

A Frustrated Piece of Mike's Mind... by Rev. Mike Morran

By request, here are the words spoken during the pastoral prayer on Sunday, March 28th, in response to the shooting in Boulder...:

Very aware that I have family members and a few friends who will passionately disagree, I don't care. I don't care if extensive mandatory background checks, mandatory wait times, mandatory safety training, magazine size limits, limits on individual arsenals, registering and licensing every device capable of firing a bullet, using technology to make every gun trackable, banning anything that can be modified into an assault-style weapon makes it harder for you, or me, or anyone, to get your weapon of choice, raises its price, is an inconvenience, or feels like an infringement on "freedom." I do not care.

Please see **Mind** on page 2



Keeping a Sense of Awe by Erin Kenworthy, DRE

"Children see magic because they look for it." – Author Christopher Moore

"Only where children gather is there any real chance of fun" – Journalist and Author Mignon McLaughlin

The pandemic has been a stress across generations, even for those resilient and emerge children and youth who will be forever impacted by the personal and cultural shifts experienced since mid-March of 2020. And still, our children and youth retain a sense of awe and connection. They still notice the sounds of birdsong, and delight in spotting new nests in neighborhood trees. As the snow melts, there is plenty of mud to stir, sticks off of trees to wave, and green shoots and buds to inspect. Spring springs forth, excites our senses and our hopes for emerging from the isolation of pandemic, isolation we have practiced in good faith that our friends and family will be able to rejoin us again for worship and shared moments of awe.

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I am aware that none of these things will stop all mass shootings or dissuade all domestic terrorists. But if they will collectively provide a sufficient hurdle that avoids just one more mass shooting, just one - if just one life is saved from someone getting frustrated at the difficulty of getting that weapon, or having to stop and reload, that is totally ok with me.

Don't tell me I am politicizing a tragedy. Don't waste my time with straw arguments about the government coming for your guns. I'd just like it to be much harder for the next cowardly psychopath to take out his personal pain on the rest of us, or at least lower the body count. Personally, I would be ok with the kinds of gun laws and outright bans they have in countries with 1/100th the gun violence that we have. But since gun voters clearly don't value human life as much as they value guns, I'll settle for the above.

To be clear, I do not expect any action from our lawmakers. They have repeatedly shown that they are far more afraid of gun voters and the NRA than they are of more dead Americans, even dead children. But I am not afraid of gun voters or the NRA. I am afraid of the next cowardly psychopath with an arsenal that was far too easy to obtain.

Peace,

Mike

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People can attend our Sunday service virtually even without a computer. From a telephone dial 312-626-6799, 646-558-8656, or 301-715-8592. When prompted enter the meeting ID 466 677 668 and the password 454623.

Awe from page 1

Many of us, myself included, have been awed by the science-based response to the pandemic, which has resulted in a vaccine that will help us back into the presence and arms of those we most miss. How amazing the speed, the efficacy, the collaboration that has brought vaccinations into our arms in growing numbers! I am grateful for the curiosity, the imaginations, and the dedication of scientists who once were children looking for magic, grown to adults who work to manifest “magic” in our world and in our lives. By my next Ploughshare article, the state of Colorado will have opened vaccinations to anyone over the age of 18, and even to some 16 and 17 year olds who can obtain a dose of the Pfizer version. This is exciting news! Though we know that not everyone will want, or will be able to receive a vaccine, perhaps enough will get their dose to effectively control the spread and the impact of Covid-19.

What fun we will have when we are once again able to gather! And I implore us to remember the wisdom that Author Mignon McLaughlin imparts. Let us not leave behind those among us who are full of fun and possibility. Let us remember that while vaccines become more accessible to adults, a significant portion of our congregation remain unable to receive the awe-inspiring doses of science “magic” that bring peace of mind and a sense of improved safety. Let us find the patience to be fully inclusive of all our vulnerable community members. Because that is where the real magic and fun will be found. Progress is being made on vaccinations for children, and it will rightly, take time to run trials, evaluate data, and complete the due diligence to keep our kids healthy and safe.

When we do fully and safely gather, I encourage you now to think about how you will engage our community with your enthusiasm, your gifts, and your own sense of awe and wonder. Our babies, toddlers, children, tweens, and youth are fun, magical, thought-provoking, and full of awe. Might you be willing to foster relationships, rather than keeping that awe at a distance? Might you get proximate by volunteering to spend a few hours within the joy of their presence? Think on it. We don't have a specific ask, nor are ready to receive your answer quite yet. We are not yet arrived at the time to organize classes, but I offer you the invitation to consider how you might get to know these vital members of our community. I am beginning to plan what could be, but I will not be able to deliver programming alone, or by staff alone. Soon, we will ask for volunteers. We have an awesome fun time.

Be well, be vaccinated, be patient. We shall be together again.

A Song of Spring by Robyn Rissman, Trustee, First Unitarian Board of Trustees

Every late winter (about exactly the time I'm writing this), I think to myself, I've never been happier to see spring come as I am this year. And every year it's true. Last year, during those first terrifying weeks of the pandemic, it was the truest it had ever been. Until this year. It makes my heart sing to see the return of the light. The bulb flowers shooting up tender green leaves, and the early birds, the crocuses and the mini-iris and the snowdrops, quietly unleashing the joy of their blooms on passersby. Just this morning we saw a nesting pair of house finches examining some real-estate on our back porch—a beautiful nest used by robins in years past. The hope that with the return of the warming sun and longer days, we'll once again be able to see friends and family out of doors after a long winter of isolation. That the vaccines will bring us a chance to gather once again, including here in this beloved community.

And of course, it brings the time-honored ritual of spring cleaning. Last year, lockdown saw many of us emptying out closets and basements and attics filled with the relics of a lifetime (and an über-consumerist culture)—many of which hadn't been cleaned out or perhaps even thought of in years. As the light at the end of the tunnel inches closer to a return to the joys of the Before Times, I know many of us are also thinking about what we wish to sweep away of those times, those things that no longer (or never did) serve us or our siblings in humanity.

What joys of spring are you most eagerly anticipating? What will you spring clean from your thoughts and heart?

In years past, I used a journal called *The Essene Book of Days*, a lovely work that focuses in part on the yearly rhythms and cycles of nature. There was always a seasonal focus to meditate on and I perpetually looked forward to the first one that hinted at spring: "Brooks run free and buds appear." It would become a late winter mantra of sorts that let me relax into the knowledge that no matter how long the winter seemed, spring would always break its hold. From there, it was "Buds unfold to early flowers," and then "Flowers announce the promise of fruit," and so on.

As we welcome the joys of spring, I wish for you a rebirth in whatever way you seek. As Anita Krizzan says, "Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer." May you be warm again very soon.

From the Archive found by the Archive Committee

I found the pieces of this story by the accident of opening a booklet. It is an excerpt from what looks like two articles by John Kokish, Denver Post Staff Writer and published around February 12, 1966. Enjoy!

UNITARIAN BOY RULED UNFIT TO TESTIFY

James P. Wesley was sued in Denver court by his former wife, Nina Wesley for custody of their three children. The father had received custody when they divorced in 1963. His attorney, Harry K. Nier, Jr. attempted to call as a witness their 12-year-old son to testify that he wanted to remain with his father. The judge questioned the boy to determine if he understood the oath.

"Do you understand what a lie is?" Judge Keating asked.

"Yes," the boy replied.

"And what will happen if you tell a lie," the judge asked.

"Well, if you discover it, I would be in pretty bad trouble," the boy said.

"Suppose I didn't discover it?"

"I would feel guilty."

"Would you feel that you could tell a lie if no one would discover it?"

"I don't think so."

"Would you be punished if you told a lie," the judge asked.

"Yes," the boy said.

"By whom?"

"Myself."

"No, I mean, son, if you told a lie would you be punished for it?"

"Yes."

"By whom? Do you believe in God?" the judge asked.

"We are Unitarians," The boy replied.

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"We are Unitarians," The boy replied.

Attorney Nier then asked the boy, "You know the difference between right and wrong, don't you?"

"Yes," the boy said.

"Do you think there is some person higher than you that will punish you if you don't tell the truth," Nier asked?

"Yes."

"Well, in your religion what is that called?"

"Well in our religion we mostly believe in science. Well, that is about it.....I don't know how to explain it really."

"How about the power that you refer to," Nier asked?

"Well, I don't really know."

"Would you be punished?"

"Yes, by my own conscience."

"I don't think he is qualified." Judge Keating said, "Step down son."

During a recess, Attorney Nier contacted Rev. Richard Henry, Pastor of First Unitarian Church to explain the sect, the Unitarian beliefs. Rev Henry testified that the religion is non-creedal and offers no strict dogma an "every man is answerable to the highest truth within himself which we call conscience and other might call God, and like other citizens we are answerable to the laws of our society."

Judge Keating told a reporter that his decision to bar the boy from testimony was not based on religion, but on his idea that the child did not understand the oath which is: "You do solemnly swear by the ever-living God and the testimony you are about to give in the cause now on trial before this court will be the truth and the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Chapter 154 of the Colorado revised statute says: "No person shall be deemed incompetent to testify as a witness on account of his opinion in relation to the Supreme Being or a future state of reward or punishments; nor shall any witness be questioned in regard to his religious opinions." Case law in Colorado involving the competency of minors to understand the meaning of the oath involves children under 10. In numerous cases, children as young as 6 have been permitted to testify. The boy will be 13 on April 10.

When the former, Mrs. Wesley testified she told the judge the boy's IQ was "125 plus". "That," Judge Keating said, "Got him thinking." He decided to reverse his decision. "I think with an IQ as high as that, he understands the oath," the judge said.

After the boy testified, the judge allowed the children to stay with their father, but liberalized the mother's visitation rights. Doctor Wesley and his second wife founded the Unitarian fellowship in Rolla, MO where he was on the faculty.

On a later editorial page, there were 4 letters in favor of the boy's moral code based on "love and insight." The judge's initial decision was condemned as "illegal" and "unwise."

Whole Souul Living

Love has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Love and compassion for the world is to look out; yours are the feet with which Love is to go about doing good; and yours are the hands with which Love is to bless us now.

Compassion is the Whole Souul Living Theme for April, and the quote above is adapted from St. Teresa of Avila. Another quote to consider this month is un-attributed but even more pointed: “Show me someone who goes through life with a heart more closed than open, and I’ll show you someone who can never be fulfilled.”

Some questions for individual and communal reflection:



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- Compassion is said to be both the means and the end of the spiritual life. If you look within your own heart, does this feel true?
- Some Buddhist traditions affirm that the goal in life is to be happy, and the way to be happy is to make others happy. Is this true to your experience?
- What does a compassionate person, organization, or community look like, sound like, feel like?
- How does a person, organization, or community become more