

Sharing the Lifeboat of the Future

Shared at Shadow Rock UCC

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After a ship sank in the ocean, three men ended up stranded in a lifeboat. They floated around for days without food or water. One afternoon a bottle floated up to the boat. The men grabbed the bottle and when they pulled the cork out of the bottle, a genie appeared.

'I'll grant each of you a single wish,' said the genie.

'I wish I was home,' said the first man. Then, poof! he disappeared.

'I wish I was home, too,' said the second man. Poof! He disappeared too.

The third man looked around. 'Gee, I'm kind of lonely,' he said. 'I wish my friends were here with me.'

This is our last Sunday for exploring our various connections with and through Shadow Rock United Church of Christ. We really have barely scratched the surface but we have done some important work and we have had some important conversations.

Today I want to ask the question, “Why is any of this important?” Do we or the world even need a Shadow Rock spiritual community? Can we not all go our own way and do our own thing?

The answer of course is “YES”. No one, no institution, no organization, no nation, and no empire is indispensable. While this is true it is also true that because we do exist and we share this particular time and place in history we bring something incredible and valuable to the table of our community.

We recognize its importance for our children. We want to pass on something to our children.

Fun experiences

Values of compassion, honesty, integrity, hope, and healing

Reinforce their sense of being unique and unrepeatable

Make them emotionally and spiritually strong

A place and people that is safe and reinforces what is important

A wider support network for the journey

Not only is this true for our children but it is true for adults as well. It may be easier to acknowledge this need for our children than it is to admit it for ourselves. I suspect there is some secret desire for connection and belonging for adults but there is a kind of denial. I see this dynamic in conversation with parents as they come back to church towing their children with them but it is the eyes of the parents that get a special gleam when we talk about faith issues. I have heard many parents during confirmation orientation say that they wish they could do it again because it is now at this time in their lives they feel they are ready.

All of this is true and underlying this is an assumption about what it means to be human. The assumption was mentioned last week and it is this; spiritual community is a basic human need.

Our own growth and development as a human being is a number of internal tensions

Individual (isolation) and belonging (enmeshment):
Quiet, solitude and rootedness and support
With + Duty = Community

A balance/well roundedness

Not only do we need this for our own individual health and well being but it is essential for our survival as a species. Our time on this planet is limited if we continue to pursue our own individual self serving agendas. Our lives and the agendas of forces larger than us are very much intertwined and we need spiritual community to discern the way forward. The agendas that are destroying our families, communities, and world are ecological, economic, and political.

The sermon began with the question, "Why is any of this important?" I would say none of it is important if all it is, is a way to perpetuate our denial, provide rubber stamp approval for destructive forces of greed and power hoarding, and comfort us as we go over the Niagara Falls of history in our life boat.

This is why we need each other and this is why our mission to engage secular people with life's greatest possibilities is so important. We need each other because as a congregation we need to use our God given prophetic voice to speak truth to power and shape life together on this planet.

About a year ago, Rev. Bill Smith expressed his concern about the growing debt of our world economy and he expressed his concern about what kind of future were we leaving for our grandchildren. He was indeed asking the right questions. The future is a life boat that all of us build together and all the children of the earth share.

I do not want to get into the hyperbole of any extreme political views. I am not into parroting other voices. I have concerns about the future that are all my own.

I am concerned about the debt and the kind of world we are leaving for our children, but I do not believe the budget can be balanced by demonizing unions, teachers, welfare recipients, immigrants, or the federal government. I think it is an issue of justice that we address the issues of income distribution through tax reform, and we address the areas where we, as a nation, spend the most, which is not on those who have the least.

Neither do I want to demonize the military or the rich. Many women and men serve in the military with integrity and honor but many decision makers do not send them in harm's way with the same integrity and honor, and some of the rich are speaking in favor of a more fair distribution of the wealth of our nation.

It is not the responsibility of our fellowship to demonize anyone but it is the responsibility of our fellowship to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable, especially when the comfortable are comforted at the expense of the poor.

It is not our responsibility to take sides politically but it is our responsibility to speak truth to power and call the powerful to account when they lie in order to get more and more and more for themselves and their financial supporters rather than work for the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

It is not our responsibility to name particular politicians but it is our responsibility to name the injustice of abusive political power that is bought and paid for at the expense of the good and welfare of a more perfect union.

I am very concerned about the future for my children and grandchildren when their prosperity is dependent upon an economic theory of a never ending expanding economic pie.

I am very concerned about the oceans being like a pot of water on a hot stove. It takes a long time to heat up and it takes a long time to cool down beyond the actual application of heat. The effects are playing out now and they have yet to completely unfold. I hear people running for political office that say there are "gaps in the science" which is true but there is far more science than gaps and people are irresponsibly playing up the gaps for selfish short term gain at the expense of our children's future.

We need our connection to each other and to the world so that we may meet the challenges together or the future will be very grim for all the children of the earth.

So, we have come full circle. Spiritual community is for all of us and yes, especially for our children.

