

## Morning Celebration

for the Fourth Sunday: June 27, 2010



Art by Delaney Myers

*Mother Spirit, Father Spirit, take our hearts. Take our breath and let our voices sing our parts. Take our hands and let us work to shape our art.* Norbert Capek

*Everything vanishes around me, and works are born as if out of the void. Ripe, graphic fruits fall off. My hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will.* Paul Klee

<b>Preparation: Affirming Loving Community</b>
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<b>Gathering</b>	<i>until the temple bell calls us to mindfulness</i>	
<b>Welcoming</b>		David Easter
<b>Centering</b>	<i>An Arc of Doves</i> by Harold Budd and Brian Eno	
		Nathan Hamm, piano
<b>Kindling</b>	<i>the grail which signs our heritage</i>	Jay Hebner
<b>Celebration</b>	Celebrate the Arts with Me!	Don Jones
	(based on a work by Kenneth Patton)	

I have come to think of the doing of art as a sacramental activity, perhaps because I am witness to the gradual desacralization of the world. Art activity is my grounding - my space, my resource to cope with stress and chaos . . . when life, nature, human relationships are profaned. Art's role in healing is a sacred endeavor (and obligation).

Celebrate the ARTS with me!! Let us sing for singing and dance for dancing. This is our gratitude, being creatures fashioned of delight and enabled with passion. Forms and shapes are insight and wisdom. We bring beauty from the mating of mind and emotion. The images of our inner landscapes are unknown, unique and graceful creatures.

Our arts are keys to doors, wings for flying. Poems are feet for running on new paths through valleys of questions. Our paintbrushes are lightening, opening our souls to see the awesome. Sculpture reveals secrets in the fullness of alternating sunlight and shadow. Dancing is the story of a dream, the dancer, a lively imagination. Plays and stories invent a history of people in uncreated worlds. Music's voice sings a greeting from the heart.

Come, walk with me on this aesthetic journey to art's hidden places. Listen to my song. The melody will speak to you of more than your minds can remember, or my brain knows how to tell.

**Experience**

A New Awareness of Hymn 123 Spirit Of Life

Jo Dickinson

Yes, Don, this Sunday service is, indeed, a celebration. A celebration of our capacity to be the makers of every kind of expressive medium inherent in our human abilities and in our spiritual awareness.

Now, come back with me to this hymn number 123 we have just sung for the singing. I'd like to guide you with the help of your imagination in that part of our brain which gives us pictures, colors, actions. The goal here is to enrich deeper, more personal meaning from this, perhaps, all too familiar hymn.

Please sit back, relax, and let me be the talking voice which invites your inner TV screen, your movie making minds. I'll speak those familiar words slowly and with pauses. You will invite and stay open to what picture, colors, actions your wonderful imagination offers you - only you. Now turn on the TV screen of your mind, close your eyes, and be aware with your imagination and these words.

[Reads 123]

Before you open your eyes, hold on to especially clear, sharp images/pictures.

Now turn to a person near you and share your adventures.

**Affirming** We are here this morning to observe and to celebrate the creative spirit within humankind, the creativity which is standard equipment in each of us here, the natural inventiveness of our children's minds, the creative gifts from the world's musicians, poets, writers, painters, carvers, stitchers, and weavers and makers of every other form of art.

We seek ourselves, every one of us, to create meaning and order in our lives; beauty in our environment; truth in our thinking; and balance in all things we touch. We teach our children, and each other, to create a world and all things in it worthy of our sacred lives and heritage. And so . . .

**Mindful that we share a common world, but approach that world in different ways, we begin our celebration together by kindling our promise of mutual honesty, attentiveness, and deep courtesy. May we become more proficient at gratitude and awareness, that we might more deeply embody the kind of justice and peace which embraces everyone on earth.**

**Singing Together #330 The Arching Sky of Morning Glows**

**Ingathering** *Ish* by Peter Reynolds

Jeannie Sperling

**Greeting** *news of the congregation*

Steve Abbott

This first Sunday of summer is the first of our summer series of lay-led services on the theme of spirituality. Today a group of artists from the congregation will explore the interwoven dimensions of Spirituality and Creativity, and how each of us, viewing the world through the unique perspective of our own mind's eye, has access to an artistic temperament that can enrich and deepen our experience of this universe that we share.

<b>Devotion: Welcoming Memory and Hope</b>
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**Statements** Spirituality, Creativity and awareness

Judy Fettman

From the time I was a little girl I was fascinated by photographs of sunrises, sunsets, mountains, clouds. I ripped out pictures of colorful landscapes from *Ideals Magazine* and taped them into my scrapbook. My father often took my brothers and me on Sunday afternoon

rides in the country and took our pictures in front of brilliant autumn trees or sitting upon a huge rock. I often protested, but secretly I was filing away in my mind those brilliant images of nature's splendor. When I was given a camera at age ten, I began capturing my own moments with nature. And now that I have the time to return to that childhood interest I find the inspiration for my photographic creativity in my awareness of the beauty and power of nature.

Artist William Sommer said "Art is the creation of our spiritual, inward vision. Nature just starts us off."

And Rachel Carson wrote, "Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."

Let me tell you a story. I was feeling sluggish and depressed one December morning, and had trouble getting out of bed. As I headed for the coffee maker, I noticed the sun peeking out from behind the clouds. I opened the kitchen window and found it exceptionally mild for December. A buck stood staring at me like some stationary yard ornament in the grassy hill above the deck. Neither of us moved – our eyes remained locked until he was bored or hungry and moved on.

Then I noticed the thick fog. The live oaks receded and eventually disappeared in the mist, creating layers of trees, one upon the other. The first of the winter rains had allowed tender young shoots of grass to grow thick beneath the branches. December in California felt like spring in Michigan – and I began to remember why I had wanted to move here.

Something bright in a tree caught my eye. Between two leafy branches a spider had spun a perfect plate-sized web. The low morning sun was glistening on each fine strand of the web, the spokes of a perfect wheel, connected by innumerable filaments, each one glowing with light against the dark, foggy trees.

Slowly I began to take in this miracle of the morning. After gazing at it in wonder for some time, I thought, "Someone should take a picture of this." I tried to remember where I had left my camera—downstairs. I didn't feel like going downstairs and up again, and besides, the camera probably wouldn't work, the batteries were low.

Nevertheless I found the camera, climbed upstairs once more, nearly tripping on my old fuzzy bathrobe. I pulled a kitchen chair over to the window, threw off my bathrobe, and climbed higher onto the counter, kneeling before the open kitchen window. The web was still glowing there against the fog, its fine elastic threads trembling in the breeze.

"Probably won't come out," I grumbled to myself as I snapped the shutter.

As I sipped my coffee I couldn't quite let go of that amazing scene. I snapped on the camera again to see if I had caught anything. There on my one by two-inch screen I could make out the fog and the dark trees, and a white blob where the spider web had been.

Curiosity led me to my computer for a better look. On my screen appeared the foggy trees, and between the branches, that perfect sparkling web! I felt the stirrings of excitement rising within me...here was the picture of Christmas in California – the sun, the warmth, the live oaks that do not lose their leaves – and spider webs as ornaments! Pure joy stirred in me. The photo conveyed that sense of awe I had finally felt at the sun shining down in a new day. And with gratitude I thanked Mother Nature – or Whomever – who had indeed presented me with peace and delight. All I had to do to see it was to open my

eyes



Our UU sources include “direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder...which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life,” and “spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.” In the UU Visual Artists’ group, and in the Artists’ Way course, here at First Church I have found important support for my own developing art.

Photography, has made me look closely, has developed in me a creative awareness of nature that surrounds me. As photographer Paula Chamlee writes, “I love looking at the world – there is so much to learn from looking. I see the world as if it were one continuous canvas, a constantly unfolding painting – and I stop now and then to selectively put edges around parts of it....”

**Statements**     Poetry and Awareness

Steve Abbott

As a poet and teacher of poetic technique in college and community workshops, I explain in the first class or first few minutes of a workshop what seems a harsh approach to the work that aspiring poets will produce. I explain that, if their view is that poetry is a vehicle for expressing their feelings, they are about to be disappointed. I tell them this in a direct and possibly cold way: “I don’t care about your feelings.”

This might appear to be a bad beginning, but I move quickly to try to remove the shocked or disappointed looks from their faces. I note that, although their feelings—their emotional responses to the world and their experience of it—are central to creative expression, they can’t expect me to understand what they mean when they say experienced love, or pain, or loneliness. My pain and my loneliness are different from theirs. They understand better when I point out the difference between what women and men can mean when they say, “Love.” When a guy says, “I love you, baby,” he probably means something very different from what most women mean when they use the word. In fact, a woman may respond with,

“You don’t love me. I know what you mean. If you loved me you’d—” and then start a list of ways that he can show his love.

This brings us to the concept of representation: What represents “longing”? What represents “joy”? Poet Ezra Pound said, “Go in fear of abstraction.” Poet William Carlos Williams’ primary statement of his approach to poetry was direct: “No ideas, but in things.”

That is, poets—and yes, there is a poet inside each of us—must use the things of the world to convey something intangible: our highly personal reactions to the world and our lives in it.

There is no way to effectively convey emotion except in terms of the things of the world—physical objects, expressive verbs, and the reactions they evoke. Each of us understands how our own emotions make us feel, but we cannot assume that what we feel is the same as what anyone else feels. Poet Marvin Bell has taken a stab at defining how poetry works, and one statement he came up with is, “What people say there are no words for? That’s what poetry is for.”

That is, poetry seeks not to explain what is but to suggest a connection that exists not above the neck but in the chest, in the gut. Although poetry employs the intellect, it is not so much an intellectual process as it is one that demands that we leap beyond the literal into the figurative, or associative. The awareness produced by the best poetry taps into our sense of things rather than the meaning of them. Poetry provides a way to express how the world is to an individual writer, or to ourselves. And if that resonates with others, so much the better.

We’re all familiar with the basics of this awareness: similes that allow us to convey the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar (“The river twisted like a dark snake through the hills”), or metaphors that convey the same comparison as if it’s fact (“The river was a dark snake twisting through the hills” or the implied metaphor of “The dark river snaked between the hills”), or personification that uses human actions to express the workings of the animal or inanimate world. And with such comparisons, unstated associations arise: “The river was a dark snake” does not directly state that the speaker found the river threatening or menacing, but allows it to be suggested just below the surface of the language. Thus, we come to an enlarged awareness, not so much of what the world can tell us, but what it can suggest to us through, as poet Jennifer Bosveld has phrased it, “making words dance together that never danced together before.”

Another of poet Marvin Bell’s efforts at explaining how poetry works on our awareness states, “Prose is prose because of what it includes. Poetry is poetry because of what it leaves out.” A poetic awareness allows us fill in those spaces with our own reactions to an enhanced awareness of our world. This awareness is an expansive one, one that enhances our capacity for ambiguity, for multiple and possibly conflicting responses to images. The allowance for ambiguity in poetry sweeps away dualistic thinking and opens us to a world that is not either black or white, but is both black and white; to emotions that are not either loving or resentful, but are both loving and resentful. And in this way we become more aware of our capacity for nuance, for empathy, for compassion.

As we practice such awareness, we begin to appreciate the interconnectedness our subconscious—our “mind’s eye”—creates from the things of the world and the behaviors of ourselves and others. These non-literal, non-linear ways of seeing are in tune with the Seventh Principle of Unitarian Universalism: respect for the interconnected web of all existence. In allowing ourselves to explore these connections, we tap into a way of thinking and seeing that captures our own unique and highly personal ways of interpreting the universe.

A poetic awareness allows us to understand, without being able to put it into words, why the wind-driven movement of trees, in full leaf or stripped bare in winter, brings to mind the silent applause of upraised hands by a deaf audience. It allows us to know what an immigrant student meant when he wrote, “I went outside and smoked down my anger.” Poetic awareness allows us to share the emotion of the poet who wrote, “You touch me the way an autumn leaf sets the sky afire.”

**Communing**    the Sequence: the Silence, the Naming, the Music

As we move into this brief period of silence and contemplation, I encourage you to relax, to close your eyes and simply allow yourself to breathe. And as you tune into that natural rhythm, allow yourself to release the world and those around you, to move inward. To move inward, where each of us keeps a creative spark. It is like a small portable radio, a camera, or a TV in our mind's eye. Usually we don't think about it. We don't consciously see ourselves as creative. So we don't tune in that little radio, that little camera, that little TV. We don't hear the quiet signals that seem to come from another place but that are in truth ourselves speaking to us. And so we don't tune into ideas. They shoot across the ether and are lost. Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that "in every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts."

So as we move into this brief period where we can exist within ourselves and listen to ourselves, be interested. Be willing to be a receiver. Turn on your receiver. Receive, not the ideas of another but of yourself. Believe that you are a receiver, a valid receiver, and that the ideas you are receiving from somewhere within are true and valid. Believe, in your own inspiration.

Be courteous in pursuing this truth and the realization of your own ideas. Be free and reckless in this pursuit. Be quietly determined and relentless in the face of your own doubts and memories of supposed limitations. Release and abandon those statements that your own creations are not good enough. Open your mind's eye, your internal ears, the creative hand that shapes images of its own creation. You are unlimited. You can go anywhere. Now.

[      silence      ]

As part of the powerful energy created by silence, we now call to mind those for whom we care deeply. We remember those whom we have mourned and imagine those whom we still hold to us. Those whom we love and those whom we have difficulty loving. Those with whom we are blessed to share time, and those whom we can only long to see. We now speak their names aloud or whisper them in the quiet rooms of our hearts, in the knowledge that our attention and our mention are ongoing acts of creation and re-creation for those named and for ourselves.

[    names    ]

We keep these names, spoken or cushioned in silence, close to us, as we look to this day, these clustered moments, and offer to each other the compassion and understanding that keep us whole.

*Dream A Dream*, words and music by Ed Robertson  
Summer Choir, Dee Keller, Director

<b>Presentation: Opening to the World</b>
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**Readings**      1. from *Letter to Agnes deMille* by Martha Graham

*Despite her distinguished theater family (Cecil B. deMille was her uncle), Agnes deMille had many years of struggle and failures in trying to become a dancer and choreographer. After one of her ballets failed, Martha Graham wrote this letter of encouragement. It has become a mainstay of artists' inspirational literature.*

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and there is only one of you in all time. This expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it.

It is not your business to determine how good it is, not how it compares with other expression. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.

2. from *In the Eye of the Artist* by Ken Wilber

“The secret of all genuinely spiritual works of art is that they issue from nondual or unity consciousness, no matter what "objects" they portray. A painting does not have to depict crosses and Buddhas to be spiritual. This is why, for example, Zen landscapes are so profoundly sacred in their texture, even if they are ‘just landscapes.’ They issue from a nondual awareness or unity consciousness, which is itself Spirit. At the height of transcendence, Spirit is also purely immanent and all-pervading, present equally and totally in each and every object, whether of matter, body, mind, or soul. The artwork, of no matter what the object, becomes transparent to the Divine, and is a direct expression of Spirit.”

Wilbur also quotes a source in Eastern philosophy, "He who cannot become an object cannot paint that object".

**Statements**      Spirituality and Creativity – Where It All Began      Tom Baillicul

Look around you at our community, our nation, our world, at buildings and bridges, galleries and restaurants, museums and music halls. We humans are a creative lot. And in our creativity, we've brought into existence hundreds of distinct religions. So far as we can tell, we are the only species that both discusses matters spiritual, and perceives beauty.

This should not be surprising since spirituality and creativity are two sides of the same coin. They both arise from an ability to think and communicate symbolically, and to imagine things not yet present. How is it that we came to possess these traits?

It turns out that, like all human characteristics, our creative and spiritual sides have their origins deep in our biological ancestry – our behaviors are different in magnitude and degree from other species, but not in kind.

Consider those animal species that share an awareness of self with us. Dolphins have brain to body mass ratios on par with modern humans and are known to exhibit inter-species altruism. However, dolphins don't make art. Whale song can be heard over vast distances, but the meanings of these ever changing vocalizations are beyond current human understanding. Elephants have been observed to display apparent grief over the death of a family member, a precursor of moral thought. Some zoo elephants also apparently enjoy brushing bright colors onto large canvases. Chimp groups in the wild use up to 20 types of tools for various functions of daily life, including sociality, subsistence, self maintenance, and sex. Chimpanzees create in a social context and have been shown to have a sense of humor, and to transfer cultural knowledge. Further, chimps in the wild will respond to a thunderstorm the way they would to an animal predator, such as a leopard. In other words, they assign an animate “purpose” to the storm – different from their reaction to, say, a wildfire. This is the beginning of religious thought.

Still, to the extent that we can put ourselves into the minds of other species through observation of physical behaviors, no other animals appear to ponder their origins, the meaning of life, or the existence of the divine.

It is very difficult to pinpoint the precise moment when human beings began to express imagination and to reason symbolically. Prior to the development of writing, our knowledge of the earliest humans is largely limited to durable materials such as stone and bone. The physical evidences for the existence of a symbolic, and thus a potentially spiritual culture include: cave paintings, rock engravings, personal ornamentation, decorated tools, the use of



natural pigments, engraved bones and stones, burials with grave goods, systems of notation, musical instruments, and complex bone and wood technologies. There are hints that species ancestral to modern humans may have had the capacity for complex communication, and imagination. Brain size appears to be key.

At a 400,000 year old site in Zambia associated with the large-brained human ancestor, *homo heidelbergensis*, archeologists discovered 300 lumps of ochre and other pigments - yellow, pink, red, purple, brown, and blue-black - some gathered far from the site. Ochre can be used as a binding agent for attaching stone points to wooden shafts; but for this use one color is sufficient. Why collect a range of colors? *Homo heidelbergensis* also has been associated with an 8-step manufacturing process for wooden spears, and with a change in the quality of craftsmanship of stone tools – moving from the simply utilitarian forms used by earlier human ancestors to ones of striking symmetry, suggesting an aesthetic sense.

From Neanderthal sites in Europe, dated to between 30,000 and 40,000 years ago (a time when our own species was present), comes evidence of body ornamentation (shell and bone beads), complex tool making, ritual burials, and the creation of musical instruments. These were people capable of symbolic reasoning and practice, of making music, and of questions about the meaning of death. Yet, evidence about how their habitation sites were configured suggest that Neanderthals had thought processes very different from those of modern humans.

Our immediate ancestors, anatomically modern humans, arose in Africa somewhere between 160,000 and 200,000 years ago, and their remains have been found in the Levant, dated to around 100,000 years ago. However, the Levant *homo sapiens* sites do not show cultural remains any more sophisticated than nearby Neanderthal sites. It's in sites in southern Africa dating to around 75,000 years ago that we start seeing objects associated with *homo sapiens* remains which strongly suggest a new way of thinking about themselves and the world around them. From the Blombos Cave on the Cape Coast of South Africa comes a set of worn shell beads indicating an interest in bodily adornment. From this site also comes the first known human artwork, a piece of ochre engraved with a geometric linear pattern.

In a time span covering the next 40,000, years and from sites throughout Africa, the Middle East, Australia, and Europe archaeologists have uncovered an increasing treasure trove of artifacts demonstrating that early *homo sapiens* possessed self-awareness, imagination, abstract thinking, and the ability to communicate symbolically. By 35,000 years ago, art and spiritual expression were in full swing in Europe, Africa, and Australia. Cave paintings and rock engravings of both realistic images, and fantastical creatures, part animal, part human, are evidence of fully modern imaginative abilities and of religious expression. This is what separates humans from all other species on the planet today. Our ancestors created art, music, bodily adornments, stone tools with aesthetics rather than simple utility in mind, and also complex social structures. They buried their dead with care and placed in these graves food, jewelry, and weapons, strongly suggesting a belief in an afterlife.

As anthropologist Ian Tattersall points out, only modern humans have the demonstrated ability to divide up the world around them into a huge number of discrete elements - and then to name those elements. This allows us to rearrange those elements in our minds and imagine a variety of different realities. How did this ability come about? Tattersall believes that it arose as *homo sapiens* began to express an understanding of the world in ever more complex language. Language - words and syntax - is the mechanism of our conscious thoughts. Try thinking deeply about something without thinking in words.

Spirituality and creativity, symbolic thought and the ability to ask the “Great Questions” – we are the species that not only thinks about ourselves and our relation to the universe around us but expresses our understandings and imaginings in myriad ways.



Embrace your humanity - go forth, ask questions, seek answers, and create beauty.

**Statements** Creative Awareness And The Spiritual World Of The Unitarian Universalist:  
John Dickinson

I never imagined when I choose art as a retirement hobby that it would become my spiritual journey. At first, I naturally thought about images I wished to portray, about materials to use, and the romantic image of myself with brush in hand before the easel.

But experiences in creativity, reading, and contact with others brought realization that the images were not the things I'd be painting. For painting was not the challenge; it was seeing, seeing into a deeper reality, a reality not seen before by my eyes. And true seeing came only from a heightened awareness of reality. As William Blake said, "He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments and in stronger and better light than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all."

At a time in life when I expected to become less engaged in the world, I found myself falling in love with the world, becoming entranced through creative awareness. I knew from 40 years of museum going that looking at art made me see things much differently. Looking at people, I recognized qualities that I'd seen in portraits. Looking at nature, I saw it as though it was a landscape by a favorite artist.

Perhaps the most startling awareness came after a class in visual perspective. After that class I saw straight lines shooting everywhere: eaves continued their lines into the sky; rooms developed a dizzying array of surfaces, angles, and corners. I was aware for the first time where everything was and how it related to where everything else was. And I sensed my place in "the interdependent web of existence".

People who receive their reality from creativity transmute this experience into a distinctive awareness. Reality moves through them and becomes another reality. American poet Wallace Stevens said, "Reality is not what it is. It consists of the many realities which it can be made into."

So this new reality became integral to my lifelong religious journey. Thankfully, the Unitarian Universalist faith supports a journey rather than requiring a destination, and it encourages exploring and thinking about one's own reality.

Creative people in their statements about their process reflect the same three source of awareness as the spiritual inspirations in liberal religions. First, the more traditional, or one might say "religious", consider the source of their creations to be outside of themselves, to come from a God, from a transcendental essence of the universe. Second, many consider their source to be within themselves, to come from an indwelling spiritual presence that they seek to find and honor. Like the people who make the often quoted statement, "I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual", they make this distinction – they find their own sense of immanence from intuitive inspiration. And third, many feel themselves outside of these religious or spiritual traditions - their source is rational and humanist. They do not see their inspiration coming from a divine or inner spirit but from intellect, reason, and compassion. Now, listen to the words of creators reflecting the same three sources.

Handel composed Messiah in 24 days, an amazing act of creation. It is a monumental work, complex, long, and rich. He must have been writing in a frenzy of awareness. How did he see this? In his own words, "I thought I saw all Heaven before me and the great God Himself." Handel is telling us that he received awareness from outside himself. About writing its best known part, the Hallelujah Chorus, Handel said, "Whether I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it I know not. God knows." These are profoundly religious statements.

Then, there is the great American dancer and choreographer, Martha Graham, whose letter we read earlier. Graham told people that her dances had always existed. She only invoked them. Nor did she choose to; she was chosen. As she recorded in her "Notebooks", she had been given "lonely terrifying gifts" which were followed by, as she said in the first reading, a "divine dissatisfaction; a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive." So Graham sensed a source outside of herself, a religious source.

A spiritual source from within was cited by Ken Wilbur in the reading when he said that one could sense "nondual awareness" from works of Zen art, the spiritual oneness of the creator and the created. "He who cannot become an object cannot paint that object".

Intuitive awareness also is a source of innocence, an openness to begin again, to see the world as though it were new and fresh. Listen to creative artists about their surprise at their awareness.

Marcel Proust penned, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

The sculptor Robert Kuhn said, "I can't wait to experience the surprise of what my hand creates."

Some of you may remember the Columbus sculptor, John Freeman. His wife sang in our choir for years. John said, "Why do I go to my studio? I go so I will be there for the next surprise!"

When my wife, Jo, read this talk she said that these last two statements reflected her own experience: what surprise awaits her when she begins to create her abstracts, her collages? What new awareness will come? Members of the First Church artists group were challenged to create works in black and white for last fall's show. Each had to become aware of a world without color and create a work in black and white for that show. And they did! Their pieces were exciting! And each very different.

This openness quality of awareness is also expressed as the individual's ability to receive visionary creations from their subconscious. The American painter Edward Hopper wrote, "So much of every art is an expression of the subconscious, that it seems to me most all of the important qualities are put there subconsciously, and little of importance by the conscious intellect."

And finally, the famous writer Rod Serling, once a member of this congregation, said, "Take truth for authority, not authority for truth." I find this a reference to a distinctly humanist source, one which is dubious about revelation but relies on intellect and reason.

And for myself, when called to write an artistic mission statement, I found it easy to describe my response. I believe that excitement flows from every point in the universe, energy from the creation. I believe that with the awareness which comes from creativity we can perceive this excitement as beauty, as awe, as grandeur, as order, as ultimate reality. So I seek to become aware of places where this excitement can be seen and to create works which can transmit it to others. When I am asked, "where do you get your ideas?", I have to say, "I don't get ideas - ideas get me." It is as though they were outside looking for a home, looking for someone who will give them expression. Once they inhabit me, I become their servant, not questioning the master, just committed to the idea.

I might classify this in the religious tradition. Or maybe spiritual. Or, as I struggle with figuring how to get the effects I want, it is just plain human intellectual figuring. Perhaps all three! How very human! And what fun!

<b>Integration: Recommitting to Our Mission</b>
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**Offering** The work of this church is the act of re-shaping ourselves, society and human relationships. This creative activity requires a place similar to the period of silence at the center of this service, a space in which our creativity is given room to take root and grow, a place where each of us can feel safe in exploring the individual and collective acts of creation that make us whole. To build and strengthen our faith community and its work both within these walls and in the larger world, the offering to nurture and sustain the creative work of justice, compassion, and community will now be given and received.

*La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* from *Preludes Book II*  
by Claude Debussy

**Singing** #326 Let All the Beauty We Have Known

**Blessing** Go now with awareness. Go now and see what you have not seen before, go with new eyes prepared for new visions. Go to sing a new song, loudly and with all the gusto of your life, for the way you sing is your song. Go now and move, for the way you move is your dance. Go now, live Ishfully, and be surprised at your life.

**Celebrating** *we gather to deepen community in Fellowship Hall*