

“Coming of Age Service”
Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
May 4, 2008

Welcome & Introduction to Coming of Age Service

Welcome to our Coming of Age Worship Service, and thank you for coming. In the fall each youth was matched with an adult mentor from this congregation. Youth and Mentors met all together monthly to get to know each other, learn about Unitarian Universalism, play games and share delicious desserts. In addition to those meetings we gathered for community service projects. See your Order of Service for all the church and community projects we engaged in. Our final project was to write the Credo Statements that you will hear today. Ten of us will present at the 9:15 service, ten at 11:15.

Lighting the Chalice (in unison)

We are travelers. We meet for a moment in this sacred place to love, to share, to serve. Let us use compassion, curiosity, reverence, and respect while seeking our truths. In this way we will support a just and joyful community, and this moment shall endure.

Opening Words

Come into this place of peace
And let its silence heal your spirit;
Come into this place of memory
And let its history warm your soul;
Come into this place of prophecy and power
And let its vision change your heart.

(William Schultz)

Responsive Reading

LEADER: Deep within our selves resides the religious impulse.

CONGREGATION: We have religion when we hold some hope beyond the present, some self respect beyond our failures.

LEADER: We have religion when our hearts are capable of leaping up at beauty, when our nerves are edged by some dream in the heart.

CONGREGATION: We have religion when we have an abiding gratitude for all that we have received.

LEADER: We have religion when we look upon people with all their failings and still find in them good; when we look beyond people to the grandeur in nature and to the purpose in our own heart.

CONGREGATION: We have religion when we have done all that we can, and then in confidence, entrust ourselves to the life that is larger than ourselves.

(Ralph N. Helverson)

CREDO STATEMENTS

(Each Youth was introduced by their Mentor)

Peri Muellner's Credo (mentor, Shary Irwin)

I believe that life is an opportunity to make a difference. I feel lucky to be able to live. Sometimes people have to end this wonderful adventure before they've had their share.

Love is like a rainbow: it goes around the world, yet sometimes you can't see it clearly.

I believe that God is everything: the natural beauty of the earth, sun and stars.

I believe that when I die, I just become part of the circle of life, moving on the way everything does. No one knows exactly what happens when we die.

Before I die I want to make sure I have made a difference in someone's life.

Rilke Rutenbeck's Credo (mentor, Pat Hundhausen)

At this time in my life, I believe that:

People are merely one grain of sand on a beach. Like one blade of grass in a field. You can sway with the wind, or push against it.

When I die, I start my life over, as a new person.

Praying is not something I do, but more like a part inside me. It's a silent hope.

Tragedy is sometimes the result of a bad choice. But, sometimes, tragedy strikes people who didn't see it coming.

God is not one but many. God is an inner force, or rather, a gut feeling.

Love is crucial. It's what makes the world go round.

A good friend is there to listen. A good friend respects your every opinion, and sometimes supports it. A good friend doesn't have to change to be your friend. A good friend likes you for who is inside. A good friend doesn't care if you snort when you laugh.

I admire myself because I am the best me I can be. I try to live my life at its fullest, because each day will only happen once.

I tell right from wrong from experience. You have to have bad in life, or else you wouldn't know good, because there would be nothing to compare it to.

Ben Iuro's Credo (mentor, Rod Mitchell)

I believe that there is an encompassing force, vibe, power, or whatever you wish to call it, binding together all that is. Not all that physically exists by occupying space, but all mental and spiritual projections, thoughts, dreams, faith, ideas, and theories therein. This ties in deeply to the beliefs and teachings of Buddhism in the sense that there is no singular deity, but rather a non-corporeal force resonating through the entire universe. Another junction between my beliefs and those of Buddhism is the belief that practicing patience, compassion, and humility is the true way to

enlightenment. One who is humble instead of pompous has a greater reason to be proud and is the example that I believe others should follow.

Learning to become one with your surrounding environment yet not become attached to it is the primary goal of my beliefs. That is not to say that I will be able to reach this goal in the near future, or possibly in my lifetime. I also believe in a sort of judgment following death. Based on how you go about your life, you may take on a different form and leave the physical universe to join reality as a whole, similar to Nirvana, again tying into Buddhism.

Many scientists speculate that we may live in a “closed universe”, according to which means that at some point in the distant future, the universe, as we know it will come to an end. Whether it will collapse in on itself, freeze, disintegrate, or any of the other mind-boggling theories is irrelevant at this point in time except for my belief that a spiritual universe will be eternal on some plane of existence.

According to my belief system, there is no true evil that exists, merely delusions of the human mind. To be truly evil is to be completely devoid of even the simplest emotion. Granted that murder, betrayal, and other major wrong doings are terrible things, but those who commit such atrocities are still capable of emotion and understanding that what they did was wrong, thus rendering at least a spark of humanity in them.

Many of my beliefs coincide with Buddhism and so I consider myself a Buddhist in many respects. My belief system, however, is still forming and may always be forming, but this credo is simply what I believe at this moment.

However, practicing compassion and kindness will always be what my belief system will be based on.

Ellie Forbes' Credo (mentor, Sheila Lauder)

I wish I had an easy button. Those little red buttons that people press and receive office supplies directly from Staples. I don't want numerous office supplies, but it would be nice for instant gratification once in a while. Just a little red button that you press if you are having a problem and then POOF,

magically you can see the answer. People don't realize how hard it is to be a kid. All of our peer relationships seem so important.

Everyone tells you that you only have to be with these people for a little while and then they're gone, but right here right now it seems like everything is huge. Every report card and every friendship is like a balance. If you tip the scale it all goes up in smoke. An easy button would come in handy once in a while. How are we supposed to do well in the future if we have trouble keeping friendships alive, juggling grades, and being organized?

Credo means creed: any system of principles or beliefs, or so says wordnet. Kathy told us that for Unitarians credo meant "at this point in my life I believe". I believe that I am a Unitarian Universalist. "What's that?" I have been asked that so many times. The truth is: nobody knows. I think that is because UUs are everything. They believe that everyone is right, but no one is absolutely right. Unitarians are able to talk about what they believe in without having to all believe the same thing. We can even debate about faiths, though we rarely do.

Some people think that I'm an atheist because I don't really believe there is a god or divine power. They are wrong though, because I believe in other things, like friendship, love, and compassion. Those are all things that you can't see, you just have to trust that they are there. I believe in other universes millions of light years away. I believe peace can be achieved through discussion and compromise.

Death is very hard for people to understand. Some religions tell us we are judged by our actions in this life. Some say that we are judged by karma, and still others say nothing at all. Death is something that no one knows about, because no one has lived to tell us, obviously. I can only hope that when I die I am content. Finding out what happens in death has never really interested me because it's coming anyway, so maybe it will just be a surprise. If you concentrate on death too hard, you won't be able to think about life.

I think life is all about satisfying your dreams. If you don't get to live out your dream, even if it's something very small, like writing a story or learning to play the clarinet, you will never be happy with yourself. Life should also be about understanding and discovering. We should all explore

our world and better it for the generation that follows, while also discovering ourselves.

I believe one's passion should be the driving force in one's life. You should strive to do things you are passionate about, even if they are a little weird like standing on one hand and singing the national anthem or discovering a way to put 46 spoons on your face. Whatever you want, you should go for it, because sometimes what seems impossible can only be just out of reach. People who follow their passion are happier than people who do things just for money or because their parents wanted them to do it.

If you don't have a passion, you should try many different things to find it. Even if you end up not liking anything, which is very rare, you will have more memories and fun times than if you keep doing something you don't like to do.

Irina Lyons' Credo (mentor, Diane Haas)

I believe family is important because they are the few people that you can totally trust.

Sports are important to me because they give me something to always go after.

I believe goals are important because if you didn't have them it would be hard to succeed in life.

In life a good person to me has qualities like honesty, humor, kindness, being supportive, welcoming, and friendly.

It is important to be able to make your own decisions in life.

To me each day is a miracle. And I am thankful to be alive.

My ideas about the Natural World are a part of my spirituality because if we didn't have nature, it would feel like we were in a big, black, dull planet and it wouldn't give us a way to be relaxed. Nature is also a part of my religion because it makes everything feel alive.

The Seven UU Principles remind us it is important to have peace in our world.

To me, God is an all-powerful being.

Karling Rutenbeck's Credo (mentor, Kate Madson)

At this time in my life I believe that:

People are little beings in a big world. Everything we do impacts everyone around us no matter how small. When we work together all the little things can make a big difference.

God is a force that is everywhere he is not a single person or being.

Love is the most powerful force on earth. Love holds us together and without it life, as we know it, would not exist.

The religions of the world teach us to treat each other with the respect and kindness that we would like to be treated with. They can also teach us lessons about all in life that we may or may not agree with.

As a wise, fictional, old man once said, "To the well organized mind death is but the next great adventure." I believe this and also that after we die we are reincarnated because at this time in my life I can't grasp other ideas.

For me, life is a journey; it has its ups and downs but we must all go through it to experience the good parts.

Austen Turner's Credo (mentor, Donna Frosthalm)

I believe spirituality means to become one with your spirit and to take the time to explore your spirit, along with your ideas and beliefs and to try to understand yourself.

I believe we must all strive to live the best lives we can possibly live. We need to make mistakes in order to learn from them and become a well-rounded and wise person.

I believe that pain and grief are necessary in life, because without them we would not appreciate joy and happiness as much. And we would not be as appreciative toward life, and caring and gentle, if there was no death.

I believe there is an after life, or something of that sort. Or this life may be a pretest, getting us ready for something more. Also I believe our souls are never ending.

Last, I believe that we need to strive to live the best life that we can so at the end of the day we can be happy with who we are and how we lived.

William O'Brien's Credo (mentor, Denny Madson)

I admire Nelson Mandela because he never gave up on what he believed.

I look for kindness and trust in a friend and in a community.

I believe people should be as kind as they can to each other, even if they are not friends.

A community should be like a distant family where everybody knows each other and respects each other.

I believe God is everything and is in everyone but not in a body form.

I think it's important to live life to the fullest even if the future doesn't seem bright.

I believe there is an afterlife and that each person becomes their power animal when they die.

Madilyn Kidwell's Credo (mentor, Cara Leckenby)

God is the man that unites us, as a whole. He is the connection between you and me. My belief in God is that he has no control in our lives, but he is the creator and savior of us all.

The earth is our home. Every day is new, and every new day we have that one chance to believe that faith will give us a second chance. A chance to forgive, to restrain from bad, and to love what we have. God lives among us in our planet, and he is the creator of all. Nature is a common way of praise, which is in many of my daily beliefs in God, and also spirituality.

Spirituality is what we depend on to make us a better human. For the passion, and curiosity that we behold is a part of what we believe and who we become. All the joys and sorrows that live among us in our daily lives gives us a chance to live and learn, and appreciate what is given and what can come out of our actions. Spirituality is what we love, grow with, and unit with during this path called life.

Many of us live with hope that we do not fail. Sadly, many of us do fail, worried how people will view us after we express our deepest thoughts. The value and meaning of many lives is a life of little respect and passion. Once in awhile we should remind ourselves to stop and smell the roses, for they won't be there forever.

I believe that every person has a reason for who they are; good and bad. There is no evil person, for those who are looked down upon are just misunderstood. And the few humans that do good deserve no reward, but knowing that they can change the world for better.

A friend is a person who loves you no matter what. There is no true definition for what a good friend is, but the ones that count as gold are the ones who will lift you up from underneath when you fall, and help you spread your wings so that you can fly and find a way home.

Life is given to us so we can have a passion for Gods creation. Life is a gift; not a privilege. This is our time to realize how marvelous the gift of life truly is, and to enjoy the sacred beauty that surrounds us every day. There is a lot for us to learn during our time. This is why we are here. To understand our purpose.

Death is a time to leave what we once had, and be given something else. Once our time is expired we enter the afterlife. There is no hell or heaven. For this is a time to be forgiven. Our souls will live on, in your heart and in mine. As our spirits live among the living, our souls will take a new form. We will become something else. To embrace a new journey.

Before I die, I would hope to live. Live the life of a dream, and experience those wishes that are close to my heart. Every day I grow stronger, and come closer to whom I will become. As I grow wiser, and more aware of my surroundings I will desire more wishes. All I hope for is that I can follow my heart in order to complete my pursuit to happiness.

Max Meier's Credo (mentor, Bill Kaune)

I believe that there is a little bit of god in all of us. God is the natural flow of life. I believe god flows through us, willing us to live and be active. We control our own destinies, but god is with us the whole way. God wills us to move forward in life and appreciate nature. God helps us notice everything and not just the important things.

I believe that we are all born good and choose to do what we want with our life. I believe that when we die we go to our own version of heaven, whether that is a sports field or a bed.

I believe all people should be welcoming, accepting, and understanding. I believe that if everyone had these qualities then there would be no fighting and nature could take its natural course.

I believe that we are here on earth because of something that each of us will do in our life that is worth being here. I believe that we should strive to fulfill our dreams.

And lastly, I believe that if you see something worth seeing then look, and if you hear something worth hearing then listen and you will learn something worth learning.

Emma Kelety's Credo (mentor, Robin Stemen)

Life is the twinkle in an old man's eyes, the eyes that have seen it all except for what is coming.

In my eyes death is like a yarn ball unraveling as it goes, becoming faster and faster the closer to the end it goes.

I see God as the sky, intent on giving the birds a place to soar.

War is a map that always leads to tracks of tears.

I feel love is the embrace that fills your lungs, like a breath of fresh air filled with something sweet.

A good friend is like a pillow, always there to comfort me when I'm in need.

A community's many hands reaching out to brake my fall.

People are the outlines of pictures unfinished, you never truly know them until they're all colored in.

Prayer is the belief in one simple yet beautiful star, the star that is in us all and connects each living thing no matter how far away. I believe in this star, the star that is shining and will continue shining even after this moment is gone.

Ryan Hoffman's Credo (mentor Mike Morrissey)

The goal for my life is to be remembered as a good person. This means having a generous amount of compassion for everything. You can do this by listening with your heart and acting upon your knowledge of what is right. I want to travel around the world, making friends and expressing these principles.

I feel happy when all my feelings are revealed, specifically when I cry. It feels good to love something more than myself, like my family.

I appreciate that I am in a healthy body, and that I have the ability to love.
I appreciate that cats were created.

I wonder if there is or is not an afterlife. For the best religious insurance, whether there is salvation to be earned or not, be considerate to other people, listen with patience to your surroundings, and practice generosity.

The way I live my life is my religion. My religion is what I value; my cats, my parents, and friends. I am thankful for the privilege of living in America which has material things that gives us the opportunity to help people in other countries. I value hot water and good food.

I once heard that a girl went to a teacher for help and said, “I am having trouble thinking of the 7 wonders of the world.” The teacher wanted to know what she had already written. The girl’s list of the 7 wonders of the world were:

Seeing
Hearing
Feeling
Smelling
Tasting
Laughter
And Love.

Liz Dennison’s Credo (mentor, Deborah Hammond)

Before I started this I had no idea what I believed, but now I have an idea.

As William Shakespeare once wrote:

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,…”

I believe life is a journey of yourself.

You live in it with other people. People are very small parts of the Universe but they have a big impact. The choices people make are what make them have a big impact.

God and Jesus are a mystery to me. I can’t explain them. Religion is something that we are not alone in. We can be different in our beliefs and we can all be ok.

Nature is one of the most powerful and beautiful aspects of the Universe and I believe humans should respect it.

Love is a feeling, great or small, which describes how you feel toward another person. Why feelings exist and where they come from is a mystery. Even so, love is one of the strongest and most positive forces we have in our lives.

William Shakespeare wrote:

“Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;...”

My friends are a very big part of my life. To me a friend is a person who cares about me and I care about them in return. My friends are important to me just like my family. I look up to them and go to them when I need help.

A community of friends and family is important to have because it helps form you into being who you are and who you will become. War is one of the greatest failures in community. War is a gateway to unhappiness, disappointment and pain.

Death is the end of life's experience but you begin a whole new experience. I believe in reincarnation. I also believe that whatever you believe happens after death, happens.

Molly McGuire's Credo (mentor, Jan Forrest)

This community is the foundation that supports me to go forward in life. I feel that each person that enters this sanctuary intends to support others as they make their way on this journey.

I believe that God is an energy, not a man on a white cloud, which is what some people think of him as. For me, God is a force, invisible but known, encircling us all in this place where we live. I see God in the brief life of a

fluttering insect's flight. I feel God when I close my eyes to take in the depths of silence.

I have chosen to believe in reincarnation because I cannot grasp the alternative; of leaving and never returning. To me death is a marking of a journey ended, and possibly a new one begun. I believe that the reason we fear death is because we don't know what it's like, or what will happen as a result of it.

A few years ago, my Uncle Kerry died. His death was a tragedy because he was so young, and left behind his two daughters. I will hold my memories of who he was and share what I can with them. In this way, a part of who he was will stay alive.

For me, life is a series of experiences. Each person travels through them one way or another. Life is a river, and each person travels its course in their own boat. Avoiding a rock on the left, or a snag in the middle. Keeping time with the force of the current, constantly pushing forward.

I believe that kindness and love are the best gifts to give and receive. The two gestures blending together to form one, that lightens the heart, and has been known to fill the eyes with tears.

Leah Russell's Credo (mentor, Jenifer Taylor)

Writing this belief statement was really hard because I don't know how to put my beliefs into words. But here are some beliefs that I have.

I think a friend needs to have kindness and the ability to stand up to someone if they are being mean to the other friend or to me. Also, a friend is someone who is there if I am sad.

If I think about death, I always wonder where your spirit really goes when you die. Sometimes I think your spirit goes to your favorite place to be.

I think the way to see the difference between right and wrong is that right is if you are helping contribute to the world, and making people happy. Where wrong is if you are hurting people's feelings or hurting anything in the world.

I often think about the universe, like how it was formed and how can it go on forever. Sometimes I get a headache, but I can't help wondering what all is out there.

Now that I have told you my beliefs, I must say this was one of the hardest things I've ever tried to put on paper. But I also believe that in writing this, I learned a lot about what I truly believe.

Alethea Westlund's Credo (mentor, Sharon Schlentner)

I believe in not god but a little voice in each of us. A friend. A friend that will comfort me when I am not comforted. A friend that will be with me forever and ever. I imagine the friend can be a loved one or a pet or anything that listens to me. Guiding me the right way through the world.

A friend that will be with me even after I die. The voice inside knows me better than anyone else. A friend that will raise me to the heavens because it will always be a part of me and has done nothing wrong. A friend that will make me bloom like a flower and grow like a tree. An important friend that I will never let go of.

A friend that will not make the choices for me but with me. A friend that will help me be kind and caring to all people with suggestions it makes in my head. A friend that is strong in many ways like friendship, love, support, gentleness, and compassion.

Isaac Urner's Credo (mentor, Dick Conway)

- People are simply the only sentient species we've found so far. We got lucky in the big evolutionary dice roll, that's all. We got both the big brain and the opposable thumbs to enact our ideas.
- I have no idea what so ever about what happens when I die through I like the idea of reincarnation.
- Prayer is a means of communicating with a higher being that some believe to exist. I don't think there's a god but if there is could he

please give us a hand. Also the fact that a god if they exist hasn't stopped some of humanity's more horrible crimes upon itself makes one think that such a god would be evil. Could a loving god sit back and watch the Holocaust?

- God is, as far as I can tell, non-existent. Otherwise he/she/it would have shown itself by now.
- On the subject of religion I don't really care about it if it's not forced upon me, though I do somewhat see the more fanatical believers as deluded. Religion exists to answer the questions we can't answer but science is starting to answer them.
- Tragedy is the result of poor planning, bad luck and human stupidity and nothing more.
- Jesus was a great teacher and nothing more. His followers twisted his teaching far out of proportion. How can you endorse a crusade in the name of the prince of peace?
- The religions of the world teach us compassion and tolerance but their followers don't practice such teachings. If god/gods don't exist than religion is the biggest con job in history. Follow me or the big Juju will get you! Religion does help people but it is also a means to gain power
- For me life is a wild ride that I intend to live to the fullest. As someone said: You should not arrive at your grave in good condition. You should arrive with a bar of chocolate in one hand and a martini in the other going Woohoo what a ride.
- War is one means of nations settling conflicts. It is also a way to gain land and power. It's the greatest horror humanity can unleash upon itself but brilliant tactics and strategies involved (not the actual fighting) are art form in its own way. I personally view the Battle of Cannae as art just as I view the Mona Lisa as art.
- A good friend is someone who I loyal to you and you to them. Everything else is secondary.

- Community is important because it gives you people to help you in times of need and vice versa.
- Before I die I want to see all of my personal wonders of the world (Venice, Rome, The Great Wall etc) and generally travel and live life to it's fullest.
- I tell right from wrong by what I generally feel to be right or wrong. It's just a feeling that I just shouldn't let the strong abuse the weak. It's just instinct not to let anyone beat on the children. I can't really explain my moral code more than: Defend your tribe and your tribe is your buddies and anyone weaker than you.

Molly Brown's Credo (mentor, Gayle Kaune)

The curtain falls but I'm still watching. Life continues even though the play has ended. Have you ever stopped and thought, this is me. I'm not dreaming. There are consequences to the things I do. I'm not going back. I can only go forward. I am not going to wake up and have everything be perfect. The curtain falls but I'm still watching.

To be me is hard. I know it is. Because I am me. And I am learning. Learning to say what I mean, mean what I say. Learning to ask questions. Learning to go ahead anyway. Learning to not care what other people think. I choose to be me. And I may not always say what I feel, but I feel what I say. And sometimes, that's all I can do. I'm proud. I'm proud that I try.

A good friend cries when you cry. A good friend does not change you or them to be a friend. They watch the crappy movies and sappy plays with you. They share their problems and happiness with you. And if you're a freak, they're one with you.

Love jumps out from the strangest places and pulls you along with it. It drags you down the road and then lets you ride piggy back. When you sit back to rest it pulls you back up and keeps you going. It's always there, waiting in the shadows. Of course then you bring a flashlight.

I want to travel to unforgettable places, before I die. I want to be on the big screen, I want to go to college, I want to fall in love. Before I die I want to see the classics, learn all the car brands, gallop a horse, swim with the turtles, meet a chimp, have a pet monkey, live in the tropics. Before I die.

Nature is the sun that greets you on the first day of summer. Nature is the first tree you ever climbed. It's the wind that greets you like an old friend. It's the first blue flower. Running through the sand in your bare feet. Going wading and getting soaked. That one blackberry you can never get. The inch you grew over summer break. That's nature.

Nakaia Millman's Credo (mentor, Carolyn Salmon)

I believe in freedom; making my own decisions and expressing my ideas and opinions freely without other people's judgment.

A friend is made up of many elements; trust, fun, and honesty. If a friend is in lack of one element, does that still make them a friend?

I believe there isn't really a god. To me the name -God- is but a concept people came up with long ago, as an explanation for things they didn't truly understand; a reason for things happening that no one could explain. I believe that the animals and humans on this planet do the work and make things happen, I believe that there isn't an all powerful being making things take place. I believe we were put on the planet to live good lives and to learn; not for -God-.

Before I die I want to be satisfied with my life and the choices I have made. Then I can go on. I believe in after life. The present is only a prologue of one's real life, only a beginning, a learning opportunity. I also believe that someone's belief of an afterlife is exactly how he or she explains it but for them only. People will go different ways after death depending on what they think afterlife is.

Nature is amazing. It is my world and everyone's home. I believe this planet would be a much better and more enjoyable place if people treated the Earth with more respect. The trees and their roots, the animals and the water all need our care. I believe that there is much much more we are capable of

doing for the planet. The Earth is falling apart and fighting with each other, and I believe the people have enough power to change the world.

I believe in change. Change is something everyone must work with everyday. I believe that there is no way to avoid it because there are so many people with feelings wanting to be considered, not everyone can always get exactly what they want or hoped for. If I can learn to accept change more, I feel I will be much more successful in life and I will enjoy myself on this endless journey.

Rinnah Becker's Credo (mentor, Barb Dyer)

Nature fills me with awe. It is a beautiful place where there is always something new and interesting, whether a vibrant rainbow or a curious squirrel. The best thing about nature is the peacefulness; a single maple leaf falling from a tree or a tiny creek rippling through a dense pine forest.

There are many things that I believe are important to have in life. There is kindness, honesty, loyalty, joy, friendship, and acceptance. All of these are wonderful qualities.

We should take advantage of our life here. This is the time we have to help others and make our world a better place. Together, we should try to find and put into action, a solution to global warming, even if it does mean we might have to give up such comforts as cars.

What happens when we die is a mystery. I don't know what happens, but I love to wonder about it. I don't think people's spirits disappear when they die, but I don't think they become angels either. They might just fly away and be free to roam the world, looking in on loved ones and visiting with their ancestors. When I die, that will be one interesting thing to learn: where the spirit goes.

When I was littler, I thought god was a lady with very long hair. Maybe god was, at that time. Now, I believe that god is a part of nature, a kind of guardian, only not in a human or animal form. To me, god is mostly a greater force in nature. I believe god can be whatever you want god to be.

RECOGNITION OF COMING OF AGE MENTORS AND YOUTH

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Mentors, you have answered the call to be guides, friends and teachers to the youth of our congregation. You have led by example, you have taught by sharing your own beliefs as Unitarians Universalists, and you have modeled friendship as a journey of generosity, commitment and curiosity.

CONGREGATION (in unison): Mentors, we are grateful for your willingness to give your time, energy, and love as stewards and elders to the youth of our community. You have planted seeds of self-identity, personal integrity, and clarity that will continue to sprout and grow as these youth step out into the world knowing what it feels like to be seen and supported by their religious community.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Youth, please stand and face your mentor. I ask you to place the necklace around your mentor, and remain standing. Thank you, mentors may be seated. Youth who are presenting at 11:15, please rise.

MINISTER: Youth, we honor your commitment to show up these past seven months, to be of service as volunteers, to explore friendship with your mentors, and to express your beliefs so eloquently to the community. We are excited and honored to welcome you as young adults into our congregation.

CONGREGATION (in unison): We welcome you with pride and awe for all that you have accomplished while Coming of Age. Each of you reminds us that our future as a congregation relies on our willingness and ability to listen to and learn from each other. May you continue to thrive in our midst and always feel at home in this community of open minds, helping hands, and loving hearts.

MINISTER: Please recognize our twenty youth and their accomplishments.

Spoken Benediction

Now may the love of truth guide you,
The warmth of love hold you,
And the spirit of peace bless you,
This day and in the days to come. Amen.

(Jane Mauldin)

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this chalice
But not the light of truth,
The warmth of community,
Or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts
Until we are together again.

(NOTE: The above statements are the manuscript versions of the Credo Statements given by the Coming of Age Youth at the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Sunday, May 4, 2008. The spoken messages are also available on audio cassette at the Fellowship.)