

Minds, Hearts and Hands
Rev. Diane Rollert - 19 February 2012
The Ulay Congregation, Negros, Philippines,

In my congregation in the city of Montreal, in the province of Quebec, in the country of Canada, we have taught our children to say these simple words:

We are Unitarian Universalists
With minds that think,
Hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

These are the hand motions:

We are Unitarian Universalists (make "U"s with the hands)
With minds that think, (place hands on head)
Hearts that love, (place hands on heart)
and hands that are ready to serve. (Offer hands outward in a gesture of giving)

Can you repeat it with me in Cebuano?

Those words are so easy to learn. Any child can say them, and even we older folks can memorize them and remember them pretty quickly. Of course, like anything in life, *speaking* is always easier than *doing*. There is a famous expression that we have in English: Practice what I preach, not what I do. This expression is really a joke about how we can all be so good at preaching or telling everyone else how to live, while we do just the opposite. Wouldn't you agree that we adults can be very good at telling our children what they should do, but we aren't always so good at showing them how to live their lives according to our faith?

Minds that think. Hearts that love. Hands ready to serve. These three simple phrases are the essence of our faith. This is the Universalist message that I am sure Rev. Rebecca's father first brought to these churches so long ago.

We have minds that think. That's what the first Unitarians and Universalists said when they began to read the Bible for themselves, hundreds and hundreds of years ago. They realized that they didn't need a priest or a minister or a pope to interpret the Bible for them or to tell them what to believe. "God has given us intelligence," they said. "God has given us reason. It is a blessing from God that we can think. So let us read the words written in the Bible on our own. Let us read and let us see what is written there."

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How surprised they were to read the Bible and find no virgin birth. How surprised they were to read the Bible and find no Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Bible did not say Jesus was God. The Bible did not say the church must be organized by men who rule people's lives, gather riches for themselves, and keep the people from seeking their own truth and understanding of God. What the first Unitarians and Universalists found instead were powerful words from Jesus that the poor shall inherit the earth. They read the teachings of Jesus and they began to see that people are not born in sin. Our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors said, "We are born with the capacity to be good, to do good, to be loved, and to love. Jesus said you must love your neighbour as you love yourself. God is a loving God." Our Unitarian and Universalist forefathers and foremothers learned all this by using their minds, by thinking, and by daring to question what they had been taught.

"God is a loving God," they said, "God will not condemn us to hell. God loves us all, and in the end will grant everyone, every human being, universal salvation, whether or not they have ever heard of Jesus, and even whether or not they have ever strayed from the path of goodness. God will love us for who we are, for the beauty of creation that we all are."

This is the most important lesson we must learn and we must teach: We have hearts that love. We may have intelligence, but without love our intelligence is nothing. As Paul wrote in the Bible:

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

That is why the heart is in the middle, between our thinking and doing. In everything we do, we must begin with love. This is what the Universalists taught. It is love that saves us.

More than two hundred years ago, the great but humble Universalist Hosea Ballou said that if we can agree in love, there is no argument or disagreement that can hurt us. But if we do not begin with love, no agreement, no conversation, no action can help us or do us any good.

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So, we say, "We have hands that are ready to serve." We must take this love that we have and put it to good service. God has no hands, no feet, or body on this earth. There is only us, with our hands, our feet, and our bodies. We are the ones that must make a difference in this world. We must teach our children how to live our Unitarian and Universalist faith. We must show them how to love this earth, and how to love and care for each other. We must show our children how to honour their own inherent worth and dignity. We can only do that by living with dignity and loving and respecting ourselves. We must show our children how to honour the inherent worth and dignity of others. We can only do that by treating others with respect and valuing their presence in our lives. We must guide our children through our actions so that they will take what they learn from us and pass it on to the next generation.

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This is our faith, our Unitarian Universalist faith. This is why we light the chalice each week and come together as a community. We must remind each other how to think and to question and how to take action in this world. We must do this guided by the love in our hearts. We must come together to help each other to find love, to nurture love and to let love grow. We must do this for all the children who surround us in this sanctuary.

And yes, if we are honest, this is not easy. We often lose our way. We get angry, jealous, selfish, unkind, and hurtful. This is because we are human. When we get lost, we have to help each other get back on the right road. We can forgive each other and we can start over again. It's okay. That's the Universalist message. It's okay. We are still loved. We just have to remember these simple words and keep trying to live up to them for ourselves and for our children.

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Can we do what we say? Can we think, love and serve? My prayer is that we can each fully live these words, practicing what we preach, doing what we say. My prayer is that we can teach our children to live these words, to love this faith so they in turn will teach their children to also live these words and to also love this faith. This is what I believe our world needs more than anything, now more than ever.

Amen. Blessed be. Namaste.