

*Our World Is One World*  
Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, Thunder Bay, Ontario  
Sunday, October 11, 2015

**Responsive Reading #651 “The Body Is Humankind”** Norman Cousins [an American essayist; his most familiar book was *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient*, 1979]

I am a single cell in a body of four billion cells. The body is humankind.

I am a single cell. My needs are individual but they are not unique.

*I am interlocked with other human beings in the consequences of our actions, thoughts, and feelings.*

I will work for human unity and human peace; for a moral order in harmony with the order of the universe.

*Together we share the quest for a society of the whole equal to our needs,*

A society in which we need not live beneath our moral capacity, and in which justice has a life of its own.

*We are single cells in a body of four billion cells. The body is humankind.*

**Reading : “We, the Peoples of the United Nations”** [#475 grey hymnal]  
[Abridged from the preamble to the charter of the United Nations; adopted in San Francisco, California on June 26, 1945.]

We, the peoples of the United Nations,

Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,

To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small,

To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

And for these ends to practice tolerance and to live together in peace as good neighbors,

To unite our strength to maintain international peace and security,

To insure that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest,

To employ international machinery in the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all people,

Have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.

**Reading #2: “The Great Lesson”** Olympia Brown [#578 grey hymnal]  
[Olympia Brown, 1835-1926, was the first woman officially ordained by the Universalists, in 1863; active in the women’s suffrage and temperance movements in the U.S.]

We can never make the world safe by fighting.

Every nation must learn that the people of all nations are children of God, and must share the wealth of the world.

You may say this is impracticable, far away, can never be accomplished, but it is the work we are appointed to do.

Sometime, somehow, somewhere, we must ever teach this great lesson:

We can never make the world safe by fighting.

**Sermon: “Our World Is One World”** by the Rev. Suzanne Wasilczuk

1.) **Background**

I’m not sure exactly when I first heard about the United Nations. I guess, in the fourth grade. I was nine years old, and Mr. Jaworski was our teacher. My first male teacher. And Mr. Jaworski provided us with a window on the great wide world.

The United Nations was that kind of window.

The United Nations seemed like a wonderful idea to me.

I didn’t know much about war, just a bit about the Second World War. And it seemed a rather bleak and nasty and sad affair. I didn’t understand why adults couldn’t just sit down and talk things out. That was certainly what they always advised me to do.

And the United Nations said, Yes. Let’s talk. Let’s sit down and talk. Let’s fight for peace just as hard as we fight in wars. That made sense to this nine year old.

Nations united for peace. It’s a pretty good idea. I still think so.

Nations had been coming together cooperatively for other matters – in 1865 folks got together and founded the International Telecommunication Union so everyone could send telegrams, between countries, around the world. And, so folks could mail letters throughout the world they established the Universal Postal Union, in 1874.

The League of Nations was the forerunner of the United Nations. In 1919 the treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations to “promote international cooperation” and “achieve peace and security.”

That didn’t work out as well as its 58 member nations hoped it would. The League of Nations did not prevent the Second World War.

But, hope beats eternal.

In 1945, even before World War II had formally ended (8 May – Victory in Europe; 15 August – war ends in Japan; 2 September – surrender documents signed), on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, delegates from fifty countries signed the United Nations Charter. And the UN officially came into existence on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1945, when China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and a majority of the other 45 nations ratified the Charter.

On Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> [2015] we celebrate United Nations Day, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its existence.

The United Nations has four main purposes:

- ≡ To keep the peace, all around this world;
- ≡ To develop friendly relations among nations;
- ≡ To help nations work together to improve the lives of their people, especially their poor people; to conquer hunger, disease and illiteracy; to encourage respect for each other’s rights and freedoms;
- ≡ To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve these goals.

That’s a tall, tall order. And the United Nations has certainly not always been successful.

This past August we read of sexual abuse – some involving children – by UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. Such abuse has apparently not been limited to that country or region of the world.

So, on the positive side, a number of years ago the World Health Organization reported that indoor health pollution – primarily from cookstoves – was claiming more children’s lives than malaria and HIV/AIDS combined. Smoke from cooking over open fires and crude stoves prematurely kills more than 10,000 people every day and sickens millions more, with children and women disproportionately affected. Beyond the enormous health toll, this method of meal preparation is linked to significant deforestation and is responsible for up to 25% of the world's black carbon emissions. A number of Nongovernmental agencies moved into action, and hundreds of thousands of efficient stoves have been distributed throughout the world. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/nov/22/new-cookstoves-clear-the-air-in-nepal>; accessed 9 October 2015.

Just last month, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted 15 *Sustainable Development Goals* – commitments to wipe out poverty, tackle climate change, fight inequality, and improve medical and educational access over the next 15 years. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics>; accessed 9 October 2015. <http://cleancookstoves.org/about/news/09-23-2015-alliance-helps-change-how-millions-of-people-in-developing-countries-cook.html>; accessed 3 October 2015.

Many of these goals address the needs of girls globally:

- ≡ Of the one billion people who live in extreme poverty, an estimated 70% are girls and women. Eradicating poverty and hunger are largely women’s issues.
- ≡ Pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death of girls aged 15-19; 70,000 adolescent girls in developing countries die annually of causes related to pregnancy.
- ≡ [62 million girls around the world are out of school, and], of the world’s illiterate population, two-thirds are women. Education is the ULTIMATE KEY to a higher standard of living.
- ≡ Finally, girls are often the ones who are responsible for fetching water for their families. When a girl has improved access to clean water, she can spend more time in school learning and less time walking far distances to collect drinking water for her family [as well as being safer in her person.]
- ≡ Girls deserve to have the same rights and opportunities as boys. End of story.

<http://girlup.org/what-do-the-global-goals-mean-for-girls/>; accessed 3 October 2015.

## II.) **Human Rights**

In 1948, under the prodding and direction of Eleanor Roosevelt (who chaired the Commission that drafted), the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. That document is something the United Nations got very, very right. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* tells us that everyone deserves "basic **rights** and **freedoms**... regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language, or other status."

As a child, that sounded right and good to me. It still sounds good.

In April of 1980 I walked into a Unitarian Universalist church for the very first time. The church was the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I was heading for the basement, to attend the start-up meeting of an Amnesty International group. I had lived in the neighborhood for several years, and had no idea what Unitarian Universalists stood for.

But I did know that I wanted to find some way to speak up for others.

At that time I was a member of the War Resisters' League and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. I subscribed to *The Progressive* magazine out of Madison, Wisconsin and to *Akwesasne Notes*, a newspaper about Native American concerns that came out of the Mohawk Nation. I had read feminist writers: Germaine Greer, Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan.

I wanted to find out more about the world, how its peoples lived and fared. People different from the Polish Catholic Americans and the German Lutheran Americans, and the other white Anglo Saxon Protestant Americans with whom I'd grown up.

I wanted to find out about the world, and find some way to speak out against injustice, and to work for fairness.

I picked up some pamphlets at the front door of that Unitarian church. And when I got home that night I read:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The interconnected web of all existence of which we are a part;...

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;...

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;...

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all...

*Sounded good to me. It still sounds right and good to me.*

*Just like with the United Nations, it's been a love affair ever since.*

*But, just like the United Nations, we haven't been as successful as we would like, in establishing peace and liberty, compassion and justice, for all.*

*These days I also have a love affair with a chorus. It's called Echoes of Peace. Echoes of Peace sings songs of love and justice, our interconnectedness, our efforts to promote peace and equity and compassion among us.*

*One of those songs is based on the words of a German pastor and activist, Martin Niemoller (1892-1984).*

*Niemoller wrote:*

When the Nazis came for the communists,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a communist.

When they locked up the social democrats,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a social democrat.

When they came for the trade unionists,  
I did not speak out;  
I was not a trade unionist.

When they came for the Jews,  
I remained silent;  
I wasn't a Jew.

When they came for me,  
there was no one left to speak out.

[http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Martin\\_Niem%C3%B6ller](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Martin_Niem%C3%B6ller); accessed 20 October 2011.

SUNG:

*I'm not a communist, so when they came for the communists...  
I held my tongue  
Minded my own business like a good neighbor  
I trusted that justice was done.*

*I didn't ask what was their crime  
It was their sadness... wasn't mine  
I didn't care where they were sent  
By my silence I gave my consent... by my silence I gave my consent.*

Our director, Sara Thomsen, wrote another verse [that I've adapted] :

*I'm not Algonquin, Chippewa, Mohawk,  
Ojibwe, or Metis or Cree  
When they came for the children  
To boarding schools taken away  
I had nothing to say.*

*I was ok, 'cause I was a citizen... and I was free  
I didn't care, now there's nobody there  
No one to speak out for me.*

*I didn't ask what was their crime  
It was their sadness... wasn't mine  
I didn't care where they were sent  
By my silence I gave my consent...  
by my silence I give my consent.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QTYKqXqB7g>; accessed 24 October 2012.

1.) ***And Here Is the Hope***

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."*

Eleanor Roosevelt, crafter of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, said that.

On the United Nations' website I discovered a quiz about human rights and human rights activists. Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress. Cesar Chavez, the Mexican-American Farmers Association and the Delano grape boycott – my first boycott of a product. Gandhi's commitment to total non-violence, mass civil disobedience and peace. Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat. Martin Luther King, Jr. Desmond Tutu. Many familiar names.

But I also learned about human rights activist Shirin Ebadi, the first woman in Iran to serve as a judge, and the first Muslim woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize.

I learned of Val Kalende, a Ugandan activist who came out as a lesbian and works to oppose the anti-homosexuality bill proposed by the Ugandan government.

I was reminded of Nkosi Johnson, a South African child born HIV-positive and a speaker at the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference. Nkosi encouraged people with HIV/AIDS to be open about the disease and fight for equality. Nelson Mandela referred to Nkosi as an "icon for the struggle of life."

<http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/2010/test.asp>; accessed 19 October 2012.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Utah Phillips (1935-2008) was an American singer, songwriter, activist, hobo, proponent of labor unions and the working folk.

In 2001 Utah Phillips and Paul Kamm wrote *Ship Gonna Sail*.

Paul Kamm says of *Ship Gonna Sail*, "this is Utah's entreaty to us to not lose hope. It is a reminder that many others before us have struggled to bring about positive change, often at great personal cost to themselves.

The parts that make up a ship are many and varied, and each is important in its own way. We benefit from the work of others, as others will some day benefit from ours."

<http://labornotes.org/2011/02/ship-gonna-sail>; accessed 20 October 2011.

Working on a ship we may never sail on  
Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday  
Working on a ship we may never sail on  
But we're gonna build it anyway

**SUNG:**

*Sojourner Truth said "ain't I a woman?"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*  
*Mother Jones said, "no child labor!"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*  
*Eugene Debs said "no more prisons!"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*  
*Joe Hill said "Don't mourn, organize!"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*

*Working on a ship we may never sail on*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*  
*Working on a ship we may never sail on*  
*But we're gonna build it anyway*

SUNG: *Dorothy Day said "swords into plowshares!"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*  
*Martin Luther King said "I have a dream!"*  
*Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*

Working on a ship we may never sail on  
Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday  
Working on a ship we may never sail on  
But we're gonna build it anyway

Ken & Jean Morrison  
Sharondale Stone  
Medhat Rahim...

Who else in this Fellowship, in Thunder Bay, in Ontario, in Canada has been working on that ship?

**SUNG:**

*Now they're all gone but we're still building  
Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday  
With the winds of peace and the waters of justice  
Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday*

Working on a ship we may never sail on  
Ship's gonna sail, gonna sail someday  
Working on a ship we may never sail on  
But we're gonna build it anyway  
We're gonna build it anyway  
We're gonna build it anyway

The United Nations is a dream, a beautiful dream, a ship made of many and varied parts. Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday.

The Canadian Unitarian Council is a dream, a ship made of many and varied parts. Still building. Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday.

The Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship is a beautiful dream – a collection of memories of the founders, a work of community in the present, a hope for the future of our children and their children, and their children. With the winds of peace and the waters of justice, ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday.

None of these organizations will change the world by itself. And, in our lifetimes, we will not see all the changes we want to happen.

But, our world is one world: what touches one affects us all: the seas that wash us round about, the clouds that cover us, the rains that fall.

Our world is one world, just like a ship that bears us all: where fear and greed make many holes, but where our hearts can hear a different call.

A different call. A dream of peace and justice, human rights for all. A ship well worth building. Sailing with the winds of peace, on the waters of justice. Ship gonna sail, gonna sail someday.

May it be so. May we make it so. Blessed Be. And Amen.