

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.

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

Prayers: "A Prayer for Desert Times"²

Margaret A. Keip

The journeys of our lives are never fully charted. There come to each of us deserts to cross -- barren stretches -- where the green edge on the horizon may be our destination, or an oasis on our way, or a mirage that beckons only to leave us lost.

When fear grips the heart, or despair bows the head, may we bend as heart and head lead us down to touch the ground beneath our feet. May we scoop some sand into our hands and receive what the sand would teach us:

It holds the warmth of the sun when the sun has left our sight, as it holds the cool of the night when the stars have faded. Hidden among its grains are tiny seeds, at rest and waiting, dormant yet undefeated.

Desert flowers. They endure. Moistened by our tears and by the rains which come to end even the longest drought, they send down roots and they bloom.

May we believe in those seeds, and in the seeds within us. May we remember in our dry seasons that we, too, are desert flowers. Amen.

Musical Meditation *Spring Song*, Schumann

Offertory Words

"We are here that we might have life" by John C. Morgan³

We are here that we might have life

² <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditations/5488.shtml> February 22, 2014

³ <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/openings/5431.shtml> 2/1/14

Second. If we have the courage to disinter the dream, we are then faced by the second obstacle: **Love**. [If after much reflection we finally discern what it is we actually want to do we may yet be] afraid of hurting those around us by abandoning who we once were in order to pursue our dream. We do not realize that love is [the] impetus, not something that prevents us from going forward. We do not realize that those who genuinely wish us well want us to be happy and are prepared to accompany us on [our] journey.

Third. Once we have accepted that love is a stimulus [propelling and wooing us forward], we come up against the third obstacle: **fear of [defeat or fear of failure]**. [Those] who fight for [their] dream suffer far more when it doesn't work out, because [they] cannot fall back on the old excuse: “Oh, well, I didn't really want it anyway.” We do want it[, we stake everything on it, and [find] that the path of the personal calling [comes] no easier than any other path, [but it is far riskier because . . .] our whole heart is in this journey. It means that we must be prepared to have patience in difficult times and to know that the Universe is conspiring in our favor, even though we may not understand how.

[Are] defeats necessary? Well, necessary or not, they happen. When we first begin fighting for our dream, we have no experience and make many mistakes. The secret of life, is to fall seven times and get up eight.

So, why is it so important to live [into] our personal calling if we are only going to suffer more than other people? Because, once we have overcome the defeats – and [with perseverance] we always do – we are filled by a greater sense of euphoria and confidence. In the silence of our hearts, we know that we are proving ourselves worthy of the miracle of life. Each day, each hour, is part of our Spirit's vision. We start to live with enthusiasm and pleasure.

Having disinterred our dream, having used the power of love to nurture it and spent many years living with the scars, we suddenly notice that what we always wanted is there, waiting for us, perhaps the very next day.

Then comes the fourth obstacle: the **fear of realizing the dream** for which we fought all our lives . . . The mere possibility of getting what we want fills the soul of most of us with guilt. We forget about all the obstacles we overcame, all the suffering we endured, all the things we

had to give up in order to get this far . . . [When] our personal calling comes within our grasp, [some of us] go on to commit a series of mistakes and never reach our goal – even though it was only a step away. This is the most dangerous of the obstacles because it has a kind of saintly aura about it: ***[as we turn away from joy]***.

But, if you believe yourself worthy of the thing you fought so hard to get, then you become an instrument of [the Holy], you help the Soul of the World, and you understand why you are here.”

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

And so I ask you again, what of your dreams? What have become of them? Did you get what you wanted? Did you want what you got?

There is someone else I want to introduce you to and that is Frederick Buechner, an American writer and theologian. Born in 1926 in New York City, he is an ordained Presbyterian minister and the author of more than thirty published books thus far. In his book, "'Wishful Thinking' [he provides a lexicon/a new language] for the restless believer, for the doubter, for anyone who wants to redefine or define more concretely those words that have become an integral part of our daily language—words that we use about G*d⁵, the universe and, last but not least, humankind.⁶

VOCATION⁷

Of the word “vocation” he says, "Vocation comes from the Latin vocare (to call) and means the work a person is called to by God [or the Spirit of Life or the Universe or That Which Cannot Be Named]. [Now there] are all . . . kinds of voices calling you to . . . different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of [the Holy] rather than of society, . . . or the superego, or self-interest. The kind of work G*d usually calls you to is ***the kind of work that [a] you [have a personal and deep] need to do and [b] that the world needs to have done***. If you find your work rewarding, you have presumably met requirement (a), but if your work does not benefit others, the chances

⁵ Rev. Lloyd does not spell out the word, “G*d,” because the term is loaded with many misconceptions and preconceptions. That which is the spirit of life and community, the spirit of love and death, the spirit of humanity, cannot be relegated to one three letter word. Rev. Lloyd invites others to reconsider the meanings of this word, and, to contemplate whether it is a noun or verb. Is G*d Love? The reader is invited to expand their vision and understanding . . .

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Buechner February 22, 2014

⁷ <http://frederickbuechner.com/content/place-god-calls-you> February 22, 2014

are you have missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work does benefit others, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you are unhappy with it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping [others] much either. The place [the Universe] calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."⁸

And, so let's try a little experiment. Take the index card that is in your Order of Service and fold it in half.

On one side think about those things you most enjoy doing, these are the things that you cannot help but do. They bring you pure pleasure, or they might be things that you do exceptionally well. Things you enjoy doing or that you take satisfaction in doing could . . . range from walking in the woods . . . to writing . . . to serving food. What do you most like to do? Write down three things that you most like to do . . . I'll give you a minute or so.

Now turn to the other side of the folded index card. On this side I want you to think about those conditions of the world that elicit in you the greatest compassion and desire to help. They could be big issues or small. Examples could range from solving world hunger to making friends with someone who really needs a friend. It could be teaching or saving animals, politics, or promoting beauty and art. Whatever it is it is something a bit beyond our apparent control but it is something or someone who needs a little help. Think of three such issues that call you beyond yourself with a desire to do something about it . . . and write those down on the other side of the card.

Now . . . take a breath . . . and open the card so you can see both those things that you enjoy most and those things that call you to action and compassion. Take a look at them. Try to link one thing you enjoy with something that calls you to help. Then try to link another pair. How could your time be spent choosing something from column A along with something from column B in order to find your vocation? In what ways could you spend your life at the intersection where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

This exercise does not end now. In fact, it's hardly even begun. If you are serious about pursuing your dreams, you'll find a place later to go sit in some quite spot, and start this process over again. Make a much longer list in both columns, and then narrow it down

⁸ <http://www.marquette.edu/osd/vocation/about.shtml> February 22, 2014

to your top three in each column. What brings you the **most** pleasure? What calls you the **most** to act on your compassion?

And once you’ve done that, try posting that list somewhere near your computer or desk or the place you have breakfast, someplace that provokes you each day to contemplate the possible intersections between that which you love to do and that which calls you to care. Play with the possibilities, there are many. All it takes is self-awareness and persistence.

Living your life is the only job you have on this earth . . . make it worth your while . . . make it worth your time . . . make it worth your life.

It doesn’t matter whether you are 10 years old or 95. How much time you have left in your life is irrelevant. How you spend whatever time remains is relevant. Why not do that which you love to do in the service of someone or something that needs your help? Persevere. Don’t worry about the obstacles. Life and hearts will open up to you each time you rise again to follow your call. Take the time you have left on this earth to find that place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.

May it be so.

***Closing Hymn #1018** *Come, and Go with Me*

***Closing Words**

“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”

Extinguishing the Chalice

Closing Music *Invention in F major, Bach*

* Please stand as you are able and comfortable.

Latecomers may be seated.