

Transcription of the Building Dedication Service

September 17, 1995

Abstract

On Sunday September 17, 1995 we had our first service at 2515 Churchville Road, Churchville, Maryland. The video was made into a DVD and was subsequently transcribed in the form you see here.

Invited speakers include Cynthia Snavelly, Minister of the UU Congregation of Columbia, MD; Kenneth Hurto, Minister of the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church in Alexandria, VA; Matthew McNaught, Minister of the Towson UU Church; John Buehrens, UUA President; John Niles, Fallston Presbyterian Church; Kimmich (Kim) Beach, UU Church of Arlington; Daniel Webster Aldridge, Jr., All Souls Church, Washington, DC; Patricia Carrol, JPD Executive.

Fellowship speakers include Alice Blair Wesley, minister; Charles Harris, Board president; Ruth Sheridan, former Board president; Dyrck Van Dusen, Building Committee chair; Glenn Brown, Capital Fund Committee chair; Kay Saucier, Director of Religious Education.



CHARLES HARRIS: You are welcome to this place. I am Charles Harris, president of our Fellowship. I felt that it was the idea of our group that if we built this place, you would come, and so you have. You are welcome indeed.

We are a free congregation. If you would like to join us, you do so by signing our membership book over here. Your signature would be an indication of your desire to support and participate with us in our communal community. Many of you are

from other congregations. You are particularly welcome to join with us this day.

As you can imagine, this has been a rather expensive operation for us, and a few of you would, if you are willing to, help us work with our debt, that would be appreciated. We have plates out in the back, and we would like to get on with our tasks and joys of being a free Fellowship. Thank you.

REV. CYNTHIA SNAVELY: Welcome to a day of hope and promise. We come together to celebrate a new home for this congregation. We call upon ourselves to attend to our visions for this place and this community, and work for their fulfillment. We summon the power of tradition and the exhilaration of newness. May the dreams be fulfilled.

[To the tune of "Edelweiss"]

Bless this time; bless this space
Bless our dreaming together.
May our strengths join as one
As we go forward together.
Spirit of Love, may we bloom and
grow,
Bloom and grow forever.
Bless this time; bless this space
Bless our dreaming together.

KAY SAUCIER: Okay, boys and girls, here is where we start to follow along at the bottom of the first page, where I'm going to read words as KAY, and you're going to read words as the CHILDREN.

Why have our Members and Friends gathered here on this special day?

*We come to dedicate this building to
all that our Fellowship is for.*

And what is our Fellowship for?

*It is for love of life and truth, and
for love of all the people of the earth.
It is for help in hard times. It is for
learning and growing and serving. It
is for having a good time, too.*

Our Fellowship is also for children. Members hope this will be your special place for growing kinder and wiser and stronger.

*Today we light the chalice for all we
can become in the loving community
of this special place.*

EVERYONE: May these rooms long be a place of hope for every one and faith that we will continue to grow in mind and spirit.

Okay, now you may sit with your parents or in some of the brown chairs up front.

REV. KENN HURTO: Please rise and turn to Responsive Reading Number 567, "To Be of Use" by Marge Pusey.

I want to be with people who submerge in the task,

*Who go into the fields of harvest
and work the roads and pass the bags
along.*

Who stand in the line and haul in their places,

*Who are not parlor generals and
field deserters but move in a common
rhythm when the food must come in
or the fire be put out.*

The work of the world is as common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.

*But the thing worth doing well done
must have a shape that satisfies, clean
and evident.*

Greek amphoras for wine or oil, Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums, but you know they were made to be used.

*The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work is real.*

Please be seated.

REV. ALICE WESLEY: Our congregation was organized in the late fifties. Harford County was very rural, very conservative. There was little reason to suppose Harford County Unitarians would ever be very numerous, and yet the Fellowship would be influential indeed.

In the sixties and early seventies, members were especially active in the civil rights movement. They saw to it that the new county charter included a permanent Human Rights Commission. Member Charles Reed, member of the School Board, led the schools from racial segregation to integration.

Members helped organize chapters of the ACLU and the NAACP. They worked on Black access

to restaurants.

For a time, it appeared that the radical H. Rap Brown would be tried in Harford County courthouse.¹ Reporters were coming to cover the news of preparations for the trial. Local motels would not let them rent rooms. The Fellowship announced that they could sleep in the church. There were many a peace marcher en route to D.C. had slept before them.

Meanwhile, the population began to grow in earnest. The Fellowship needed to grow. The congregation in 1984 called an extension minister, whom we shared with York [Pennsylvania] in 1988, with the help of district Chalice Lighters. Members called me, the Fellowship's first settled minister.

It was soon obvious that if we were to continue to grow, we had to have a larger building. But *what difficulties!* We began to look for a new site. Land prices seemed completely out of reach. I took to stopping at any property appropriate for a church, for a sales sign or no, to ask whether the owner might sell to us.

One day on the way to my office, I saw a man working in his garden on Churchville Road. I pulled into the driveway, got out of the car. As we walked toward each other, I realized the man was Walter Banks, a distinguished African American leader widely known as the father of the NAACP in Harford County.

That first time we talked of Walter's cornfield as a possible site for a new church, he said he really hadn't thought of selling. I asked him to consider it. A couple days later, stopped again, thinking to mention a tax deduction for any who sell land to a church for a price less than the appraised value.

But as we neared one another, Walter called out, "I decided I'd let you have it."

The land was listed in the deed book as two lots, one of two and a half acres, the other one acre. Just eight-tenths of a mile down the road is a piece of land, zoned commercial, which sold about that

time for \$600,000.

The bank's land was zoned agricultural. The appraised value of the two lots was \$120,000. Walter and Maudeline Banks first decided they would let us buy both lots for \$100,000.

Then they learned through their tax attorney that they could give us one lot and sell us the other without the \$30,000 tax bill, which would have been due if they had sold both the lots to a private individual for \$100,000. Walter and Maudeline Banks sold us this land for \$70,000. In effect, they gave us a gift of \$50,000.

Why? Maudeline said, "It seemed like during the Civil Rights struggle, it was only the Quakers and the Unitarians who wanted folks treated as equals." Walter said, "I just want to help people."

We have been the beneficiaries of two wonderfully generous people, first and foremost because of their character and also because our members were dedicated to racial justice a generation ago.

Walter and Maudeline gave us as they did because they expect us to live up in the future to the history of our own congregation. Walter died last year.

Maudeline, we want you to know that we want to live up to your hope for us. Would you stand and let the people applaud you, Maudeline?



Maudeline Banks receives standing ovation.

RUTH SHERIDAN: As the immediate past pres-

¹H. Rap Brown's Trial and a Car Explodes in Bel Air

ident of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County, it is an honor to have the privilege to thank publicly a small group of special people who have been primary movers in making this building a reality.

In 1989, soon after Alice Wesley became our minister, the Long Range Planning Committee was formed for the purpose of researching possibilities for expanding on our Lee way site.

We thought there would be plenty of space as we opened the back lot. Very quickly we learned about wetlands. The committee spent hours and months investigating possibilities, but it became apparent that building on Lee Way would be too costly. Several alternatives were considered and the cost was always a major disappointment.

One factor that was obvious was that we needed to do something if we were to serve our continually-expanding outreach to southern Pennsylvania, Cecil, and Harford County. We had a vision, but we thought no money. During the summer of 1992, seven members pledged \$144,000, \$70,000 of which was available immediately, and we were on our way.

Walter and Maudeline Banks agreed to sell us this property at an affordable price. The congregation began to believe that our vision might become real. At a special congregational meeting in September of 1992, the Fellowship members voted to move to Churchville Road.

The Board appointed the Building Committee in the fall of 1992, and the Long Range Planning Committee then became the Building Committee. Dyrck Van Dusen became chair, a position he has held for three years. He has spent hours committed to this project, driving from his home in Areville, Pennsylvania, to attend meetings and take care of the many, many details the job entails. Under the leadership of Dyrck, this Committee took the dream and made it real.

In 1993, the Board appointed Glenn Brown chair of the now much-needed Capital Fund Committee. Glenn has worked extensively doing all the paperwork involved in applying for loans.

The committee met several times with Alan Evans of the Towson Church, and in October of 1993, we held a weekend celebration to begin the Capital Fund drive. The Rev. Dr. John Wolf, minister of All Souls UU Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was the keynote speaker on Sunday morning, and then in the evening, a pledging reception was held at the Browns' home. What a thrilling surprise!

The financial commitment of our small congregation was overwhelming. Glenn has continued to faithfully keep the records and monitor our financial status.

To you, Dyrck and Glenn, and to all the committee members, on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County, I'd like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We love you both.

DYRCK VAN DUSEN: I'm sort of surprised I feel a little shaky up here. It's kind of unusual for me.

Throughout the whole process here, we've been supported by some exceptional business and professional people, and we owe a particular debt of thanks to all of them. All of these businesses supplied us with the materials for our extensive self-help efforts in completing this building. I should say that all of them really put an effort and were aware of our financial situation and helped us out an awful lot in keeping the prices where we could do the work.

In addition, we've had other key assistance from the Forest Hill Bank, who financed our project. I think Glenn may talk to them in a second. Joanne Parrott, the president of the Harford County Council, who helped us through the bureaucracy and those little sticky points that you run into here once again.

The Maryland State Highway Administration, who were very gracious and helpful in getting our site plan approved as far as the state highway aspect of it. And the Harford County Administration for help with the seemingly unending permits, plans, inspections, and approvals.

I'd like to have special recognition for the follow-

ing:

- First of all, Paul Taylor of George William Stevens & Associates. Paul developed the site plan for this project and was instrumental in getting it approved. Actually, without Paul, I don't think we would have ever gotten started. Thank you, Paul.
- Charlie Muellen of the Harborview Contractors. Charlie was particularly adept at working with the committee, which I've got to give him credit. Boy, the guy that could work with our committee really had it together. And Charlie did a great job. I thank him for his patience. And I thank him for his understanding of our limitation as financiers, engineers, and construction experts. Charlie and Harborview, the contractor for this site, were truly a pleasure to work with and have given us a sound building in which to grow. So thank you, Charlie.
- Gary Goetz and Terry Taylor of Goetz-Taylor Architects. These gentlemen designed the building and led the team through the construction process to get it put together. In the process, they somehow captured a little bit of our spirit and incorporated it into the result. Without them, I don't believe we ever would have developed such a beautiful facility as we're so lucky to have here. So thanks, Gary, and thanks, Terry.
- Finally, I would be remiss as the past chair of the Long-Range Planning Committee and its successor, the Building Committee, if I didn't recognize personally the contributions of my fellow committee members. Ruth addressed a little bit about the committee. The membership is listed in your order of service. I'm not going to go down through them, but I want every one of them to know that I personally, deeply appreciate your time, your ideas, your sweat, and your sacrifices. Thank you very much. You did it!

GLENN BROWN: My name is Glenn Brown, and I'm to acknowledge all of the folks who have made contributions, both financially and with their muscle.

And I've got two minutes to do it here. There's no way I can do that, the list is too long, so I'm going to have you do it. But first, before I get into that, Alec Evans, where are you? Would you stand up, please? And stay standing, because we're going to get everybody standing before it's over.

Alec Evans was the catalyst for our Capital Fund Committee. He got us so excited, got us convinced that we could raise some money. But he got us convinced that we could raise more money than we dreamed we could raise.

And we were thinking maybe we could raise \$150,000, \$200,000. We raised \$342,000 in pledges from our small congregation, and no small thanks to Alan. And let me tell you also, Alan and Anita's pledge is part of that also.

Now, let's talk about the non-financial contributions that were made. Can you stand up? We've not built a church. This is not a church, it's a cathedral.

Cathedrals take centuries to build, and it's not finished yet. I thought it was, but I find out it's not. And you know, it's just as well that it isn't.

It should always be growing, it should always be improving, it should always have more depth to it. So I see us as always working on this building, and all the sweat equity folks, your job's not over yet.

Now, how many brides do you know that don't go to the big fancy stores to register for their gifts, but instead go to Crow's Nursery and say, "If you've got anything that you would like to give to the wedding, it's going to get planted at the church"? And I just think that's one of the nicest things that Judy and Charles have done for us. Can you stand up?

Now, there's one person that definitely has to be specifically mentioned by name, and then we're going to get into some of this general knowledge.

This is Joe Wesley. Now, Joe starts perspiring when the temperature gets to about 40 degrees. And he worked all summer long during that 35-day straight heat wave we had, and I never saw a man work so hard in all my life. Joe, will you stand up?

These aren't the only people that are going to be standing up. When you hear a task that you did, stand up and wave your hands or applaud or whatever you want to do, okay?

Who dug a tree hole? Stand up. Who dug a tree hole? That's right. Stand up. Who stained some T-111 siding? Dug trenches for green pipes? Planted a tree? Spread grass seed? Mulch grass? Cut the grass? Nailed on roof shingles? Hung doors? Washed windows? Pulled telephone wires? Hammered nails? Sawed a board? Filled nail holes? Sanded? Built cabinets? Glued baseboards? Selected colors and furniture? Go on, stand up and wave. Made signs? Built a barbecue pit? Installed all the hardware? Picked up rocks? Picked up rocks? How many rocks? Built boards? Varnished the cedar? Sealed knob holes? Primed raw wood? Selected and bought kitchen sinks? Painted walls? Painted ceilings? Painted doors? Painted trim? And will be staining the kitchen cabinets? Who helped lay the carpet? Who helped move all the furniture from Lee Way? Who swept the floors? Again and again and again? Packed and moved all our belongings back to the carpet? Installed speakers? Built shelves? Primed ladders? Wired up appliances? Plumbed kitchen sinks? Washed windows? Installed ceiling tiles? Took trash to the landfill? Hung pictures? Bought appliances? Weeded? Hauled tons in their pickup trucks? Cleaned paint brushes ad nauseam? Who kept the photo history of the whole process? Now, those are all the rest of you. Now, how many of you all pledged or gave money? Let's stand up and give ourselves a round of applause.

REV. ALICE WESLEY: Before you start your reading, may we just say that the little ones who would like to go to the activity may go or stay to the end.

REV. MATTHEW MCNAUGHT: Before shar-

ing the responsive reading with you, may I express my personal pleasure in having been invited here today.

The Responsive Reading 568 is by Marge Piercy.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.

You can learn about all things by looking for what's happening.

More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.

Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.

Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.

Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.

Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.

Live a life you can endure: make love that is loving.

Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in, a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you like yourself, and it may happen:

Reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.

This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,

For every gardener knows that after the digging, after the planting, after the long seasons of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

The title of this section may very well be the title of "Surely the Holy is in this Place," because God is equally present.

This is a solemn and joyous occasion. It brings together a sense of past accomplishments and future hopes. Above all, it is a time of the deepest religious affect and reflection.

Solomon, who stood at the threshold of the new temple in Jerusalem, a temple his father David was forbidden to build, said in *I Kings*, and here we feel tethered to history. And now, O God of Israel, let the words which you did speak to thy servant David be confirmed.

For can God indeed dwell on earth? Heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have built. Yet attend to the prayer and supplication of thy servant. Listen to the cry and prayer which thy servant that honors this day, that thine eyes may be on this house night and day, this place of which thou didst say, My name shall be there.

So mayest thou hear thy servant when he prays towards this place. Hear the supplication of thy servant and of thy people Israel when they pray towards this place. Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling, and when thou hearest, forgive.

Philip Larkin, the poet and agnostic of our time, wrote of the sacredness of places of worship, old and new:

*A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,

Since someone will ever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper, to grow wise
in.*

And a few moments of silence.

Let us pause to remember and give thanks for those whose vision created this unitarian universalist society of friends. Let us pause to remember and give thanks whose present vision created this new and lovely place for people to grow wise in. And with Solomon let us pause to remember those who come here for welcoming and caring to hear the word faithfully preached to a broken world of

grace and forgiveness which lies at the heart of all things.

So let it be.

[*choir sings "I Will Sing Praises" by Toby Tate*]

REV. DR. JOHN BUEHRENS: On behalf of more than a thousand congregations all across this continent, with which this one is joined in religious fellowship, I bring you congratulations, blessings, and greetings today.

A rabbi once asked his friends and learned colleagues, "Tell me, where is the dwelling place of God?" And they replied, "Why, how can you ask such a thing? The scriptures are perfectly clear: The book of nature confirms it all about us."

The heavens and the earth are all full of God's glory. But the rabbi just shook his head. "No," he said, "no, the holy."

The holy enters only where we let it in.

Consider this modern tale. A photo appeared in the *New York Times* that was both striking and incongruous, showing an unkempt-looking man with longish hair and a shaggy mustache wearing formal evening clothes and sitting on a chair in the middle of a street with a cello.

The street, said the caption, was in the midst of Sarajevo, at a spot outside a bakery, where the weeks before, some 22 people had been killed by mortar fire while standing in a bread line. The man is quoted as saying that he doesn't know what to do about hatred in the world or war, except what he knows how to do, which is to play the cello. And so for 22 days, veteran Smilovich braved sniper and mortar fire to come to that spot and play through Albinoni's haunting "Adagio in G minor."

In Seattle, Washington, an artist in one of our congregations sees the photo and story and says, this man's crazy. His gesture, futile, surely, but then stops to think.

In each of us, there's a cynic that guards our own wounded and hurt places and that is quick to dismiss all such manifestations of the spirit, self-transcendence.

Yet somewhere deeper in our souls, we are each capable of hearing and following the music, just listen, the artist did, and organized 22 cellists to play Albinoni in 22 public places in her city for 22 days until on the final day, they gathered in front of a window where she had placed 22 burned-out bread pans, 22 freshly baked loaves of bread, and 22 roses where they might play together. The story spread. Robert Fulgham, the best-selling author and Unitarian Universalist minister, helped to spread it.

He told me this story this summer as we walked around Walden Pond together. And this afternoon, I pass it on to you, the story of a man playing his cello softly, one note at a time, as though trying, like a pipeline, to call out the rats infesting the cellars of the human spirit. As Fulgham puts it, we must never, ever regret or apologize for believing that when one of us decides to risk addressing the world with truth, the world may just stop what it is doing and start to hear.

There's far too much evidence to the contrary. And besides, when we cease believing this, surely the music will stop. And where is the dwelling place of the holy, of such music, wherever we let it in, the harmony that makes for true wholeness and holiness within us?

Once there were two sisters, and though very different, they loved each other very much, and when they grew up, they were fortunate to live near each other. The younger sister married and had a husband, many children. The older sister and her partner did not have children to love, but felt blessed, contented, nonetheless. And one year when the time of harvest came, each had reason to feel very grateful indeed, for though the summer had been dry, each had reaped from the land more, more they felt than they needed for the winter. And so one night during the harvest, the older sister woke from her sleep having dreamt, My sister had so many mouths to feed, she thought, and went from her bed to her barn, took a sack of grain, and carried it across the hillside field through the night to her sister's storehouse. While meanwhile, the younger sister woke from a dream saying, My sister and her partner will have no children to care for them, and help feed them when they are old. So she had gone to her storehouse and taken a sack of grain and set off toward her sister's barn. And midway between their two homes they encountered each other, realized what each was doing, and the place where they met became their place of worship.

In the heart of Sarajevo, there was once a bridge that linked the Serb and Muslim quarters. And in Italo Calvino's magical book, *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo describes to Kubla Khan the building of such a bridge, stone upon stone. Which is the stone that supports the bridge, the Khan asks. Oh, the bridge is not supported by one stone or another, Marco answers, but by the line of the arc that they form.

The Khan remains silent, reflecting, and then asks, Why then do you speak to me of stones? It is only the arch that matters to me. Polo answers "Without stones, there is no arch."

I trust you will pardon me if I speak in parables this afternoon. I am very concretely here to tell you, on behalf of all those other stones with which you are mortared in spiritual association, that what you have done here matters not only materially, but to our spirit as well. For this is no mere structure of stone and wood, of concrete and plaster. It is also the footing of a bridge, which as it rises, reaches wider. Its embrace going out as its aim goes higher, linking you and linking us in self-transcending community together.

A child once asked her mother, "But why do we go to worship at that place, there on that particular gentle hillside, and not somewhere else?" And the mother answered with this legend:

For as they told their children and their children's children, wherever human beings meet, in the spirit of sisterly and brotherly love and sharing, there surely is the dwelling place of the holy.

Now my friends from Arlington who have heard this story from me before, when they dedicated their building, will know that it is a *midrash*, that is one told by rabbis to update and explain an even more ancient story.

But those of you here in Harford County will know how particularly fitting it is for this place, where just a year and a half ago I stood with Alice when this was grasping my feet, and she told me the story of her meeting here with Walter, and how this land was acquired.

The *midrash* is upon a story that anciently described the setting apart of the very first place of worship we hear tell of in the scriptures.

In the midst of legends about two brothers, Esau and Jacob, who don't help one another. Far from it, Jacob steals from his brother, lies about it, runs away. But he stops on a hillside in the midst of a field, lies down at night to rest with only a stone for a pillow, and there has a dream.

In his dream he sees a structure like a ladder or steps rising on the earth, reaching toward the heavens, figures going up and down upon it, bringing prayers and messages in both directions. The truth of his life is carried up in Jacob's dream, and holiness, which as the psalmist put it, often seems so high we cannot attain unto it, comes close to his heart. In the midst of a fugitive and even sinful existence, the possibility of self-transcendence breaks in upon him, and a voice speaks to him which he feels has been heard before by those who went before him.

A boy went back to the rabbi, "Why do we say in our prayers the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and our God? Is this not all the same God?" And the rabbi replied, "Of course, my son, but in every generation the holy must be known and encountered afresh with fresh ears and eyes."

Often through a struggle, he might have added, but that's another story of Jacob, of his wrestling with the holy. In this one, Jacob simply wakes from his dream and says these words, "Surely the holy is in this place. And I, I did not know it." And he is afraid and says "How awesome is this. This is none other than the house of the holy and the gate of heaven."

In the midst of his life, Jacob finds and is found by a sense of the possibility of greater wisdom, greater love, greater giving, that simply will not let him go. That says to him, know that I am with you and I will keep you wherever you go and bring you back to this place. For I will not leave you until I have done what I promised.

Then Jacob takes the stone that has been his pillow and sets another upon it and pours oil on them and calls the place of his worship, Bethel, the house of God. First he dedicates the place, then he dedicates himself, making promises that remind me of the sacrifices shown by the two sisters, by the chalice. Of all that you have given to me, says to God, surely I will give you one tenth.

For at the heart of the religious life, the life of self-transcendence, there's more than a dream and a vision. There is dedication and sacrifice, that word which at its root means to make sacred or holy.

This place has already had poured out upon it the pure oil of dedication and of sacrifice and of love. Today we bless it in the name of all that is holy and ask that we too might in this time and place dedicate ourselves to carry forward the spirit of the meeting that took place upon this land, the quest for justice, for self-transcendence, self-finding within community, the quest for all that is holy and that might bring heaven a bit closer to this earth.

With the blessings of congregations who with you light this chalice week by week, that the presence of that holy spark within us all might be felt and carried forward from here, may all who come here for nurture, for fellowship, for worship in all the years ahead be blessed abundantly. Amen.

[*Hymn 126: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing (first two verses)*]

Come, thou fount of ev'ry blessing, tune our hearts to sing thy grace.
Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
While the hope of life's perfection fills our hearts with joy and love,
teach us ever to be faithful, may we still thy goodness prove.

Come, thou fount of ev'ry vision, lift our eyes to what may come.
See the lion and the young lamb dwell together in thy home.
Hear the cries of war fall silent, feel our love glow like the sun.
When we all serve one another, then our heaven is begun.

REV. JOHN NILES: I'm John Niles, and I bring greetings and congratulations from the congregation at Fallston Presbyterian Church. The session acted on Thursday and ordered me to convey these greetings and congratulations, and I obeyed.

I can say that I knew you back when. I've been around Harford County for all of 12 years now, which is fairly senior for ministers in this county, and I knew you back when, and you weren't too shabby back then either. Your members and your ministers, Geoff Druchas and Alice Blair Wesley.

Among the churches and the synagogue that formed Harford Food and Nutrition Committee nine years ago, yours was the most active and certainly the most welcoming. We used to have our meetings in the old building, and we always did feel welcomed. You were very hospitable. The Food and Nutrition Committee is now a main component of the Harford Community Action Agency, which is the community action connection for this county.

And to be blunt, we at HCAA need you. We need you as volunteers once again, and as leaders, we need you. This building is now a dedicated building, but I'm here to tell you that HCAA and other helping groups in the county need you dedicated people.

We need you to reach out. To be socially concerned is part of Unitarian historical tradition, and it has certainly been lived out by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County. I don't just look backward, though I did know you back when.

I look forward, and I urge you to look forward too. Now that you have accomplished so much in establishing this building and establishing yourselves as such a strong congregation, I urge you to rechannel a portion of your talents and of your obvious energy to social action and service.

As you soon will all say together in the act of dedication, make the world more just and more like a good home. Let it be so.

REV. KIM BEACH: Good afternoon, I'm Kim Beach, Senior Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. I'm especially delighted to be here this afternoon with my wife Barbara and to bring you the greetings of our congregation on the completion of the dedication of this renewed church building.

Because our own congregation completed just one year ago and dedicated with John Buehrens's help, he alluded to that prior dedication just a little less than a year ago, because we completed our own construction program, I feel a certain instant kinship with you walking into this place, and also especially I think hearing the earlier speeches in this dedication service about the kind of work that goes into making this place, and the kind of fundraising, and the kind of continuing concerns about the commitment that it takes to raise such a place, maintain it, and continue it, and continue to make it grow.

We in Arlington increased our physical facilities by a factor of about two, and even after a capital fund drive, which paid for half of that project, we increased our annual debt service by a factor of about 15. Those are literal approximations.

I don't know what the comparable figures would be in your own case, but I suspect you'd qualify for membership in a new group we are organizing, the Association of Gutsy Churches. I'm delighted to be here also because I've enjoyed the long-standing collegial relationship with your dear minister. I've known Alice.

Alice, I've known you for a long time now. It's been a long way down. We were down Texas Way before we came back up here to the Joseph Priestley District.

We've had many great associations ever since. One of the delights of this tight little island of a Unitarian Universalist Association is the sense of comradeship among parishioners and colleagues in ministry that runs across the decades. I think laypersons enjoy the same sort of thing both within their congregation and if they're especially lucky in association with other Unitarian Universalists in other congregations beyond the local community.

I'm saying then that you have that sustenance and joy to look forward to if you are relatively new to this congregation or to Unitarian Universalism, a sustaining sense of comradeship rooted in making common cause of our liberal faith, our liberating faith as it should be. This deep sense of connection and comradeship will grow with time as you give yourselves with all your heart and soul and mind to it.

You are here for the long haul. That is the thing that is evident in this dedication today. You've decided to be here for the long haul. You've made a statement.

We are here to stay. We are a seriously committed people, a people of faith and a people of freedom. You are honored.

You are members already in this association, as I said, of the Gutsy Churches. You're building something more than a building. You're building a lifelong relationship of caring and of common faith.

You're building a spiritual home for your children and for your children's children within this house.

You are learning the God-like arts of having and staying power. So we salute you.

You say you have far to go. I hear precisely. We know that you will go far. It is good for you to be here.

DANIEL ALDRIDGE: President Buehrens and my colleagues and the members of this fine church, my name is Daniel Webster Aldridge, Jr. I'm the senior minister of the All Souls Church in the town of Washington, D.C. And it is my pleasure to be here and to bring you greetings on behalf of our members.

All Souls has been meeting in some sense since 1850. Our own church was initially dedicated in 1820 as a prophetic voice for liberal religion in the nation's capital. I would certainly modify that to what Kim has said, to be a prophetic voice for liberating religion in the nation's capital.

What I would suggest and recommend is that you consider making these bricks live and to do that by being committed to telling the truth, the whole truth.

And this is often very difficult. When you hear people talk about All Souls, we talk about the fact that James Reed was one of our members and one of our ministers, Adelaide Stevenson attended, William Howard Taft, Frederick Douglass was a regular attender of the church, was founded among other persons by John Quincy Adams. Little is one to say, and we certainly don't shout about the fact, that John T. Calhoun was also one of our founders.

We seldom talk about Daniel Webster, the slave-supporting senator from Massachusetts and New Hampshire was also one of our founders. And I have never heard anyone say before, in fact, certainly with glee, that Miller Fillmore was a member of the All Souls Church behind the Fugitive Slave Law connection. So, it's a struggle for many of us to tell the truth, the whole truth. But in fact, the whole truth is who we are.

And we'll only be a Bible church and a Bible religion and a Bible movement, and this will only be a Bible congregation. If you learn to speak the

truth, to tell the truth, and be committed to the truth and committed to justice.

This is a very difficult time in this nation's history. We are moving in a period in which we are unsure as to whether we want to be conservative or fascist. It's a difficult period. And nowhere is the voice of those people of a liberal faith more needed.

Our children need us as we seek to push them out of hospitals because it is not cost effective. As we seek not to provide them adequate childcare. As we seek to cut public funding for their education. Our children need us desperately.

Our nation needs us as its leadership begins to call for our attention by pitting persons of different racial and ethnic groups against each other. By mobilizing the worst of our instincts against those people who have newly arrived here.

So that a liberal religious faith is really needed. A liberated faith committed to truth and justice. If you make that commitment, these bricks will live.

But if you fail to make that commitment, one day they'll talk about this place. They'll talk about the bricks that were here. But they will not talk about the energy and living spirit that was given to the people.

So I ask you to do as Ezekiel said. Breathe on the bones. And make a commitment. Don't just celebrate the bricks. Breathe on them. And give them your spirit.

Thank you.

REV. PAT CAROL: Well I'm Pat Carol and I'm also delighted to be here. I come directly from the airport.

From seven days of meetings at the Unitarian Universalist Association. Of the field staff and of the Boston based staff. Where we talked at great length about the importance of being a team.

And so I'd like to bring that message to you as well. You are a religious team if you will. You are a part of a larger team.

I've sort of been thinking about this this week. I haven't tuned in really in my adult years to professional teams. There seem to be some distinction of roles between owners and managers and coaches.

And John I'm not sure which you are. But I know my role. My role is the third base running coach at baseball.

I used to play baseball and there were two signals that a third base running coach could provide. One was like this. Hold up.

Stop. The other. Keep going.

I would give you this signal today. You have courageously come this far. And it is with great pride and admiration in the vision and the sweat that has built this sacred space.

That your teammates look on in admiration. So on behalf of those teammates of the 13,000 Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestly District. The other 64 or so congregations.

I want to add congratulations, blessings, and the great news. That this is what you should do. And that there are more innings ahead. Your teammates are beaming with pride.

REV. ALICE WESLEY: Will the members and the children of the Fellowship please stand?

Out of concrete and wood. Out of dreams and sacrifice. Out of the work of our hands and hearts and minds. We have built this home.

And it is our duty as a team to honor, to honesty, joy, openness, and courage, and love, and trust.

On these foundations we aim to be that kind of beloved and therefore free and healing community. Wherein all believers may dare to share, conscience and forgiveness, confidence and doubt, anger and laughter, sorrow and song.

May these walls hear the voice of the child as well as the scholar. The roar of picnics and string instruments.

The roar of vacuum cleaners and the mower. And whispered prayers. The heated sounds of reasoned

arguments and affirmations of faith. And know
that all are home.

*Glad to be a free religious community.
We pledge to take care of you. Of this
building and of each other. That we
may together do our good work. To*

*help each other. To have our freedom.
To make the world a more just and
more rightful home. Amen.*

Would you stand and join us all in singing hymn
number one.

[*Hymn 1: May Nothing Evil Cross This Door*]

May nothing evil cross this door,
and may ill fortune never pry
about these windows; may the roar
and rain go by.

By faith made strong, the rafters will
withstand the battering of the storm.
This hearth, though all the world grow chill,
will keep you warm.

Peace shall walk softly through these rooms,
touching our lips with holy wine,
till every casual corner blooms
into a shrine.

With laughter drown the raucous shout,
and, though these sheltering walls are thin,
may they be strong to keep hate out
and hold love in.

If you came here seeking God, may God go with
you and keep you. If you came here seeking to
embrace life, may life return your affection. And
if you came here seeking a better way, may a way
be found for you with others. And the courage
to take it step by step. ■