

MATT'S MUSINGS



Years ago, I was vacationing on a sailboat with my siblings down in the Bimini Islands off Florida. Sun and wind in my face, a glorious day. Sailing at a broad reach, heeled nicely, making good time. I was doing my part, hiking, acting as ballast to keep the boat from heeling over. Good music playing on the sound system, a really nice bottle of microbrew in my hand; and my brother-in-law, the excellent cook, sending up exquisite appetizers every now and then.

And I thought, "Man, this is living!"

And then I thought, "Is this all there is?"

I mean, is there more to life? Certainly there could be a material "more." For my family, this kind of "more" emerged in another sailing trip a couple years later, with a bigger boat (actually two boats), in a classier locale (the British Virgin Islands), more people, more food, more drink, more diving, more island beaches. With that more came more effort, confusion, tension, disagreements. The result was less satisfaction and less intensity of experience, at least for me. -*+

It was easy for my siblings and me to think, quite unconsciously, that more is better. Our culture constantly murmurs "more more more": buy more stuff, do more things, use more credit, work more hours, have more money.

We need to notice this constant murmur, and then ignore it. We have to notice it consciously in order to analyze it, deconstruct it, figure out how it gets to us -- and only then can we ignore it. Then we ignore it by making silent space for ourselves, quiet time, time to be at peace. Only after we've begun to do this can we begin to think about what is truly living. The Dalai Lama has said:

We are visitors on this planet. We are here for ninety, a hundred years at the very most. During that period we must try to do something good, something useful with our lives. Try to be at peace with yourself and help others share that peace. If you contribute to others' happiness, you will find the true goal, the meaning of life.

We don't have to go live in a monastery (or in the Dalai Lama's case, be sent to a monastery as a child), in order to sort out how to truly live. We simply have to make small steps, trying out things that might lead toward inner peace. As we find practices that work for us, we need to make them a more regular and integral part of our lives.

Our UUYO community can be a source of support for this kind of spiritual exploration. As a church community, we provide support and care, and we provide many ways for people to care for others. Together we contribute to each other's happiness, and create a more joyful community. In this way, as the Dalai Lama suggests, we can find the true goal, the meaning of life.

See you in church! Matt

SUNDAY SERVICES - 11 AM SANCTUARY ALL ARE WELCOME.

The children start in the Sanctuary for all services and leave together for their classes, except for multigenerational services noted below.

January 29: "Science and Anti-Science"

Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government." And what if they are not? What if they reject the process and wisdom of science and reason, in areas like evolution, climate change, and health-care? How can we reverse this trend (and I'm assuming we should)?

Worship Leader: Matt Alspaugh

Worship Associate: Ed Goist

February 5: "Who Cares!"

"You will be cared for, and will be called upon to care for others" is the mission of a church in Minnesota. How do we care for one another here at UUYO? What kinds of care are needed? How do we care for the caregivers? We'll look at these questions as we consider the changing nature of care in this congregation.

Worship Leader: Matt Alspaugh

Worship Associate: Melissa Smith

February 12: "The Four-Five Kinds of Love"

C.S. Lewis and others identify four types of love: affection, friendship, romance and unconditional love. On the eve of Valentine's Day, we will explore a different perspective on love. Here we find on Valentine's Day everyone has a sweetheart.

Worship Leader: Sarah Lown

Worship Associate: Sarah Jordan

February 19: "Generation to Generation"

We are said to be defined by our times. Do we approach the world differently from someone born a quarter century earlier, or later? Are generational labels -- X, Y, boomers, millennials -- just another way to stereotype people? This is a multigenerational service.

Worship Leader: Matt Alspaugh

Worship Associate: Ben Barnes

February 26: "Occupy America"

Though the camp-outs are largely over, the Occupy movement still lives on in rich variety in many cities including Youngstown. We'll examine the influence the movement has had, the moral foundation of its actions, and prospects for the future.

Worship Leader: Matt Alspaugh

Worship Associate: Audra Carlson