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Rev. Ann Benedetto

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SERMON: DREAM TIME

The Warrior Spirit within us dreams, emerges, and knows what to do. Our prophetic dreamtime is untainted and clean, like a newborn child, for the information comes from the Source, and, is shielded from the ills of society, even if it points to the ills of the society. It offers divine direction and guidance for manifesting our spiritual path, gives us the next step choice, and orders our steps for a template of focus for our Earth Walk. Paying close attention, and listening to the whispers during the silence of our waking hours, and remembering our dreams from our sleep time, augments our right action. We might think of a dream, as seeds of truth-thought, that we notice, pay attention to, nurture and grow to fruition. Getting the house we want, the car we want, the vacation we want, may be gratifying in the moment, but will ultimately not sustain fulfillment. Following our spirit path...or... if you will...consider it, the reason our spirit resides on Mother Earth...in this time, in this place, and in this manner, is the only thing that brings everlasting, inner, peace. Our purpose for being may be simple, and like one of the millions of unsung heroes and sheroes on our planet. Or, we may be one of the stand-out Avatars that brings light to millions. Whatever position we hold, we do not judge, for the unsung heroes are just as important as our famous leaders. What is important is that we all do our part. In the name and concept of non-hierarchy, we must begin to see the world in this way. Our truth begins with a dream, a vision in our minds, held in our hearts of how we want things to be. An inner knowing and guidance, blessed by divine forces, to guide us through otherwise uncharted courses. We all have the birth rite to have our dreams, our visions, our truth, become a reality. As we give birth to our truth, there is a freedom for our souls to be fulfilled, and accomplish our deserved destiny.

Unitarians are known for their superior ability to think, analyze, and move in the realms of logic and reason. Many of us left our religious traditions because of what Karl Marx expressed about religion; that religion allowed people to project their hopes and dreams onto some other world, while enduring great injustice in this world. Unitarians do not like injustice. Our 6th principle; The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. When I was taking acting classes at the National Black Theater, one of my assignments was to attend a Pentecostal church in order to experience the science of the soul, which I did, and that is another story. In the church I attended, the preacher often told folks to happy with your leaky faucets for others have none, be happy if you have no heat in winter for some have no place to live, be happy with all your struggles in life because others are worse off. The church was filled with incredible uplifting spiritual energy so I rationalized some of why that was said. However, my inner perception of his words...his message...was that this minister was telling people to accept injustice and their plight in life, and be docile about their disparities caused by poverty and social injustice. (side note: all the paper fans in the church has a picture of the Washington, D.C. capital building).

As Unitarians, we may have put too much emphasis on intellect, logic and the power of reason. One of the problems with the progressive movement is that reason and intellect may not be enough to change the world. (Ringwood elections) Our ability to dream has been framed by stereotypes and colonization. Unitarianism provides a faith that liberates us from this colonization and materialism, just as UU ancestors Channing and Emerson liberated spirits in their day.

I think we may have thrown out the baby with the bath water. I think rejecting all the mystical aspects of traditions because of truth in Karl Marx's statement, does a disservice to our innate ability to summand unconscious knowing...to our conscious mind. I think we can slowly, and for some of us, very cautiously, begin to bring certain aspects of spiritual beliefs back into our lives; consider them personal tools, added to our medicine bag of knowledge, for our personal and collective empowerment and change.

I'M NOT AFRAID...HOLLY NEAR SONG, sung by Terri Clegg

I want to approach the topic of dreaming from western, indigenous and personal perspectives. The cultural differences on this topic can be huge. There are almost as many dream theories as there are trees in the forest, each of them, even as truths appear opposite, are backed by research in western cultures; often times the research produces contradictory results. Most current dream research, (as stated by dreamresearch.com) professes that dreams serve no purpose, and other past research says they do have a purpose. Western theorists often agree that dreams have some purpose, but disagree on just what those functions are. Saying that dreams serve no purpose reminds me of doctors saying when I was a child, that tonsils and appendixes have no purpose; they are vestigial organs. While it is true we can live just fine without an appendix or tonsils...or one leg, or one kidney, or one eye for that matter, but it does not mean that that organ did not have a purpose. The appendix drained toxins from the large colon, and the tonsils drained toxins from our throat giving our colon and throats respite and time to recover. My point is, I don't care too much what researchers say about dreams, because my personal experience and my dreams have been so potent and prophetic. They have been a warning for danger, an indicator of things to come, and addressed issues I needed to attend to in my life. For those who don't know, I was a staunch atheist for 14 years, from the ages of 14 to 28. My dreams while waking and asleep have been so demonstrative, so helpful, and so compelling, that I could not ignore their presence, power, or function. I had to release my belief system, because my dream experiences were so big that I could not deny them. Dreams unequivocally have served a vital purpose in my Life's mission, and in my overall well being. This is an aspect of spirituality in which I have no doubt. My dreams have served a crucial purpose. Even skeptic Sigmund Freud wrote, "The ancient belief that dreams reveal the future is not entirely devoid of truth." Again, our UU ancestor Emerson paraphrased said, "the spark of God consciousness, and the spark of creative imagination are one in the same."

I had a recurring dream when I was about to change direction in my life. I would always be presented with a crossroads. I would choose a path and it inevitably, led to a bridge that I was afraid to cross. There were dangers on the bridge but somehow I always got to

the other side. In each dream, the crossroads were different, the bridges were different, the dangers were different, the characters were different, but the theme was the same. In my day to day life, I was unaware of the change until the dream brought it to my waking consciousness.

In western definitions (taken from wikipedia), "dreams are sequence images, sounds and feelings experienced while sleeping, strongly associated with rapid eye movement. The contents and biological purposes of dreams are not fully understood, though they have been a topic of speculation and interest throughout recorded history. There is no universal agreed biological definition of dreaming. Dreams are associated with REM, and recently they discovered that dreams also occur without REM. During a typical life span, a person spends about 6 years dreaming. Some western hypotheses about the function of dreams are:

- *external stimuli bombard the senses and become part of a dream
- *dreams allow the repressed part of ourselves to be satisfied
- *Freud suggested that dreams teach our brains how to control emotions and dreams express our deepest fears and desires
- *Jung said that dreams allow for compensation for one sided thoughts in our waking state
- *Ferenczi proposed that dreams communicate something not being said directly
- *Dreams clean our thoughts and release them
- *Blechner says dreams create new ideas
- *Hartmann says dreams function like psychotherapy
- *dreams lower stress levels

In personal testimony a friend shared that dreams keep her on course with goals and integrity and that nightmares are a resistance to something in our lives.

Dreamtime sounds mysterious to the Western mind, and in my opinion, is unfortunately for the most part, not valued in western society. J.B. Priestly, in a book called Man and Time says, if we are to properly understand the ancient peoples, we must never project on to them our own state of mind and rational thought. Their lives were not separate and compartmentalized. Their social life was not separate from their economic life, from their artistic life, from their family life, from their work life, from their political life, from their religious life, as religion was and is defined as the way in which they live their lives each and every day, not something they did just on Friday, Saturday or Sunday. They lived their lives according to their dreamtime beliefs.

Most, if not all, indigenous cultures consider dreamtime a sacred space. The Seneca Iroquois say that the dream world is the real world. The Hemblecha or Vision Quest ceremony gifted from the LaKota people is about fasting for four days in a created sacred space, and waiting for a dream or vision to be gifted to the quester. These visions offer valuable information for the person seeking a vision, and benefits the larger society.

The Aborigine's from Australia, are known for their dreaming. In their culture, dreaming establishes the laws and rules for their society. The dreams are communicated and kept alive through paintings, music, dance, songs and especially storytelling. Their dreams are very connected to the land, plants and animals of their region. There are four aspects to dreamtime.

1. creation stories
2. life and the influence of the ancestors
3. the way of life and death
4. sources of power in life

"Dream time is considered an all-at-once time. Dreamtime rituals allow the person to return to the womb of all time and existence, which allows them to feel connected to all Nature, to all their ancestors, and to their own personal meaning and place within the scheme of things. The experience of dreamtime flowed into their lives in practical ways. Herbal medicines were dreamed to help people. There was no separation between the living and the deceased, making the future less uncertain... for life is a continuum linking the past, present and future in an unbroken connection. Limitations of time and space are overcome. There was no separation between the people and the land and all its flora and fauna; all its relations." (This info is from www.dreamhawk.com)

According to Robert Moss, an Australian born historian, journalist, and professor of ancient history at Australian National University, dreaming in indigenous cultures is not about sleeping, it is about waking up from the illusion of every day life. This has been addressed by many philosophers and indigenous cultures. "It is waking up to a larger truth, a larger reality that is not accessible through ordinary consciousness," says Moss. Dreams can be release dreams, message dreams, prophetic dreams, lucid dreams, reoccurring dreams, creative dreams, and day dreams. (www.mossdreams.com)

For the past 5 years I was having a reoccurring dream that scared the heck out of anyone in close proximity to my bed for I would wake up with what was described to me as a blood curdling scream. It never bothered me emotionally but it scared everyone around me.

*(tell the dream)

*tell the dream about community through fire

*tell the dream about blowing up the mountain

One thing we can all agree on is that we all dream. If we don't imagine another world, it won't be possible. Scripture says, "with out vision the people perish." What we do with this phenomenon of dreaming is up to us. As I share my thoughts and dream experience, I invite you to think about entering your dream world in a more involved way, regardless of where you are on the spectrum of believing that dreams serve a purpose. Your venue for intuitive knowledge may not be dreaming. You may receive this type of information through other modalities.

First and foremost, it is my truth that dreams and visions have guided me to this sanctuary, and continue to support and guide the direction I take in my sermons and philosophy. There is no other way that I could have produced sermons given my Mother caretaking responsibilities these past 14 months. We have also been sent all these lovely people, each of you, that enriches all we do here exponentially. Some other force is with us.

Some concrete UU examples of vision for me are:

#1. the vision I was given about each of you is a light being, letting me know that non—hierarchy is the way to go

#2. the vision that we need to establish roots, build a strong lay led clergy for longevity; roots and then wings... we can fly once these things are established.

#3. We need to pay attention to the seasons, the moon phases and Mother Earth in each and every one of the sermons

#4. Bring back the presence of the Mother consciousness into the hearts and minds eye of the people.

#5. We need to conduct a meaningful search for truth in each and every sermon; especially dispelling societies myths

#6. We need to redefine words that are buzz words for rejecting religion so we can establish common ground. Some past religious practices are valuable. It is what humans did with them that is a crime. Some of it we need to reclaim.

#7. Always look for what we have in common, and hold our differences as enriching experiences.

#8. It is recommended that we consider ourselves as part of an eco-theological movement in order of human beings to survive

Because we are not a one book, one doctrine religion, we may want to pay attention to the pitfall of hyper-individualism. It is important that we can find the common thread in all we do, and still respect the inherent worth and dignity of each and every person's beliefs. That is the challenge of being Unitarian. There are times when it may be

important to operate collectively in our vision and truth. We don't want extreme individualism to prevent us from operating collectively when it may be necessary. There is power in the potential of a collective vision.

One of the greatest gifts of dreaming is that it takes us beyond ordinary reality, and offers a conduit to who we really are, and what our passions are. If our internal dreams don't match our external lives we might consider change. The Huron, a dreaming people of North America have a word for dreaming. It is ondinnonk which means "a secret wish" of the soul. Robert Moss says, "By connecting with our dreams, and celebrating and acting on the information they gift to us, we bring the energy and magic of soul into our daily lives. As we allow our big dreams to take root in this world, we become whole and well, and start living our deeper story. Ancient healers understood that we are out of touch, in our surface minds, with our deepest truths and heart's desires. Our dreams can renew our understanding of our soul's purpose. They can tell us which parts of ourselves is missing, and in the most liberal sense dreaming can make us whole. It connects us with our inner self and with our larger connection to the whole."

In conclusion, to achieve more of a balance with UU intellect and spiritual intuitiveness, I offer this quote from Dr. Jonas Salk who created the polio vaccine: "Your dreams tell you what to do and reason tells you how to do it."

RESOURCES:

<http://www.all-souls.org>

<http://www.dreamresearch.net>

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

<http://dreamhawk.com>

www.mossdreams.com

www.soulfulliving.com