

“Leaning Into Your Legacy”

Reverend Dave Franks

November 15, 2020

The Boards of the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, Inc. and the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater Endowment Foundation, Inc. are very pleased to invite you to UUC's Inaugural Legacy Giving event via Zoom at 6 - 7 p.m. Monday, November 16, 2020.

Your Will, Trust or other end of life documents are the ultimate reflection of your values. Family, faith and educational institutions are the top three ways most people express those values. Learn the whys and the ways you can create a legacy that will allow UUC to expand its mission of providing spiritual support and meaningful social action to benefit future generations.

Good morning. There are things I want to share with you today. One of them is that as I've gotten older I can't always remember if I'm repeating stories I've told before. As a young man I can remember nodding my head politely when visiting an older person in the church tell me the same story a good number of times and ask me if I heard them share the same story. I think I may now be that older church person I used to visit as a young clergy person. So, just nod politely if I've told you this one before.

One Sunday morning a mother knocked on her son's door and said, "It's time to get up." The son sleepily replied, "I don't want to get up." The mother persisted, "Come, it's Sunday morning and you must get ready for church." The son answers, "I don't want to go to church – the preaching is so dull." But the mother was not to be put off. She marked into his room, shook the bed and declared, "Get up! And no nonsense about it. You're forty-seven years old, and besides, you're the pastor of the church."

This morning, it's not that I don't want to go to church, and I pray the preaching won't be dull, but the last couple of months have found all of us writing more sympathy cards, preparing food to leave at the doorstep, and sending flowers and emails expressing our support for those families of this beloved community, whose loved ones have died....Mike Metty, Patricia Coyle, Ann Scott's first husband, Aryna husband Neil Battiste, Sam Hall, and last Tuesday evening, John Hoover.

It's in such times as these that we not only look back and appreciate, celebrate these people lives whom we hold dear but how they held us. It is in our having been held by who they were that their legacy was formed and enables us to move forward in our lives to shape, to lean into

our own legacies. This is what I want to share with you this morning. Our legacies have as much to do with looking forward as it does with appreciating, honoring who and what is remembered in leaving something behind. I believe everyone received the invitation from UUC and the UUC Endowment Foundation to attend tomorrow evening's Inaugural Legacy Giving event. I encourage you to avail yourselves to that event. I don't know exactly what they'll present to you for your consideration, but I do trust that my message to you this morning will align with their message.

The first sounding I want to share with you is that leaning into your legacy is about living, giving energy, forward movement to promises and the values you hold to life itself. As one speaker whom Jay Williamson sent to me stated about a co-worker who died, "Would have I lived what matters most to me."

In preparation for this morning's sermon I did some research as to how legacies are formed and what is meant by "legacy." Definition: *a **legacy is** something that someone gets by inheritance, or by a will. In **historical** terms, a **legacy is** something that **is** handed down from one period of time to another period of time. Often it **means** something handed down from an ancestor or predecessor.*

In law, it is all of that. And yet it is so much more! Sharon Lechter, a philanthropist, licensed CPA for 35 years, author of numerous books, including, the Rich Dad series, writes, "Most people think of legacy as something you leave behind or a benefit that occurs after you've lived your life. I don't want to wait until I am gone to create maximum impact – I want to live my legacy while I am here." She goes on to list those things you can do to create your living legacy, like, take action, be persistent, share yourself.

And there is Joan Moran who writes of five great ways to leave a great legacy:

1. Support the people and causes that are important to you.
2. Reflect and decide what is most important in your life.
3. Share your blessing with others.
4. Be a mentor to other.
5. Pursue your passions

That would make for a great little sermon series, but what I truly find in both Lechter's and Moran's approach to living your legacy is summarized by leaning into the Seventh Principle of Unitarian Universalism, "**Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.**" The other 6 UU principles certainly support living our values in such a way that life moves forward with the inherent worth of persons, creating community, that promotes justice, and spiritual growth. But the seventh principle may be,, as Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director of Shalom Community Center in Bloomington, Indiana, writes,

“Our seventh Principle may be our Unitarian Universalist way of coming to fully embrace something greater than ourselves. The interdependent web—expressed as the spirit of life, the ground of all being, the oneness of all existence, the community-forming power, the process of life, the creative force, even God—can help us develop that social understanding of ourselves that we and our culture so desperately need. It is a source of meaning to which we can dedicate our lives.” —Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director of Shalom Community Center, Bloomington, IN (read more from Forrest in [*The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*](#), ed. Ellen Brandenburg)

When we lean into our legacy we are about those efforts that intimately tie us to the process of life, to the creative force, even in the face of death and grief, and in so doing embrace something greater (call it what you will) than ourselves. **Mike Metty** stepping out in contagious courage for social justice when civil rights were denied to so many African Americans, **Patricia Coyle’s** exuberance for theatre and playing those roles that brought not only laughter and tears to the stage but a warm appreciation to our understanding of life’s complexity, **Sam Hall’s** passion to pursue the language of the soul sung with a tenor’s range that lifts up one’s soul, and **John Hoover** whose vocation, his calling, whose feelings not so much spoken as scored through music, inspired others to claim their own callings and feelings, so much so that the likes of composer and conductor Igor Stravinsky, known for his stylistic diversity, under whom John played, saw that same depth and diversity in him.

As many of you may know, **Neil Battiste**, Aryna’s husband, in death brought life by being an organ donor, his heart given for medical research and his kidneys given so that two people in need and so wishing to be off of a dialysis machine might be given a new way of life going forward. Talk about the interdependent web of all existence of which he and two people have entered. No guarantees that the beneficiaries of Neil’s gift will be successful, but that’s not the final point. The act of giving to life is the point. It is the hope, an awaiting hope come to life. Living one’s values in such a way that life moves forward for another person.

Legacy is about living. Whether it be with by our peaceful protests, or in laughter and tears of the characters we play, or that octave our voices reach for so as to bring beauty to those who have ears to hear, or in conducting aspire one’s talents, or finally by the parts of our bodies signaling to us that life is mortal, we come to embrace a knowing of life that is greater than ourselves. The words we speak to one another, how we heal another’s hurt and brokenness in taking the time to really listen to each other, reveals what we truly value in our own living. And that my friends, is love. That is what embraces us as eternal. Agape – the Greek/Roman term that points to an unconditional love made flesh only by how we are with one another and for each other.

Unitarian Universalists are all about that and you speak about it in the language of covenants. They are the ground on which your legacy stands. They are the way you lean into it, into life. Some weeks ago, Rev. Roberta and I were in conversation about covenants, their meaning, and quite frankly, about all of us here. And in our conversation we thought about, in so many terms, her and my legacy here at UUC, here with you. How it is we go about leaning into your legacy, your life here as a people, a congregation, assembled under principles and faith. Rev. Roberta then invited me to join in covenant with her. And as the song goes, "Let it begin with me." We then wrote our covenant, and we enter into here with you now.....post in chat.

Covenant between the Ministerial Leadership of Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater

Reverend Roberta, I invite to put on that outward and visible sign of your ordination, your stole, and share in with me our covenant as our beginning legacy to this congregation of Unitarian Universalism.....

United in our call to serve the spirit of love and justice through the vocation of ministry in the liberal religious tradition of Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater (UUC), Reverend Dave Franks and Reverend Roberta Finkelstein, covenant with one another:

To conduct ourselves with integrity, and honoring in one another the trust placed in us;

To embody in our lives the values that we proclaim on behalf of our faith and traditions;

To support one another, listening to what each has to share, in collegial and theological respect and care, understanding and honoring the diversity we each hold within the broader scope of our vocation, presently lived within the community of UUC;

To hold ourselves accountable to each other for the competent exercise of our vocation, and should there ever be conflict between us that seem unsurmountable, we will seek to resolve such conflict according to recognized conflict resolving practices;

To use our authority constructively and with intention, mindful of our potential unconsciously to work against that intention;

To seek justice and right relations according to our evolving collective wisdom, and to refrain from all abuse or exploitation;

To cultivate practices of deepening awareness and spiritual development, understanding, humility, and commitment to our ideals and the seven principles;

To labor earnestly together for the well being of our communities, both civil and spiritual, and the progress of Unitarian Universalism.

Reverend Dave Franks

Reverend Roberta Finkelstein