

It's All About Us
Association Sunday

October 16, 2011
Rev. Walter LeFlore

It's all about us. Yes, today it's all about us. I say this without fear of being accused of being selfish, self-centered or egotistic?

Today, this morning, here and now, without hesitation, without equivocation, I say it's all about us. You can't listen to words such as June's, and think selfish egotism. You can't be around folks who have given so much of themselves and their money for so many years in support of a place like this and think selfish, egotism.

Yes, It's all about us, our past, our present and our future. US, is a very small word, but it's meaning can be big and powerful...at least if we mean it in a Universalist way. If we really mean US and not merely some mirror image of self or some extension of self, then US has an important meaning.

But all too often, us is used as a small word; referring to people who believe as we do, eat the way we eat, dress the way we dress. It can refer to people of our own skin color and cultural traditions. Us can refer to people whose sexual orientation is the same as mine or yours. Or people in the same age group or of the same political persuasion as ourselves.

All of these can be necessary and meaningful distinctions. Such groupings have their time, place and appropriateness, but they can never encompass the larger meaning of US. Our Universalist forefathers, George de Benneville, John Murray, Hosea Ballou, Benjamin Rush and scores of others, seemed to have some deep, internalized understanding of this. These folks said, in one form or another, if God is a loving God, he couldn't, wouldn't condemn so many to damnation. If God was a loving God then he would be on the side of salvation for all of us. God would be standing on the side of love.

This important notion laid the foundation for our current belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. These are the beliefs we profess and are called to live into, to live out, to manifest.

OUR UU association of congregations, along with our individual churches and fellowships, exist to assist us in living out our beliefs in the biggest meaning of US. These various manifestations of institution do not exist to serve our personal, self oriented, egoist needs for companionship, friendship and a sense of belonging.

This is a construct that so many of us miss, or simply forget. Now, the UUA, various congregations and associated groups, at different points in time, have certainly catered to my ego needs of being liked, of being in community. And I genuinely hope

they have allowed your egos to be stroked, and allowed you to feel valued and appreciated as well. BUT that is not the primary reason we come together as a faith community.

We gather, we covenant, to be about something bigger than any one of us as individuals or individual congregations. We seek to impact the world around us, to make this place a better place to live and rear our children. We seek social justice, we seek equity in human relations and we seek to honor and value the interconnected web of life. These concepts, ideas and beliefs are the epitome of the larger definition of US.

When we forget this or get lost in our own “goodness”, we become merely a club or a self-defined group of the “good guys”, separate and distinct from others, and yes, if pressed, we’d admit to being better than the rest.

We must step up to be shepherds and stewards of our values, beliefs and of our mission in the world, regardless of how well or ill-defined it may be. We, as the Fellowship of Poughkeepsie, need to gain better clarity of what we as a congregation are all about, what we are called to be and do.

Today I stand in front of you as a prophet and point to a bigger calling, a better set of behaviors and a deeper commitment to our values and beliefs. I call you to stand taller in service of what is our work, our role in this community, and the world in which we live. I challenge us all to be the bigger person we are able to be and to support the growth and achievements of our fellow travelers.

Let us join in support of each other in being the best we can be. Talk to our elders who have walked the path before we even knew there was a path. Seek the wisdom they have gained from being in community, find the spirit that allowed them to help create and sustain what has come to be our spiritual home. And let us do it together. Let us be ever mindful, that US is a very big word.

And may it be so. Amen