

**Service from UU Montclair**  
**February 21, 2021**  
**“Walking The Talk by Dismantling the Mess: The 8th Principle and Our Pledge to**  
**End White Supremacy”**

**Introduction to Hymn - Markus**

Welcome! My name is Markus Grae-Hauck, I am the Director of Music Ministries here at our congregation. My pronouns are he, him, and his. We are about to sing our gathering hymn, joining virtually, together in song. And in a moment we will join together for our chalice lighting, where we will invite everyone to light your own flame, at home. To prepare for this, perhaps you will want to find a chalice or a candle, as we sing. Our hymn leader is Ami Brabson.

**Building a New Way, #1017**

**We Would Be One, #318**

**Welcome and Chalice Lighting - Rev. Anya and Rev. Scott**

RA: Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever age, ability, history, identity, gender, or sexual orientation, you are welcome to bring your full self here.

I am Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael, she, her, hers.

RS: And I am Rev. Scott Sammler-Michael, he, him, his.

Grounded in faith, we come together to nurture the soul, inspire hope, and bring into being a more just and loving world.

RA: A couple weeks ago we shared a Time for All Ages - “There’s Something On Your Face!” - teaching how we should gently consider the comments from members and friends when they tell us we have missed the mark, not been our best.

RS: Today’s service, *Walking The Talk by Dismantling the Mess*, is a deeper exploration of that discipline, investigating the history of our faith - something which, like our nation, grew up drenched in the myths and customs of White Supremacy.

Specifically, we will examine why it is important to actively dismantle racism and all intersecting oppressions as a duty of being a good Unitarian Universalist, and how adding an 8th principle proclaiming that is one tool to speed us down a path to finally bring about beloved community by becoming anti-racist as people and as an institution.

RA: If you have school aged children, please register for our innovative Children’s Religious Education program.

Now a moment from our Board of Trustees...

## **Lauren Carlton, Board Moment**

My name is Lauren Carlton, and I'm a Member at Large on your Board of Trustees. We are starting to plan for next year's budget. Soon the Finance Committee will propose a budget to the board based on lots of information, including how much money the pledge campaign brings in.

Our financial stewardship tells a story of who our congregation is. We want to keep streaming services reaching people all across the country and as far away as Poland. We want to reach out into the community. We want to join together and fight for social justice. We want to educate ourselves about the things in life that make a difference. We want covenant groups, drop-in groups, Connection Cafe, beautiful music in services. We want to fund those things. This is our spiritual home. Do you know who our most important pledger is? You are. The Board is hopeful that we can have a budget of our dreams. Please make or raise your pledge now.

RS: ...Thank you Lauren. Our congregation continues to move forward. Great to hear.

RA: If you are joining us at 10am, please continue with us for a virtual "Connection Cafe" beginning at 11am which today is a Town Hall Gathering regarding our Care and Connection ministry - our ministry that includes all of our small groups.

RS: It's time to light our chalice, a beacon to guide us through these times together. Perhaps you have a chalice or candle at home... anything that you can illumine.

Let's light our collective chalices as we share our chalice lighting affirmation.

## **Chalice Being Lit**

### **Invocation - Rev Scott**

The 8th principle of Unitarian Universalism states:

"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

As this is no exercise in wordsmithing, we will vote to adopt this principle as a congregation at our annual meeting in June, as it is written.

We begin our exploration of the 8th principle with testimony from longtime member David Hanley.

David is our chief Hospitality Engineer, and a member of the 8th Principle Project Team. In his sharing, David will refer to the term BiPoC - which means Black, Indigenous and People of Color ...

## Testimony - David Hanley

### 8<sup>TH</sup> Principle Discussion

I grew up in the segregated south in Atlanta, GA. I attended a Black Baptist church until my early teens. I left because I felt I could no longer accept the narrative that was given to me. While in college, in a religious discussion, a classmate suggested I attend a UU service. I attended the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Atlanta. There, as I watched the people coming in, I was reminded of a quote I had heard from MLK Jr. "11am Sunday is our most segregated hour". But here, here I saw people from various races, ethnicities and religious backgrounds all under one roof. The service was led by Rev. Eugene Pickett who would later go on to be the President of UUA. Coffee Hour was wonderful as I had conversations with so many different people. I left believing I had found my religious home. This service began my life-long association with Unitarian Universalism.

Over the years, I have lived in Atlanta, Richmond, VA, Charlotte, NC and finally here in New Jersey. I have always found the UU Ministers to be progressive, the members well educated and very creative and, always some talented musicians. I also found congregations who were part of the vanguard of societal change, who stood up for those who were underserved, discriminated against or in need of assistance. The diversity and inclusiveness of the masses have kept me engaged. And, I have never felt overt racism at any place I have attended. I have found people who not only talked the talk but walked the walk.

However, I did find, as, Paula Cole Jones, of the Mid-Atlantic District mentioned, when discussing the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle, there are people who believed they were being good UU's without dealing with racism and other oppressions at a systemic level. There were times when I faced unconscious bias and/or what I considered a tone-deaf approach to some issues and discussions.

Despite good intentions, these words and actions were a definite turn-off. Case in point. Do not proudly go up to a person you identify as BIPOC and tell them about going to an event where you were the only white person in the room. That person knows all too well what it's like being at an event, conference or meeting where there is no one else who looks like them. Sometimes in their own congregation in a committee, team, or even Board meeting. Your comment does not impress them. And, sometimes when they are at those events, they feel their concerns are not addressed or not considered a priority.

Keeping up the activism that UU's have for years exhibited, from participation in marches for women's rights, Black Lives Matter, Same Sex marriage, or supporting the LGBTQ community, we step forward when other religious organizations don't. Now, we need to look inward. Adopting, exploring and following the 8<sup>th</sup> principle will help us do that. And, we will be all the better for it.

### **Remembrance Intro (Intern Ali)**

Called, now, by this testimony into worship, we turn to seek a soft meditation, a deep reflection, an ardent prayer. ...Each as we are called, yet, mystically, all together.

And we enter into this space by hearing the lamentations, the requests, and the remembrances of our community -  
Let us hear one another to heal one another.

### **Candle Lighting - IA voiceover**

We light this candle for Beth McGrain. Her mother died on February 9th, and her father is recovering from Covid. May this candle bring warmth to Beth in this time of loss.

Wendy McNeil lights this candle for the Rev. Betty Bailey. Betty served as interim pastor at Union Congregational Church and was the first woman to pastor at that church and she worked to secure peace and dignity for the Palestinian people. She died on Wed. February seventeenth. This light shines for her.

Nikki Kean lights this candle as a celebration of David Bronstein's birthday. Although we can't have a big celebration, we are blessed to have our health, family, community, and lots of love. Happy Birthday!

Steven Mintz lights this candle and shares: "Melissa and I had a granddaughter arrive yesterday! Willamina Melissa Helen Mintz. Parents Ben and Jess were married at our congregation by Minister Emeritus, Rev. Charlie Ortman." And as Steven shares this great joy he adds that it is "Sad only that Melissa is not here to share the joy."

For the people of the state of Texas, needlessly suffering dire hardship due to partisan foolishness and a criminal disregard for public health and safety. May the suffering be minimized in the face of this predictable winter storm.

We light this final candle for the joys and sorrows that have not been spoken aloud. In the silence that follows, you are encouraged to speak the names of those you are holding in your prayers or meditations, or to write them into the chat. May we hold this silence as this silence holds us.

*(Silence: 10-20 seconds)*

May our listening bring forth acts of love.

### **Prayer - Intern Ali**

Please join me in prayer.

Spirit of life as we move through our days let us not lose sight of our holy connection. Our connections of birth and death and all of the touchstones that we experience in between those wondrous and holy moments. For some times we may forget that we are not actually disconnected when we are no longer in the presence of our loved ones, let us remember and be comforted.

Spirit as we go inward now to seek you, let us hear the clarion call of our faith to seek out and heal the thoughts, habits, emotions, hurts that keep us from living into the fullness of our beloved community. For we so clearly want to be living into to what we

aspire we just need to find a way so spirit let us build this new way let us build it with the tools of grace, equity, and action. Let us build a bold new way in which we learn from our mistakes and we repair the damage that we do along the way.

Amen

## **Prayer Response: Somebody's Hurting My Sibling**

### **Offering - Deb Ellis**

*I pray that we will continue to not be silent in the face of cruelty and destruction ...*

When you give to our offering, 80 percent of your gift will care for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair, and 20 percent will support our justice recipient.

Our February Sharing Our Riches recipient is UU FaithAction NJ. FaithAction is a social advocacy network representing the Unitarian Universalist Congregations of NJ, and has been supported and often led by our congregations members. Working for 11 years with coalition partners, FaithAction acts as a moral voice in the public square, supporting environmental justice, immigration rights, reproductive freedom, criminal justice reform and gun violence prevention, while recognizing that all issues must be viewed through an anti-racist, anti-oppressive lens.

You can text to give, mail us a check or go to our home page and click on the donate button. This is a time of need.

All of your gifts are worthy and they are all received with love.

### **Reading - Deb Ellis**

“Over the years, Paula Cole Jones, a Black leader from All Souls Unitarian Universalist in Washington, DC, identified the existence of 2 different paradigms in our faith: Our 7 Principles, and Beloved Community. After working with congregations on these issues for over 15 years, she realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the 7 Principles without actively confronting racism and other oppressions at the systemic level. She deduced this from the fact that most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture, and leadership, even when located near diverse communities. Paula Cole-Jones realized that an 8th Principle was needed to correct this. ...

Our Principles were designed to be *dynamic*, never a fixed creed; UUA bylaws call for their review and revisions every 15 years. We want to always continue to educate ourselves, explore truth, and raise our consciousness. When we get to a new level of understanding and clarity, our faith challenges us to reflect that.

Ours is the only religion that intentionally builds in that flexibility to acknowledge the importance of ongoing, revealed truth.

This happened when environmental awareness reached a critical mass and got added as a 7th Principle.

We have reached a critical awareness of the *systemic* nature of racism and other oppressions.

Currently, none of the Seven Principles mentions *love*; by including “Beloved Community” in the 8th Principle, it brings our commitment to love higher into our consciousness, teaching us what love looks like in public.

The 8th Principle is really just the *beginning* of action, rather than the ultimate goal. It should lead to restoring support for programs designed to identify and remove all vestiges of White Supremacy and other oppressions from our institutions.

The 8th principle would require action to dismantle racism and all intersecting oppressions a duty of our shared faith.

So, Let us make our *actions* match our *values*.

Let us build into our principles the constant challenge to live our principles in this world and not reward happy talk and empty gestures.

That would be spiritual wholeness.”

Today’s Anthem comes from Lea Morris, whose music you have often heard during our opening and closing loops. The song is called *Be The Light*.

**Anthem: *Be The Light* - Lea Morris - sung by UUCM Choir**

## **Homily**

*There is always light.*

Thanks Lea Morris, and the UUCM Chalice Choir

One way we can be the light is by summoning the courage to hear difficult truths about ourselves and our institutions.

To be the light we need now, after a summer of mass protests after police murdered George Floyd; after a year of Americans of Color dying of Covid in much larger numbers than whites; after an armed White Supremacist insurrection - to be the light means to take the lead in dismantling all systemic oppressions by revising our Congregation’s understanding of faithful living.

The very start of this holy work is preparing to adopt the 8th principle of Unitarian Universalism.

In 2017 the Unitarian Universalist Association engaged in a painful hiring practice that, at its core, was the result of unacknowledged White Supremacist attitudes.

This made us realize we needed to teach about White Supremacy; we realized that dismantling all intersecting evils must be seen as a faith imperative.

We have tried this work before, but every time we have faltered because we grew weary of the work, got confused about why it takes so long to accomplish;

We failed to ground the work deeply in theological urgency and institutional survival.

The Commission on Institutional Change, issued a report after the 2017 hiring fiasco called "Widening the Circle of Concern." The report revealed that people of color in our institutions have suffered damage for decades.

It found Religious professionals of color continue to have difficulty acquiring and keeping positions, often being rejected over fake fights that are thin veils for white supremacist attitudes and customs baked into the culture of too many of our institutions. And congregants who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color, have suffered a myriad of personal indignities.

Here are just a few racialized insults, sometimes called micro-aggressions, shared in the Commission's report:

"Where are you really from?"

"You must be new to Unitarian Universalism."

"Could you empty this trash can?"

"Welcome! Do you want to join the Racial Justice Team?"

"Ooh, I just have to touch your child's hair."

"You speak English so well!"

Imagine being spoken to like this in your congregation?

Sadly, the horrors of our nation's sins invade even our sacred spaces, as they do every American space.

By all reports, our congregation was integrated at its founding - there were people of color present from our congregation's opening, making us unlike most congregations in the US -

- yet systemic racism lurks here, too ... we have our stuff

Many people of color in our congregation have reported all types of hurtful behavior and practices - some from the 70's, some from the 90's, and some very recent - everything from cultural insensitivity, to clueless comments, to being frozen out of leadership due to informal power structures having no accountability.

Though we strive hard to prevent these failings today, without a clear challenge to walk our talk by dismantling the mess of White Supremacy in our institution, we run the risk of once again stalling this holy work.

Your leadership brokers no delay in this holy task

Beloveds - everything in our culture has emerged in a milieu that includes America's original sin - White Supremacy.

Like fish in water, myths and customs of white supremacy so engulf our culture, the depth and breadth of its evil are too easily overlooked or even dismissed, belittled.

Now, our congregation embraces a year-long journey to learn, adopt, and live into the 8th principle of Unitarian Universalism, calling us into faithful action.

So - Why an 8th Principle?

The seven principles of Unitarian Universalism were adopted in the 1980's.

At first there were 6 principles; - the seventh principle - respect for the Interdependent web of being - was added during the final stages of passage, enshrined in Article 2 of the UUA bylaws.

Our bylaws also mandate the principles be reviewed every 15 years so they remain relevant as our faith evolves.

However, the principles have never been revised since their adoption some 36 years ago.

In that time our faith has evolved.

We have moved away from making idols out of thought and freedom; we've learned the intricacies of systemic oppressions and how they intersect.

We have learned the cruelty of elevating the individual above all else, especially in a culture born of white supremacy, polluted by centuries of bigotry and the grave injustices of Jim Crow and mass incarceration.

Our faith evolves; people today look to UUCM to give them more specific guidance of how to accountably live our faith in meaningful ways in the world.

Young people especially resist calls for gradualism; they reject institutions that proclaim freedom, but aren't willing to toil collectively, in sacred risk, to bring it into being.

Young people grew up in the most multicultural America yet; they are adept at being in right relationship with people from the rainbow of humanity's expression.

They expect the same from their parents, jobsites, schools and congregations.

The 8th principle leads us to collective action as a people of faith - Challenging us to dismantle systemic oppression as a requirement of a faith worthy of our sincere devotion.

One of the objectives of our congregation's 2020 Strategic Plan, our 8th Principle Project has the full support of the UUCM Board of Trustees.

Next, two members of our 8th Principle Task force will share with you a slice of their journey.

First, Shannon Gattens, and then, Nicole Gray.

Shannon Gattens

I have been involved in social justice activities since high school, although back then it was just called volunteering. It was a calling I answered with determination and grace. I got involved with actions around the environment, homelessness and abortion rights. However, despite going to a very diverse college, my white privilege kept me mostly blind to racial justice issues until later than I want to admit... Until I learned of the senseless death of Trayvon Martin, and then Eric Garner, and then Michael Brown and then... well, the list continues. I often wonder why it took these heinous acts to open my eyes, but it was then that I decided to educate myself about systemic racism and work as hard as I could to dismantle it. I have since attended trainings, facilitated group discussions and gone to rallies from here to DC. I am on a commission in West Orange that focuses on diversity and inclusion. I recently finished the Fall semester of a UUA program called Beloved Conversations, and I am active with our Allies for Racial Equity



group. When Rev. Scott asked me to be on the 8th Principle Committee, of course I said yes. Why am I telling you my whole history? To gain some credibility with you? Maybe... but more importantly, it's to call you to action. The action to become aware and then go forward with intention. You don't know what you don't know but, we know, and we cannot go back. The effort around promoting and adopting the 8th principle is the effort to become aware and go forward with intention. Without a specific principle addressing the injustices faced by our BiPoC brothers and sisters, we are simply talking the talk. It's time to walk the walk. Do we know how we will live into this new principle? Sure, we have some ideas, but this is not a sprint, it's a marathon. The injuries were inflicted over a period of many generations, and cuts that deep don't heal quickly. A commitment to the 8th principle means we are in it for the long haul - whatever that looks like and however long it takes. So I ask you to join me as we begin to "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Nicole Gray

My name is Nicole Gray, and I'm a member of the 8th Principle Team. My parents were married at All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, DC in the late 60s. All Souls was founded in 1821 by well-known luminaries like John Quincy Adams -- along with laborers, immigrants, merchants, and Black people, both free and enslaved. In 1969, David Eton became minister at All Souls, making him the first Black minister to serve at a large UU congregation. By the mid-1970s, the congregation was balanced between white families and families we now refer to as BiPoC. Eton served until 1992.

I find it curious that many people consider UU a white faith. I think it's because of how whiteness is centered in the US. My experiences at All Souls have not been centered in whiteness. They are centered in UU-ness, and in being there with my dad. My sense of feeling safe and loved was because of how easily we fit in -- the music, the art, the laughter, the cadence of the conversation -- and the coffee, of course -- plus, bonus, no talk about going to hell -- Hallelujah!

The demographics of All Souls and UUCM are different. But the 8 Principles, and the types of people who are attracted there are the same. True, I've encountered my share of microaggressions -- those clueless comments that cut deeply. But it's clear to me that some people here have had very little interaction with Black people before UUCM. I can sense that intuitively. In those moments, I err on the side of love. As leaders, we are taught to embrace emotional control and be true to covenant. Under covenant, we are safe.

True, there are certain white spaces in UU that don't feel safe to me. But my belief in redemption and building Beloved Community keeps me here. I'm excited that we have such a dedicated group of 8th Principle warriors involved in Black Lives UU, Allies for Racial Equity, Beloved Conversations, and the Adult RE Program.

My sense of community has grown during our virtual interlude. Rev. Scott's Baldwin/DuBois class was packed with people who showed up and did the reading. I

felt safe with them in breakout rooms. In fact, I found it incredibly healing to be in community in this setting with people who I know care. And trust me, you have to care. The classes were very long -- good, but long.

The truth is that if one is not actively anti-racist, they are perpetuating racism. The great sin of white culture is not being openly racist, it's benign indifference -- A perfect breeding ground for wily, shape-shifting, life-destroying white supremacy and the oppressions that come with it.

As my 8th Principle teammate Shannon said, "You don't know what you don't know until you know. But once you do, you can't turn back."

**Rev. Scott:** What we have learned in our 8th Principle project programs - Slavery by Another Name, Beloved Conversations, Widening the Circle, and more - is that dismantling white supremacy and all systemic evil must become an orientation of being - a way of aligning our will with that of Universal divine love - a way of judging everything we do through a transformational lens of liberation.

When our consciences are provoked, what brings joy and awe is organized, focused action to dismantle historic evils that have been allowed to simmer and stalk the innocent for too long.

This work is ours, now, for as long as it takes, come what may.

To be frank, I see no goodness in opposition to this initiative.

Is it not unholy to delay implementing justice clearly identified as necessary?

We become moral monsters when we tell others to wait for their freedom ...

So come - learn, discover your role, and create ways to champion collective, faithful action as a people of faith dedicated to righting the wrongs baked into our nation's founding -

~ Let us walk the talk by dismantling the mess, because dismantling white supremacy is a priority of faithful people here and indeed of anyone claiming to honor the divine light that sparks us all into being.

"There is always Light - if we are ready to be it"

Amen, and Blessed Be ....

### **Reflection Question -**

Will you reflect with me ...

How can we embody the truth that a life of faith requires actively dismantling the intersecting oppressions plaguing our world?

Now hush, hush, somebody's calling our names

Sing with us our closing hymn, the African American spiritual, Hush ...

### **Closing Hymn - #1040 Hush**

## **BENEDICTION**

**DH** - *Someone is calling us -  
Let us answer the call to be active agents of liberation*

**SG** - Let us not make idols of freedom and thought

**NG** - *Let us instead embody our duty to dismantle the intersecting oppressions plaguing this world*

**RS** - Let us find, together, the perspective to see the mess into which we were born, the courage to confront it, and the wisdom to fashion a faith dedicated to dismantling white supremacy and all systemic evils

### **Together**

**RS** Let us learn, **SG** adopt, **NG** proclaim -

**DH** and live into -  
the 8th principle of Unitarian Universalism

**Song: “Our Worship Has Ended, Let our Service Begin”**

**Sign-Off** - Rev. Scott and Rev. Anya  
Join us right after this for Connection Cafe  
Join us tonight for a Soulful Sunday, at 6pm  
Make sure to Register for Sisters in The Wilderness,  
our 5 week course beginning this Thursday, at 7pm  
And - Until we meet again,  
Virtually or otherwise,  
You are in our hearts.