

FORWARD THROUGH THE AGES
The Rev. Cynthia Barnes Johnson
September 18, 2016
20th anniversary of the founding of
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County

FORWARD THROUGH THE AGES

Oh, what a great job we did the Thursday night of “Joyfully Celebrating 20 years” of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County! I’m deeply honored to be here, here now, here with you as we continue our celebration. This new podium/pulpit and table are a fabulous and significant way to prepare our beautiful Fellowship for the next chapter of our shared lives here, in this place, with each other. I don’t know who the anonymous donors are, but thank you, thank you!!! And thank you, thank you, thank you to the 20th Anniversary Committee! I’m pretty sure the official celebration ends in an hour or two when helping hands tidy up the crumbs of cake and any little spills of champagne in the Gathering Room – and decide who will take the tablecloths home to wash so the tablecloths will be clean for next Sunday.

This morning I have a metaphor I want to set out before you: weaving as mental image for our individual lives and weaving as a mental image of community, who we are together, in this time, in this place, Under the Same Sky. Remember: weaving: you, me, us, here together in this community. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County. Weaving.

Wikipedia reminds us:

Weaving is a method of textile production in which two distinct sets of yarn or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth...The longitudinal threads are called the warp and the lateral threads are the weft or filling. The method in which these threads are interwoven affects the characteristics of the cloth.

That’s what we’re celebrating this morning: twenty years of warping and wefting in our Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County. You visitors here this morning may feel as if you’ve suddenly been transported to a family reunion where all the other people present enjoy the retelling of how Uncle Howard dropped the platter of Cousin Mildred’s famous macaroons the year before Joe and Louise’s triplets were born. Just about everyone remembers the beastly hot Fourth of July that Grandma Lewis broke her leg when the rooster tripped her on her birthday so that Grandpa Lewis had to reschedule her surprise birthday party. This morning that’s the kind of celebration you’ve chanced in upon and we hope you’ll pull up a chair and enjoy yourself now that you’re here. We’re glad that you are here in our community that “envisions a world empowered by reason, compassion, and love.”

This morning we tell our story this way:

We wouldn’t be here together this morning if one or two or three individuals hadn’t realized in the longago year of 1996 that inside each of them was a restlessness for something they didn’t have but wanted to have, in their life here in Door County. What they yearned for was a liberal religious community in Northern Door. And that person talked with one or two or three other people, and they found that the boundaries of their individual restlessness connected. And then they decided to go out seeking their known world to see if there were others who yearned for the same thing.

One or two at a time, the group of interested people grew, enhanced greatly by the fact that the Rev. Robert Clarke, a retired Unitarian Universalist minister and his wife, Anne, had retired to Sister Bay. Religious liberals and others whose varied needs or desires for a community of faith started meeting to talk with each other about such things. Because these ancestral people lived in a time and a place with a local newspaper, they placed an ad, and lo! The folk of the countryside were invited to come to a meeting to discuss the possibility of starting a Unitarian Universalist Fellowship that coming Fall.

And lo! It came to be. Sunday services at Scandia Village were announced, and the people came. Sometimes there was a sermon by Bob Clarke, sometimes a presentation by someone else in the group or

by an invited guest. And there were music and readings and sometimes videos -- and always coffee hours with refreshments and many parties in people's homes and lo!

By the time the people decided to seek formal association with the Unitarian Universalist Association, 37 people together were charter members. Those people were the warp of stabilized threads across which the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County has for twenty years continue to add the weft, the filling, the unique patterns of our community. Their numbers grew, one by one, Sunday by Sunday, together creating traditions. Together they began to weave a community.

After the early settlers soon were too numerous to meet in homes, they gathered at the Women's Club building in Ellison Bay, and later moved to the Gathering Room at Scandia Village for several years. When they outgrew the space at Scandia Village, those ancestors of ours bought themselves a building and through hard work, generosity, hands-on labor, and a clear intention of creating something lasting, they created a vibrant liberal religious community. Bylaws and committees and elections and annual meetings...the weaving grew longer and more beautiful because of hard work, good spirits, and a belief in who they were and could be together in community. The Fellowship was formally was at Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly in June 1998, a ceremony attended by John and Lynn Lees, proud to carry the first UUFDC banner created by members and friends of the fellowship.

The custom of visiting speakers on Sunday morning began early. Members and Friends, and their families, the people they knew, interesting houseguests from other places. Speakers came from The Door County community and much further afield: leaders of workshops and classes who came early or stayed after their week-long programs; seminary students and retired ministers. Al and I vacationed in Door County in the late 1980s and throughout 1990s. Jane Aldrich was excellent at booking and following up on coffee hour conversations, and I enjoyed speaking at the Fellowship several times, long before we decided to retire in Door County. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is such a very attractive opportunity that these days speakers are often booked a year in advance.

This Fellowship was already a grand weaving well begun before Al and I moved here in 2000. My last Sunday as minister of the First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City was the Sunday the Rev. John Buehrens, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association came for the building dedication of the Fellowship's first permanent location: Koessl Lane in Sister Bay.

Venerable founding Members -- and the ongoing arrival of brand-new Members. Steady and generous Friends, many of whom live elsewhere for much of the year. Returning seasonal visitors and first-time Visitors. We value each constituency. We are pleased to have so many visitors include us in their Door County vacation plans. We have a custom of listening to each visitor tell us where they're from and how they came to be here with us. At the end of each person's introduction, a goodly portion of the congregation says "Welcome!" That is a custom in many Unitarian Universalist congregations, and I hope we will increase our proficiency at saying "Welcome! all together. There's a special thrill when someone introduces himself or herself as soon-to-be residents of Door County.

Year round our Fellowship is the location for concerts and films and justice-making meetings; for art exhibits and poetry readings and religious education classes and workshops; and special events for children and/or adults. And there are committee meetings galore to plan all those classes and projects for ourselves, for our community, and for the world beyond. Together we choose to make this place of worship connect our hearts and our hands, as we add more weft to the weaving, which keeps growing longer and more elaborate and beautiful. So many gifts, so much sweat equity, so ambitious our aspirations, so much caring, so heavily-laden are our calendars. So often we see our friends here.

We do too much, and sometimes we worry that our Energizer Bunny culture cannot be sustained as an infinite energy system. We try to take time --to make times -- for our individual lives with our singular well-spring of family, friends, nature, travel, special interests, and Door County culture. The challenge is balancing our individual wants and needs with the buzz that happens when we step into the stream of energetic do-ers who are having such a good time with the warping and wefting. It's rather contagious!

The big secret is that as we weave our community with the things we do and the way we are with each other, at that very same time *our individual life-long tapestries* are enriched by what we receive from being together. We probably should sing the words to this round more often on Sundays: "From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, and from this we live." In many ways, that is the fuel for our aspirations and achievements, for us as individuals and for us as a community.

It's a lovely surprise when a sermon's metaphor is part of the current news cycle that spans the globe! Weaving. This Fellowship. Us. Here and now. Twenty years in the creation, not finished yet, still in process. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Three news items about weaving this week!

1. *In Asheville, N.C., Students are 'Weaving a Web' around the globe by "weaving a web," and not just any web, a global interdependence web.*

Jones Elementary School is a global scholars school, so students are constantly encouraged to look beyond their own backyard. 5th graders in Ms. Ross's class are weaving a web to show how every country in the world rely on another country for some of its good and services; like food, clothing, and shelter.

The students also brought in products that we use every day that is made in countries like Mexico, China, and Japan. Students say the research and hands-on activities that give them a better understanding of the global economic benefits of working together.

At the end of the project, the students are asked to reflect on what they have learned and share their thoughts and ideas about interdependence.

BY TAMMY WATFORD TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH 2016

WLOS — ASHEVILLE, N.C. --

#2 This week there was an article on the ScienceAAAS website about an analysis of weavings that are 6,000 years old, the oldest weavings yet discovered in ancient cultures.

The dyed fabric pieces are small scraps made of woven cotton... excavated from a prehistoric site called Huaca Prieta, which is north of the city of Trujillo in coastal Peru. Huaca Prieta was a prehistoric dwelling that was covered by a mound and turned into a temple...The temple was made of a sort of concrete mixed from ash, shells and sand; over the years, many layers of this material had been applied to the structure as local people renovated and rebuilt the temple. The fabric scraps were found in [bundles](#) lining the ramp that led up to the top of the temple, embedded in the concrete-like layers. They all date to between 4,000 and 6,200 years ago, making them the oldest woven fabric discovered.

"They were literally sealed under these new layers of building, but because the building material had so much ash in it, it leached into the textiles, making them a very dirty, sooty color.."

Ritual fabrics:

The fabric pieces were all cut or torn before they were deposited on the temple ramp, which probably represented a ritual "killing," by peoples who viewed objects as living...

"We see that all over [the Andes](#). They not only ritually killed textiles, but they ritually killed ceramics. Anything that was buried was broken," he said. [[Photos: Journey Into the Tropical Andes](#)]

The fabrics weren't just blue — they were woven in patterns made of blue-dyed yarn, natural off-white cotton and bright-white thread made from milkweed, a very rare textile in South America... (I liked the milkweed/Monarch butterflies/Door County connection.)

3) This New Fabric Harvests Energy from the Sun and Wind

Written by **MICHAEL BYRNE**

September 12, 2016 // 11:00 AM EST

A few summers ago I was living in a tent in the high desert of far southwestern Colorado. In terms of weather, there were two things that defined the locale: wind and sun. Both were relentless, and I can still hear the sharp whapping and billowing of nylon subjected to the same wind gusts that had been filing smooth the redstone of the Colorado Plateau for many thousands of years.

Living in a tent in the desert is a bit paradoxical for a technology journalist. You wind up spending a lot of time at the library in town charging devices.

Some future version of me might not have to go through the hassle, however. Engineers are developing fabrics that can harvest not just solar energy, but mechanical energy as well. The material of the tent itself could be purposed as a portable wind farm, with all of that whapping and billowing being converted into voltage to charge portable electronics and beyond make them good candidates for wearable electronics. A human walking in sunlight wearing a 4 cm by 5 cm section of the material is capable of generating an average output of around .5 mW. Given human biomechanical movement such as hand-shaking, the material could power a commercial capacitor with up to 2 volts per minute. "It is worth noting that the hybrid power textile is not limited to wearable applications," Wang and co. write. "It can also act as a piece of flag, harvesting energy from sunlight and ambient wind blowing, and the delivered power is also capable of charging personal electronics as well as driving electrochemical reactions for self-powered water splitting. In addition, the hybrid power textile was also demonstrated to generate power from weak sunlight and wind from a moving car in a city location on a cloudy day, which also indicates its decent capability of working even in a harsh environment." The study emphasizes several times that the new material is robust and all but ready for integration into industrial textile production processes. It could be something we wear or use for shelter or fly on a flagpole, but the textile can also be scaled up as well, offering power generation at a much larger capacity. Will the energy future include hillsides covered over in parachute power generators? For now I'll settle for a charged phone...

The online article contained diagrams of how the high tech strands were woven together, warp and weft.

In 1993 I wrote a prayer poem to open a weekend retreat for the Board Retreat for the First Unitarian Church of Dallas. It is a touchstone in my life. It's about braiding, but I think there's enough of a cousin-like connection between weaving and braiding to share this with you today.

Knowing. Doing. Being.
Three strands to be braid together into the whole to make a life.

Knowing.
We are so good at knowing.
Quick-witted. Intelligent. Well educated. Bright. Perceptive.
We can trust our minds to tell us important truths.
Knowing.

Doing.
We are are good doers.
We have good judgment. Many skills. A willing heart. Busy hands.
We understand bureaucracies and can wend our way through red tape.
We want to fix things because our hearts are good--
and because we are so good at it.
Doing.

Being.
Just being. Here. Now. Enough. Nothing other than just what is.
Nothing demanded. Nothing sought. Nothing claimed.
Sustained as part of a Oneness that is me and not-me.
Breathe. Smile.
Being.

I look at the braid of my week.
Brilliant strands of Knowing. Sturdy strands of Doing.

Gossamer strands of Being,
just barely holding the pattern of left over right, right over left,
left over right, right over left.

The braid of my life grows a little lop-sided as I try to will Being
into the braid because I know it needs to be there,
but I've got a little Being-deficit this week that I think I'll try to hide
behind these impressive strands of Knowing and Doing..
Knowing. Doing. Being.

Knowing. Doing. Being.
Three strands to be braided together into the whole to make a life.

Cynthia B. Johnson August 27, 1993

And these closing words are an invitation to our shared tomorrows at the Door County Unitarian
Universalist Fellowship:

“The Music of the Earth” Sara Moores Campbell

Let us listen to the music of the earth and be glad we have the ears to hear and the heart space willing to
be widened. (CBJ words here)

For the inspiration of winter's requiem, we give thanks.
For the renewal of spring's symphony, we give thanks.
For the lullabies of summer nights that cradle us in a vast universe, we give thanks.
For the oratorios (or' a tor' ee oos) of autumn that stir our restless spirits, we give thanks.
For the songs we sing together and the tunes that make us dance, and for the harmony of friendship, we
give thanks.

We listen, too, for the discordant notes:
--to the cries of children...where the sound of gunfire masks the melodies of daily life.
--to the harsh interruption of illness that come too soon for too many and isolate them from the
music they long to sing.

Learning to match our steps to the rhythm of the music and the pace of others requires attention and
devotion, patience and willingness to falter.
We listen to the music of this earth, a blend of harmony and discord. May it inspire us to compose beauty
in our lives and join our voices with friends and strangers alike.

Yes, may this be so...