

## First Unitarian Church of Honolulu Social Action Musical Celebration, May 29, 2011

### Pre Gathering Recorded Music

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"Pastures of Plenty", Woody Guthrie

"Mercy, Mercy Me (Ecology)", Marvin Gaye

"We Shall Overcome" Speech by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

### Singing Bowl, Service Opening

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#### Aloha! Welcome!

Deborah Bond-Upson

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The light is clear and refreshing this morning.  
The spires of the Hawaiian mountains, the view of the vast pacific,  
The green leaves of every shape and hue grow and move  
--on a fuse of life from our precious earth.  
We are thankful to be in this sacred spot on earth.  
And we are here in this beloved congregation,  
where open hearts welcome us,  
where kindness and tolerance abide, where courage to risk,  
on behalf of right and weak, is strong,  
where graciousness and love thrive.  
What an exquisite blessing that we share this together today.

Aloha – the presence of divine breath. It is in us. We breathe aloha.  
We protect and change our world with our breath from god.  
We breathe our participation on the planet,  
We breathe as responsive elements in this divine universe.  
Please join me in speaking, all of us to each other, a fulsome Aloha.

#### Aloha!

Are **guests** with us here this morning?  
We would like to greet you with a group aloha now  
And with personal conversation after the service.  
If you wish, would you please stand?  
(lead congregation in saying "**Aloha**" to all standing visitors)

#### This is Social Justice Sunday!

Your Social Justice Council, Gene, Susan, Steve, Jim, and I lead this service today, to celebrate and support the daily social actions of each of us, and how they relate to the larger world.

Each day we congregants of this church are engaged in social action to protect, preserve and advance. This work has become so much a part of our lives, that some of us may not realize the significance of all our good work as we do it.

We have this one service to celebrate all this, and in this service we seek to tie our daily actions to inspirational events and to music inspiring and memorializing those events.

In addition to the gorgeous live music evoking our social action heritage, from music director Karen Valasek and our inimitable music ensemble,

We will have 5 brief sermonettes today, each followed by music related to need focus of that Sermonette.

The music will allow us each to reflect about that social need or action, and during the music, to note what we do, have done or will do to respond to that need.

Please write (hold up post it) actions you do and actions you plan, on these notes.

For example, when Jim speaks on Economic Equity, in the music that follows, we will write notes on what we do..... buy local, vote for programs to support those in need, contribute to organizations, study the economy, educate others, political action, pay taxes, donate food, helping with job development-- Whatever it is, let us recall what we do, or what we'd like to do in that realm and note it.

Our youth will collect our notes, during each music interlude. Hold the notes up when you're done writing, and youths will post them on our Social Justice walls. (point to screens)

Throughout this service we will be projecting images of the needs and responses to needs, Global and local. Very local. You will see images of us in this beloved congregation, going about our lives in ways that support our planet and our spiritual lives.

Let us reflect and enjoy our part in our interconnected web of need and response. Our Kuleana.

**Hymn**

**"Singing for our Lives" --Holly Near**

**All**

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### **Chalice Lighting**

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May I invite all our keiki down front this morning to be part of our Chalice lighting? Come right down here and have a special Gift and a special place.

*(gestures to pillows set up for the keiki) (Pause)*

While Susan lights our beacon of Service to the world, our keiki will receive Passports to take them safely into the world of community service.

During and after the service they will be able to validate their Passport by checking those activities they have been involved in and others they will wish to work on. They will consult with adult friends and parents after the service. *(Susan crosses to light Chalice.)*

Does anybody know what the Unitarian Service Committee is?

Well, it's a group of Unitarians who work to help people who can't help themselves. Like right now--have you seen on TV the floods and the houses destroyed by the tornadoes on the mainland?

Well, those people who have lost their homes are helped by the Service Committee until they can rebuild their homes.

The Rev. Dr. Charles Joy, Unitarian Service Committee leader for Europe, was working in Lisbon, Portugal . It was the only open port city in Europe in the early 1940s. Lisbon was the place to go for millions of refugees who were fleeing the Nazis.

You probably have not studied about the Nazis yet, but they were very evil men who killed a lot of folks who did not agree with them.

Many refugees were without the identification papers they needed to cross borders, so the Lisbon Unitarian Service office worked especially hard on helping them get replacement papers.

*(Steve hands out Passports)*

Rev. Joy did something very new:--He made travel documents issued by the Unitarian Service Committee itself. Sorta like it was a government too. He wrote to the Boston office of the USC, "*We are now issuing navicerts to pass emigrants to the new world through the British blockade. We are certifying that they are politically safe and sound.*"

Rev. Joy believed these important documents needed a seal, a special stamp, like other important documents had, so he asked Hans Deutsch, an Austrian refugee artist, to create one. The result was pretty much the flaming chalice as we know it now. It first appeared as a symbol for the UUA 36 years later on the 1976-77 UU Directory and it has come into widespread use only in the last 20 years.

Our Chalice was born as a seal of UU commitment to one of the most pressing humanitarian needs of the twentieth century.

Long may it light our way toward Social Justice.

We'll sing our youngest keiki up to class and all others will participate by marking the Passports with their Social Justice action for later validation by parents and other congregants.

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**Singing Our Children to their Program**

**ALL**

"Go with wisdom, go with wonder, go to meet a brand new day. Learn to see the light within you, as we send you on your way.

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**Visual Presentation Begins on the Screen Behind the Speakers throughout all Sermonettes**

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**Sermonette: 'Āina**

**Steve Lohse**

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*Aloha!* We are so lucky to live Hawai'i for many reasons. Among these is the chance to experience the Hawaiian concepts of *'āina* and *'ohana*. *Oha-Na*, literally the spreading, thriving, or showing of joyous affection – *'ohana*, family. And *'āina*, *'Āi-Na*, literally the eating or feeding – *'āina*, the land that feeds us.

To appreciate Hawaiian culture is to appreciate the deep sense of connections that bind together all aspects of nature – plants, animals, mountains, sky, ocean, and people. *'Āina* is about real estate and food, yes, but *'Āina* is really about the deep interconnections from which we emerge, that make this world possible.

Social Justice starts with this concept of *'āina*, the profound interconnections that give us life. If these connections are whole and healthy, then we expect social justice and community equity. If these connections are destroyed, then we can expect injustice, inequity, and a lot of unnecessary suffering by innocent people.

In fact, does it seem to you that we are systematically destroying our connections with *'āina* and with each other? That we are deliberately waging war on our own environmental, biological, and cultural life support systems? Is this really how we want to live? Is this really the world we want to leave to futures generations?

I have a favorite example of the *'āina* disconnect that we have come to. Water is life in Hawai'i, right? Does anybody know how many agencies manage water in Hawai'i? I'm an environmental scientist by trade, and I don't know. We have federal, state, county, and private agencies. We have separate agencies for atmospheric water, for surface water, and for ground water. We have separate agencies for water quantity and for water quality.

We have agencies that slow down good water to recharge our mountaintop aquifers, but slowing down the water makes floods worse. So, we have agencies that speed up bad water to prevent flooding, but speeding the water out to sea makes aquifer recharge impossible. And it's all the same water! Does anybody doubt that we are seriously disconnected?

So, I am celebrating today! I am celebrating that I am here today in the midst of a community actively engaged in NOT waging war on our own environmental, biological, and cultural life support systems. This community knows, in the words of John Muir, "Tug on anything at all and you'll find it connected to everything else in the universe."

This community knows, in the words of Yo-Yo Ma, "When we enlarge our view of the world, we deepen our understanding of our own lives." This community knows, in the words of Jane Goodall, "We cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around us. What we do makes a difference, and we have to decide what kind of difference we want to make."

We are gathered here today to celebrate the difference that we make! In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality."

Folks, we are in this together! Look to the neighbor on your left, look to the neighbor on your right, and get used to it.

Let us join together today and celebrate our shared Social Justice commitments, our active engagement with economic equity, education, housing, healthcare, political action, and yes, the 'āina. With the assistance of our young people here, we will also celebrate ourselves and the commitments that many of us make privately to a just and equitable world. Yes, we do make a difference.

So, let us celebrate our shared engagement with our 'āina right now. Let's each take one sticky note from your OoS and put down one or two words describing something that you do or contribute that connects you to the health of our 'āina. Do you contribute to an environmental group, do you volunteer, do you teach, do you recycle – write it down, and while we listen to Hapa's version of "Redemption Song" our young people will collect these notes and stick them on the 'Āina panel where we can we all share and celebrate them.

Thank you.

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**Recorded Music****"Redemption Song", Hapa**

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**Sermonette, Economic Equity****Jim Lomont**

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Aloha!

There is a great deal of economic inequity in the U.S. This is inequality in income, wealth and overall material well-being is unjust because it results largely from the rich owners of corporations taking advantage of most people.

This inequality is greater in the U.S. than in any other economically developed country. It is even greater in the U.S. than in Egypt. It is partly reflected in several striking statistics: (1) The top 1% of the population in income make 20% of the total income of the entire population; (2) The top 1% of the population in wealth have as much wealth as the bottom 99%; (3) The CEOs of big corporations are paid several hundred times as much as the average employees of those corporations; (4) 15-16% of the U.S. population are living below the poverty line as defined by the U.S. government, which is a level of real poverty; (5) 16% of the population are un- or underemployed,

Within countries economic inequality goes along with a striking number and variety of social, psychological and physical problems. So, because of its great inequality, the U.S. stands very high in regard to these. They include distrust between people, low status of women, mental illness, drug use, low life expectancy, obesity, low math and literacy scores of 15-year olds, teenage birth rates; homicide rate, and social immobility.

In the last several decades corporations have waged highly aggressive war on organized labor. This has greatly weakened the unions and their ability to increase their income and other benefits through collective bargaining. As a result, workers have received a considerably smaller share of income from the output they have much increased. This has produced a large distribution of income upward from the employees to the owners and managers of the corporations, and of course this distribution has strongly increased overall inequality.

Corporations have also increased inequity in people's material well-being by producing, through their political clout, reduced funding of public facilities. These particularly include education, infrastructure and social work and psychological services. This has significantly increased deprivation for a large part of the population.

The money saved by this reduction has been, to a large extent, thrown down the rathole of the U.S.'s current wars. And despite the desperate need for public money shown by this reduction, taxation of the rich has been greatly reduced, so as to increase the tax burden on the rest of the people. This tax reduction has also been supported by the reduced public funding.



rates, and will earn 40% of what college grads earn.

So what are we going to do?

Blame teachers. Blame unions. Try a few experiments.

Some public schools like Mike Staffaroni's project-based learning HS, some private schools and some charter schools are thriving. But 4 in 5 charter schools are not doing well and charter schools can't accommodate our students on a broad basis, even if they grew at rates vastly higher, they could only serve 25% of our student in 10 years. What about the youths who won't be served?

Emerson said "The child amidst his baubles, is learning the action of light, motion, gravity, muscular force."

How can we protect that fresh effective learning, support them and get barriers out of their way?

Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education found 98% of 3-5 year olds rank "genius" in multiple intelligences including divergent thinking, this drops to 32% at 8-10 years, 10% at 13-15 years, and to 2% at 25 years and older. We must learn how to protect their genius.

**Without solving our education crisis, we cannot solve our other crises.**

What are we at First Unitarian Church of Honolulu doing to address this? **Plenty.**

For example, Joann Marshall of our congregation, joined with others forming SOS—"Save our Schools" to lobby, educate, and sit in.

Legislation was passed to guarantee 180 days of school—

And it withstood budget cuts only via continued work by SOS, FACE, Parents for Public Schools and other active citizens.

Nan, Catherine, Steve, Susan and others continue service on the FACE Education Task Force.

We hosted FACE Education Talk Story here. Jim Lomont lead the Board of Education Forum in this room.

Mike Staffaroni teaches in an effective project-based learning HS.

Lisa Gilles-Davis guides youths toward college with Upward Bound,

Veronica Morgan and our own president Charlotte Huszcza support students in our public schools.

Helen Slaughter, career educator, is engaged in education reform.

Our Gallery on the Pali mounted student and teacher exhibits pointing to the exemplar and rare arts program at Kalihi Middle School.

We serve on school community councils, tutoring groups, in our own Sunday school, Coming of Age, and OWL programs, attend legislative meetings, talk to our friends and neighbors about the importance of education reform. I am proud of all this congregation does to support public education.

The slides showing the deep attention and love this church devotes to our young people will continue during the education musical interlude. Please note your Education actions—completed or planned and hand them to our youths.

Now, the Top Ten Reasons Why I think UU's can beat the crisis in education:

- 1) we are smart and we care about education more than anyone
- 2) we like to find new ways to think
- 3) we like change
- 4) we enjoy listening to our children
- 5) we treasure our children's thoughts and products
- 6) we consider all the children our children
- 7) we know that everyone needs to learn continuously, not just children
- 8) we know that imagination is more important than memorization
- 9) we are not afraid of having our children exceed us
- 10) we don't give up

**Sermonette, Housing and Health**

**Susan Lebo**

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Aloha!

One world/one community. Every day world news, national news, and local news stations carry stories of the escalation of people lacking adequate housing, healthcare, and nutritious food. Every day, it becomes even more clear that achieving viable long-term, sustainable solutions to these most basic needs requires each of us to think globally and to act locally.

I work in Iwilei and most days I walk to work from my apartment Chinatown. On my way to work a week ago I counted the number of homeless people I passed. I have several routes to choose from, down King Street or Hotel Street, past the Salvation Army on Nimitz or past the Institute for Human Services on Iwelei. I took the Nimitz side that morning. My count was Forty! I took Iwilei side on my walk home. The number was higher and I stopped counting. Many of these people are not simply people I pass. Many are people I see every day. People I have short or long conversations with, or simply say hello to each day I pass. Some are chronically homeless, others recently homeless. More and more are young people in the late teens and twenties. Some are newcomers, but most are long time residents. Some gather each day seeking day labor work, others no longer seek assistance.

My friend Wendy has a master’s degree. She is my age. She worked steady for more than 25 years. After losing her job in 2005 she became homeless. Her mental and physical health has deteriorated and she no longer is able to hold a steady job. Wendy lived in her car for several years. When we last visited she had moved into a gardening shed in someone’s backyard for which she was paying monthly rent. No electricity, no bathroom, no kitchen, but it meant no longer having to live in the park, under the overpass or in her car.

We all have friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members who face daily challenges, be it dealing with furloughs, layoffs, foreclosures, acquiring affordable housing, access to reliable and affordable healthcare. We, as a congregation and as individuals, have covenanted to promoting lives worth living and to building healthy communities, local, national, and international.

Let us reflect on and celebrate the actions we have taken to promote social justice, housing, health, tolerance, and acceptance as well as the actions we pledge to do tomorrow, be that supporting through donations and/or volunteerism, YO, Habitat for Humanity, creating tenant associations to promote tenant rights; hosting Family Promise families; hosting exchange students; participating in our OWL program, helping to draft legislation or to engage in public protests, civil marches and parades, contributing to food banks and food drives, disaster relief campaigns, our RE program, and the multitude of other actions that we hope you will take this opportunity to share.

**Hymn**

**“We Shall Overcome”**

**ALL**

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**Sermonette, Political Action**

**Gene Parola**

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Aloha!

In an era when the constant attack on the Electoral Process spans more than a quarter-century and counting,

we find parallels to the fight against terrorism. In the latter, no nation is the enemy, only shadowy well-funded dissident groups. In the attack on our system, no particular political party is clearly the aggressor, only wealthy shadowy PACs that unofficially fund its destruction.

In such a climate all citizens need to be particularly vigilant because of the size of the aggressor's megaphone.

Locally, we are lucky that paying attention is much easier than it is nationally. And in order for us to respond, the legislature has created an office to make people participation in state lawmaking easy.

Your SJC has provided you with access to the services of that office and provided lawmakers' names, their committee responsibilities and the bills they introduce, take testimony on and finally pass or reject.

All that information appears on the SJC page of our beautiful new Web Site and it will be updated with new data after each election.

Regular email alerts have been issued about opportunities to testify and about the timing of critical votes. E-mail testimony on Bills, makes the need to take a day off to appear in person unnecessary, nor do you need to demonstrate in the streets carrying a torch and pitchfork. Although nationally, these may yet be the actions of last resort.

In this session of the Legislature significant laws on Kupuna care were strengthened. And Faith Action for Community Equity, which your SJC is by-law related to, was instrumental in helping to pass the strongest law in the nation to protect foreclosed mortgage holders from semi-legal aggression by lenders.

Steve is Chair of our UU SJC/FACE subcommittee

But as a community, we failed in the words of former Representative Kirk Caldwell, to "*give lawmakers the courage to do the right thing*" i.e. to raise the necessary revenue to run a competent state government--a symptom of the same disease that enfeebles the Federal Government.

*Taxes* is not a four-letter word.

Mahalo for your attention

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**Recorded Music****"Get Up, Stand Up"****Bob Marley**

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**Extinguishing the Chalice****Jim Lomont**

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We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. --Elizabeth Selle Jones

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**Singing Bowl**

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**Closing Words****Susan Lebo**

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**Poor/Rich**

By Katey Ball

Poor

Hungry, Unfortunate

Starving, Freezing, Begging

Forgotten, Ashamed, Idolized, Lucky

Overspending, Flaunting, Flourishing

Entitled, Careless,

Rich

Katey’s motivation to write this poem came from watching the news and realizing that over half of news stories were devoted to celebrities and the latest crimes they had committed. She thought, Are there no bigger issues in the world today? Is it really imperative that we know how much weight a pop star has put on when we are engaged in global conflicts and when so many of our citizens are facing challenges ranging from access to a good education, to receiving a livable wage, to obtaining affordable housing, adequate healthcare, or simply getting enough to eat. So, I leave us all with the words

WE HAVE POWER, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A COMMUNITY. WE HAVE THE ABILITY EVERY DAY IN THE CHOICES WE MAKE AND THE ACTIONS WE TAKE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, TO CREATE THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN.

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**Hymn**

**“We Shall Overcome”**

**ALL**

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**Memorial Candle**

**Gene Parola**

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**Dona Nobis Pacem**

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**Aloha!**