in the forest where they had left them. The rabbit and the wolf were sitting right next to each other.

“What’s the deal, rabbit?” the gopher demanded. “Are we going to take back the forest or not?”

“You eat the rabbit, and I’ll eat the gopher,” the coyote said to the wolf.

“That’ll teach them and send a message to their friends!”

“No,” said the rabbit.

“No,” said the wolf.

“What?!” said the gopher and coyote together.

The wolf said, “We’ve been talking . . .”

The rabbit nodded and said, “You were right that we need to take back the forest, gopher . . .”

The wolf said, “We do have a lesson to teach them, coyote, one we can also learn . . .”

They both said together, “I want to introduce you to my friend so you can be friends too.”



photograph by Phyllis Bertke

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder where you see yourself in this story.
- I wonder what happened next.
- I wonder what makes us fight instead of talking things out.
- I wonder if being nice to people makes them treat you better.
- I wonder how the world would be different if more people sat down and talked over their problems instead of threatening to hurt each other.

Whit

On learning that a single step
at the ocean's edge,
the gravity of one foot
on matted sand, will crush
a thousand creatures, each only
a few cells wide and off-putting
when magnified—the invisible,
the unredeemed—I wonder
if I were the Buddha would I ever
step again along the shore
onto the world.

If there is a god
in the sky—storm or star-studded,
does she falter in the riddle
of going out or staying in.

What I scoop into my hand
I lift in the name
of all who have no names.

So how much weight gives rise to
oblivion—sandpiper, pelican,
laughing gull, children hunkered
on bony knees—crawling
pawing patting mauling.

What universe lives beneath.

Would I go there, would I alter
my human pedigree for a brief life
of cool foam, a quiet rustle
of dune grass, salt from the sea.

— Barbara Conrad
from *Wild Plums*
published by Future Cycle Press 2013



After the Frost, art textile by Nancy Cook

CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS FOR SOUNDINGS

The editors of Soundings invite members of the congregation to submit creative written and visual material for publication. Submissions should reflect one of the congregation's upcoming Second Sunday themes: January—The Common/Greater Good; February—Commitment; March—Spirituality. Written pieces (poems or prose) should be no more than 150 words. Visual works can include photographs or high-quality photographs of paintings, sketches, fiber art, sculpture, etc. All submissions must be original. The editors—the UUCC professional staff—will review all submissions and contact the authors regarding suitability for publication.

Please send submissions to
uucc@uuccharlotte.org

FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Below you will find a list of books, reflections, movies, lectures and much more for further engagement on the subject of Peace.

BOOKS:

Adult

Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life, by Thich Nhat Hanh, edited by Arnold Kotler, contributions by Dali Lama XIV, 1992

The Voice of Knowledge: A Practical Guide to Inner Peace, by Miguel Ruiz, Janet Mills, 2000

The Power of Nonviolence, Writings by Advocates of Peace, edited by Howard Zinn, 2002

Peace in Our Lifetime: Insights from the World's Peacemakers, by Susan Skog, 2004

Being Peace, by Thich Nhat Hanh, 2005

The Art of Peace (Akido), by Morihei Ueshiba, translated by John Stevens, 2007

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time, by Greg Mortenson, David Oliver Relin, 2007

Be the Change, Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers, by Stephen M. Shick, 2009

Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War, by Glen H. Stassen, 2008

Peace from Broken Pieces, by Iyanla Vanzant, 2010

Interventions: A Life in War and Peace, by Kofi Annan, Nader Mousavizadeh, 2012

The Anatomy of Peace, by The Arbinger Institute, 2015

A Year of Spiritual Companionship, by Anne Kertz Kernion, 2016

Preschool/ Early Elementary

Ferdinand, by Munro Leaf, 1936

"Enemies" from *A Bucketful of Dreams*, by Chris Buice, 1994

What Does Peace Feel Like?, by Vladimir Radunsky, 2004

The Peace Book, by Todd Parr, 2009

Say Something, by Peggy Moss, 2013

Older Elementary

Trees of the Dancing Goats, by Patricia Polacco, 1964

The Wall, by Eve Bunting, 1992

A Little Peace, by Barbara Kerley, National Geographic Children's Books, 2007

Paulie Pastrami Achieves World Peace, by James Proimos, 2009

I Have A Dream by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from his daughter, Dr. Bernice A King, 2012

Goal!, by Sean Taylor, 2014

Peace is an Offering, by Correna Ness, 2015



photograph by Elsa Lafferty

Middle-HighSchool

A Separate Peace, by John Knowles, 1959

Ain't Gonna Study War No More: The Story of America's Peace Seekers, by Milton Meltzer, 2002.

Buddha Boy, by Kathe Koja 2004

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Below you will find a list of books, reflections, movies, lectures and much more for further engagement on the subject of Peace.

BOOKS CONTINUED:

All Ages

Amazing Peace, by Maya Angelou, 2010

2011 Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer, by Maya Angelou, 2011

Parenting

Philosophy for Teens: Questioning Life's Big Ideas, by Sharon Kaye and Paul Thomson, 2006

Lord of the Rings, Fellowship of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien

MOVIES:

All Quiet on the Western Front, 1930 (no rating)

Ferdinand the Bull, 1938 (no rating)

A Far Off Place, 1993 (PG)

Pocahontas, 1995 (G)

Pay it Forward, 2000 (PG-13)

Brave, 2012 (PG)

Selma, 2014 (PG-13)

Timbuktu, 2014 (PG-13)

VIDEOS:

http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/peace_and_justice_films

<http://www.cinemaforpeace-foundation.com/>

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS OF ART, POETRY, AND READINGS:

Phyllis Bertke

Phyllis has been a passionate amateur photographer since she discovered that experiences are richer if she has a camera nearby, even if she's not taking pictures. Her camera helps keep her present in the smallest of moments.



Barbara Conrad

Barbara Conrad is author of *Wild Plums*, published by FutureCycle Press in 2013 and editor of *Waiting for Soup* (2004), a collection of art and poetry from her weekly workshops with homeless neighbors in Charlotte. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies such as *Tar River Poetry*, *Sow's Ear*, *Southern Women's Review*, *Icarus* and *Kakalak*, and have won awards, honorable mentions and a *Pushcart* nomination. Her writing focuses on personal exploration, nature and social justice issues.



THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS OF ART, POETRY, AND READINGS:

Nancy Cook

Nancy has been working in the textile medium since 1994. Her art is in public and private collections throughout the USA and she has won numerous awards. She has exhibited in over 50 juried, invitational and traveling exhibits on five continents and the USA. Cook's art textiles are widely published. Martha Seilman selected her as a featured artist in *Art Quilt Portfolios: The Natural World, 2012*. Two of her quilts can be seen in 500 Art Quilts. She was a 2004 Summer Affiliate Artist at the McColl Center for Visual Arts.



Nancy Pierce

UUC member Nancy Pierce has worked as a documentary photographer all her adult life. Her client list reflects her interests in land and water protection, sustainable communities, active transportation, social justice and the common good. In addition to her corporate, nonprofit and editorial work, Nancy was commissioned for the recent exhibits *Families of Abraham* (Levine Museum), *River Docs* (Light Factory) and *City of Creeks* (Projective Eye Gallery). She has photographed General Assembly for the Unitarian Universalist Association every year since 1993. Nancy and her husband Mickey Shaver raised two sons in the UUC.



Elsa Lafferty

As far back as Elsa Lafferty can remember she has felt a longing to capture the beauty around us. Colored pencils, paints, were a constant part of her school years. So were regular trips to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam to study the Dutch Masters. Photography has opened up endless possibilities. Traveling,

stopping whenever something interesting appears. Elsa says, "How fortunate to be in a place of my life where I have the luxury of truly being in the moment, waiting for the light or an expression, for a flower to open, a wild animal to stop and look at you. A sunset, a moonrise . . . To capture that moment makes my heart sing. To be able to share it with others will only enhance the sweet experience."



Patricia Raible

Patricia Steele Raible is a contemporary abstract artist working primarily in mixed media. Her first introduction to art was an elective course in college where she immediately became entranced. An alumni of the McColl Center for Art + Innovation, Patricia's work has been collected and exhibited throughout the South and Mid-Atlantic regions in solo and juried shows. Currently, she exhibits and teaches art classes at Ciel Gallery in Southend Charlotte. She and her husband Michael have been members of the UUC for about 8 years.

SOUNDINGS

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 9 AM - 5 PM

PHONE 704-366-8623 | FAX 704-366-8812

EMAIL: UCC@UCCCHARLOTTE.ORG

WEBSITE: WWW.UCCCHARLOTTE.ORG

UCC PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte



Kathleen Carpenter, Director of Religious Education for Children & Youth
704-366-8623, ext. 6034
kathleen@uuccharlotte.org
*Children and Youth Religious Education (CYRE),
Denominational Connections, Young Adult Group (YAG)*

Donna Fisher, Children's Choir Director
donnfish@bellsouth.net
Children's Choir

Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator
704-366-8623, ext. 6039
kelly@uuccharlotte.org
*Membership Team, New Members,
Stewardship, Visitors, Volunteer Coordination*

John Herrick, Director of Music
704-366-8623, ext. 6037
john@uuccharlotte.org
Music, Stewardship, Worship

Alesia Hutto, Office Administrator
704-366-8623, ext. 6030
alesia@uuccharlotte.org
Administrative Support, Communications

Martha Kniseley, Adult Programming Coordinator
704-366-8623, ext. 6036
martha@uuccharlotte.org
*Adult Religious Education and Spiritual Development (ARESD),
Community Building, Congregational Care, Environmental
Transformation*

Jay Leach, Senior Minister
704-366-8623, ext. 6032
jay@uuccharlotte.org
Chief of Staff, Coordinating Team, Social Justice, Worship

Belinda Parry, Administrative Assistant
704-366-8623, ext. 6033
belinda@uuccharlotte.org
Part-time Administrative Support, CYRE Support

Doug Swaim, Director of Administration
704-366-8623, ext. 6031
doug@uuccharlotte.org
Building & Grounds, Communications, Coordinating Team, Environmental Transformation, Finance, Memorial Endowment Trust, Open Door School, Security