

Sermon *The Real Meaning of a Free Faith*

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Delivered September 7, 2014 First Unitarian Universalist Society of Middleborough

“A people in community who pray and practice their faith and band together to work on themselves and for human rights. They follow a brighter light than the glimmer of their own candle; they are part of something beautiful.” (from *“Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith”* by Anne Lamott, adapted by Rev. Tim Kutzmark)

It’s a great idea, isn’t it?

People of faith banding together.

The meaning of religare the root word of religion, is “to bind”. “

When I was at the end of my rope,” says Lamott,

“the people at my church tied a knot in it for me and helped me hold on.”

We bind ourselves to one another and to what is sacred to each of us when we come together.

We have chosen to be here this morning, in this particular place of people who come together to pray and practice their faith and band together to work on themselves and for the rights of others.

But, if to be part of a religion means to bind ourselves to each other or to God, what does being free mean? It doesn’t sound free!

We are a people who are free to choose. We choose our ideas about right and wrong about why the world is the way it is, about why bad things happen, about who we are, and about God. In choosing, we have basic freedoms. We have basic freedoms from And basic freedoms to.

We are free from a shared creed or dogma – meaning we are not bound by someone else’s beliefs, no matter how ancient they are, about what is real and true and good and God. We think we can be people of faith and help heal the world without telling each other or anyone else what to believe to be a good, loving and worthwhile person.

This leaves us free to come to understandings about what is sacred and important from our own experiences, our own ability to think about those experiences, and

the science that helps us learn about  
the world, the universe and our place in it.

We are free to find sources and traditions that we can explore,  
ancient perspectives that help us make sense of things.  
But we explore them by choice.  
Revelation is an ongoing process with us.

Does this mean we just meet in this room on Sunday mornings,  
coming in with unique ideas and thinking about them while I talk?  
Yes and no.  
Of course we have our own ideas.  
But we come here because we also have the freedom to belong.

We have the freedom to determine who we are  
and what is important.  
We also have the freedom to know whose we are – who do we belong to and why they are important to  
us.

In that way, a free faith is not really ever free –  
it only means we have choices.  
Sometimes those choices may mean  
we have to take a good, hard look at ourselves  
and make some changes in the way we think and talk and act.  
Sometimes those choices may mean  
we have to take a good hard look at situations around us  
and realize, wait, that's not right,  
it doesn't have to be this way  
and we have to make things right.

Once we engage with faith – any faith – we are under an obligation  
To ourselves  
To others we will come to know  
To others we will never know,  
but we owe them something anyway  
Because they are a part of the same world of which we are a part.

That's what faith and belief and religion  
do to you and for you – they make you look  
deep inside yourself  
to see what you love and what loves you back.  
And they make you look far outside of yourself  
to see what you love, and how you love,  
and what in this great and wonderful universe  
is extending love to you.

The first step is to discover  
What you are free from

And what you are free to.

We are at the beginning of another church season  
with friends new and old  
and I invite you to take advantage of  
everything we have to share with each other:  
try something new,  
spiritual, educational, activist, helpful,  
see what you love to do, how you love to do it,  
and what in this great and wonderful universe is loving you back.