

“Constant Change”
Reverend Dave Franks

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March 21, 2021

Allow me to recall for you something I said in my sermon last Sunday. I said to all of you, “We have arrived in this place, to this time, made whole; grounded in living our lives as best as we can, working, at times struggling to stay faithful to our values and principles because of a commitment we made to one another, to walk beside one another in full measure of our humanness, vulnerable with our imperfections and in so doing hold one another in the same light as the one that glows from our chalice.” Remember hearing me say that? But do you remember that I then said this, “There have been moments when that’s not been easy, and indeed I can promise you there will always be such moment ahead of us.”

Little did you all know what a prophet I’ve become. Little did we all know that just a day later from those words I spoke we received the resignations of David Katz, Director of Music, and Linda Jones, our pianist for over 20 years, having served under the direction of more than one music director at UUC, and Emily We’ve come to another one of those moments, aware of our vulnerability, of people’s imperfections, and keenly aware change is afoot. It’s happening. My experience of you, of this congregation is that constant change is what you all seem to be about. Truthfully, I celebrate that about you.

Back in the middle of the 1700s a German physicist, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg the first to hold a professorship explicitly dedicated to experimental physics in Germany said, “I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.”

The changes we are facing at UUC are a clear indication to me that we are on the path of getting better. Some of you will say that things were fine the way they were. In many ways I couldn't agree with you more. And I can also affirm they've certainly been predictable. Well, other than seeing spaghetti come up in the middle of the service. Predictability offers us a sense of things, people, and even worship as a constant that gives us a sense of order to the universe, to our lives really. We appreciate that.

One of the two creation stories in the Book of Genesis of Hebrew scripture gives a clear order to all of creation, it even has specific days associated with what gets created and when. Humans get created as keepers of this order. Ah, but the second creation story, as told from a different tradition in Genesis, humans become, in a sense, co-creators with the Holy by naming all of the creatures of the earth. Then enters a co-creator with the human named Adam and from that day on change, a certain unpredictability of humanity became what could be counted on. It got messy at times, still does, even when resignations unexpectedly occur, but it also at times was glorious, as shall our worship and the music within it become, to make our hearts sing.

In writing about the creation story in Genesis, Frederick Buechner states, “If you think you're seeing the same show all over again seven times a week, you're crazy. Every morning you wake up to something that in all eternity never was before and never will be again. And the you that wakes up was never the same before and will never be the same again.”

Let me reflect with you a time in one of my appointments as pastor of the parish in the Lake Tahoe region of California. One of the two churches on my circuit was a struggling little congregation that wanted to do well by its future ministers by having a parsonage, a home that he or she could live in. Up to my time with them they could only offer a minimal housing allowance, which the other church on the circuit also paid.

Tell the rest of the story.

I recall that experience with you this morning as a way to say that what at first appeared as out of order and the ordinary, the predictable, a hope, a dream envisioned, a new creation became possible that would otherwise would not have been. When I was told I had 48 hours to make a change in the life of that congregation I would not have been able to tell them, as I say to you, that things would be better, but I knew somehow, as I do today, that things wouldn't get better unless there was change.

I feel myself more energized now as your Pulpit Minister, even with the changes that have come to us unexpectedly, as we move into changing some of the ways we worship together, music, story-telling, the creative, artistic talents some of you have already approached me with. We're changing it up a bit as you can already see. I can only promise that what we do here together on Sunday mornings will only get better if we make these changes.

Changes come to us as sources of joy. We have such moments to welcome into our lives by recalling them, lifting them up and dropping a stone.

1. One such joy is the continuing number of people who received their Covid-19 vaccinations.
2. Another joy is the amazing meeting that was held yesterday of all your worship associates and techy type people, beginning the process of envisioning, and implementing some exciting ways of doing worship in the coming weeks.
3. Harriet is home and doing so much better, already thinking about how we are going to make use of the donations you made last Fall to bring food staples to the farm workers laboring in Plant City. We're talking about the month of May to load our cars once again with rice, beans, and of food stuffs.

In the midst of such joys there are personal and community sorrows that accompany our times of joy, the joys that see us through sorrows.

1. A concern and sorrow is for Ray Williamson's sister-in-law, married to his brother Mike for 64 years, who suffered a stroke this past week and her present condition uncertain.
2. A sorrow is that of seeing what took place in the streets of Miami with all the spring breakers disregard to social distancing and possibly lessening the chances of shortening the length of time this Pandemic goes on. May they become better aware that community extends beyond the streets on which they party.
3. We drop another stone to hold one another, especially our chorale members who may feel the resignations of this past week most keenly. And in so doing may their hearts and their heads be lifted up to see beyond this moment and to lay hold of loving, creative talents within them, so to be encouraged to express and share it in days ahead, in full measure.
4. Finally, let us in the sounding of the bell, be in silence, keeping all we have named here, and those we name with lips sealed, those things for which we have joy, and those by which our joys hold even our sorrows.