

Acknowledging Our Efforts, Imagining Our Future©

Sermon by Rev. Duffy Peet

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Some of you may recall that last May we were holding our worship services at Christus Collegium, near the University. When I think back to our time there it seems like the distant past, not just a dozen months ago. And it was a mere three years ago this month that the Fellowship entered into an agreement with Cathy Cooper for the use of this building which she had just purchased. When I think about all this Fellowship has done in such a short period of time, I am both amazed and delighted. Amazement and delight were at the forefront of my mind when I decided on the focus and title of my sermon today, "Acknowledging Our Efforts, Imaging Our Future."

Today I want to acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments of this Fellowship, and in particular, the efforts and accomplishments of the past year. To get us all in a common frame of mind, I invite you to look around at the building we are in this morning. If you find your attention being drawn to something that is particularly interesting or enticing, focus your attention there. Otherwise, let your gaze wander and take in the many pleasing aspects this building has to offer. As you look around, those of you who attended services here during 2015 and 16 may want to recall what this sanctuary was like back then. And some of us will remember what this space looked like when it was under construction in 2016 and early 2017. Each of us has our own perceptions and memories of this building. My hope is that as we look around, all of us share a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the fact that after more than 50 years of meeting in rented or borrowed space, we are now sitting in our own sanctuary. The members and friends of this Fellowship have come a very long way in the journey together over the past couple of years.

There isn't time this morning to review the full history of how we got here. And I can't acknowledge everyone who has played a part in the 50 plus year journey. I believe I can, however, acknowledge those in the congregation who, over the past year, have made a significant positive difference here at UUFB and beyond. To do this I ask for your assistance. I don't ask much of you, simply to stand up or raise your hand at times.

Let's begin acknowledging our efforts with a focus on this building. I want to acknowledge all those who made it possible for us to be here this morning. Will those who were involved in making the early decisions that connected us to this building please stand up or raise your hand. This includes Cathy Cooper, the 2014-15 Board members, and those who worked or sought to find a building of our own. (pause and say thank you) And now let's add all those who supported, with votes and/or money, the decision to accept and remodel this building. (pause and say thank you) Now let's include those who invested time and effort in remodeling & moving into and out of and into this building. (pause and say thank you) And last, but certainly not least, I ask those who have invested time, energy or money in cleaning, organizing and maintaining our building and grounds. (pause and say thank you) You deserve more than just a thank you. You deserve a standing ovation. (begin applauding) Thank you. You make take your seat now.

While getting into this building was a significant accomplishment this year, it wasn't the only thing that deserves to be recognized. This year we have been

functioning at quite an incredible pace and at a rather high level considering all that was occurring in the Fellowship, in the community and in the country. I would like us all to acknowledge those who have made it possible for this Fellowship to function as well as it has this year. I invite those who have been on the UUFB Board this year to stand up. Board members, I have been at every one of the meetings this year and I can say you have given generously of your time and talents. I know all too well that you couldn't do everything that needed to be done. You needed and got a great deal of assistance and support. So now would everyone who has been on a committee, a task force or a working group of some kind this year please stand up. (pause and say thank you) And to this group let's add anyone who has attended or participated in any of the organized activities of this Fellowship. This includes Religious Education programs, including Our Whole Lives, Spiritual Pluralism groups, Men's and Women's groups, Sharing the Journey of Aging, the Support Group for Caregivers, Holy Days and Holidays gatherings and other events that I may be forgetting. You also deserve a standing ovation. (begin applauding) Thank you. You make take your seat.

I now want to acknowledge the people who have given of their time and energy to make our Sunday services the best they can be. First I would ask our pianist, Laurel Yost to stand. (pause and say thank you) Erin Equall is in Europe and unable to attend today. And I invite anyone who has added their voice to the UUFB Singers to please stand or raise your hand. (pause and say thank you) Let's now add those who have played a musical instrument for any of our services. This includes all forms of musical instrument, including percussion instruments. (pause and say thank you) Moving away from music, I would invite those who have been Lay Leaders to stand or raise your hand. (pause and say thank you) And finally there are the people who have provided important support on Sunday mornings. These are the greeters, the Chalice lighters, those who make coffee for after the service, and the folks who provided Valet service throughout this long and challenging winter. Without all of you, our Sunday services would have been lacking. Thank you. I offer you my gratitude and I applaud you. (begin applauding)

Up to this point my focus has been on acknowledging our accomplishments within the Fellowship. These accomplishments are significant and important but they are not all that we have done or all that deserves our recognition. During this past year members and friends of this congregation have also been active in the larger community. During this past year, people who are present here today have put our Principles and our values into action to make a positive difference here in the Bozeman area, in Montana, in our country and beyond. You have done this in multiple ways. I would now like to acknowledge the ways and the people who have, as the old saying goes, been "taking it into the streets." I would ask people to stand or raise your hand if you have participated in a march, demonstration, gathering or discussion this year which focused on anti-oppression, anti-discrimination, or violence prevention. (pause and say thank you) Please stand or raise your hand if you have, at one of our second or fifth Sunday services each month, made a financial contribution to the organizations we have given our offering plates to. (pause and say thank you) If you have brought food for the Food Bank on any third Sunday of the month, please stand or raise your hand. (pause and say thank you) Please stand or raise your hand If you supported or volunteered time, energy or effort to Family Promise or Fork and Spoon Homestyle

Kitchen. (pause and say thank you) And finally, I would ask anyone who has sought to live out, to the best of your ability, the values identified in our Seven Principles, to please stand or raise your hand. You are doing the work that makes our Fellowship and our faith tradition meaningful, valuable and real. I respect, honor and applaud you. (gesture for people to be seated)

It is important now and then that we acknowledge what we have accomplished as well as those who have made the accomplishments possible. We are where we are today because of all of you. And we are where we are today because we, as a Fellowship, have had not only values and Principles to guide us, but also a Mission and a Vision. UUFB has both a Mission and a Vision Statement that were created by and are specific to our Fellowship. Together these two documents provide guidance as decisions are made by those in leadership. Our Mission Statement is printed on the Order of Service each Sunday. Our Vision Statement can be found on our website. For those of you who may not know, we made a transition to a new website yesterday. I encourage you to check it out. And when you do, remember that it is a work in progress.

At the congregational meeting that will occur after our service this morning, members of the Fellowship will have the opportunity to decide on the Mission Statement that will guide us in the years ahead. If the proposed new Mission Statement is approved, work will begin in the weeks ahead to create a new Vision Statement. Our current Vision Statement was originally intended to be realized by 2015. Much of what it contains has been accomplished. Some of what it states is yet to be realized. Together these two documents, the Mission and Vision Statements, strive to put into words the aspirations we collectively hold for the future of this Fellowship. It is because of the visions held and worked toward by those who came before us that we are where we are today.

Today, we are looking ahead and preparing to move into the future with a new building, with new members and with a renewed sense of mission and vision. We can't know for sure where our future will take us. It is my hope that the future will take us into both a larger as well as a deeper sense of community—a larger and deeper sense of community both within and beyond our Fellowship. It is my hope that our future will continue to take us out into the larger community—to further our values and to actualize our Principles—to make our Principles come to life in the Bozeman community and in the larger world.

This morning we have considered our accomplishments of the past year and those accomplishments are noteworthy. And we are beginning to imagine our future. From what I have heard from many of you, there is much that we want to accomplish in the years ahead. In some future time, I believe people will look back and be grateful for the effort, the commitment, the wisdom and the guidance that we will have provided—effort, commitment, wisdom and guidance that will have made that future moment possible. And I believe they will offer thanks, just as I say thank you today to all of you who have made this present moment possible.

Thank you and bless you all