

## Reverential Ramblings (aka, final Annual Report from your minister)

Rev. Richard R. Davis, May 4, 2024

Sometimes you may pass by old church buildings no longer housing a congregation – either they’ve been repurposed into a restaurant or wedding venue or it’s become a historic landmark – and I can’t help but think of those from earlier times who sacrificed and created this building both for themselves and future generations.

Then, over time a slow demise eroded the community – perhaps the demographics of the surrounding area changed and the congregation was oblivious of the need for adaptation until it was too late. It’s hard to pin the blame on anyone, but what a shame it is when it comes to this. I can’t help but feel that earlier generations have been let down.

Now imagine the world a century from now when UUCS will be 175 years old – what do you suppose will be here at 5090 Cordon St.? It’s hard to envision, but the deep human need UUCS now fills will not have ceased to exist, despite dire prognostications about the future of religion in our world – people will still need loving community and some sense of higher meaning and purpose in their lives.

There is a deadly fatalism afoot in some circles that is resigned to the slow decay and decline of religious communities – so I am grateful to witness how, during the beginnings of this ministerial transition, you are embodying the exact opposite of this. Here I see evidence of strength, resilience and an eagerness to explore your opportunities to grow, evolve, thrive. You are honoring and embodying the commitment of those came before you.

Over the years I’ve attended workshops and heard many ideas about how to approach the challenges congregations face, and it has oftentimes struck me as a misguided quest for magical solutions wherein dedication, sacrifice and commitment are not required when, in fact, they are essential and foundational.

In my estimation, it’s simple, yet profound. This wonderful community, which I have been honored to serve and am now preparing to leave, is called to continue heeding, with ever strengthening resolve, these four aspects of the spiritual imperative to Love. When love is your motivating force then commitment and sacrifice will flow naturally as expressions of that Love.

**One:** Love the stranger who comes into this community as a newcomer in sensitive, creative and adaptable ways. Ask: How are we loving the newcomer? Who are we missing? Who might feel left out? How can we widen our embrace?

**Two:** Love one another, especially during times of loss and distress. Ask: How are we loving one another? Do we take the time to

notice and reach out to one another? Do we offer one another forbearance and forgiveness? Do we create opportunities for friendships to form, for the fellowship and fun that brings us together?

**Three:** Love the larger surrounding community, especially where this is most needed. Ask: Who are our neighbors? How are we loving them? What are their needs? How can UUCS serve them?

**Four:** Love truth and beauty. Ask: Are we creating compelling worship and opportunities for spiritual growth that acknowledge and address the deepest yearnings of the human heart for truth and beauty – the truth that unifies and uplifts and gives meaning and purpose to our lives?

If you do remember to let love guide you during these precious days of your life, you will not get lost.

Love,

Rick

5.4.24