

10/23/11 READINGS –1

Association Sunday

Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

Excerpt from the UUA *Strategic Plan for Professional Ministries 2011*

Strategic Review of Professional Ministries Task Force How do we take the best from our past and at the same time live with radical creativity in the multicultural reality of the present day? Unitarian Universalism lifts up a powerful theological message, poured through the vessel of covenant: you are at once precious and distinct, and at the same time intrinsically a part of the oneness of all being. This message provides us with a quandary and a call. The quandary is this: we must live out our faith as individual members and congregations while holding in tension the needs of the whole. And the call is this: we are to walk together in the ways of love, inviting all who would join us in our big tent of faith. Our UUA President, the Rev. Peter Morales, was elected in 2009 on a platform of change. He believes most urgently that Unitarian Universalism can and should be the religion for our time. If we are to live up to this challenge, we must equip our religious professionals to become deeply grounded in theology, cross-culturally competent, strategic about the use of technology, entrepreneurial as leaders, and resilient in the face of new challenges.

Reading 2

Association Sunday 2011 by

Stephan Papa

Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

What is excellence in ministry? Does it mean our clergy have excellent taste or a good sense of humor? Does it mean our religious professionals serve our congregations or lead them? Does excellence in ministry mean they have been well trained in the ways of the past and carry forward traditions, or that they are visionaries prepared for a future, which we see uncertainly? How do we develop the excellence of our ministries? Shall we tweak our system, our ministers, or our congregations? Do we send our religious professionals for transformative multicultural experiences or back to the books? Do we push them to be preachers or prophets, social activists or pastoral care providers, educators for all ages or bossy business managers, entrepreneurs or sensitive small group facilitators with social skills, personal spiritual counselors or charismatic leaders of public worship? Do we want a minister who can collaborate or one who can cast a vision? Can anyone do it all—excellently? The ministry has changed; it is no longer an individual endeavor but a shared opportunity to worship and work together to create a more caring community and world. The ministry has changed and so must we if we are to be of service. Whatever excellence in ministry means we will best develop it by talking to one another, by sharing our dreams for Unitarian Universalism, and our fears, by standing by this faith together. As it has blessed us, so we will be a blessing to the future.

10/23/11 Reading 3

Excerpt from *Why I am A Unitarian Universalist* by Jack Mendelsohn

Association Sunday

Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

Who is a Unitarian Universalist minister? He is a man [or a woman], never completely satisfied or satisfiable, never completely adjusted or adjustable, who walks in two world's—one of things as they are, the other of things as they ought to be—and loves them both. [S]he is a [wo]man with a pincushion soul and an elastic heart, who sits with the happy and the sad in a chaotic pattern of laugh, cry, laugh, cry. And [s]he knows deep down that the first time [her] laughter is false, or his tears make-believe, [her] days as a real minister are over. He is a man with dreams he can never wholly share, partly because he has some doubts about them himself and partly because he is unable adequately to explain, describe, or define what it is he thinks he sees and understands. A Unitarian Universalist minister is a [wo]man who continually runs out of time, out of wisdom, out of ability, out of courage and out of money. [S]He is hurttable. [Her] tasks involve great responsibility and little power. He must learn to accept people where they are and go on from there. He must never try to exercise influence he does not possess. If [s]he is worth [her] salt, [s]he knows all this, and is still thankful every day of [her] life for the privilege of being what [s]he is. The future of the liberal church is almost totally dependent on these two factors: great congregations (whether large or small), and skilled, effective, dedicated ministers. The strangest feature of their relationship is that they create one another.

10/23/11 **Reading 4** by Gordon B McKeeman

Association Sunday
Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

Ministry is a quality of relationship between and among human beings that beckons forth hidden possibilities. It is inviting people into deeper, more constant, more reverent relationship with the world and with one another. Ministry is carrying forward a long heritage of hope and liberation that has dignified and informed the human venture over many centuries. It is being present with others in their terrors and torments, in their grief and pain, knowing that those feelings are our feelings too. Ministry is celebrating the triumphs of the human spirit, the miracles of birth and life, the wonders of devotion and sacrifice. It is witnessing to life enhancing values, speaking truth to power, standing for human dignity and equity; for compassion and for aspiration. Ministry is believing in life in the presence of death, struggling for human responsibility against principalities and powers in institutions and structures that ignore humaneness and become instruments of death. It is all these and much, much more than all of them, present in the wordless, the unspoken, the ineffable. It is speaking and living the highest we know, and living with the knowledge that it is never as deep, as wide, or as high as we wish. Wherever there is a meeting that summons us to our better selves, wherever our lostness is found, our fragments are reunited, our wounds begin healing, our spines straighten, and our muscles grow strong for the talk, there is ministry.

10/23/11 Reading 5

"It's the Minister: The Mystery and Magic of the Role"--Ken Sawyer, First Parish in Wayland, MA

Berry Street Essay, 2007

Association Sunday

Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

I want to talk about the mysterious, almost magical power of the minister's role. Of course the role can be constricting, painful, potentially duplicitous, dangerous, and sometimes hard to come by, and for some more than others, sad to say.

But I want to acknowledge and hold up and celebrate the chance that the role allows us – if we are given it and we take it and it pretty much fits and we use it well – to accomplish more than any of us mere mortals might imagine possible, enabling us to counsel, console, educate, conduct special services, lead other worship, preach sermons, offer opinions, stir people to action, and help tend the institutional needs of religious organizations with an authority we both earn and are given as a trust, as a gift....

They did not ordain or call or employ us to be ourselves but to be the ministers we are capable of being, all of us in our own ways. And to listen with our whole hearts. Because then we can and do become, at least every now and then, mediators of mercy, agents of love, instruments of redemption, revealers of grace, proponents of peace, instigators of justice, and midwives of communities and relationships of affection and faith.