

WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

Rev. William R. Phillips

Sunday, August 29, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago I was coaching little boy's baseball. They were 6-8 years old. Our team was called the Crackers. We had a cheer to begin the game, "What are we here for?" To have fun! To play ball! To learn!" The Crackers won one game and lost fourteen. We had a lot of fun. That slogan kept ringing in my head. Next started I thinking a lot about "What in the world are we UU's doing here?" First, "What are we doing at the Two Can Cafe?" What are we doing here at this service? Is this a worship service? If so, what or who are we worshipping? What does "worship" mean? If we are not "worshipping", what are we doing? What is a religious service? To worship comes from the old English and is related to such ideas as "worth, honor, admiration, extreme love and adoration." We say we have religious services. The word religion is very old and comes from the Latin: "ligament, to tie together, to connect, to bond with, to reunite, and to reconnect." Well, as I walked the beach of Jekyll Island I have come up with some answers for me about what we are doing here in our religious service. I think we are worshipping, i.e. honoring our history, declaring the worth of every person, and showing extreme love of truth and peace. I believe this service is one of religious connectedness. We declare our bonding to nature, and to one another. Here are some of my thoughts about "what we are doing here", why we meet every other Sunday for ten months of each year.

1. We Meet To Honor Our History. The martyrs of the early church over 400 years ago, those who died or were persecuted for our freedom of religion. Name them! Michael Servetus, the Spanish free thinker who dared publish writings questioning the Trinity was burned at the stake in Geneva by the Calvinists. Katherine Vogel of Krakow, Poland was burned at the stake for denying the Trinity. Francis David in Transylvania, condemned as a heretic for preaching against the trinity and died in prison. And of course more recently James Reeb, a Unitarian who died in Selma, Alabama. We meet to honor our history of freedom of thought, freedom of worship, and freedom of speech.

2. We meet to acknowledge our connection. To reconnect to history, to nature, to the universe, to one another, to our own selves is a religious experience. We want to reconnect to all that is in reality.

3. We meet to express ourselves. We want to express our devotion to truth. Our commitment to justice, and our love of peace.

4. We meet to sing praises to the beauty of nature, the glory of the universe, and to the interconnectedness of humankind.

5. We meet to acknowledge the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. The oneness of all people, red and yellow, black and white, all the children of the world.

6. We gather to feel the oneness of human pain, the oneness of human grief, and the oneness of human suffering.

7. Finally, we gather to acknowledge the joy and humor of the human condition. We are all on the same side, in the same game, and we will all reach the same exact goal. The score will always be the same, 0 to 0. All our accomplishments and all our acquisitions will one day be equal. Black and white, red and yellow, "all the children of the world are the same in the end."

Conclusion: We gather here to remember our history, to celebrate our freedom, to share our thoughts, beliefs, doubts, fears and feelings, to reconnect with our sense of the mystery of life, to the sand, the stars, the earth and the sea, and to reconnect with each other and to our own inner selves. What are we doing here?

We are here to offer an alternative! We are here to offer a new kind of church. If you are full of doubt and questions, this is your kind of church. If you believe in God but do not believe in the trinity, this is your kind of church. If you believe Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and Moses were all extremely holy and wise men, this is your kind of church. If you believe Jesus is the son of God and was a divine gift, but you don't think you should beat others over the head about it, but should love and accept them, this is your kind of church. If you don't believe in any personal deity, but do believe in a mysterious interconnectedness of all people and things, you are in the right place. If you don't know what you believe, if anything, but want to think about it and talk about it, come on in, you are among friends. We are here to offer an alternative kind of church, an uncommon denomination.

We are here to be a truly welcoming congregation. We welcome all people who want to visit or join with us. Unmarried people and married people are both welcome. Heterosexual people, homosexual people and non-sexual people are welcome. Rich people, poor people, and everyone in between are welcome.

We open our doors to extroverts and introverts, large and small, intellectual and emotional, the sane and the insane, European, Asian, and African. We are here to be a welcoming church with an open door. We are liberal in our acceptance of people and their beliefs.

What are we doing here? We are here to be a beacon, a beacon to the liberal acceptance of human beings who want and need support, who want acceptance not just tolerance.

We are here to support each other, to support the search for truth, to support the idea and expression of love and peace, to religiously defend the right and freedom of every person in every land to worship as they so choose. Amen