



Santa Cruz Unitarian Fellowship  
2/18/18  
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**Childrens time with "Wally the Wave"**

Way out in the waters where the whales Misbehave,  
a breeze blew life into Wally the Wave!  
While brightly reflecting sun, star, and moon  
Wally wandered night and day whistling tropical tunes.

He delighted the dolphins who dove in his wake  
and he plundered poor pirates whose treasure he'd take

Under his belly a wet and wondrous would whirled with life,  
full of frolicking fish of every color size and strife.

Squid, shark, and seahorse swam all around  
colorful coral caves where strings of seaweed abound.

Traveling Westward Wally widened in the wind,  
passing long lost islands ancient sailers had pinned.

Wally sure did love to explore the vast ocean  
Free to play all day long and toss ships into motion.

**BUT WAIT!** What is that?!? Far off in the distance...  
A palm tree-lined coast threatened his existence!

Wally winced when he watched waves break onto the shore,  
and he trembled with fear at the sound of their roar!

He swelled tall and steep in the shallowing sea;  
which thrilled several surfers who road him with glee!

No luck slowing down, turning left, nor veering right,  
Though Wally's fate seemed fixed, he still put up a fight.

"What would it be like when this world came crashing to its end?"  
"Will it hurt? Where do we go? Can we bring along a friend?"

Wally closed his eyes with a cringe as whitewater swirled on his head,  
And someone yelled 'wipeout' at a bodacious body-surfer named Fred.

While an explosion of water sent shells soaring into the sky,  
a rather strange sound took the place of Wally's final cry.

**A GIGGLE!** No pain, just a sand-tickled tummy!  
Who would have thought such a fearful end could feel so funny?

His eyes slowly opened to a magnificent surprise,  
a new world surrounded him as bright as the sunrise.

He'd long traveled the surface, companionless and causing commotion  
but suddenly he was more than a mere wave, he was part of an ocean!

One with the waters, a part of the larger whole  
Where before just a weak wall of water, he was now part of the tides unified roll!

Though each fish, rock, and ripple were beautiful and unique  
Their joining together as an ocean gave strength to the weak.

Clams cleaned the water and seaweed added air,  
Clownfish liked laughter, while jellyfish caused despair.

Coral Reefs added bright colors and played home to electric eels  
who lit up the deep so fish could dodge fishing reels!

When it feels like we're all alone life can seem pretty sad  
but all the different members make our community super rad!

So always remember that you are more than just a wandering wave,  
your part of an ocean. So stand tall, mighty, and brave!

We are not separate waves,  
wandering the world's waters all alone.  
The sea lives in us, and our differences create a welcome home.

*Ryan Althaus*

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**"Sermon"**

I try to reserve Wednesday's as midweek- weekends... sacred days of writing and reflection... complete with evening sailboat races and uncrowded surf sessions while 9-5ers cram cubicles.

However, there are many a Wednesday I stare blankly at a computer screen or twirl a pen in front of a whitewashed journal page because I just don't have anything to say.

(Frustrating at first, but empty minds, empty pages, and empty schedules are rare and beautiful gifts despite our inclination to fill them.)

Then there are day's like this past Wednesday, with so much to reflect on, an equal blankness occurs because I've got no way of transcribing it into a digestible Sunday 15 minute sermon.

It was Ash Wednesday, the commencement of the 40-day contemplative lenten season, whose roots of deprivation and isolation were juxtaposed this year by an overlapping valentines day's focus on gluttonous rich chocolate, overpriced pre-cut roses, and various gaudy symbols of love...

\*\*If your a single 34 year old guy Valentines is actually another day of isolation and contemplation.

Add to the mental messiness a slight but persistent ear infection (just enough to cause discomfort and a distracting ring, a pile of undigested scrap-paper notes and ponderings from a recent mini-sabbatical spent meandering Maui's road to Hana,

and reflections on week 1 of a yearlong journey living in my van...

Yes, I am in essence now 'homeless'... parked IN THE DRIVEWAY OF A RECOVERY HOME WITH 14 awesome (unjustly labeled) TEACHERS of whom our "Sweaty Sheep" program has partnered with in providing spiritual discernment and recreational therapy.

Have you ever have so many rich thoughts and inspirations swirling that you grow dispirited because you cant figure out the words through which to share them?

That was my Wednesday, at least until my scribbled outlines and petty frustrations were overshadowed by news of yet another shooting sparking a word-jumbling, emotion-plundering, spirit tumbling dive around the impossible question, why?

I like to refer to these dismal 'dives' as 'retreats' so to present myself as a contemplative and not a head case, but the two can be quite synonymous!

... So I 'retreat' into isolation seeking divine wisdom, again with a pen in hand, ready to scribe the next mishna, gita, Pulitzer Prize novel, provocative poem, or at least quotable sentence in a quest for purpose.

But as today's focus on human relation denotes, you don't find the divine in the dark...

We can only glimpse creator through creation...

Ask Plato... The cave is what we are called to escape, not where we should hide away if we ever want to see past the shadows that cloud our enlightenment.

But light is scary. Its bright and "In light" we are exposed to the world... (like that wordplay?)

But damn is it beautiful... and not only do we each possess a light to share, but a responsibility to share it!

Namaste they say, let the light in me shine on the light in you.

Before wandering westward I paused in Louisville, KY for a decade and I grew a certain fondness for good bourbon and a kindred spirit named Thomas Merton...

a known black sheep turned trapeist monk, whose 'Abbey of Gethemene" was but stone's throw from my seminary campus.

And outside the YMCA where I worked, Merton's greatest epiphany hung scribed on a bronze sign:

*"I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers."*

*"It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness..."*

*This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate.*

*As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."*

Again, we can only glimpse creator through creation!

*Unfortunately, Merton and I, and many of you may relate, share a common flaw... two actually (and likely many more unrelated).*

*They are flaws shared by many a contemplative, aesthetic, sojourner, or pilgrim...*

*We seek wisdom in the caves and crevices.*

*For Merton, even the intense silent life of a Trappist monk wasn't enough, thus he actually built a small shed in the far reaches of Gesthemene where he would retreat into deep, and self-admitted depressing, silence.*

*The second flaw, somewhat related, and equally dire... we take ourselves WAY too seriously, stripping the fun from life and making simple things way too difficult!*

*The easiest path to enlightenment may be to lighten up! (last wordplay on light, i promise!)*

*Again to Plato, the writer of the aforementioned Allegory of the Cave, who writes "we learn more in an hour of play than a lifetime of study."*

*Note that Merton's euphoric enlightenment occurred unplanned, no pen in hand; in the midst of an ordinary day, running errands for the monastery, far from his shed of contemplation, and deep amidst the diverse messiness of humanity...*

*That being so, it challenged the concept of a separate 'holy' existence with the glorious destiny that comes simply from being a human person and in relation with, not separated from, the rest of the human race.*

*When Sarah told me this Month's focus was "Justice, Equity, and compassion through human relation" it seemed evident that we need start from with the 'human relation' part and work our way backward.*

*Sounds simple... but turn on the news and its evident we still have a little work to do so lets break it down:*

***Human:** Derived from the Latin humus "earth, soil," the word unfortunately began drifting away from early themes of humility and humanity throughout the 12th century and has sense grown into a mere noun, 'skin and bones' on a websters dictionary page.*

*However, as we sit in a Unitarian Universalist church we can celebrate this denomination's profession to the creed "that a person's highest duty is to advance the welfare of the human race." A demonstration that we still hold on to the humanitarian essence of the human word.*

*"My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together...." writes Archbishop Tutu...*

*As Humans, humus latin (earth and dirt) we are grains of sand... Think the popular Ash Wednesday scripture that "from dust we were created and to it we return."*

*To be human we need to be independent, a grain; humble, of dirt; and engaged in relationship, building a castle and being part of a greater whole...*

*That starts with the recognition if we believe we are one, self-love and self-acceptance are not selfish ventures!*

*In Christian doctrine we are told, 'love others as you love yourself' and that doesn't do much if you don't love/accept yourself!*

*Our love of another is rooted in our love of ourselves as part of the other, and vice versa...*

*thus Part 2: "Relations":*

*Once we achieve self acceptance and independence, we open ourselves to authentic interaction and mutual evolution...*

*defined through our Independence and interdependence, not co-dependency!*

*Wally would say that our evolution depends on an eb and flowing relationship to the larger ocean, not our crashing on the shore as a rogue wave...*

*You can't talk evolution without Darwin!*

*Little is it recognized that in "the Decent of man," the theme of love occurs 95 times, moral sensitivity 92 times, mutual aid 27 times and the survival of the fittest concept of competition only 12.*

*Lets now turn briefly to the themes of justice, equity, and compassion:*

#### **Justice:**

*There was once a poor beggar who'd spend his day sitting outside the kings temple... he'd awake every morning and retire at night to the same thought...*

*"Why is he so rich and happy while I'm so poor. How unjust.*

*I wish someone would cut off his head and make me king in his place."*

*The poor man's resentment of an unjust world made angry, bitter, and incredibly tired.*

*So tired in fact that one day he fell asleep in the middle of the road and was run-over by the kings chariot who never even knew he'd had caught off the poor mans head!*

*We are called to seek justice for others and ourselves, but the most unjust thing we can do is to allow our resentment to kidnap our spirit.*

*...because those we resent often don't even know it.*

#### **Any Simpson's fans here??**

*\*\*Schadenfreude: (German Schadenfreude, from Schaden 'harm' + Freude 'joy.'). pleasure sought through the misery of others. (the 'ha-ha of Nelson from simpsons')*

*In theory, given, the numbers, we could be 7.8 billion times happier every day by sharing in one another's joy instead of growing ulcers around perceived injustice and schadenfreude. (that definition said pleasure sought, not found!)*

*Equity: As church people we have this calling to serve.... Unfortunately, our serving another, though good-intentioned, can enhance inequality; whereas, in serving eachother we empower one another.*

*Hemingway wrote, 'true nobility, equity in this sense, is not found in our superiority to our fellow human, but our superiority to our former selves.'*

*This divergence between serving the other and evolving alongside each other find heart in in our final theme...*

**Compassion.** *In relation to justice and equity, we find a compassion that stands far from 'sympathy.'*

*Through Compassion, we exchange interaction for relation; transaction for transformation, and enablement for empowerment.*

And its easy!

Compassion is achievable when we share in a simple common-passion!

At Sweaty Sheep, we believe one “common passion” is PLAY... as our mission lies in utilizing ‘recreation to break down faith, social, and economic barriers...’

This sharing of a common passion allows us to ‘feel...’ and feeling is the essence of compassion.

“Feeling does not causally effectuate our being,” states Sartre,  
“but rather makes a claim on [us].”

Feeling allows us to “not just ‘see’ the homeless person but ‘encounter’ them as ‘to be helped;’  
not just hear the other's voice, but register a question to be answered honestly;’  
and not simply happen to sit quietly in Church but ‘attend reverently.’”

Feeling is what ignites the passions and reveals the immense value and potential of each individual  
(housed and homeless, abled and disabled, refugee and native, LBGT & Q, and everyone in-between)

...to be active agents in the healing and unification of our diverse community.

*That all said, its important to know that it is okay to be a little uncomfortable, in fact, I'd say that authentic, equal, just, and compassionate human relation thrive in environments where everyone is uncomfortable and thus no one person has the upper hand.*

And it is okay to acknowledge our discomforts and prefer certain things.

*Repressed discomfort becomes resentment and we saw what resentment did for the now headless begger!*

*There is a big difference between Preference and Prejudice!*

*Preference occurs when we seeing and respecting all the choices we prefer, are more comfortable with, one over the other. It requires dialogue and open-mindedness and allows our diversity to foster a unifying mutual evolution.*

*Prejudice occurs when we choose one without opening ourselves to learn from and grow with the other. It is the root of conformity and is founded on fear and insecurity.*

*Finally racism occurs our resentments and prejudices turn to hatred and we believe that the only way to be ourselves lies in belittling or discriminating against our neighbor.*

**Schadenfreude**

*Seeking joy in others misery!*

*Lead into Meditation focused on our interconnection through the earth (adameh in Hebrew and the root of ‘Adam’... then outward into light with a closeout of ‘Nameste” (the light in me shine on the light in you):*

*Additional thoughts:*

“A human being is part of the whole, called by us ‘universe,’ (or Wally the Wave’s ocean!) a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest-a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

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— *Albert Einstein, 1921*

*“Today you are you... that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than YOU!”*  
-Dr. Suess