

## SAYING YES, YES, YES TO LIFE!

Today we're continuing to celebrate our 50th anniversary year with sending forth our precious seniors to bless the world. Hasn't today been inspirational to honor four of our own San Dieguitan youth? And so, on this special Sunday morn, it seems fitting to focus upon the art of saying Yes or as Jewish custom would proclaim: L'Chaim...“to Life”!

Unitarian Universalism is unabashedly and unashamedly a life-affirming religion. We're flawed, to be sure, as is every human religion, but it's our clear charge to shout Yes to life, to create a good earth rather than waiting around for a perfect heaven.

Indeed, ours is a faith that majors in the most important word in any language: *Yes*. Oh, to be sure, some of us have been trained to be knee-jerk yes-people. We have trouble setting proper limits. We raise our hands whenever anything moves in the room. Hence we burn out prematurely, and our yeses become meaningless, since we seldom offer a clear-cut NO.

It's hopeful news, indeed, that our four high school graduates are standing tall this morning and speaking their truths in love, in essence saying No to what diminishes their humanity while declaring Yes to everything that affirms and sustains a more just and beautiful world.

It's also encouraging to see adults, like you and I, daring to muster effective No-s: ceasing negative habits, quitting unsatisfying jobs, resisting blatant wrongs, pruning our overburdened lives.

For, clearly it's imperative that we learn, all of us, to offer firm, unbending No-s, not merely maybes or passive-aggressive Yeses, but rather clear-cut No-s to this behavior or that request.

After all, we Unitarian Universalists belong to the historical movement of heretics, those individuals who bravely countered the orthodoxies of their times, who raised their hearts and hands against religious bigotry and social oppression...who said no way and not here...folks who were often shunned, even burned at the stake, for their courageous views.

**But** we also belong to the radical wing of the protestant tradition. And as protestants, that is protestors, we know it's important not just to *denounce* certain realities, but also to *announce* other possibilities. Protestors are literally those who "testify on behalf of" something they hold dear. As mature protestors we would voice our bold No-s only in service of the greater Yes!

So, today, while realizing the inestimable value of compassionate resistance, of boundary-setting, and of establishing clear-cut no-s in life, I want to salute the worth of saying a bedrock *Yes* to life. L'Chaim!

Yet what pains me about our modern culture is the tendency to be Yes-butters. A yes-butter doesn't tell a child, "What a neat trick" but rather: "come on, show me another one." The child has shown the only trick she or he knows, and their pride is instantly converted into feeling inadequate. Or one partner says to the other: "Do you love me?" and the answer verbally, or otherwise, arrives: "Yes, but not totally, or it all depends, or only if you do such and such." In numerous and daily ways, yes-butters make life miserable for themselves and the rest of us.

Folks, I'm inviting us to reserve our yes-butts for rare occasions and instead risk being carriers of a resounding yes to life and its wild and wondrous possibilities. I challenge us to forswear our timid, tepid ways, to quit driving life's car with the breaks on, spinning futilely in circles, but rather to drive boldly ahead.

One of our unsung 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian leaders, by the name of Frederic Henry Hedge, exemplified our hopeful, upbeat message when he unabashedly declared: "Enough of negation! Have done with denying; the soul demands something positive. Give us the everlasting Yes!" Hedge is right on purpose, our purpose, because at the heart of Unitarian Universalism is an everlasting yes.

But there's no way we can live consistently courageous lives of Yes under our own spiritual steam. We need this beloved Fellowship to assist us in converting our concerns into convictions, then converting our convictions into commitments. We hunger for spiritual comrades who set examples for us, who lift us when we're dragging and center us when we're reckless. We need sisters and brothers of like mind who make sure we don't succumb to quick no-s or seductive maybes, when difficult yet fulfilling Yeses are required.

Let me get to the nubbins of the issue. If you, as a San Dieguitan, new or old, only attend worship services without venturing participation in the rest of Fellowship life, if you only receive without contributing, if you're ready to join but somehow keep stalling, then, after awhile, you'll likely fall prey to an existence of yes-butting. Showing up, without signing up, results in a partial and puny life. Black Elk knew that a vision has no real power until it's danced publicly before people. And, that's precisely what numerous

folks are doing next Sunday as new members; they're daring to dance publicly for their chosen faith.

All studies indicate that people who don't commit themselves to some structured activity or service in our San Dieguito Fellowship within a matter of months, will soon drift away, unattached and unsatisfied.

When it's all said and done, when our life has reached its conclusion and we're asked to sum up its worth, our life will be weighed not in terms of the causes we've started but the ones we've seen through, as fully as possible.

My own personal life will be measured not in terms of the platitudes I've preached from pulpits but by the values I've practiced privately and publicly, not by the creeds I've muttered but by the commitments I've mustered. As Albert Schweitzer put it: "My life—my argument!" All else is either fluff or fraud.

So I exhort you this morning, my friends in faith, to make a commitment rather than fudge or fence. Choose to be an affirming flame that will light the way for those you know and those you'll never meet. Choose to become a living Yes in your own, singular fashion!

San Dieguito needs you, especially as you shape a brand-new shared ministry with your settled minister, David Arthur Miller...as you continue to be a spiritually strong and vital social presence in North County.

If I'm not mistaken, San Dieguito exists for three main reasons: first, it gives us a chance to speak our truths in love; second, it gives us chances to extend ourselves for causes beyond our own egos; and finally, it means we won't be alone when we come to

die. Now, I don't know about you, but I covet a place and a people that can help meet those three primal human needs!

We're lucky to be born in the first place; you and I are statistical miracles, and the only soul-sized response we can ever make is to say thank you, and the best way to say thank you is with concrete yeses, in specific sites like San Dieguito, where we can truly feed our souls while repairing the world.

You'll remember that when Moses struck the Dead Sea with his wand, nothing happened. The sea only opened when the first person plunged in. When that first person took the plunge, said *Yes* to life with their very body and soul, then, and only then, did the Dead Sea open forth.

Oh, that tiny but mighty and majestic word: Yes...the mightiest word in the lexicon of any language. And unquestionably the key word of our life-affirming, this-worldly religion. Yes, I can be that; yes, I will do that; yes, you can count on me to be present and accountable. Yes, I choose to nourish my spirit while serving the world. Yes, yes, yes...from start to finish.

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June 14, 2009