

“Lone Rangers & Ethical Change”©
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd
February 19, 2017

As we enter this sacred space together in fellowship and holiness, please turn off your electronic devices and respect others' need for silent reflection.

Gathering Music *Opus 42, #2, Beethoven* Carol Wright

Sounding of the Gong

Welcome Dan Brill
Board of Trustees

Prelude *Mazurka in a minor, Chopin*

Chalice Lighting & Bell
(The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith)

Opening Words Rev. Lloyd

By Angela Herrera, adapted.¹
Don't leave your broken heart at the door;
Bring it to the altar of life.

Don't leave your anger behind;
It has high standards and the world needs vision.

Bring them with you,
And your joy and your passion.

Bring your loving,
And your courage and your conviction.

Bring your need for healing,
And your power to heal.

There is work to do
And you have all that you need to do it right here in this room.

#*Opening Hymn #108 *My Life Flows on in Endless Song*

¹ **Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the Living Tradition.** (Boston, UUA, 2015) 37.

Honoring Our Joys and Sorrows

Each Sunday we take time with one another to share our personal joys, sorrows, and challenges. There are many ways to honor our joys and sorrows. Sometimes we share words, sometimes we share silence. We do this in the sanctuary, the safe container, of a covenantal community.

RING BELL

At this time, I invite you to center yourself on what is in your heart. Relax your body, bring your mind and your heart into this space of community, faith, reason and love. Take these moments to center yourself . . . breathe deeply.

At this time, you may come forward to the mic to share a joy or sorrow, or, as needed we will bring a mic to you.

Musical Meditation: Hymn #83 *Winds Be Still*

Pastoral Reflection

41 by Penny Hackett-Evans²

Each of us brings a separate truth here.

We bring the truth of our own life, our own story.

We don't come as empty vessels but as full people, each with our own story and our own truth.

We seek to add to our truths and add to our stories.

This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.

All manner of people are here:

Needy

Joyful

Frightened

Anxious

Bored

We all bring our truth with us.

² **Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the Living Tradition.** (Boston, UUA, 2015) 13.

May we all recognize the truth and the story in other lives than our own.
May we hear and honor the truths that we all bring as we gather together.

Together we have truths.

Together we have a story.

Together we are a community.

Offertory Words

As we prepare to take the offering, I offer these words by my colleague, Leslie Takahashi.³

Here in this place of peace, may we find hope.

Here in this place of connection, may we find life-giving community.

Here in this place of rest, let the unrest of our hearts turn us toward justice.

Here in this space made sacred by memories of connection,
Let us each feel ourselves part of the new that grows from the old in the spiraling unity
of years.

Offering & Offertory Music *D major Rondo*, Mozart

Sermon *Lone Rangers & Ethical Change*

Rev. Lloyd

LONE RANGER STORY

How many of you remember the Lone Ranger? How many of you grew up watching him on a black and white TV? I remember coming home from kindergarten each day, in Alabama, turning on the big brown box in the living room, and, with the afternoon sunlight streaming in between the glass curtains, watching this masked hero go out, find people in trouble and help them solve their problems. He never shared his real name or his identity. Riding along with him, he had his friend Tonto, "the silent Indian" who called him Kemo Sabe, which meant "trustworthy scout". And, then of course there was the ranger's beautiful white stallion. At the end of each 30 minute show, the masked ranger would rise on his horse and shout, "Hi Ho Silver! Away!"

³ **Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the Living Tradition.** (Boston, UUA, 2015) 12.

What I didn't know until I started researching this sermon is that the Lone Ranger was called "lone" because (as the story goes) he was the sole survivor of a group of six Texas Rangers who were attacked. It is said that he and Tonto were friends from childhood, and that after the attack Tonto nursed him back to health. The Lone Ranger kept his identity secret because the attackers were still looking for him, By wearing a mask and never saying who he really was, he could help others without being discovered.⁴

According to legend, the Lone Ranger operated by this moral code:⁵

- to have a friend, [you] must be one.
- all . . . are created equal and . . . everyone has within [themselves] the power to make this a better world.
- God put the firewood there, but . . . every[one] must gather and light it [themselves].
- [Be] prepared physically, mentally, and morally to fight when necessary for what is right.
- make the most of what equipment [you have].
- 'this government of the people, by the people, and for the people' shall always live.
- [we] should live by the rule of what is best for the greatest number.
- sooner or later...somewhere...somehow...we must settle with the world and make payment for what we have taken.
- all things change but truth, and that truth alone, lives on forever.
- [believe] in [your] Creator, [your] country, [your neighbor]

Now, I know we can spend a long time talking about the stereotypes promoted by this TV show. A white man as hero, a silent Native American, paternalism, perhaps some naiveté, but for today, let's let go of those criticisms and look instead, more closely at the different kinds of Lone Rangers that are out there in the world and the differences between those that create ethical change compared to those who create chaotic and ultimately destructive change. Which kind leaves chaos in their trail as they pursue "change" for others? Which kind restores community by their efforts to change the world?

To study this distinction between lone rangers that do good and those who do not, we need to focus on what kind of change is, indeed, ethical. Not all change is good, and not all self-anointed heroes promote change for the right reasons.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Ranger February 18, 2017.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Ranger February 18, 2017.

PAUSE

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Today’s sermon is based in part on this excellent small book called, “The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making,” by Michael Rion. I read it years ago in seminary for a course called, “Business Ethics”. I remember that when I told others the name of this course, several said that those words were an oxymoron. Though that idea had never occurred to me, it evidently strikes a chord in many.

Rion writes in 1990, “The word Ethics [comes] from the Greek word . . . ethos . . . [identifying the concepts of] character and deep values [that describe the] identity and goodness or badness of an individual or group . . . Most of us have “built-in” ethical responses. We identify certain actions as wrong, others as morally praiseworthy. A public official lies about some action, and we say he was wrong to do so. Even if we excuse this behavior as a concession to ‘politics as a dirty business,’ our very awareness that an excuse is necessary reveals deeply held [subconscious insights] of what constitutes ethical behavior. A traditional value such as honesty – and others such as promise keeping, truth telling, justice, benevolence – endures because it is essential to the social fabric of human existence. ***[It is essential to the social fabric of human existence.]*** “[Without] certain fundamental principles of fair dealing and mutual respect, business would be impossible. Consider how chaotic business life would be if we could not generally count on associates, customers, and suppliers to keep their promises and to speak truthfully to us. We too easily forget how vital to daily existence are these usually [un]stated norms. But when the norms are violated—when a supplier, for example, proves unreliable in keeping to agreed-upon delivery schedules – we are abruptly reminded of their significance.”⁶

Another example:

“Imagine a baseball game in which the umpire arbitrarily awards a batter a fourth strike just because he feels like it or because he feels sorry for [a] batter caught in a slump! The opposing manager will first appeal to the rules of the game. [And, then remind the umpire that they] . . . promised to officiate at the game by the agreed rules. [They gave their word.] The frustrated manager might well exclaim, “if you can’t keep your promises, we can’t play the game at all!” Basic moral principles such as honesty and fairness are essential to the very possibility of developing a game. Likewise, we can never get a human community going, whatever its peculiar modes of organization, without moral principles that create the possibility for dependable mutual relations.”⁷

⁶ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 14-17

⁷ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 14-17.

Rion says, “Ethical principles [require that we] . . . treat persons as ends and never merely as means . . . all human beings deserve our respect. To treat another person as a means to our own ends or to abuse his or her concerns and expectations out of carelessness is to deny that person the respect we expect for ourselves. This means that categories like human pain and misery, self-realization and happiness are ethical considerations. Ethical principles are essential to human interaction precisely because they embody the respect for persons that enables all parties involved to participate in the fabric of human community with dignity.”⁸ [They embody a] deeply rooted appreciation for mutual responsibility in community.^{9 10}

PAUSE

As you know, Unitarian Universalism first called me to community ministry, not to parish ministry. Since then I have learned to see the community within our congregations. But, for me, then community ministry was out there in the world, beyond a congregation’s walls. It was working in the community, working for justice and equity, working on issues of race and disability, working to build bridges between people, working to bring our church communities into the larger world and by so doing, striving to transform our lives into lives that lifted healing and health over hatred and division. I was inspired and wanted to do it all. And, I was perhaps a bit arrogant and naïve in my idealism. My efforts to “fix” others failed to reflect that I might need some fixing myself. Slowly I was guided by mentors away from my confidence in my own ability to save the world and toward instead being a different kind of activist for change. One that asked this very important question, “Who Else Matters?”

“Who Else Matters?” It is a question that assumes that when introducing change, [even if we think it is change that others should have] if it is to be ethical, we [the change makers] [are responsible to] the stakeholders, of whom there may be many.¹¹

⁸ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 14-17.

⁹ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 14-17.

¹⁰ “Moral principles have a special claim on us, symbolized by the notion of conscience. For many of us, this claim is grounded in religious convictions about the relationship of morality to the divine will. Others root the claim in respect for human dignity or simply in the powerful psychological effects of their upbringing. Whatever the source, most persons experience ethical guidelines as significant imperatives for their own action.” Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 14-17.

¹¹ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), Chapter 3.

Who else matters? To whom are we responsible? Rion says, “Asking [this question] . . . means identifying the affected stakeholders and considering what interests they may have, what commitments have been made to them, and what impact proposed actions . . . have on them. The underlying [principle] is that [institutions] hold a kind of public trust. Society requires business enterprise for human well-being[.] [I]ndividual corporations [and governments] derive their power ultimately from society’s consent that the business [or government] is fulfilling its public trust. Managers are not simply responsible to [the] ‘owners’ but also to the wider community that needs the industry and whose support is necessary for successful operation. Recognizing responsibility to stakeholders is a step in this direction . . . [Those] who ask ‘Who else matters?’ recognize not only the ethical importance of . . . relationships but also their opportunity for service to specific stakeholders and to the common good of the whole community.”¹² “[Intentional] efforts to expose [ourselves] to the realities of other stakeholders . . . help[s] [us] form . . . judgments in new ways as [we] grow in understanding.”¹³

What we are talking about here is ethical change grounded in relationship building, not chaotic change that disregards the need to maintain and strengthen the public trust. When honesty, accountability, and transparency is jettisoned by someone with too much power the public’s trust in humanity and one another is shredded.

The self-absorbed Lone Ranger who ascends to powerful heights to fix things for other people to whom he or she is not accountable or responsible cannot accomplish ethical change. Contrast this with the hero who seeks ethical change, without dividing the people. They search for the many stakeholders, they try to find common ground, and, when they find it missing, they work to create common ground by lifting up those human rights issues that affect us all. Ethical change seeks understanding among one another and the creation of a common language that allows us to, yes, name our individual needs, but also to see the larger needs of our society, such that we, by some sacrifice of our individual agendas effectively and resiliently restore public trust (as opposed to shredding it).

PAUSE

Normally, in day to day life, we have laws that govern our behavior, but other than that most people don’t necessarily live by a written code of ethics. We go on our own way, perhaps trying to be kind, but sometimes we get in trouble with each other because while each of us has our own perspective of why our way is the right way, we usually

¹² Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), Chapter 3.

¹³ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 122.

don't grasp the other person's internal code of how it is that they know their way is the right way. We get in trouble when we do not check each other's perceptions out, and when we do not dig down deep enough to find and/or (if need be) create a common ground of understanding that we can share.

But, even though we may not as a rule, normally think about ethical practices, there are common examples where large groups of people do operate by their ethical codes, people who choose to forge a common understanding in order that they may serve a higher good that is greater than their individual needs. Most obvious are the many ethical codes that shape the behavior of various professional groups and their members. Where would we be without the ethical codes that encourage the highest performance and sacrifice by doctors, engineers, ministers, social workers, psychologists, accountants, teachers, the police, scientists, and so forth. Typically, these professions aspire to promote:

- Honesty¹⁴
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Objectivity
- Respect
- Obedience to the law, and,
- Loyalty

REFLECTIONS

It should thus, come as no surprise that in my professional life and as part of my ministry I have focused on various ways to bring people together to help them form mutually crafted written codes by which they strive to live.

When serving as the President of the professional organization of UU Community Ministers, significant misunderstandings and missteps occurred among our members and between our members and other ministers until we helped the membership write its first “Code of Professional Practice.” Indeed, it was by way of writing that Code, that issues were talked through and community began to be formed among our members. From that experience, I went on to help the UU Minister's Association revise its Code of Professional Practice, again talking through the misunderstandings and getting our ministers to vote and approve the ways by which we would be with one another, our

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_ethics February 18, 2017

congregations and the world. These things we did to promote the public good and to build community.

It should then be no surprise to you, when I stress the urgency and need for us to try to live by our congregational covenant. It is what allows us to put the health of the congregation above our individual and perhaps transient needs. It is what makes this a community instead of a social club. Trying to live by our covenant does not mean that the individual should be sacrificed for the needs of the whole. But, neither does it mean that the health of the congregation should be sacrificed for the needs of one individual. The incarnation of our theology is in the process of finding out about each other’s needs and trying to find that common understanding of how we may meet not only the other’s needs but also build a sustainable community that is resilient in the face of competing needs and external challenges. Our community cannot be based solely on meeting each person’s individual needs. This is not an “I” church. Our community and country must ultimately be a living out of “We the People,” “We the People,” “We the People,” as a resilient, effective, whole and healing community that is sustainable well beyond each individual person’s tenure. **We**, my friends, have a responsibility to make sure this congregation and this country grows toward health and wholeness. We have a responsibility to make sure it is here for the next generation that needs it.

Rion says, “Our basic perspectives and self-understanding are shaped by fundamental values and beliefs . . . [But,] our identity is shaped through relationships and community involvement as our own story takes its place in the context of the wider story of family and community . . . [We] all need community not only to sustain our own personal character, but also to challenge and support one another.”^{15 16} We need community to help us live lives of integrity.

As a Unitarian Universalist minister, my job, when I can, is not to tell you how to be, what to believe in, or what rules to follow. My job is to try to help you discover the

¹⁵ Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 92-93.

¹⁶ “For some, the story and experience of religious faith illuminate events in life and enable them to understand their own stories and those of the world around them in a meaningful way. Patterns of spiritual piety and ritual, symbols, and examples and images from religious traditions serve to shape their self-understanding. For others, it is the values fostered and nurtured in family and community that ground their view of the world. These experiences affect how they deal with tragedy and death in close personal circles, what they expect of life in community and institutions, where they gain satisfaction from personal endeavor, and how they grasp hope and possibility in their own lives and in the history of the wider society. Who we are and how we see the world are shaped fundamentally by our most deeply held values . . . this process of character development never occurs only in isolated private experience.” Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 92-93.

values that make your life meaningful to you, and then to try to help you live those values you choose in meaningful ways. I will do that because when the way you live your life is out of kilter with what you believe, that dissonance becomes a source of disease, a source of restlessness, a source of chronic anxiety. Knowing what you stand for, sacrificing what is necessary to keep standing for it, and living your values is what your soul or spirit or conscious or reason calls for from you every day.

This place, this sanctuary, this place of meeting and of caring, becomes the incubator in which you can make these discoveries and live into them. This is what your soul cries for, and it will not be satisfied until its need for congruence between who you are and how you act is met. So too, our souls are distressed when the integrity of our community and country are threatened. My job is to remind you of what matters most to you, and then help you remind others in our world to do the same.^{17 18 19} As leaders we should all be working to make sure that what change occurs ethically reinforces the public trust, society’s trust, our trust. Just as our souls cry for congruency between what we know to be fair and true and honest and what we ourselves do each day, so too, our country cries for congruency between the America that says we stand for justice, by

¹⁷ “[Integrity] . . . points beyond the self toward the person, the ideal, the transcendent which gives shape to the person’s life.’ [But, only] in the context of community, can integrity . . . [shape] . . . the narrative of one’s life.” Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 93.

¹⁸ According to Robert Bellah (a renowned sociologist), “[the tendency exists] . . . for individuals to identify their interests in terms of self-expression and tactics to achieve personal or institutional goals . . . [leads] . . . to an erosion of [the kind of] genuine community [that] ‘attempts to be an inclusive whole, celebrating the interdependence of public and private life[.]’ [The] rise of lifestyle enclaves,’ that is, gatherings of persons for essentially private pursuits with others who share similar life-styles . . . [and] the strength of radically autonomous individualism constantly threatens the community dimension . . . This is why emphasis on integrity within the community is so vital. Community is an antidote or counterforce in a culture dominated more by radical individualism and life-style enclaves than by genuine communities of memory and hope. Only in groups with integrity and deeply rooted traditions of meaning can individual values be shaped and strengthened . . . [In] seeking to strengthen moral responsibility, we cannot lose sight of the forces that constrain individuals, even without their awareness . . . [There] are forces that work against the nurture of personal identity and moral character, most notably the individualism so predominant in our culture but also other cultural pressures as well as the characteristic human tendency to fall short of our aspirations. But none of these realities need to be decisive. Indeed, they remind us how crucial it is to develop communities of memory and hope, communities of conscience, that strengthen character and support those who are struggling with difficult problems.” Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 97.

¹⁹ “Integrity is the ‘bottom line’ in ethical decisions. Asking ‘Am I being true to myself?’ helps us to check our reasoning about a specific case in light of who we are as whole persons. [We] will most successfully ask, and answer, the question if our personal identity takes shape through vital relationships in some community of memory and hope.” Rion, Michael. *The Responsible Manager, Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990) 98.

refugees and immigrants, and with ethical change. It is our duty, as citizens, to resolutely reject any effort to split the soul of this country from our founding principles of integrity, truth, accountability, respect and transparency.

PAUSE

When I was young, I never knew that the lone ranger I used to watch on TV had a code by which he was trying to make ethical changes in other’s lives. To me, as a child, he was just a hero with a great horse and a mostly silent friend, trying to do some good in the world. There’s a lot I didn’t know then. I didn’t know then about other kinds of lone rangers that do more harm than good, that use fear and hate to divide us, and who fail to ask this simple question, “Who Else Matters?” Beware of those who forget to ask that question and who trivialize honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, objectivity, respect, and, obedience to the law. By their fruits shall you know them, and by them, we the people, our communities and our countries doth fall or rise.

May we all ask of ourselves and all others, every day and in every way, “Who Else Matters?” And, then . . . may we work together to create the balance that protects the most vulnerable while sustaining our community and country. We have no greater and no harder job.

May it be so.

***Closing Hymn #124** *Be That Guide*

***Closing Words**

Extinguishing the Chalice

“Please join hands for the extinguishing of the chalice.”

“We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. We extinguish this flame, but not the power and meaning of our covenant, calling us to our highest ideals and ways of being with one another. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. Let the congregation say: AMEN”

Closing Music *Little Prelude in D major, Bach*

* Please stand as you are able and comfortable.

Latecomers may be seated.