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Theme: Unitarian Universalism
Credo service with Rev. Jozsef Dimeny

**Reading: “At the Teahouse, 6 am”
by Holly Hughes**

Sunrise at the octagonal hut;
beyond, where two decks meet,
a lizard does pushups in the sun.
I see the green, chattering world
through the window, I see
my image in the window.
Both are present; are both true?
A bee enters the hut, buzzes
insistently against the window,
but the window won't yield
to his wishes. I want to
show him the open door,
say *this world through the glass*
is only an illusion but I don't.
How long will he hurl himself
against the dusty glass? How long
will we believe we are not free?

Credo

Sunrise at the octagonal hut—or rather, late morning in the octagonal sanctuary.

How long will we believe we are not free?

Credo is from the Latin, meaning, “I believe.” We ask our tenth graders in the Coming of Age class to write a *credo*. But how many of us have charged ourselves with writing down what we believe?

You should try it sometime. You might be surprised at what comes out.

From *credo* comes the word *creed*—a statement of beliefs pledged by many people.

One of the ways American Unitarian Universalism is distinctive from other religions and from our visiting Transylvanian Unitarian friends, is that we do not have a *creed*.

We do not ask everyone
to learn and repeat and take to heart
the same statement of faith.

In fact, a common way for Unitarian Universalists to start explaining what we believe in
is to say

“Deeds, not creeds.”

Our faith holds us in a covenant:
a promise to walk together in love
and to serve each other and the world
in the name of peace and justice.

And so we call ourselves “a free faith.”

The challenge is using this freedom responsibly.

The poet writes about seeing “the green, chattering world” through the dusty glass of her
window, and seeing her own reflection there too.

“Both are present; are both true?” she asks.

Our faith asks us to search for what is true,
to find meaning in both the world
and the reflection.

In my academic training and work,
theological jargon can get overly reliant on big fancy words.
Heresy. Orthodoxy. Exegesis.
My personal favorite: Filioque.

But in real life the big fancy words just get in the way.
Because what theology is really trying to do is answer some very simple,
yet very profound questions:

What makes us human?
What is the purpose of suffering?
Is there a God,
and if so, what is God’s nature?

In order to express my beliefs,
I have, over time, started using a shortcut,
a little nickname,

I may have mentioned it before: God.

I always say I don't mind if you use the same nickname—I didn't think it up—and I don't think God minds.

When I started Divinity school a dozen years ago, the word “God” stuck in my mouth. I found it hard to say, because I didn't know what I meant when I said it, and so many of my classmates from other faith traditions said it so...easily.

For them it was like tossing a wiffle ball
and for me it was like lugging around a cinder block.

It took a lot of time and experience and reflection
to figure out what I believe,
my *credo*,
for that word “God” to lighten and float in my hands.

And now I guess you would say I carry that *word*, God, more like an egg.

It is strong, it can create life;
it is vulnerable, it can be broken;
it can be thrown in someone's face in hatred
and it can be given as a simple and nourishing gift.

The word has great potential and great power,
and yet anyone can pick it up.
Even you, if you wish.

Even if I am comfortable holding word God these days,
I'd still call myself an agnostic—one who doesn't know exactly what is true.

After all, I can't read my own husband's mind.
How could I possibly know exactly what God wants? Or figure out who God is?

Or uncover the meaning of Life, the Universe, and Everything?¹

I believe I do not know everything: the safest belief there is.

But to stop at basic level agnosticism in a Credo
would be a huge cop-out, and so—
Here is my Credo:

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I believe that there is a mysterious, ineffable Spirit of Love in the world, which I know and name as God,
And know and name in many other ways:
Spirit, Mystery, Universe, Wholeness, Holy.

I believe this force of goodness and Love helps me find strength and peace in the face of danger and suffering.

I believe this Spirit helps me reach out to others with compassion and justice;
it speaks to my conscience and keeps me on the right path.

I believe that evil exists because human beings are flawed and wounded in many ways, including myself,
and that the possibility for hope and redemption is always present,
within each human being, and in myself.

I believe we are all part of something larger than ourselves, we are all connected.

I do not believe that everything happens for a reason,
I do not believe that there is a divine plan or destiny and we are all in lockstep with it,
and I do not believe that suffering is meant
to test or teach me, or anyone else.

I do believe that human beings
have the will and ability
to make meaning out of any event,
even the most terrible suffering,
that this meaning-making is holy and powerful,
and we can use that power to transform ourselves
and our world.

And I believe that God,
whom I know by many names
but who calls each one of us Beloved,
is always with us,
in our joy and in our grief,
in our contentment and in our terror,
in our ecstasy and in our pain.

“How long will we believe we are not free?”

I believe we are free,
and I believe we are contained behind a glass,
and see through it only darkly.

We are free *and* we are bound:
bound by the limits of our minds and imaginations,
bound by institutions and systems;

and bound, quite beautifully,
by the love we have for each other,
the love that brings us together,
keeps us together,
and then sends us forth,
a living flame to brighten the world.

May you seek what you believe;
And may you find it;
And may you live it.
This is my prayer for us all.

Amen.