

Unitarian Universalist Church of Wakefield
Reverend Maddie Sifantus
September 13, 2009
HOMILY *Ingathering: Here we go again!*

So, here we go again. Another year at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Wakefield. We walked up the same front steps. Here are those same four walls. We have said together again our words at the chalice-lighting, our covenant stating what we are about here as we gather again, as have many before us. As we broke for the summer in June, those who were here that day participated in the traditional Flower Communion celebrated in most Unitarian Universalist churches. We have just participated in another newer tradition—the water communion. We are gathered in.

And yet—and yet—there are the inevitable changes, just as the surface of a lake is constantly changing and a river flows over rocks and rills, sometimes in placid pools, other times raging towards the sea after a storm. We each enter here not the same person we were when summer began in June. We have each had different experiences, different learnings, and different life passages during the summer months.

We look around and even here there are changes. And we can rejoice in many of them! I am speaking this morning through new microphones and sound equipment. And if you haven't heard already, we have a new roof over our heads! Many thanks to all of you who supported it financially, to those on the property committee, the Board of Management—to all of you! When you see Matthew Jewett, please give him a special thanks for all he did to shepherd the projects, including my phone calls when I discovered one Sunday when I arrived for our Meditation Practice Group that the ceiling in my office and over the stage were caving in! Matthew is not with us this morning because he is participating in the Arthritis Walk in Boston today. So even as we gather, there are those who are not with us.

This brings me to others who are not here with us this morning. Some of those missing faces, like Matthew, may just be out of town today, but others may no longer be with us, for one reason or another. Those of you who have read your *Gleam*, our church newsletter, know that our long-time volunteer music director and member, Jeff Workman, and our Religious Education Director of the last several years, Starbuck Hersey, have moved on over the summer months for personal reasons. We will miss them both and their contributions to our community. Each had their gifts and were important to us in different ways.

Here we go again. It is time for us to welcome each other, the familiar faces and those new or newer among us. It is time to open our circle and share the good news of Unitarian Universalism with our friends and neighbors in the Wakefield community. Several of you have been hard at work this summer meeting to discuss how to bring new energy and excitement to our community. This initiative came organically out of our last several services at the end of last year and a couple of newer members brainstorming with some folks who have been around for a while. You may have seen the new pamphlet they produced or the article that Gary Band wrote about us in the local paper. You are invited to stay for a short while after church next Sunday to talk about this new initiative, and we hope that many folks from the church will join us to hear about and give your input on what is in the works—or what could be. It won't need to be a long meeting but it is an important. And you will also have plenty of ways to give input in other ways this year and be hearing much more about our ministries together in the coming weeks. Here we go again.

These ministries are of course not all we do together but are rather focusing areas, celebrating and encouraging what we already have been doing together. These three are how we welcome each other in this community, with a special emphasis on welcoming our LGBT members, friends and neighbors, intentionally creating a safe space and seeking justice for all; environmental action, promoting stewardship of the earth; and the ministry of music, touching the heart with the universal language of music.

Continuing to ride the waves of change , next Sunday evening at 7 PM, Lucy Skeldon, Susan Kilkelly and I will be convening a conversation about religious education here at our church. As we decide what kind of program we would like to have as we go forward after Starbuck's unexpected departure, I am looking at this as an opportunity rather than a challenge. What would education across the lifespan look like for us here? I will be devoting the service next Sunday to thinking about religious education for all of us—whether through the sermon, at committee meetings or in the traditional way of classes. I will raise some ideas and we want to hear yours at the evening meeting. After all we are all on the *Blue Boat Home* together, “casting questions into the deep.”¹ What would multigenerational worship and education look like here at UU Wakefield?

¹ *Singing the Journey*, 1064.

Also in the coming weeks, Board of Management member Sheila Moran and I plan to have conversations about social action. Please let us know if you would be part of that conversation.

What role do you want to have here? Do you want to tell a Story for All Ages at the Sunday service? Do you want to join our choir? Do you want to teach a course or be part of the religious education effort? Do you want to help with the Craft Fair? Perhaps all you have time for this fall is to come to church most Sundays or attend our Meditation Practice Group and that's okay too.

So here we go again. There is a lot going on here, and I am excited to see it unfold over the next weeks and months. We will need all hands on deck, and it may not always be a calm sea, but I guarantee that “waves will uphold us and the winds will urge us on.”²

May it be so.

² Ibid.