

9/6/09 Sermon

I Can See Clearly Now
Rev. Paul D. Daniel, Minister

Today, the sun rose brightly in the Eastern sky. It shines on this blessed community for it is the dawn of a new day, a new era, a new future for UUMAN.

There is hope in the air. There is an expectation that something great is beginning to happen. Can you feel it? Let me hear an "Amen" from you if you do. ... "Amen!" ... Come on, you can do better. Let me hear it again. ... **"AMEN!!!"** ... Now, that's what I'm talking about.

The future is not yet fully visible, but together we will build a New Jerusalem in Roswell, a monument to our hopes and dreams, yearnings for a better tomorrow. This is the dawning of a new age, where justice, equity and compassion will become our bright guiding beacon for our community.

We can lead the way to ending hunger and homelessness. We can fight for adequate health care for all people. We can see to it that our resources are conserved and fairly distributed, and poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are wiped out. Yes, we can. It is in our grasp. It is in our power.

It begins within each of us, in our families and here at UUMAN. It starts with us treating each other with respect and dignity that our principles call us to. This is the chosen time, the right moment to reexamine, to reignite, to renew the spiritual and institutional compact we have with each other.

We have been blessed with this very instant of opportunity to recommit ourselves to personal, spiritual and institutional growth. With a shared vision and concerted effort, we will build a community that connects us to each other and our inner longing. If we truly seek to unite our hearts and minds – to create a larger vision of what we can be, we will finally begin to see clearly who and what we are when we come together for the greater good.

The adventure begins. "Let it be a dance we do," as Hymn 301 suggests, as we create a symphony of shared ministry. The hymn tells us that "through the good times and the bad times too, we will share the laughter and help each other bear the pain."

That is what being UUMAN is all about. It can reflect the best that our values and principles call us to – to communicate respectfully, to value each

ones' worth and dignity as individuals; and to remember that we are part of the shared web of existence represented in the diversity of this community of faith. It is here that we are nourished by others spiritually, emotionally and physically and are blessed with the will to complete the circle through our nurture, love and compassion.

This is my vision of who you are and can be as we grow in depth. I have great hope for my new ministry as your spiritual and communal leader.

I know that since Rev. Greg Ward left, you have had a challenging time. While life is always filled with hills and valleys, perhaps you have had more tribulations than you expected. That may not change much. To be alive and breathing is to live with change. What does not change, the poets tell us, withers and dies.

What is different now is there is a "new kid on the block," eager to make his mark. To do that, I hope to be a consistent leader in offering what wisdom I have to the growth, development and stability of this congregation. I will be with you in love and compassion – in your trials and times of celebration. I seek to empower you to take complete ownership of this community that you support with your time, treasure and talent. I will goad you and encourage you and support you to make this the kind of church we can all be proud to be part of.

I will point you in the right direction but you must willing set out on the road of discovery with me. This must be a collaborative team effort. I cannot take this congregation to the next stage of growth alone. This new vision will take us into the unknown, beyond where we have been before. This journey goes beyond just increasing in numbers, important as that is. It is fundamentally about your spiritual path that can link your contributions of time, talent and treasure to what you most want by being a member or friend of UUMAN.

Each in our own way are called to come to grips with what our personal and corporate goals are for the future of this community. To do that we must squarely and with a level of personal integrity face the future boldly, making the hard decisions necessary to move beyond mere survival to creating nothing less than a better world for all of humanity.

Yes, that will take a continued and increasing financial commitment to the mission and vision of our founders. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their efforts and vision, and owe no less to ourselves and our children as we set about the next stage of change. We are once again on the cusp of growth. The future is not to be feared but prepared and planned for and

then anticipated with enthusiasm.

Things are changing already, and as the Borg in "Star Trek" said, "Resistance is futile."

We are starting to burst at the seams in our sanctuary, our Ministry with Children and Youth is expanding, our parking lot is almost full on Sundays. We are called now, not tomorrow, but right now, to get ahead of the curve; to think about new paradigms of worship and ministry, to re-vision how we do things.

I'll drive if you like, along with you 175 or so backseat drivers who have hitched a ride on this stagecoach.

What a great time it is to be on this journey. We are alive and involved in many activities and interests. Our spiritual life is growing richer, our satisfaction deepening, our horizons opening, our belief in ourselves and the possible can becoming boundless.

I cannot think of a luckier minister than myself to have been called to you in this exciting time. Together we can achieve what seemed impossible just eight months ago when your last minister left. There is new hope in the air, a spring in our step and a glint in our eyes. Allow yourself to feel the optimism, to be happy in the face of our challenges. There is so much that is supportive of our growth, so much we can create and become.

Your Search Committee recognized your yearning and enthusiasm for a new beginning when they invited me to be your candidate. Your vote confirmed their decision and belief in a new, bright future we will share.

I want to invite them to stand for you to show your appreciation for their long, tireless and fruitful efforts.

(Applause)

Now that their work is over and mine has just begun, I will need your support and good will if we are to succeed in our ministry together. Without doubt, I will have some missteps and make mistakes, for that is what it means to be human.

When I do, I will try to learn the lesson in them, and move on hopefully a little smarter. If you remember my candidating sermon, please don't hold it against me that while "I walk on water, I can't" swim. If you say, "Huh?" ask someone next to you who was there.

I will try and always give you my best efforts to be the kind of spiritual leader you want and need. Together we can dance the dance without stepping on each others' toes – too often. When we do, apology and forgiveness are a step we can practice.

We will grow in wisdom and courage to face an always unknown future. I intend to be with you every step of the way, whether fox trot, swing dance, line dance, or solo. I will lead and follow as the need arises. That is what you do when you dance with another.

I will learn and grow with you. We will come to see the future clearly, for we will be creating it together. It is ever renewing.

The future is now!

Let the dance begin!

Blessed be, Namaste, Shalom.