

--Chalice Lighting--

The Rev. Israel Buffardi spoke the following to his West Virginia congregation at a time of change:

“The road that lies ahead of us is a long one, and the pace of progress will sometimes feel glacially slow.

Never forget that glaciers over time can carve out grand canyons and great lakes.

Moving tectonic plates can rise up mountains over millennia, or they can explode awe-inspiring volcanoes in milliseconds.

Our commitment to love and justice can do the same.”

One objective of this Congregational Meeting each year, is to provide everyone in our congregation with an awareness of where we currently stand, on our own proverbial road. On this day, we remind ourselves of our commitments... reflect on the value of what we have at this juncture as we look to the future and to our mutual vision for MUUC.

As President of the Board of Trustees, I will begin today by sharing where we stand, in this “State of MUUC” address. So I think we all should stand, if we are able... stand for a moment, take a deep breath, and look around.

On this day—Sunday, May 6, 2018—this is who we are. Who do you see? The people, yes... women, men, young people, little ones... the hearts and minds that comprise our congregation—who we are.

What else do you see? The space we are standing in... our sanctuary, to some “our sacred space.”

Now be seated, and look beyond the window-glass, to where we can see trees and grasses, bushes... this, too, is part of our space and part of who we are... more-so, because we have established some traditions here at MUUC that include the immediate area surrounding the building and some parts beyond: Memorial gardens and memorial trees, native wildflowers that attract pollinators and morph monarchs, multiple transplanted trees designed to screen the meeting house from the highway, a quiet campfire area, and more.

Eyes forward now, to the place where the person leading Sunday's service generally stands (or sits, as the case may be). Most of us agree it would be ideal if we had a UU minister, at least part-time. Each year, nearly the entire Sunday Service Committee budget is spent to pay "outside" people to lead services for us. Unfortunately, a UU minister we had scheduled for three additional services suddenly left the area and was unable to follow-through.

By the end of the year, we will have had 3 UU ministers present a total of four services. In addition to availing ourselves of UU ministers when possible, the Sunday Services Committee reached out to NMU faculty and students as well as members of the local community, to recruit speakers for our services and forums that reflect the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

Another door has opened for us with the purchase of the Soul Matters source materials, which provide monthly themes for services that also coordinate with RE. Those who presented Soul-Matters-inspired services this spring are enthusiastic and eager to lead forums so that others might be inspired to lead.

The piano to the right at the front has been used a whole lot less this year, due to the temporary loss of two of our pianists. We are committed to having live music as much as possible.

Now, cast your eyes to the opposite end of the building. Do you know what happens down at that end each Sunday after we “sing the children out?” We are very fortunate to have Jamie working with the children. Her ideas are inspirational, her energy is contagious, and the kids love her. RE is at the center of the beating heart of MUUC.

One year ago, our stated primary commitment for 2017-18 was to “focus on ourselves.” And this is us.

We are a small congregation—40 members—fewer people than twelve years ago, when MUUC purchased this building, and fewer even than only a few years ago, when we could actually afford to increase the amount we paid on our mortgage.

Stay tuned for more budget-talk... I’m trying to be brief so we can enjoy the day... but I need you to know you’ve been HEARD when it comes to your desires and your fears when it comes to MUUC. Stay tuned for information on the survey many of you took, and for follow-up on Studio RAD, and for some ideas that may help our current financial crisis.

Some of you HEARD Stewardship Chairman Gary Stark’s plea for increasing pledge amounts and paying pledges on time. Some of you HEARD the pleas of Jane Harris, Sari Embley and others for volunteers to help with the many little things that can become an overwhelming burden if they must be shouldered by the same small group of people.

We need to build our numbers, and we have ideas regarding that, which will be shared in a bit.

Referring back to Rev. Buffardi's words at the beginning of this speech: "Moving tectonic plates can rise up mountains over millennia, or they can explode awe-inspiring volcanoes in milliseconds. Our commitment to love and justice can do the same."

Our commitment is also to Love... to be kind to ourselves as a congregation and as individuals, in this place and at this time... moving forward as best we are able for the good of All.... or "good of most" (knowing we can't please all) but hoping All who comprise our congregation understand our aims are just.

Hymn # 1020 "Woyaya"

"We are going, heaven knows where we are going
We'll know we're there
We will get there, heaven knows how we will get there
We know we will

"It will be hard we know
And the road will be muddy and rough
But we'll get there, heaven knows how we will get there
We know we will..."

