Sun., Apr 5, 2020 - 10 a.m. CUUC – Peter Scales via Zoom - **Lux Eterna** - The covid-19 pandemic and Canada's isolation response has caused all religious organizations to close their physical services. In Victoria some groups were ready for the change because they had already been broadcasting certain services. Other congregations have struggled to reach out. Religious and community leaders know that their function is as much pastoral (caring for the people) as it is theological (spreading and reinforcing the core messages of the faith), so not only pulpit services but also coffee chats and social gatherings are shifting to online. What do we want from our congregation in normal times, and how does that change in pandemic time? How do we keep the chalice flame illuminated?

Prelude: *Danse macabre*, by Saint-Saens Janet Yonge

 *Danse macabre*, written in 1874 by the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. …based on an old French superstition... According to legend, Death appears at midnight every year on Halloween. Death calls forth the dead from their graves to dance for him while he plays his fiddle. His skeletons dance for him until the rooster crows at dawn, when they must return to their graves until the next year.

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

#580 – The Task of the Religious Community, by MMR Peter

 The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

 It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.

Song: #6 - Just as Long as I Have Breath Congregation

Amanda: Pebbles of Joy & Concern: followed by singing Pebbles Fall Congregation

Peter intros Musical Interlude for prayer, contemplation, meditation. Mozart Lacrymosa

Mozart composed part of the Requiem in 1791 but it was unfinished at his death. A completed version dated 1792 by Franz Xaver Süssmayr... The autograph manuscript shows some finished and orchestrated parts in Mozart's hand, but Mozart wrote only the first 8 bars of Lacrymosa (Latin for ‘weeping’).

 Lacrimosa dies illa / Qua resurget ex favilla / Judicandus homo reus.

Huic ergo parce, Deus: Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem. Amen.

That day of tears and mourning, From the dust of earth returning

Man for judgement must prepare him, Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.

Lord, all-pitying, Jesus blest, Grant them Thine eternal rest. Amen.

Acceptance Song:

#402 From you I receive, to you I give, together we share and from this we live

Peter intros Song: #1021 - Lean on Me – song by Bill Withers who died a few days ago. I chose this song for today’s service because the lyrics talk about how we all need to lean on each other when times are tough.

Talk: “Lux Eterna”

Song: #118 - This Little Light of Mine

Closing Words: 580 – The Task of the Religious Community, by MMR

Linking Song: #123 “Spirit of Life”x2 (below) – lyrics in chat box, join hands

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Script:

A church without a Bible? A church without God? What kind of religious community do you belong to, and what goes on in there? I have been hearing this for 25 years. Back in the 1990s in Ontario, some of the questions had an edge of hostility. These days in Victoria, the Canadian city with the lowest attachment to formal religion, the questions seem innocent. My answers have varied during my years in Unitarian-Universalism but “community” has always been near the top of this list.

There are three things I want to say today:

First I want to talk about the functions of religious community.

Second I want us to think about how we are going to deal with death in our community.

And third, Let us consider what Capital UU will continue to be during the pandemic and afterward.

First I want to talk about the functions of religious community. Religious community leaders know that their function is as much pastoral: caring for the people -- as it is theological: spreading and reinforcing the core messages of the faith. The covid-19 pandemic and Canada's isolation response has caused all religious organizations to close their physical services. So not only pulpit services but also coffee chats and social gatherings are shifting to online. In Victoria some groups were ready for the change because they had already been broadcasting certain services. Other congregations have struggled to reach out.

 Do you recall that on March 15 our Amanda Tarling broadcast our service to the homes of half of the congregation, on a platform called Zoom that many of us had never heard of? Ah, the good old days! Because of Amanda’s pioneering efforts on March 15, and through Mike Riess’s improvised efforts as Forum moderator, Capital was more ready that we knew, when Dr. Bonnie Henry essentially compelled us to shut down our physical services and move to Zoom only services. I commend the Board and staff for being nimble and action-oriented, supporting us all to keep the chalice lit eternally.

 Two weeks ago I surveyed 15 religious communities in Victoria, reading their Facebook pages and websites. I noted then that all websites and Facebook pages stated which services have been cancelled or have been moved online. Some were “push” and some are “pull”: “Watch this service on one-way video” or “Interact with this service on Zoom discussion.” “Call us if you need help” or “Our worship team is calling everyone.” Three of the websites I looked at had explicit reminders that people needed to continue paying their offering during covid-19. Few discuss (a) pastoral visits, (b) weddings, (c) funerals (Jews & Muslims do), (d) preparation for Easter or Passover, and (e) reaching out to neighbours or coreligionists. I hope that their email chains and phone trees are covering those efforts now.

Passover and Easter are coming. Christians are in the time of Lent.

Funerals and visitations: expectations? Reality? Delayed memorials or online memorials?

 Now, after three weeks in pandemic mode, Victoria spiritual communities have stepped up. Three sterling examples: FUCV story time for kids and families; OBUC Sunday suppers; and Glad Tidings positive tone and active outreach.

What are religious communities supposed to do in regular times?

[https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/the-functionalist-perspective-on-religion/ ]

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 The sociologist Emile Durkheim’s work highlights the social role of religion. Durkheim argued that religion provides social cohesion and social control to maintain society in social solidarity. Collective consciousness creates a reality of its own. Durkheim argued that religion is, in a sense, the celebration and even (self-) worship of human society. Given this approach, Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society: it provides social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs; social control to enforce religious-based morals and norms to help maintain conformity and control in society; and religion offers meaning and purpose to answer the existential questions. Religion is very real; it is an expression of society itself. According to many social science studies, psychological well-being is positively correlated with religious engagement. Many studies suggest that religious people are happier and less stressed than their non-religious counterparts. Religiosity has a salutary relationship with psychological adjustment, because it is related to less psychological distress, more life satisfaction, and better self-actualization. Social scientists have identified a number of mechanisms that might explain why religion might make an individual happier, none of which rest on the explanation of divine intervention or supernatural phenomenon. Certain features of religious practice may facilitate greater well-being for members. These include the following: basic social contact; a large, non-family network of social support; the positive mental health one derives from optimism and volunteering; and coping strategies to enhance one’s ability to deal with stress. In a recent review of 850 research papers, the majority studies suggest that higher levels of religious involvement are positively associated with indicators of psychological well-being (life satisfaction, happiness, positive affect, and higher morale). In these studies, religious involvement was associated with less depression, fewer suicidal thoughts, and less drug alcohol abuse.

5 Functions of Religion Flashcards | Quizlet

 social cohesion. -brings society together.

 social control. -prevent undesirable behavior in society by associating it with negative spiritual consequences.

 explaining the unexplained. -emotionally satisfying answers to big questions of human existence.

 psychological support.

 positive social change.

The Role of Religious Leaders and Religious Communities in Diplomacy

Durriya Badani and Stephen R. Grand - October 20, 2010 - The Brookings Institution

 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: The members of the working group on the Role of Religious Leaders in Public Diplomacy issued the following statement at the conclusion of the 2010 U.S.-Islamic World Forum: Moral purpose must be at the core of the work undertaken to implement nation-building, end conflicts between nations, and prove humanitarian assistance for all whose lives are negatively impacted by war, poverty, illiteracy, human rights violations, natural disasters and religious extremism. Moral purpose is at the very core of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Religious leaders must re-affirm this truth and exercise their leadership, and engage in partnership with diplomatic initiatives, to bring about a cessation of violence against our common humanity, to work to confront and end religious extremism in all its forms, the domination of one religion over another and the domination of one nation over another. […] Religious leaders must be seen as equal partners and as positive agents of change in 21st century public diplomacy.

 Within Capital, we have a handful of events and committees that work – often behind the scenes – to fulfil the functions of typical religious communities. In the olden days, before March 15th, most of us met weekly on Sunday mornings to greet each other with smiles, handshakes and hugs, to form, renew and maintain friendships, to sing together, to learn and to be inspired together, and to share joys and concerns. We strive to create and maintain a safe place for humility, openness, triumph, and for discussing the Big Questions including questions of Life and Death.

 Which brings me to my second point.

 Second I want us to think about how we are going to deal with death in our community. Dealing with illness, death, grief, funerals and celebrations of life are enduring functions of religious communities. At Capital, Amanda and I are committed to our lay chaplain duties during the pandemic. This means that we will continue to perform rites of passage: weddings, baby-namings, and celebrations of life.

 Pandemic time is a good time for all of us to make sure that our Wills are up to date. If you would like help getting your will together, talk to either Amanda or Peter who can refer you to resources.

 If you would like special music or readings or foods included in your celebration of life, start writing this down this afternoon or tomorrow. Please do not wait until you are sick. Try not to think of this as a tragic chore but rather as a joyful way to tell people what you really want, one last time. I can tell you that my job as lay chaplain was made easier by long-time Capital members Lien Patel and Shurly Mazerolle. Each of these women had written the orders of service for their memorial services! Lien had even given instructions to the choir, to sing a hymn joyfully and not somberly.

 While I am on this weighty topic, there are a few more things to consider:

1. The Memorial Society of BC [which was founded at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver] recently published an article in the Times-Colonist, with the title “Life carries on and so does death: End-of-Life arrangements during the coronavirus.” The Memorial Society says that they have discussed with their contractors the best practices to keep family and staff safe during the pandemic. First, all funeral or cremation arrangements by telephone or email; do not walk into a funeral home without contacting them first. Once you have made initial arrangements, only one person should physically visit the funeral home. A useful option in this pandemic time is to invite the contractor to come to your home instead of you going to their office. This keeps us all safer. [1-888-816-5902; memorialsocietybc.org ]

2. Neither Capital nor any funeral home will be able to hold a full celebration of life until the end of the pandemic but we will honour you to the fullest extent possible during the isolation times.

 Unitarian celebrations of life do not usually include requiem music, but they can. The Requiem is a Mass in the Catholic Church for the deceased. Originally, the music was meant to be performed in liturgical service. Eventually the dramatic character of the text began to appeal to composers to an extent that they made the requiem a genre of its own. If it were not for the covid pandemic, I would be rehearsing Mozart’s Requiem these days for a concert in May. The title of today’s service came from the Requiem text, which is connected to everything in this homily:

In Latin: Lux æterna luceat eis, Domine: Cum Sanctis tuis in æternum: quia pius es. Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis. Cum Sanctis tuis in æternum: quia pius es.

In English: May light eternal shine upon them, O Lord, with Thy Saints for evermore: for Thou art gracious. Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them:

With Thy Saints for evermore, for Thou art gracious.

 As I said, Amanda and I are committed to our lay chaplain duties during the pandemic and always. We consider the duties to be a core function of any spiritual community, and they are one way we contribute to keeping the eternal flame lit.

third, I ask us to consider what Capital UU will continue to be during the pandemic and afterward.

5 Functions of Religion Flashcards

 social cohesion. -brings society together.

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Passover and Easter are coming up, and Ramazan will begin on April 23. How should Capital mark those events, if at all?

 Capital Unitarian is lay-led and volunteer-led. Always has been and likely always will be. We are doing all that we can but perhaps you can think of ways to expand our outreach during pandemic time. Would you like to help? The board and staff would be delighted to hear from you. Are you finding community in other, new ways during the pandemic? Are there Big Questions that you would like Capital to address in a homily, a Thursday discussion group, or some other way? Are there ways we can keep the spirituality, the humanism, the concern for the environment, and the concerns of the world alive in our hearts? How can we keep the lux eterna, the eternal light, glowing until we get to the other side of the covid 19 emergency?

Conclusion

There are three things I wanted to say today:

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And third, I asked us to consider what Capital UU will continue to be during the pandemic and afterward.

Jason Opal, Associate professor and chair of the Dept of History at McGill Univ.,: …he is not a religious man; occasionally goes to Unitarian Church of Montreal; does not normally believe in prayer. He wrote in the Mar 21/20 Globe&Mail: “I think about my loved ones in New England and New York. I worry about friends who just made it out of Lebanon, hours ahead of a nationwide lockdown. I assure our children that the virus isn’t interested in them. I think about my students, to whom I’ve promised some kind of improvised class. And I weigh my responsibilities to my colleagues, who have more questions than answers and who look to me for some kind of clarity. I close my eyes, fold my hands and do the best I can: *Look down on us in our hour of need. Give strength to the healthy and relief to the sick. Help us to comfort the frightened and the vulnerable, to stay calm in the midst of fear and anger, and to do our part to fight this plague. Be with us, come what may, until this, too, passes into history.* ”

Amanda intros Song: #118 - This Little Light of Mine

Closing Words: Peter - 580 – The Task of the Religious Community, by MMR