

Loved into Being  
Delivered by Rev. Margie King Saphier on May 15, 2005  
At United First Parish Church of Quincy, MA

“Universal Spirit of Love, who has loved us into being .... I love those words. I used these words to begin my Confession of Faith at my Installation Service. My belief that creation continually loves us into being is based on the freely given bountiful abundance found in nature and in the constant and continual interrelated and interdependent processes of creation itself.

In my lifetime I have had two memorable experiences that brought this belief to life. They might even be called epiphanies. One was almost forty years ago when I was a junior in college majoring in nursing. I was studying for an exam in obstetrics. I was expected to know the developmental stages of a fertilized egg to a full-term baby. Suddenly I GOT IT!! As I was beginning to apprehend the early cellular development, I had a mental image in which I could see how interrelated and interdependent each process of creation was to the other - not just in the creation of a baby but of all creation. It was a profound, awe-inspiring moment in which I felt the fullness of joy. I became giddy and wanted to share this with the girls in my dorm. I went running downstairs so full of excitement. I have to tell you, my fellow students looked at me as if I were crazy. They treated me as if I needed to be humored. Their lack of enthusiasm did not mitigate my enthusiasm. To this day I am still filled with awe.

The second memorable experience was this past February when my husband Jon and I were in Costa Rica. For me the greatest value of traveling to a different part of the United States or to a different country, is the experience of seeing everything as if for the first time. Too often we take for granted our daily surroundings and don't see what is there. Jesus taught we should approach life with the curiosity of a child. In the teachings of Buddhism, beginner's mind is recommended as an attitude so that we approach everyday experiences and surroundings as if for the first time.

When it is for the first time, we are truly present. Recently I, along with others, experienced this through the generosity of Jane Mudge. Jane volunteered to speak about Buddhism to the Religious Education Program for middle school students. To demonstrate awakening to awareness, Jane led us in a silent walking meditation outside walking around the church. When we came back we shared that we noticed things that have been there all along but we had not noticed them until the silent meditation walk. We were also aware how easily our thoughts could take us away from being present to our surroundings – how they interfere with us being present to all the opportunities to receive epiphanies.

When I was in Costa Rica, Jon and I explored rain and cloud forests. Every thing – the fauna, the animals, insects, the flowers - was

literally being seen for the first time! But there was a special tree which I knew had a sermon in it – because it held life and death simultaneously. The tree is known as the strangular tree – because it wraps itself around an existing tree strangulating it. Many of these trees, which are a hundred years plus, are huge. Their roots flare out from ten feet or more up its trunk. In some places, where the strangular tree has not fully enveloped its host, you can see the strangulated tree rotting or the host tree has totally decayed leaving a cavernous hole. These old strangular trees support other forms of life – vines, hanging orchids, air plants, myriad birds and insects. The strangular tree reminded me of the epiphany I experienced in college that creation is this ongoing cycle of life that includes interdependence, interrelatedness and death and rebirth.

According to Rabbi Edwin Friedman, “human relationship systems, personal or congregational, function as organisms and, therefore, it is natural for these various forms of ‘organization’ to interconnect.” Friedman, who is also a family systems psychologist, believes all systems – from the smallest microbiological system to the most expansive system of the Universe - are interconnected. He goes on to explain, “Such an integrated perspective hints at an uncanny similarity between cellular functioning in a human organism and the functioning of humans in a family, in work, or in a congregation organism. This is a ‘homogenous view of Creation.’ The biological bridges or links do not materialize the experience of spirit; rather

**recognition of the continuous interconnecting links open new paths for we humans to connect with or experience spirit."**

Listen to Annie Dillard express the experience of the spiritual connection to all Creation: *Ladies and gentlemen!* She exclaims. *Ladies and gentlemen! You are given insects and birdsong, and a replenishing series of clouds. The air is buoyant and wholly transparent, scoured by grasses. The earth stuck through it is noisome, lighted and salt.*

Annie Dillard, who feels herself awash in creation-

*"I salt my breakfast eggs. All day long I feel created. I greet my created meal, amazed."*

Annie's words makes us feel as if we are at the circus, with Annie as ring master announcing the great circus acts that we are about to behold. The circus acts are the endless gifts of creation. Although we have seen these acts before with eyes that were asleep; this time we are seeing them as if for the first time. Annie is like the angels declaring the birth of Jesus, "Behold I bring good news!" Ladies and Gentlemen, Behold! Your are given insects and birdsong ...." We are surprised and we are full of gratitude! Suddenly we recognize the significance of the abundance of creation – all of it, all of Creation is a freely given gift. The show of Creation, that Annie is announcing, is a great dance, in which giver and receiver are one.

This congregation partakes in the great dance of life. As Brenda said earlier, " each one of us is an ember, borne of the fires of inspiration from the past, acting as kindling for one another." Albert Schweitzer

recognized “there are times when our inner fire goes out, but it bursts into flame again by an encounter with another human being.” And when we **RECOGNIZE** the significance of the encounter, we experience our interdependence with one another and all Creation. Brother David Stendl Rast says, “Mere dependence is slavery. And independence is an illusion, leading to alienation. But interdependence joins us with others through the bond of a joyful give and take, a bond of belonging. The bonds of interdependence are ties that set us free.”

This Sunday we are asking each of you to bring beginners’ mind or bring the mind of a child as you intentionally RECOGNIZE our bonds of interdependence that create opportunities for the encounters that have relit your inner light or the light of another. We hope you will express your gratitude

We, the congregation, have freely chosen to be members of this congregation. And as a result we have inherited the gifts, as well as the problems, of past congregations. When the ceiling here in the sanctuary began to break away from its moorings because of years of neglect by previous congregations, we were able to do the necessary restoration because of the generosity of our early forebears. We need to carry on the legacy of freely given gifts of our early forbears so that future congregations can express gratitude for our commitment and dedication to not only carry on our historical legacy, but also our

commitment to the constant and continual creation of our everyday legacy in the making.

Annie Dillard asks, "Who shall stand in this holy place?" She answers, "There is no one but us. There have been generations which remembered and generations which forgot; There has never been a generation of whole men and women who lived well even for a day. Yet some have imagined well."

What do you imagine for this church? What are your visions for this congregation? For Yourself?

This Sunday we are asking each of you to bring beginners' mind or the mind of a child as you intentionally RECOGNIZE our bonds of interdependence that create opportunities for encounters that may reignite your inner light or the light of another. We hope you will express your gratitude in the most generous way you are able – whether that be through your creativity, your dreams, your time, your efforts, and yes, your money. In this way we can fulfill our most basic emotional and spiritual needs, which is a giving and receiving springing from the innermost self out of a deep sense of joy and abundance – the freely given abundance of creation. May it be so.

