

**“The Marketing of Liberal Religion”**  
**Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**  
**May 16, 2010**  
**Dennis Reynolds, Ministerial Intern**  
**Rev. Bruce Bode, Minister**

**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 & Musical Response**

Holy and beautiful is the custom by which we gather together on this Sunday morning.

Here we come to give our thanks, to face our ideals, to remember our loved ones, to seek that which is permanent, and to serve integrity, beauty, and the qualities of life that make it rich and whole.

Through this hour breathes the worship of all ages, the cathedral music of all history; blessed are the ears that hear that eternal sound.

**Introduction to Responsive Reading**

Our Responsive Reading this morning is written by the Rev. Dr. David O. Rankin, the senior minister with whom I served as an associate minister for over fifteen years in Grand Rapids, Michigan at the Fountain Street Church. To my mind, the statements here are about as fine a summary as you will find on the values, principles, and processes of liberal religion. I remember speaking with David about he how came to write this series of ten statements, and he wrote it, he told me, as an attempt to summarize the commonly-held beliefs of religious liberals, having surveyed those who identified themselves as such.

**Responsive Reading**

MINISTER: We believe in the freedom of religious expression. All individuals should be encouraged to develop their own personal theologies, and to present openly their religious opinions without fear of censure or reprisal.

CONGREGATION: We believe in the toleration of religious ideas. All religions, in every age and culture, possess not only intrinsic merit, but also potential value for those who have learned the art of listening.

MINISTER: We believe in the authority of reason and conscience. The ultimate arbiter in religion is not a church, or a document, or an official, but the personal choice and decision of the individual.

CONGREGATION: We believe in the never-ending search for Truth. If the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations which appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful, and wondrously exciting.

MINISTER: We believe in the unity of experience. There is no fundamental conflict between faith and knowledge, religion and the world, the sacred and the secular, since they all have their source in the same reality.

CONGREGATION: We believe in the worth and dignity of each human being. All people on earth have an equal claim to life, liberty, and justice – and no idea, ideal, or philosophy is superior to a single human life.

MINISTER: We believe in the ethical application of religion. Good works are the natural product of a good faith, the evidence of an inner grace that finds completion in social and community involvement.

CONGREGATION: We believe in the motive force of love. The governing principle in human relationships is the principle of love, which always seeks the welfare of others and never seeks to hurt or destroy.

MINISTER: We believe in the necessity of the democratic process. Records are open to scrutiny, elections are open to members, and ideas are open to criticism – so that people might govern themselves.

CONGREGATION: We believe in the importance of a religious community. The validation of experience requires the confirmation of peers, who provide a critical platform along with a network of mutual support.

(David O. Rankin)

### **Introduction to Reading (by Dennis Reynolds)**

I arrived at school late for the January term in 2009 and thus, regrettably, missed the Academic Convocation where David Bumbaugh delivered his address. The Convocation, held each winter at Meadville Lombard Theological School serves as a forum for thought amongst Unitarian Universalist students, ministers, and scholars. For students “convo” serves as preface to our weeks of intensive class work.

I was sorry that work commitments prevented me from being there, because David Bumbaugh is my favorite professor and he, not surprisingly, had something significant to say.

In his address David took those gathered and subsequent readers on what he called an “excursion through history.” Traveling through time to arrive in the here and now. To a time in the history of liberal religion where, according to David:

“The overriding concerns have centered upon the need to identify our market niche, and to devise programs and strategies to attract and keep clients. Much of our social justice effort can be defined as expressionist politics, less intended to change the world than to serve our own egos, to present a profile to the world and thus attract and expand the client base. Our efforts at self-definition are grounded in no deep confession of faith, no significant meta-narrative. This becomes clear when we consider the all-but-deified purposes and principles.”

(Rev. David E. Bumbaugh, from “The Marketing of Liberal Religion,” January 8, 2009, Convocation of Meadville Lombard Theological School’s Modified Residency Program)

He goes on to state that:

“Missing in all of this is any coherent theological foundation. Over and over, we hear each other and officials of the Association proclaim the conviction that we have a moral obligation to grow, to spread our word because we possess a vital message, one that is of central importance to the world and to the crises in which the world is entangled. When, however, we are challenged to say what that message is, what our faith consists of, what defines us as a religious people, often we are driven to an embarrassed silence, or we smile smugly and confess that no one can speak for all Unitarian Universalists, or we stutter and stammer and mutter some half-digested truisms about the worth of every person or the importance of embracing each person's freedom to follow his or her own spiritual path. Those are not wrong affirmations but they provide an incredibly weak foundation for a religious movement and a wholly inadequate program for saving the world.”

(Bumbaugh, “The Marketing of Liberal Religion”)

Here at QUUF the letters UU, for Unitarian Universalist, are central to the name of this Fellowship, yet I suspect most of us would have a hard time doing any better job describing what being a UU means than the stammering, stuttering, and muttering responses Bumbaugh describes.

Bumbaugh quotes the writer, Richard Wentz, who suggests that religion “is the dialectic of the sacred and profane,” held in “dynamic tension.” Religion states Wentz, “provides the ideas and actions that enable us to maintain the significance of the sacred in circumstances that deny it.”

To David Bumbaugh, this suggests “that a movement [or perhaps a Fellowship] that is unwilling or unable to define what it holds sacred has surrendered both its claim to religious significance and its ability to respond to the larger world with a meaningful dialectic.”

Bumbaugh states that: “If we are to respond to the needs of the world from a liberal religious basis, it is critical that we be able to address the foundational question: What do we believe?”

In the reading we will share this morning, Bumbaugh offers us an answer to that

question.

The key word in that question and in Bumbaugh's response to it is "we," for he offers us not merely a personal credo of what I, David Bumbaugh, believe, but a statement of a faith of what, he contends, we, as Unitarian Universalists, share.

Bruce and I intend to address two questions about David Bumbaugh's assertion and his statement of faith.

1. Do we, as religious liberals, or as Forrest Church labeled us the liberally religious, need a statement of faith?
2. If so, is the statement Bumbaugh offers adequate or appropriate to that purpose?

To paraphrase: Do we, as UUs and as QUUFers, need to be able to say what "we" believe? Is this statement it?

### **Reading (Reynolds & Bode)**

**Core Shared Beliefs and Attitudes of Religious Liberals**  
**By The Rev. David E. Bumbaugh, from "The Marketing of Liberal Religion,"**  
**January 8, 2009, Convocation of Meadville Lombard Theological School's Modified**  
**Residency Program**

Let me suggest to you that what the world needs from Liberal Religion, or at least from our version of Liberal Religion, is clarity about who we are and what matters to us; clarity about what vision has called us into being, and what promise we serve. Nor is this such an impossible challenge. While we proudly proclaim the great diversity among us, every study I have seen of Unitarian Universalists suggests that our diversity rests in a powerfully homogeneous core of shared beliefs and attitudes. Indeed, the studies suggest that at the core we are far less diverse than many other religious groups. Let me suggest to you some of the content of that core:

\* We believe that the universe in which we live and move and have our being is the expression of an inexorable process that began in eons past, ages beyond our comprehension, and has evolved from singularity to multiplicity, from simplicity to complexity, from disorder to order.

\* We believe that the earth and all who live upon the earth are products of the same process that swirled the galaxies into being, that ignited the stars and orbited the planets through the night sky, that we are expressions of that universal process which has created and formed us out of recycled stardust.

\* We believe that all living things are members of a single community, all expressions of a planetary process that produced life and sustains it in intricate ways beyond our knowing. We hold the life process itself to be sacred.

\* We believe that the health of the human venture is inextricably dependent upon the integrity of the rest of the community of living things and upon the integrity of those processes by which life is bodied forth and sustained. Therefore we affirm that we are called to serve the planetary process upon which life depends.

\* We believe that in this interconnected existence the well-being of one cannot be separated from the well-being of the whole, that ultimately we all spring from the same source and all journey to the same ultimate destiny.

\* We believe that the universe outside of us and the universe within us is one universe. Because that is so, our efforts, our dreams, our hopes, our ambitions are the dreams, hopes, and ambitions of the universe itself. In us, and perhaps elsewhere, the Universe is reaching toward self-awareness, toward self-consciousness. We believe that our efforts to understand the world and our place within it are an expression of the Universe's deep drive toward meaning. In us, and perhaps elsewhere, the Universe dreams dreams and reaches toward unknown possibilities. We hold as sacred the unquenchable drive to know and to understand.

\* We believe that the moral impulse that weaves its way through our lives, luring us to practices of justice and mercy and compassion, is threaded through the universe itself and it is this universal longing that finds outlet in our best moments.

\* We believe that our location within the community of living things places upon us inescapable responsibilities. Life is more than our understanding of it, but the level of our comprehension demands that we act out of conscious concern for the broadest vision of community we can command and that we seek not our welfare alone, but the welfare of the whole. We are commanded to serve life and serve it to the seven times seventieth generation.

\* We believe that those least like us, those located on the margins have important contributions to make to the rest of the community of life and that in some curious way, we are all located on some margin. We believe that all that functions to divide us from each other and from the community of living things is to be resisted in the name of that larger vision of a world everywhere alive, everywhere seeking to incarnate a deep, implicit process that called us into being, that sustains us in being, that transforms us as we cannot transform ourselves, that receives us back to itself when life has used us up. Not knowing the end of that process, nonetheless we trust it, we rest in it, and we serve it.

**“THE MARKETING OF LIBERAL RELIGION: A Response”**  
**by Dennis Reynolds**

As I read, this Statement of Faith, I hear David Bumbaugh’s voice inside my head. He is, as I noted, my favorite professor.

I remember numerous quote-worthy comments from class lectures and discussions. In one of my first written assignments for him, I answered a written question about sermon

preparation with a statement about my approach being dependent on the wishes of the congregation. He responded, “It is not your responsibility to scratch the collective itch of a congregation but rather to preach your own theology.”

David clearly practices what he preaches. He told those gathered at the convocation and those who will read his remarks, not what we want to hear, but rather what he believes we should hear. He tells it like he sees it.

His essay is a critique of those who offer slogans, logos and marketing approaches to grow the denomination, rather than assuring that what we offer, what we believe, is clearly stated.

The essay is, in part, a response to a 2005 Association Commission on Appraisal Report titled, “Engaging Our Theological Diversity,” and perhaps could be titled, “Embracing our Common Theological Core.”

David’s call for a shared core for our religion maybe seems to be counter to the view of another Meadville Lombard professor, Dr Michael Hogue, who questions whether Unitarian Universalists should be considered a religion at all or rather a community of the multi-religious.

Yet even such a community needs a center. Martin Buber wrote:

“The real essence of a community is to be found in the fact – manifest or otherwise that it has a center. The real beginnings of a community is when its members have a common relationship to the center overriding all other relations. The circle is described by the radii not by points along its circumference.”

This quote is taken from Buber’s, Paths in Utopia. To some, the existence of a community centered around commonly-held belief, may seem utopian and idealistic. I would argue that utopian ideals are a fine core for religious belief.

It is our core theological constructs, be they individual or shared within a community, that provide means to explore our aspirational or best self, the who we truly hope to be, our ideal self.

If there is no center, there is no circle. No center, no community.

A circle.

Here in this sanctuary, circles serve as important symbols of this community. The two round clear windows are the most powerful architectural elements from the former sanctuary, repeated here in this new space. They offer unaltered views of the sky and are vivid sources of light. They are openings for looking into the sky. They give us a glimpse of something larger than ourselves.

The double circle that surrounds the chalice speaks of community and of interconnectedness. Such circles embrace and gently hold as a loving community within larger communities. The multi-dimensional circle of the earth holds all within the community of life.

Bumbaugh asserts that an inclusive statement of faith, "...reminds us that we are called to serve the largest vision of community we can imagine and that all our lesser loyalties stand under the judgment of that great affirmation. Such a faith statement allows us to recognize that ultimately we are responsible to the larger, sacred context out of which we have come, in terms of which we live, and to which we ultimately return. It provides a compass by which to steer amidst the uncertainties of a chaotic world."

"A compass."

If, indeed, we are travelers, as affirmed in the QUUF covenant statement with which began today, we need navigational tools to help us find our way.

Within the circle of a compass, the center is a pin that softly holds the needle, not in one rigid position but, gently, allowing it to drift. Yet, the needle always, reliably, returns to point towards one consistent direction.

It is our awareness of our relationship to that constant reality of magnetic north that assures that, no matter where we are, whether in dark or light, or whether it is clear sailing or we are shrouded in fog, we can find our way. To stay on course, or to map out a new course, we need to know where we are, where we came from, and where we would most like to go.

In a time before the compass, human travelers learned to use the path of the sun and the patterns of the stars to guide their journey. They looked towards the sky. Not surprisingly, deities and other representations for that beyond our knowing lived in the heavens and helped them to find their way.

We have not outgrown the psychological and sociological need for faith in something outside ourselves. We need something more substantial than a statement of principles to help us navigate on our journey. We need a guiding truth we can have faith in and we need an expression of shared beliefs that lovingly embraces us as individuals within a community and within a larger reality.

This brings us to the question of whether or not the Statement of Belief that Bumbaugh offers might be a statement of such a truth.

Admittedly, my first inclination is to answer "Yes." This is, in no small part, due to my faith in the wisdom of my teacher, David Bumbaugh. David would no doubt be amongst the first to reject such non-critical acceptance.

Fear not, David, that is not the only reason I embrace this Statement of Faith. As a Unitarian Universalist, I embrace a living tradition expressed in our shared covenant to affirm and promote, not only the Principles of Unitarian Universalism, but also our Sources.

Amongst the Sources listed in the front of the hymnal are the words and deeds of prophetic men and women, a category in which I would include David Bumbaugh. Also listed there are the wisdom and teachings from my Judeo-Christian heritage, from the deep thought of humanists, the world's many religions, earth-based traditions and, first and foremost, the direct experience of mystery and wonder.

David Bumbaugh offers a theological construct of our place in the order of things that I find, with minimal exception or need for edits, is true for me, and I think most of us. This is because it is consistent with those other wisdoms and teachings, as I see them, with my reason, and with my own experiences of awe and wonder.

As Bumbaugh affirmed elsewhere:

“We have engaged the Universe at the very limits of our capacity. We have explored the world of the microcosm and the world of the macrocosm. We have found at both ends incredible complexity. In high energy subatomic physics we have encountered a reality which can only be fully expressed in the language of mathematics and when translated into our common discourse confounds all our settled conventions.

At the other extreme, the macrocosmic world we discover a universe that is larger than we can encompass in our imaginations.

How can we not stand in awe before the fact of our emergence as a consequence of those same vast processes that created galaxies and suns and stars and planets.”

I have stood in awe. The first time was a half century ago as a young child on the monkey bars in a suburban playground at sunset. I was struck with a palpable awareness of my connection to all that is.

I have experienced it again and again: before countless sunsets and sunrises, on mountain tops, and in deep canyons and below the seemingly endless array of stars in the night sky; and within the circle of beloved community, that awesome sense of wonder and connection has been reaffirmed. I feel it, too, when I stand before a stunning work of art or when I listen to or sing beautiful music.

In such moments I experience understandings that are larger than my intellect can fathom or my words fully convey.

David's Statement of Faith offers what theology professor, Michael Hogue, says liberal religion needs, a “vision for our time that is as deeply naturalistic as it is theological... that is attuned to human embeddedness within nature...”

The Rev Dr, Jerry Stone sees David's statement as providing:

“a naturalistic version of the transforming grace of the Western religious tradition. It is naturalistic, rather than supernaturalistic.... It is understandable in psychological and sociological terms. It speaks of a process or processes within the world yet outside of ourselves that heal us and urge us forward.”

Bumbaugh gifts us with a Statement of Unitarian Universalist Belief that encompasses the entire Universe.

David's office walls are adorned with amazingly beautiful and inspiring photos taken by the Hubble telescope. A friend recently shared such a photo with me. It is an image of the nearby Helix Nebula. Around a darkened center is a swirling circle of blue light set within a larger orb of white, edged in bright light. It has been called the “Eye of God.” It is awesome and awe inspiring.

Such images and David Bumbaugh's words offer a glimpse of the truly miraculous reality of which I am a part.

Bumbaugh himself acknowledges that his statement may not be “the statement” for our times. Perhaps we need a shorter version. One such option might be his words when he says:

“The more I understand of the world and its workings, the more I am driven to awe and wonder. I discover that all existence is so exquisitely interconnected and interwoven and so deeply referential that in exploring any piece I am at once engaged with the whole... No part of existence is irrelevant or insignificant. All of existence embodies a revelation.”

**“THE MARKETING OF LIBERAL RELIGION: A Response”  
by Bruce Bode**

**The dividing line in religion**

In our reading today, the Rev. David Bumbaugh makes the observation that the diversity of belief in Unitarian Universalist congregations rests in “a powerfully homogeneous core of shared beliefs and attitudes,” which he then spells out in a series of nine “we believe” statements. Rev. Bumbaugh also says that studies indicate that at core Unitarian Universalist congregations are far less diverse than many other religious groups in terms of belief.

I agree with Bumbaugh on both counts: First, that there is a core of shared belief and attitude in Unitarian Universalist congregations; and, secondly, that there is less diversity of core belief in our faith than in many other faiths.

I would put it this way: Though at one level, a more surface level, there is a wide-range of thought and belief within our congregations – the Rev. Fred Campbell, for example, speaks of four different faiths within Unitarian Universalist congregations: Humanist, Naturalist, Mystic, and Theist – at another level, a deeper level, there is less diversity in basic belief in Unitarian Universalist congregations than in many other religions.

Many religions have *both* orthodox and liberal members. They may all agree to the same creed, but they approach that creed very differently, some literally, others symbolically ... so that the dividing line in our time is not so much *between* religions as *within* religions. That is, the orthodox members of the various religions are closer to the orthodox members of other religions than they are to liberal members of their own religion; and, similarly, the liberals of the various faiths are closer *across* the faiths than *within* the faiths.

### **Example of interfaith Earth Day service**

As an example of this, I might speak of the interfaith Earth Day service held three weeks ago on the evening of Earth Day, April 22, at the Northwest Maritime Center. At this Earth Day service, we had persons from a number of different faith traditions – Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Pagan, Quaker, Sufi, Unitarian Universalist, Unity – all these persons from different faiths enjoying the contributions and fellowship of the various faith traditions.

I would suggest that those who are comfortable with this kind of gathering – the liberals and progressives within these faiths – are probably closer in core beliefs and attitudes to the persons of *other* faiths than they are to those persons within their own faith who are uncomfortable with such gatherings.

And my point here is that our Unitarian Universalist congregations are composed *primarily* of religious liberals and progressives, many of them being the liberals and progressives who have left or been forced out of other faiths and denominations. For members of our congregations, an interfaith gathering is not that much of a stretch. Indeed, to some degree, our weekly gatherings *are* interfaith meetings.

Thus, beneath our *surface* theological diversity, which is still a significant diversity, there is, as Bumbaugh indicates, a yet more significant shared core of attitude and belief that is less diverse than in many other faiths.

### **A shared embrace of a modern world-view**

And what I believe we Unitarian Universalists share at the core level is the full acceptance and embrace of a modern or contemporary world-view. Typically, we Unitarian Universalists have a modern view of the cosmos, a modern view of how we come to know things, and a modern view of authority. We also share a similar idea of the

role and function of religious institutions, and have a similar belief in how we should treat others and how we should care for our earth.

All of these core beliefs are shared with millions of others in our world who aren't part of religious institutions ... which is why we often say that there are multitudes of Unitarian Universalists outside our congregations who don't know it. What isn't perhaps shared with these others is a belief in the need for and value of *intentional* religious community.

### **A statement of some core beliefs**

My own quick rendering of some of these underlying beliefs of Unitarian Universalists is as follows:

- A belief that this universe of which we are a fully a part is both ancient and vast; and that our earth, likewise, is very old, having been formed out of the stardust elements of the larger universe.
- A belief that we humans, along with the other forms of life and being, have evolved out of this earth, that we are part of it and belong to it, and that we should regard it with reverence and treat it with care.
- A belief that life on this earth is what we should attend to first of all, not a future life in another realm – “one life at a time,” as the saying goes – and that we should receive our life with gratitude and live it by the ethic of love.
- A belief that religion is a *human* enterprise engaging the perennial human questions, such as: Who am I? How should I live? What should I value?
- A belief that no particular religion has the inside track or trump card or is the one true and final faith; nor is there is a special or secret revelation granted to the few; but rather, truth is open and available for all.
- A belief that there is no chosen people, but that all peoples and cultures are on an equal footing with one another.
- A belief that there is no special priesthood, but that all individuals have equal access and are *directly* related to the powers that be ... so that authority in religion ultimately rests with the individual as opposed to an exterior authority such as pope, council, creed, or sacred text.
- A belief that reason and science are valuable tools for seeking knowledge and ought not to be set in opposition to faith.
- And, finally, a belief that deed is more important than creed, that right relations are more important than right beliefs, and that we should strive, ever and always,

to treat others with kindness; or, as the Dalai Lama succinctly puts it, “Kindness is my true religion.”

This is my quick statement of some of our core beliefs, which could certainly be added to, and which in many ways match the statements of David Bumbaugh.

### **Do we need a “statement of faith”?**

And now let me briefly address the two questions that Dennis spoke of in his introduction: First, do we, as religious liberals need a “statement of faith.” And, secondly, is the statement of faith that Rev. Bumbaugh offers adequate or appropriate to that purpose?

My answer to the first question is: I don’t know if we *need* a statement of faith – and I note that many religions that have either creeds or statements of faith aren’t thriving well at all – but still I think it might be helpful and it would be worth the effort to try to formulate such a statement. As I’ve been saying, I believe we already have an *unwritten* statement of faith, so let’s experiment and see if we can make it more explicit.

Whether it’s possible to agree on a single statement of faith is another question. And one of the stumbling blocks, of course, will be a concern with protecting individual freedom in our faith tradition ... because in our congregations we’ve distinguished between individual credos and corporate creeds. We’ve proclaimed that ours is a community in which you are granted the largest possible freedom to discover and deepen your personal credo.

A “statement of faith” is in between a personal credo and a corporate creed. A statement of faith says that this is what you can expect to find in a given religious organization. It’s not a requirement for membership, and you don’t have to totally agree with it, but here are some of the commonly-held beliefs, perspectives, principles, purposes, and values that you will find here – these are what motivate and move us as a religious organization. A statement of faith says that we don’t exclude you on the basis of your belief, but your level of comfort here may relate to how much you share these commonly-held beliefs, perspectives, principles, purposes, and values.

I know I became a Unitarian Universalist not because they granted freedom, as important and valuable as that is – I believe such freedom is a necessary prerequisite for faith – but I joined because I shared the broader range of perspectives, beliefs, and values that I found among Unitarian Universalists. I suspect that’s the case for most persons who join our congregations.

### **Bumbaugh’s proposed “statement of faith”**

And now to the second question: Is David Bumbaugh’s proposed statement of faith a viable one?

Though, personally, Bumbaugh's statement of faith is one I agree with pretty much right down the line, my critique of it echoes Dennis' – namely, too wordy, too prosy, and too complex –and, beyond that, there are parts of it that would *not* be shared by a sizeable percentage of religious liberals and Unitarian Universalists, in particular, his statement about the Universe reaching toward self-awareness, and his statement about the moral impulse within us being part of a universal longing. But, as Bumbaugh himself says in his address, he means this as a starting point.

### **Two personal predilections**

To conclude I will confess to two personal predilections with regard to statements of faith. One of them is that along with a statement of what is held in common, I find it both interesting and helpful to have a statement of what is *not* held in common – a statement about what the disagreements are.

This has actually been done at other times in our history. For example, a Unitarian study commission in 1936 stated that “it would be of incalculable benefit to the denomination if we could contrive to state in definite and explicit terms both our agreements and our points of tension.” (quoted from Engaging Our Theological Diversity, p. 26) And they proceeded, then, to offer a list of six agreements and five disagreements.

I think it's helpful in both individual and groups settings to see if you can agree on your disagreements.

### **Several “statements of faith”**

Then, secondly, I will also confess that what I personally enjoy is having several statements of faith, not just one. This, perhaps, rather defeats the purpose of having a common statement of faith, but I enjoy it when I can survey several expressions of our commonly-shared faith.

Thus, in our new member orientation classes, I like us to hand out not one but two little pocket-sized cards. One of these is a statement of our covenant of seven principles and six sources, and the other is the ten statements of commonly-held beliefs written by David Rankin, the statements that we read as a responsive reading this morning.

But perhaps we could go beyond these and add yet other statements of our commonly-held beliefs. David Rankin's is one. Rev. Bumbaugh's might be another one. And there's a five-point summary of Universalist theology by the Rev. Forrest Church that I'm planning to preach about in my opening sermons this coming September. That might also work. And this week in preparing for my message today, I came across a nicely-worded series of twelve statements on our commonly-held beliefs prepared by a 2005 Commission on Appraisal of the Unitarian Universalist Association. In addition, as I just indicated, I would like to see a statement of our disagreements as well as of our agreements.

These several statements of our common faith would, thus, complement each other.

Also, having several of them might also quiet the concerns of those who would be worried about having a creed.

And, beyond that, if you're comfortable with having several expressions of a common faith and not just one, if you're a person whose mind enjoys the open-ended and creative play and exploration of plural rather than singular statements of common belief, you might well feel comfortable in a Unitarian Universalist congregation.

### **Benediction**

Love is the doctrine of this church,  
The quest for truth its sacrament,  
and service its law.  
This is our great covenant:  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek the truth in love,  
And to help one another.

James Vila Blake

### **Extinguishing of Chalice**

We extinguish this flame,  
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: This is a manuscript version of the service given by Dennis Reynolds and Bruce Bode on Sunday, May 16, 2010. The spoken service, available on CD at the Fellowship, may differ somewhat in phrasing and detail from this manuscript version.)