

Religious Naturalist Thanksgiving Communion Service

UU Congregation of Hillsborough, November 19, 2006, written by Rev. Dick Weston-Jones

I'm going to invite you to take part with me in a religious humanist ceremony of communion in which we will trace our heritage to all the peoples of the earth. We will give thanks for our inescapable union with the universe itself through the "interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part"—that connection we celebrate in our Unitarian Universalist Statement of Principles and Purposes.

Our communion is with more than ideas. It celebrates the acts of all animals and people through which they have left their imprints upon us, whether or not we have recognized the sources. Our bodies and our ways of movement were born in living tissue over millions of years.

Our communion is with more than ideas and acts. The atoms on this earth move so fluidly and widely that an atom that was in the breath of the Buddha lodges today in my body; an atom that flowed in the veins of Jesus flows today in you; when Socrates raised his hand aloft, holding audiences spellbound with his words, atoms that were in that hand are today in you and me.

Our communion is with more than ideas and acts and atoms once resident in our forebears. The interdependent web of all existence connects us to a beginning so powerful, so dense, so complete that a billion billion bits of matter from that moment of creation flow now about us. They have come together countless times to shape the forms of inanimate and sensate existence. The stars and the planets, the earth and all that is in it—the plants and animals and we ourselves—all are finally connected in the interdependent web.

******** Break and pass bread ********

As we break this bread and pass it among us let us think of the innumerable forms of being that have come and had substance and passed from existence. Let us ponder the ways in which we are connected to all that is and has ever been and ever will be.

Let us know in ourselves the power of the sun's heat and the cold of the loneliest dustspecks in the universe that wander close to but never at absolute zero.

Let us feel the fleetness of hoof of the deer that have roamed the earth and the cleverness of the coyotes that have tracked them. They too are in us.

Let us know the anguish of fish that drown in air and the joy of whales that breathe and dive to enormous depths in water where they cannot stay. They too are in us.

Let us feel the prolific fecundity of our own species that produces millions of sperm and eggs that die before the successful union of two brings one baby into life, and the awesome efficiency of the amoeba who merely divides him/herself and becomes two, with no losses to count. They too are in us.

******** Pass small cups of cider ********

As we drink this good apple cider let us remember our connectedness with all the human beings who have ever lived and give thanks for their being that flows in us.

We are cheered by the courage of Joan of Arc who broke the chains of gender and class to lead her people into awful battle, and ultimately died for her faith, and the courage too of Michael Servetus who refused violence, using words to fight his battles for reason, and also ultimately died in the fire for his faith. They too are in us.

We think of the love to which our Universalist sisters Clara Barton and Olympia Brown gave their strength, preaching and teaching that fear need not rule people's lives; and we are reminded too of the vitality of our Unitarian brothers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker who asked that each of us forge an original relationship with the universe. They too are in us.

We stand with all men and women who have ever lived, who have nested in valleys and climbed mountains, who have watched the sun rise over groves of trees and set over ocean waves, who have loved and wept and shouted and whispered the truths of their lives to one another. They too are in us.

We remember too people whose lives have been failures, those who committed themselves to the exploitation and destruction of others and the world. Even these have enriched us, showing us life as we would not have it, bearing themselves before us as warnings. They too are in us.

We are reminded that our lives are always lives of choice, that we live the good and we live the evil.

As we today celebrate this communion with all that has been and shall be through the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, let us challenge ourselves to bring love to the earth and reason to its aims, heart to its quest and courage to its wobblings. Let us give thanks for the good that we know flowing over and through and within us all. Let us carry it on in our lives with one another and with all the earth.

Selah and amen.