

community

The Newsletter of the Community Church of Boston
A Peace and Justice congregation since 1920

October 2011

news

Opposing 'Evil' with Justice and Solidarity

by Rev. Jason Lydon, Minister

Dear Friends and Members, as we get ourselves wrapped in the beauty of Autumn I have found myself thinking deeply about what solidarity means in our work and life. While people occupy Wall Street, as people stood up for the life of Troy Anthony Davis, with prisoners on hunger strike in California, during the uprisings throughout the world I wonder how and where solidarity can show up and what that looks like in a truly authentic way. What do you do when you think about what it is that creates this injustice, this evil in the world? There are moments when I know that the evils of capitalism, racism, the penal system, and imperialism seem to shut me down, usurping my power. Then I try to remember that we are all in this work together, deeply interconnected.

Theologian Gordon Kaufman writes, "Evil is that which destroys life or prevents the unfolding of the full powers of human life. Evil is that which dehumanizes." I understand that not everyone feels connected to theological language, like evil. However, I would encourage us all to sit with the complex reality that systems and individuals exist to privilege some at the expense of others, leaving a trail of suffering and death in its path. We, then, have a responsibility to create a culture, a community, a congregation that can challenge these manifestations of evil. Catholic Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez suggests that part of how we do this is through creating a relevant liberation theology. "Theology," he writes, "must be critical reflection on humankind, on basic human principles..."

Theological reflection would then necessarily be a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose." To translate for those who cannot/choose not to identify with God language, *Word of God* can be understood as

the beauty of reason's voice expressed through the words of a community or the magical whispers of fairies that call out for the great authenticity of justice or simply the great mystery of infinite love. We have the strength within us to oppose evil whether through coming together in our Sunday communities, at events throughout the week, or on the street, this is our collective calling.

Unitarian Universalist minister Victoria Safford, whose messages I have shared before, offers suggestions for how we can challenge the overwhelming existence of evil. She writes, "Sunlight beats it back. Humility stunts its growth. Truth telling, truth seeking, truth speaking, secret breaking, brave naming, bearing witness - these things weaken its resolve." Creating this sunlight, living lives of truth telling, bearing witness, these are our acts of solidarity that we need to live into as we practice the solidarity of Lent. We need to choose revolutionary love, we need to extend our hands, we need to use our bodies, we need to recognize that truly we will only be free when all are free. Our acts of solidarity will cultivate new soil where justice can flourish. We get to be the rays of sunlight that thaws the icy grip of evil. As we do so, keep in mind that we can only act in solidarity when we take account of our privilege. Solidarity is not paternalistic, solidarity is not telling others what to do. Solidarity is not uninvested charity. Solidarity is recognizing the truth in the Aboriginal organizer, Lilla Watson's, statement, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." This is the great possibility of solidarity.

As we move forward with the beauty of Autumn let us use the inspiration of the transforming environment to give us the strength to transform the world we live in!

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



Sunday Service &
Speakers Forum

October 2nd
LAILA MURAD
"The Struggle to Free
Tarek Mehanna"

October 9th
Indigenous Peoples' Day
SPEAKER TBA
"On The Lives of Palestinians"

October 16th
Members of THE FOOD PROJECT
"Youth. Food. Community."

October 23rd
JULIO HECTOR SANCHEZ
"Threats to the Families of
Central America"

October 30th
Rev. JASON LYDON
"On Death and Dying"

CCB Board Meeting

*The Board of Directors met on September 13th, 2011
Following are highlights of the meeting.*

Minister's Report: A new member of the board has proposed a new direction concerning member conduct at monthly board meetings. At the request of the minister, the following "ground rules," which passed by a majority vote, were inserted into the minutes of the September board meeting: (1) respect, (2) listen, (3) one person speaking at a time, (4) step up/step back, (5) disagree with concept, not person, (6) strive to meet each other's communication needs, (7) we care about each other and are united for a common purpose.



Plans for the CCB retreat will proceed when a facilitator from the Unitarian-Universalist Massachusetts Bay District becomes available.

Financial Matters: The treasurer reviewed the Profit & Loss Budget Performance report for August, 2011. Discussed were line items concerning the annual fund drive, Sunday morning collections, fundraising events, rental income, and salaries, benefits & expenses, as well as how close is CCB concerning budget versus income & expenses.

Various Concerns: A contribution of \$10,000 has been presented to the Church by an anonymous donor.

CCB is interested in becoming a co-sponsor of an all-day event to be held at Suffolk University on Saturday, October 1st; the topic is, "Ending the Endless Wars and Occupations," featuring Noam Chomsky as keynote speaker.

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, 2011 at 7:15pm. Members and friends of the Church are invited to attend.

-Dick Keshishian, Clerk

Ending the Endless Wars and Occupations

How can the peace movement continue its work to end the wars and cut the military budget while also building cooperation with the economic and racial justice movements? Noam Chomsky will keynote the peace and justice conference speaking on "Arab Spring: Significance and Prospects." Sponsored by United for Justice with Peace (UJP) and Suffolk University Department of Government, the all day conference will also address the current situation in

Syria, cutting the military budget to fund communities, issues of war and labor, youth and immigrant rights, and other topics. Kathy Kelly and Ann Wright will report on Afghanistan, Iraq and the Gaza flotilla.

Saturday, October 1st, 9:00am-5:00pm
Suffolk University (Donahue Bldg)
41 Temple Street, Boston
www.justicewithpeace.org/ten-years-after

Occupy Wall Street Rediscovered the Radical Imagination

by David Graeber (excerpted from *The Guardian*)

Why are people occupying Wall Street? There are obvious reasons. We are watching the beginnings of the defiant self-assertion of a new generation of Americans, a generation who are looking forward to finishing their education with no jobs, no future, but still saddled with enormous and unforgivable debt. Most, I found, were of working-class or otherwise modest backgrounds, kids who did exactly what they were told they should: studied, got into college, and are now not just being punished for it, but humiliated – faced with a life of being treated as dead-beats, moral reprobates.

Is it really surprising they would like to have a word with the financial magnates who stole their future?

Just as in Europe, we are seeing the results of colossal social failure. The occupiers are the very sort of people, brimming with ideas, whose energies a healthy society would be marshaling to improve life for everyone. Instead, they are using it to envision ways to bring the whole system down.

But the ultimate failure here is of imagination. What we are witnessing can also be seen as a demand to finally have a conversation we were all supposed to have back in 2008. There was a moment, after the near-collapse of the world's financial architecture, when anything seemed possible.

Everything we'd been told for the last decade turned out to be a lie. Markets did not run themselves; creators of financial instruments were not infallible geniuses; and debts did not really need to be repaid – in fact, money itself was revealed to be a political instrument, trillions of dollars of which could be whisked in or out of existence overnight if governments or central banks required it.

It seemed the time had come to rethink everything: the very nature of markets, money, debt; to ask what an "economy" is actually for. This lasted perhaps two weeks. Then, in one of the most colossal failures of nerve in history, we all collectively clapped our hands over our ears and tried to put things back as close as possible to the way they'd been before.

Perhaps, it's not surprising. It's becoming increasingly obvious that the real priority of those running the world for the last few decades has not been creating a viable form of capitalism, but rather, convincing us all that the current form of capitalism is the only conceivable economic system, so its flaws are irrelevant. As a result, we're all sitting around dumbfounded as the whole apparatus falls apart.

What we've learned now is that the economic crisis of

the 1970s never really went away. It was fobbed off by cheap credit at home and massive plunder abroad – the latter, in the name of the "third world debt crisis". But the global south fought back. The "alter-globalization movement", was in the end, successful: the IMF has been driven out of East Asia and Latin America, just as it is now being driven from the Middle East. As a result, the debt crisis has come home to Europe and North America, replete with the exact same approach: declare a financial crisis, appoint supposedly neutral technocrats to manage it, and then engage in an orgy of plunder in the name of "austerity".

The form of resistance that has emerged looks remarkably similar to the old global justice movement, too: we see the rejection of old-fashioned party politics, the same embrace of radical diversity, the same emphasis on inventing new forms of democracy from below. What's different is largely the target: where in 2000, it was directed at the power of unprecedented new planetary bureaucracies (the WTO, IMF, World Bank, NAFTA), institutions with no democratic accountability, which existed only to serve the interests of transnational capital; now, it is at the entire political classes of countries like Greece, Spain and, now, the US – for exactly the same reason.

When the history is finally written, though, it's likely all of this tumult – beginning with the Arab Spring – will be remembered as the opening salvo in a wave of negotiations over the dissolution of the American Empire. Thirty years of relentless prioritizing of propaganda over substance, and snuffing out anything that might look like a political basis for opposition, might make the prospects for the young protesters look bleak; and it's clear that the rich are determined to seize as large a share of the spoils as remain, tossing a whole generation of young people to the wolves in order to do so. But history is not on their side.

We might do well to consider the collapse of the European colonial empires. It certainly did not lead to the rich successfully grabbing all the cookies, but to the creation of the modern welfare state. We don't know precisely what will come out of this round. But if the occupiers finally manage to break the 30-year stranglehold that has been placed on the human imagination, as in those first weeks after September 2008, everything will once again be on the table – and the occupiers of Wall Street and other cities around the US will have done us the greatest favour anyone possibly can.



The occupation of Wall Street has begun, now it's our turn to occupy the financial districts in Boston:

<http://occupybos.wordpress.com>

Fifth Annual Boston Palestine Film Festival

Celebrating Palestinian Films, Art & Culture

October 21st-30th

Events at the Museum of Fine Arts,
Harvard Film Archive, and other venues tba

Celebrating its fifth-year anniversary, the Boston Palestine festival returns to bring Palestine-related cinema, narratives and culture to New England audiences. The festival has featured over 200 films, documentaries, dramatic features, video art pieces and new films by emerging artists. Like last year, guest filmmakers will be present to add contextual depth to the films themselves. And look out for related programming such as concerts by Palestinian musicians, art exhibits by Palestinian artists.



<http://www.bostonpalestinefilmfest.org>

Our Purpose

Community Church of Boston is a free community united for the study and practice of universal religion, seeking to apply ethical ideals to individual life and the democratic and cooperative principle to all forms of social and economic life.

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