

**“CREATING A SOCIALY JUST, SPIRITUALLY FULFILLING
ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE EARTH COMMUNITY”**

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St. Paul’s United Church, Orillia

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We threw in our gold and silver...
and out came this golden calf
like they had nothing to do with it...
surprise –
“look what the fire did with our gold –
it made it into the shape of the idol
of the god of the dominant culture around us.”

In this story the Hebrew people are desperate
for a sign of the presence of God –
they’ve escaped the slavery
they had endured under Egyptian pharaoh...
and now they are out wandering around the desert
– starving –
– looking for signs of God.
While Moses is up the mountain
getting some divine instruction –
the people below
are so hungry for assurances,
for spiritual fulfillment
that they create something they can see
to bow down to.

In his book
Darwin, Diversity and the Dance of the Cosmos,
Bruce Sanguine suggests that
“we are living through a modern-day version
of the story of the golden calf in Exodus”.

We live in a time
when people are hungry for the assurance
that we are not alone...
there is a spiritual hunger,
a spiritual void in our world
– that makes us –
particularly our children and youth ripe for the picking.

And the advertising industry
is using the language of spiritual fulfillment
to hook them
...and us...
on gods of the dominant culture
– of materialism and consumerism....
– Research shows
that by the time a child in North America enters first grade
they have ingested
approximately 30,000 advertisements

(p.47 of *Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos*)

Bruce Sanguin notes that
“children are being systematically initiated
into a worldview of consumerism and capitalism.
There’ s a 24 hour satellite television station
called Baby TV –
which targets 6 month to two year olds...
[so from the age of 6 months our children are targets]
to be initiated into the culture of television –
which is the medium of choice for advertisers....
Previously mysterious and sacred symbols
are reduced to mere “hooks”
designed to encourage us to buy.
These symbols hook us.

Bruce suggests –
because we retain ancient memories of them.
So today, Eternity is a perfume...
our relationship with the planets
is reduced to the
Mercury or Saturn that drives us to work....
Animals [particularly those] on the verge of extinction
are exploited for their attention
galvanizing power.”

Bruce notes that
“we are the Hebrew people –
disenchanted with the world
into which we have been initiated.
Yet, we are hard-wired for sacred mystery,
the capacity to know
that we are accompanied in our journey
through the universe by the Spirit of God.
We are, therefore,
susceptible to golden calves of all shapes and sizes.

Only the names, voided of sacred essence, remain.
We find ourselves reveling in an orgy of consumerism,
which is destroying our planet
and denying our souls of the deeper meaning
and purpose for which we hunger.”

Once in 2006, and once, so far, in 2009
we- as a congregation
have hosted the Symposium –
Awakening the Dreamer – Changing the Dream.
The call to Awaken the Dreamer comes of the Asshewn people
of the rainforests in Ecuador.
They saw the rain forest beginning to die around them.
They are people of dreams
and in their dreams
the wise women of the people,
received the message
that contact needed to be made with the peoples of the North
who need to change the dream they
we – are living –
because our dream is destroying our planet home.

In April of this year –
Carly Wortman and I were trained to be facilitators
of the “Awakening the Dreamer – Changing the Dream Symposium.”
The mission statement of the symposium
captures for me –
what our calling is in these times.
That – we are called
“to create – a spiritually fulfilling,
socially just,
ecologically sustainable human presence”
within the earth community.

And we – the church –
the spiritual communities around the world –
are uniquely placed to be part of being a creative presence
that helps our human presence to be spiritually fulfilling,
socially just
– ecologically sustainable presence in this earth community of ours.

For the many centuries
we have held a world view
that has seen the world in mechanical terms
a perspective first developed by Isaac Newton.

In the process of these years
of a mechanical world view –
we have lost the awe and the wonder of creation....

In high school –
we have learned about the mechanical workings of science
as knowledge we need to learn –
without it being connected to the essence of our lives.
We have looked at life as a series of parts
that all work together to accomplish a task.

But the universe is much more than mechanical.
It emerges in changes
and evolves in ways that are wondrous.

Last weekend
Brian Swimme spoke with great excitement and wonder
at the development of photosynthesis –
and how amazing it is
that it was developed at all –
and yet the development of photosynthesis
was a critical step that emerged from creation –
that allowed evolution to continue toward
the way we now know the world.

I remember learning about photosynthesis at school,
and re-teaching it to my daughters as their eyes glazed over
it was nothing if the enthusiasm cosmologist Brian Swimme shared
about how cells
found a way to capture the energy of sun
and bring it into themselves.
These creatures found an ability
to capture a photon travelling at 186,000 miles per second
with no brain, no hand.

We've lost that wonder and awe of the universe
that connects us to the emerging power of creation –
of which we are a part.

In years past theologians and Biblical scholars,
have been talking about
how we are in a time of emerging Christianity.
Marcus Borg talks about how these are two streams in Christianity –
an earlier paradigm as he calls it
and an emerging paradigm.
In the earlier paradigm there are,
as Bruce Sanguine suggests –
no need for updates –
it is based on a one-time event that brings salvation for all times.

For example,
 if we look at “salvation – which means to “make whole”, ...
 we see the focus of the Christian Church
 over the last three centuries
 using the planet simply as
 “a kind of a backdrop stage upon which the drama
 of private salvation has been played out - ...
 which Thomas Berry calls a
 “redemption mystique”.
 {In it} we are obsessed with our sinfulness
 and with whether we’re “saved”.
 The purpose of Jesus’ death,
 according to this fall/redemption model –
 was to redeem us from our innate depravity –
 thus saving our souls for eternal life,
 in a heavenly realm,
 somewhere beyond this universe...
 according to this earlier paradigm –
 the truth has been revealed once and for all in Jesus Christ.
 The work of the Spirit is confined to deepening this conviction...
 Sanguine and others suggest
 - that in our understanding of this emerging paradigm –
 we need to update our awareness
 to include the evolutionary “dimensions of the emerging paradigm.”
 The emerging paradigm
 requires us to evolve.
 [Sanguine and so many others note that]
 “If we are not developing, the universe,
 and the Spirit who animates the Universe,
 will simply leave us behind.
 If the universe is unfolding over time...
 why would one’s personal adventure of faith be any different?”
 When Jesus taught
 that we cannot put new wine into old wineskins, (p32)
 he was expressing
 (Sanguine suggests)
 an implicit evolutionary consciousness.
 God is never finished with creation.
 There will always be new wine.
 Creation is an ongoing dynamic.....
 It is the very nature of God.
 (Bruce says) to
 “make all things new...
 Jesus wasn’t interested in destroying his tradition.
 He didn’t emerge on the scene
 to create a new religion.

Rather,
he intended to create a new movement born of the spirit'.
That's what we are as the Christian church
– a movement –
and we need to check ourselves out once and a while
– and ask ourselves the question –
have we lost our sense of being a moment? (p.37)
'To follow Jesus
is to follow not just his first-century teachings,
but also his pattern of updating his tradition'
To ensure that we are connected to the movement
and dynamic energy of the Spirit.

I was watching a DVD the other day
on the "Future of Christian Church"
the Role of the church in the 21st century
with Ken Wilbur and Father Thomas Keating
which is to be a community experience
where people can reconnect to meaning –
with centering prayer as a significant tool.

Father Keating spoke about the Matthew passage
where Jesus speaks about prayer
and how we need to go to our private closet to pray.
Keating suggests that that private closet
is that inner place deep within
where we find ourselves,
find our source once again.
Prayer is not about outward showy words –
its about an inward journey
to that place of deep connection within
where I would say –
– we remember who we are –
remember that in the midst of all the chaos –
we come from light that is love –
and we are beloved.

We long for a world
that is not only socially just
and ecologically sustaining
but also a world that is spiritually fulfilling.

We live in a world that is hungry for spiritual fulfillment
and when we can't find it
we fill ourselves up with alcohol to medicate us,
buy fashions to sooth our soul

and try to use cars and travel and homes –
that do not fill us with what we need.

We need

- we hunger for – that deep connection
 - to source –
 - to go deep within
 - and find more

than a vacuum sucking in the high hopes of consumerism.

We need

- we hunger for –
 - a delightful connection with others...
 - when people of all ages –
- see each other and interact with each other
with a sense of the high hopes of consumerism.

We need

- we hunger for –
 - a delightful connection with others ...
 - when people of all ages –
- see each other and interact with each other
with a sense of joy and expectation
that the other may open us to new insights
and wisdom that cracks us open to the fullness of life.

Moments of deep connection,
of profound awareness of the gift of community
that feeds that place of void deep within...

- 1) Saturday, Margaret Finlayson's family and I gathered together
to bury her ashes ...
Lynn Yerex – prayer shawl, in hospital
-story The Next Place, meditation
- 2) Mariposa Folk Festival
- 3) Connecting people > because we're in community

We need

- we hunger for –
 - connection to the earth...
- to see it and the universe once again with amazement.
Did you know for example
that if you hold up a finger to the night sky
and look at your fingernail
behind that fingernail –
there are a million galaxies?

At the beginning of the 20th century
we didn't know for sure
whether there were even 2 galaxies or not...
now we know
that behind our finger nail
held up to the night sky there are a million galaxies behind it.

Connection to the earth –
– that's one of the gifts of Mariposa Folk Festival
– lake, wind, full moon, stars and community.

There is good news all around us
connections that are deep
that brings spiritual fulfillment if we are open to it ...
Spiritual fulfillment ...
that hunger of our souls...
it is nourished by prayer,
by community, meditation,
music, listening, laughter,
sunsets, Yoga, Tai-Chi
being open to the evolutionary power of the Spirit
expanding our compassion,
engaging us with all creation
in such a way that we understand –
that we are all One...
.it is nourished by healthy relationships,
forgiveness, letting go of guilt
one we've learned what we need to learn –
We will not be spiritually fulfilled by material goods
and achieving status –
though the dominant culture around us tries to tell us so.

As the church
– as a spiritual community –
we are positioned well if we are willing to invite others
into a journey that holds the potential of being nourishment for the soul...
where we find meaning
beyond the golden calves of the dominant culture...
where we treasure wholeness and awe
and the awareness that we are each born in blessing.

Come –
let us find that place of center
that opens the door to nourishment for our souls.

Hymn #374, Come and Find the Quiet Centre:

*Come and find the quiet centre
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be.*

*Silence is a friend who claims us,
cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.*

*In the Spirit let us travel,
open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming,
there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
there is always room to spare!*