

**June 17, 2018 at 10:30 AM**

**Timothy Boniface, Dominique Hall, Kat Moseng, and Sean Mackey, Lay  
Worship Associates: Creative Connections**

## **WELCOME**

Sean Mackey

Good morning and welcome to Towson Unitarian Universalist Church.

I am [Insert Name Here], a member of the Lay Worship Associates Committee, which designs and executes Sunday services while our Reverend Clare Petersberger is out of the pulpit for the summer.

This summer's theme is Creative Connections.

But before we begin, on behalf of Reverend Clare

I would like to welcome any new and returning guests we have this morning.

We encourage everyone to please stay after the service

to get to know one another and creatively connect over some coffee

with someone you do not know or do not know well.

Now let us begin service with a unison reading of our church covenant, printed in your order of service.

## **COVENANT**

Love is the doctrine of this church,

The quest of truth is its sacrament

And service is its prayer.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek knowledge in freedom,

To serve human need,

To the end that all souls

Shall grow in harmony with the divine.

## **CHALICE LIGHTING**

Kat Moseng

The flame of our chalice this morning is a symbol

Of the warmth and brightness of our connections.

The flame lights our way back together again

From our separate summer lives, and it lights our way forward

Into this new church year of promise and renewal.

## **PRELUDE**

During the prelude, if you have a significant joy, concern, or prayer ...

please form two lines down the center aisle to drop a pebble or pebbles in water.

May the ripple effect in the water represent the ripple effect

of the milestones, millstones, and stepping stones in our lives.

Return to your seat by the side aisles.

## OPENING WORDS

Timothy Boniface

As is the tradition at TUUC, every summer while Rev Clare is on sabbatical, the Lay Worship Committee plan and coordinate a thematic array of Sunday services. For this summer, we choose the theme Creative Connections.

So please look forward to learning about the various creative ways and aspects in which we connect.

We will explore the connections we make

to one another, to our community, to ourselves, to nature, and to the divine.

We will tap into the channels of connections,

such as stories, poetry, music, activism, and technology, and their influence on us.

We look forward to exploring these concepts with you

and hope they will spark the creativity in you all.

As we do, please give us in the committee feedback.

Tell us what spoke to you and what did not.

Give us ideas for future services and themes.

And if you are so daring, please join the Lay Worship Committee.

We can always use a fresh perspective.

Just as Luke Williams will explain with the tale of the Magical Paintbrush.

## STORY

*Liang and the Magic Paintbrush*

Luke Williams

Long ago in China, a boy named Liang

earned money gathering firewood and cutting reeds.

His one wish was to paint. But he could not afford to buy a brush.

One day he passed an art school and went in.

"I want so much to paint," he said. "Please, will you teach me?"

"What!" The teacher glared at him. "A beggar wants to paint?"

He drove Liang away. But Liang could not keep his fingers still.

When he went to gather firewood he drew birds in the sand with a twig.

When he went to the river to cut reeds he drew fish on the rocks with drops of water.

One night as he slept an old man appeared on a phoenix

and placed a brush in Liang's hand.

"It is a magic paintbrush. Use it carefully," the old man said and flew away.

Liang jumped for joy. "Thank you so much!" he called after the old man.

Immediately Liang began to paint.

He painted deer. As he finished, he saw that the deer came to life.

It really was a magic paintbrush!

"I will paint things for my poor friends," he thought.

And he painted toy birds, horses, lanterns, and balls for the children.

And for their parents, things to cook with, furniture for the house, and tools for the field.

Then he went to the marketplace and set up a table among the other merchants.

And he made pictures of birds to sell.

To make sure the birds did not come to life, he left something out.

One day a man asked for a picture of a crane. Liang gave it only one eye.

But by accident, one drop of ink fell where the second eye should have been

—and the crane flew away.

Now everyone knew about Liang's magic brush. Including the greedy emperor.

He went out with all his soldiers to take the brush away from Liang.

But Liang refused to give it up.

The emperor ordered him bound and brought to the palace.

There the emperor ordered Liang to paint a dragon. But Liang painted a toad instead.

The emperor then ordered him to paint a phoenix. He painted a rooster instead.

Furious the emperor seized the brush and ordered Liang imprisoned.

The greedy emperor then sat down to paint mountains of gold.

But they turned into rocks and rolled off the table.

The emperor tried again. He painted a large tree. But what do you think happened?

It turned into an enormous python which nearly bit the emperor's head off.

Liang knew the brush would lose its magic in the emperor's hands.

He thought of a plan.

And he sent word to the emperor saying that in exchange for his freedom

he would paint whatever the emperor wished. The emperor accepted.

"Paint me the sea," the emperor ordered. Liang drew a sea.

"Where are the fish?" the emperor asked.

Liang drew and drew and soon a sea full of fish were swimming about.

"So long as we have a sea," said the emperor, "let us have a boat!"

Liang painted a boat, which was soon bobbing about on the water.

Delighted, the emperor called the royal family to come and join him on the boat.

"Get us some wind, so we can move," cried the emperor.

Happily, Liang painted wind and the boat began to rock.

"More wind!" the emperor cried. Liang drew more wind, and more.

Soon waves were splashing and crashing over the deck.

"Enough!" the emperor cried. But Liang would not listen.

He drew so much wind, the boat keeled over and broke into a million pieces.

The emperor and the royal family sank to the bottom of the sea.

The story of Liang and his magic paintbrush spread far and wide.

But what became of Liang? Nobody knows.

Some say he went back to his own village.

Others say that he roamed the earth painting for the poor wherever he went.

## **HYMN #1008**

### *When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place*

## **MEDITATION**

*Lost*

Dominique Hall

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you

Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,

And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,

Must ask permission to know it and be known.

The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,

I have made this place around you.

If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.  
No two trees are the same to Raven.  
No two branches are the same to Wren.  
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,  
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
Where you are. You must let it find you.

## **INTERLUDE**

**READING**                      *Experience Connection*                      Sean Mackey

What does deep spirituality feel like to you?  
Spirituality is impossible to define and difficult to describe.  
For me, it feels like connection—connection to myself,  
to others around me, to the earth and all of creation.  
Connection to myself feels like deep peace, awareness, calm, authenticity.  
Connection to others feels like compassion,  
community, acceptance, & enduring love.  
Spirituality is not an idea; it is an experience.  
When I experience connection, dividing lines disappear.  
Inner conflict gives way to integrity.  
The line that separates my individuality from others fades; we become one.  
I find connections with my deepest self  
in times of solitary practice and reflection.  
I find connection with others in community, often in worship.  
All the great spiritual traditions teach this.  
We so very much need to experience our world.  
We need to let go of controlling our world  
and allow ourselves to become one with it.  
We find ourselves when we lose ourselves.  
May we connect, really connect. When we do, it changes everything.

**OFFERTORY**                      *The Gift of Love*                      Dominique Hall

In affirmation of our church's commitment to connecting with the wider world,  
a percentage of undesignated offertory gifts are given to the community to help  
heal the afflicted, give voice to equality, and promote the inherent dignity of all life.  
Our morning offering will now be greatly given and received.

**HOMILY**                      Kat Moseng

Our summer theme is about creating connections.  
There are many pathways one can take to create connections,  
and I can think of no better example of these differences ...  
than by how differently my daughters interact with their worlds.  
They both have richly developed, intricately defined social networks,  
and they both have many friends. But that is where the similarity ends.

One way to create connection is to do so physically, actually going over to someone's house and hanging out with them.

This is how my oldest, Beth, connects with people.

Sleepovers are as natural as breathing.

And there is now a permanent 5th spot at our dinner table

for the inevitable extra teenager over the weekends.

This is typical "extroverted" behavior. She is outgoing, gregarious, and unreserved.

Another way of being, though no less social and connected, is to do so remotely, through the use of social networking. My youngest, Megan, prefers this method.

I must confess, to me this looks, on the surface, like she's not interacting at all, but playing video games.

But upon closer inspection, she is not only connecting, but deeply devoted to her tightly bound circle of friends.

Physically, she sits at home, alone, on her bed,

fingers outstretched to the keyboard, rapidly tat-tat-tatting on the keys.

But at any given time, she's, at the same time, talking to someone on the phone,

role playing in one, two or three different on-line games,

and deeply involved in various chat groups.

This, is classic "introvert" behavior.

She feels drained after being around people too much, is quiet, and reserved.

However, her network of friends is just as extensive as my other daughter,

just, they happen to be located in Florida or Pakistan.

She rarely has people over to hang out, preferring to eat sparsely and quickly, enabling her to get back to her people as quickly as possible

in case something happened while she was away.

The deep dive here is this, Beth likes to BE THERE.

She likes to look a person in the eye when speaking to someone and see their faces and body language.

She likes to hug them and touch them and smile at them and be smiled at.

This applies doubly so for her steady boyfriend of course, much to my dismay.

I try to keep a close eye on them

but I often find them intertwined like pretzels, watching a movie.

Well, it was bound to happen sooner or later.

For Megan, she is much more awkward in face to face confrontation.

It's difficult for her to talk to people, particularly people she doesn't know.

She likes a certain ... specific set of things.

Rarely in public to do you meet that certain specific set of people.

However, when she enters a chat room, that comes with a certain set of expectations that all the people in that chat room already are interested in that chat room's theme,

therefore there is a common set of likes and dislikes that are known and safe.

After all, people don't walk around with a cartoon blurb above their heads advertising their likes and dislikes. But on-line, that is exactly the case.

The rules of engagement are known and accepted by the group.

I asked her about this idea and she had something more to add.

It is easier, for her, in text to convey emotion.

If she is sad, the letters are lowercase and there are a lot of ...'s.

if she's happy or sometimes angry, there are caps and exclamation points.

(Not sure what the difference is there).

For her, the written word is as easy as breathing,

and as I said earlier, sleepovers are key for Beth.

So what does this say about the larger view, public as a whole?

There is an article I read and it can be summarized in the following.

Social media is described as the collection of online communication channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration.

Some of the commonly known communication websites

are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. (For my daughters it's Discourse.)

Within these websites people can share memories,

reconnect with friends, plan events, and communicate almost instantaneously.

As the popularity of smartphones began to increase,

social media began to adapt to operate on a cell phone

through the use of apps that can run more efficiently on smartphones.

As of today, there are a little over 322 million people that live in the United States,

64% of whom own a smartphone.

This means that approximately 206 million people have access to social media,

anywhere at any time. And, ... since it has become more prevalent,

social media has made people have a tendency to want to interact with people online rather than in person because it has made the process simpler.

A simpler process allows for easier and more efficient interactions,

which attracts more people. It's a vicious cycle.

Right now, the current young generation will be 50% of the workforce by the year 2050

and an overwhelming majority of those people would prefer to deal with matters

in the workplace via instant messaging or email services, rather than in person.

This is going to lead to some serious issues.

It has been proven that 93 percent of communication is nonverbal

and without these cues that people use to decipher the messages

that are received in person, people will not be able to properly understand

what the other person is truly trying to say to them.

Not only will this lead to issues with work relationships,

but it will also lead to people having issues within their own families.

Some experts have argued that, more often than not,

families tend to text rather than have conversations.

This is true even in my own family. We will all be sitting watching a movie

and at an odd time both kids will burst out laughing.

I'll ask .. What? Only to find out they are texting each other,

from 10 ft away from each other.

This article, however true, directly counters what Megan said

about being able to emote better in text than she can in spoken conversations. It would though lead one to believe that we, as a people are heading in the direction of Megan's world rather than Beth's, and connecting via social media rather than in person. Is it true? Are we destined to text a person from 5 ft away or will we go hug them? I'll leave that to you to decide.

## **HOMILY** Sean Mackey

Every year, my old boss a friend, architect and painter would ask all of his employees to bring our sketchbooks and unplug all office phones. He said we were all going on a field trip for the day. We went to opening day for the Red Sox. Jim scalped the tickets, and before he passed them out, he asked us to use our sketching skills on each inning. Jim said: "Always keep your eyes open. Keep watching because anytime you see can inspire you." Now, you can try this exercise for your mind. Choose a single source of inspiration is any single connection, one person, or object or subtle, subjective idea. Then walk through the day looking for interesting new forms and examples of your chosen medium. Everything you see and touch has the potential to disrupt your normal patterns of thinking and introduce you to fresh new perspectives. We must walk through life with our eyes wide open, looking for inspiration in everything we see. Like many creative exercises, this one may seem simple at first. You may not trust the process, but keep practicing and you will find that it can generate unexpectedly productive outcomes. Proust said, "The real magic lies not in seeing new landscapes, (or foreign exotic vacations) but it in having new eyes". The real job not is in creating more connections, or more hits in your phone but rather to be able to see keener connections old ones or new ones or discounted ones, past ones. Pablo Neruda wrote about salt and socks and the everyday experience. There isn't any need for more than the wonderful connections before us, if only we can be willing to open our eyes and free our mind from their preconceptions. Only then can we help each other ourselves to see more softly using our peripheral vision while looking at what is before us rather than a sharp attention and rationally. Creative job shouldn't be more value than an ordinary job but in our world it is. When you land in procrastinating blues, remember that Jim said, "let's have a field trip." Procrastination allows a person's mind to wander and can lead to more innovative thinking. Professor Grant said "If you're a procrastinator,

next time you're wallowing in the dark playground of guilt and self-hatred over your failure to start a task, remember that the right kind of procrastination might make you more creative." But taking procrastination too far can also hinder creativity. Leaving things to the very last minute means people rush to complete tasks, using the easiest idea rather than coming up with the most original. It needs balance. Many of us may feel guilty for putting off upcoming tasks, this task: how to create a silk web, a connection. However research has that we don't need to get so upset. Around 20% of adults claim to be chronic procrastinators, but they may also be more creative, according to scientists. Grant was first alerted to this theory when one of his "most creative students" told him she had her most original ideas after she procrastinated. If you, like our next speaker, mystery novels or movies you may have found out you need a bit of oppositional defiant disorder or O.D.D when trying to solve a hidden connection. Betsy and I met a therapist who said, "Even the best-behaved children can be difficult and challenging at times. (All the parents here know this this well.) But if he or she has a frequent and persistent pattern of anger, defiance or vindictiveness toward you and other authority figures, your child may have O. D. D.' If you enjoy to solve mysteries you must try breaking those connections are seems unquestioned, baptized, or act as barriers to your freedom. The Imp of the Perverse is a short story, not a mystery tale, by Edgar Allan Poe. Beginning as an essay, it discusses the narrator's self-destructive impulses as the force that tempts a person to do things "merely because we feel we should not." His theory his own words "We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss—we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink away from the danger. Unaccountably we remain... it is but a thought, although a fearful one, and one which chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror. (Remember Poe was a drunk and a drug user.) It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping precipitancy of a fall from such a height... for this very cause do we now the most vividly desire it." You may have a personal imp of the perverse and are questioning to yourself, how best rid the demon. You may try training it and find it leads to surprised places, involuntary admission, mavericks or Zen experiences. Novel connectivity between the present and the future.

But how to choose from such a myriad of connections. By hour and hour or not?

Our precipices don't have life-changing decision,  
but sometimes we image a worse situation.

We'd do better to let our fear put chains the door when this imp visits our mind.

Novel nervous or digital connections better a nervous breakdown.

What is your most bizarre connection when you dream it?

You should stroll and drink with it.

My geometry teacher at Loyola high school repeated this quote

by a French mathematician, Henri Poincare so frequently that I still remember it:

"It is by logic you prove, but by intuition that you discover".

I know that most of the time we lean much on reason because mostly we are U U.

But when we can "depending on the circumstances, you should be hard as a diamond,  
flexible as a willow, smooth like water or as empty as space,"

said aikido founder Morihei Ueshiba. We can be a renaissance people.

You see it in a hurry culture, the biggest problem – is a lack of time –

so many hours spent deciding which is the perfect connection

with this job has lot of dead ends and mistakes.

It is the nature of job: create connections. Nature of this game. Nature of this life.

It will be dark in this room soon. In our life

## **HOMILY** Timothy Boniface

There are many ways in which we can connect with each other.

Various channels of communication we can engage in.

Whether it is face-to-face, over the phone, by letter,  
or through the world wide interwebs.

We engage in various types of connection:

whether they be professional, familial, spiritual, political, friendship, or romantic.

But regardless of the channel and type,

one of the most solid ways to strengthen our connections,  
is through how we present ourselves.

By this, I do not mean by our clothes, comeliness,

or other representations within the mirror,

but by the values, virtues and vices we express to others through our behavior.

A lot can be said about ourselves by the efforts we give one another.

There are psychological studies linking virtuousness in others to prosocial behaviors.

Behaviors such as honesty, trustworthiness, forgiveness,  
graciousness, generosity, and cooperation.

Those associated with these behaviors have been correlated with

better academic and job performance, excellence in leadership,

and stronger social bonds.

After all, who would you rather have as a friend?

One that respects your needs as equal their own,

or one that expects you to bend to their every whim?

Who would you rather have as a loving partner?

One that you can entrust with your fears and secrets, or one that judges you for them?

Who would you rather have as a boss?

One that helps you build your strengths and overcome weaknesses,  
or one that berates you for not meeting their standards?

Or as J.K. Rowling so succinctly put it,

“If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors.”

And in many cases, who they consider as inferior.

Much like the fabled Narcissus of Greek legend,

an over importance of the self can be a detriment to those around us  
and even destroy ourselves.

As the legend goes, Narcissus was a hunter that saw himself

as the most intelligent, handsome, skilled, and important person in town.

Never seeing the burdens and insults he gave his fellow townsfolk,

and never apologizing for the errors and missteps he made.

But when he pushed his arrogance too far on one villager, the priestess Nemesis  
showed him that the only one that truly loved Narcissus was himself.

At times it can be tremendously difficult to not place our needs above others.

It is after all, a natural survival instinct.

But just as a pebble has a ripple effect on the water,

so too does our treatment of others have on society.

A society that considers one another's needs, limits, and dignity

will grow stronger, happier, and healthier than one that does not.

May we find the courage and creativity to act on those ripples

and see beyond our reflection in the mirror.

## **HOMILY**                      Dominique Hall

In 1891, the greatest detective of all time, Sherlock Holmes,

fell over the edge of Reichenbach Falls while in pursuit of the villainous Moriarty.

This marked the end of the detective's 10-year career

and freed the author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for other literary projects.

Or did it? Outcry over Holmes' death

—the canceled magazine subscriptions, black armbands, and public mourning

led Doyle to write “The Hound of the Baskervilles”,

set before Holmes' death in “The Final Problem,”

and eventually led to the detective's resurrection.

Would Holmes have returned for 30+ more stories without pressure from adoring fans?

Probably not.

In fact, 221B Baker Street and its singular resident most likely inspired

the first secular fandom, commonly referred to as The Great Game.

The first rule of the Game assumed Holmes was a real person.

Players attempted to reconcile inconsistencies in the original Sherlockiana literature  
to characterize the fictional detective.

To support their theories, they utilized Holmes' preferred investigative technique:  
deductive reasoning.

They blamed Watson, Holmes' sidekick and narrator,

for his occasionally unreliable perspective.

They blamed Doyle, the wretched creator of Holmes (and referred to in *The Game* as Watson's literary agent), for omitting details about Holmes' personal life.

They wrote entire biographies for a person who never existed.

In one crossover narrative, Holmes' ancestors even practiced vampirism.

The second rule was that the Game was a serious business, not to be mocked or satirized.

Of course, 1900 was a different era.

It doesn't really matter whether Watson was wounded in the arm or the leg, or whether Han Solo shot first. Does it?

These days, we all agree on everything, all the time, and people no longer concern themselves with trivialities.

The adventures of Sherlock Holmes have also been adapted countless times into movies and radio plays.

Many contemporary works omit the less agreeable aspects of Holmes' character and the often seemingly trivial nature of his cases.

Some of these interpretations of the original material have been incorporated into the popular mythos, despite never appearing in Doyle's work.

Foremost among these additions is the phrase, "Elementary, my dear Watson."

Are these divergences accepted among the Sherlockian canon?

It depends on who you ask...

This summer, the lay worship committee will investigate the creative connections that surround and sustain us.

As Sherlock Holmes uses a scratched timepiece to inform him about Watson's family history,

we'll explore unlikely topics, and hopefully illuminate some of life's mysteries.

## **HYMN #318** *We Would Be One*

### **CLOSING WORDS**

Kat Moseng

In the words of Paul Bloom,

"We are constituted so that simple acts of kindness, such as giving to charity or expressing gratitude, have a positive effect on our long-term moods.

The key to the happy life, it seems, is the good life:

a life with sustained relationships, challenging work, and connections to community."

Go now and pass the peace on to others.