

Sermon by the Rev. Bill Phillips, delivered to the Unitarian

Universalists of Coastal Georgia, on Oct. 17, 2010

“Coming Out”

Introduction:

Two UU Principles

#4 “A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;”

#7 “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence...”

Reference the struggles of gay & lesbian friends in “coming out”

My Background:

70 years ago I began my pilgrimage with the church as a 3yr. Child

Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, MYF, and Church Camp

Call to Ministry at age 19.

Summary of childhood and youth beliefs:

God as Creator and Loving Father, but with a Temper.

Divinity of Jesus, Virgin Birth, Resurrection from Dead.

Inerrancy of the Bible, Dictated and Inspired by God.

God and Jesus hear and answer Pray.

Divine Healing and Miracles.

College Days—Religion and Philosophy Major

Courses in World Religions, Philosophy, and Greek

First Sermon, age 19 “Came Out as an Intergrationist”

Theology School : Courses in OT and NT, Church History & Theology.

Paul Tillich-“God as Ground of All Being”

Reinhold Niebuhr-“Moral Man & Immoral Society”

Joe Fletcher & Havey Cox—“Situation Ethics”

Thomas Altizer & Bill Mallard “God is Dead”

Seminar!

Gave up on Prayer, Questioned existence of God, loved “Social Gospel”

Contact with writings of Gandhi, King and Mandella—Vietnam War!

Clinical Years: Experienced the “powerlessness of prayer & God

Began to doubt anything “Supernatural”

Move toward Humanism and finally UU.

Summer Sabbatical 2010: Reading the leading Atheist writers.

Richard Dawkins: A British Evolutionary Biologist, Fellow @ The New

College, Oxford University. A regular critic of Creationism and

Intelligent Design, called “Darwin’s Rottweiler”

Author of “The God Delusion”--- 2 million copies, 31 languages.

Sam Harris: Ph.D in Neuroscience from UCLA and Philosophy from Stanford. Author of “Letter to a Christian Nation” and “The End of Faith.” An avowed “Anti-theist.”

Cristopher Hitchens: Author of “God is not Great”.

Currently dying of esophageal cancer and still a dedicated Atheist.

Stephen Hawkins—Perhaps the greatest mind of our time. Long-time ALS patient. A Cosmologist, Theoretical Physicist, and mathematician. Three most popular books, “Black Holes”, “A Brief History of Time” and his latest “The Grand Design.” He says, it is Life, the Universe, and Everything except God. Stephen Hawking is a convinced and convincing Atheist!

Coming Out with my own philosophy belief and lack of belief:

I do not believe in God, the Father, Son or Holy Ghost. I do not believe in Yahweh, Allah, Buddha, or the Great Spirit!

I believe that religion can be very dangerous and destructive, especially when religion and politics are blended together. Religious faith and religious furvor have caused:

Beheading and burning human beings

The Christian Crusades against Muslim infidels

Jihad and suicide bombers by Muslim religious extremists

Christians defended slavery, segregation, and *apartheid*.

German Christians participated in the Holocaust, killing 6 million.

Around the world gypsies, mentally ill, gays and lesbians, have all

Been persecuted, beaten, raped and hung in the name of some God.

I believe that religion can be dangerous and deadly, religion and politics is a frightening lethal concoction.

I believe in the laws of nature, but not anything outside of natural law!

No supernatural beings, no angels, saints, no virgin births, no miracles.

Since I do not believe in a God, I do not believe in prayer! Not public, not private, not intercessory, no divine forgiveness.

I do believe in meditation and human forgiveness. Meditation is a period of quiet when we can become more consciously aware of our inner self, with nature and with our connectedness to all things and all people.

I do not believe in the divinity of the Bible, the Koran, the Bagavad Gita or any other piece of human writing. All religious history was written by humans just like you and me.

I do not believe in heaven or hell, or “life after death.” No 72 virgins if you kill infidels—those who do not believe like you do!

So what is left? A lot of wonderful and wonderful things!

I believe in the worth and dignity of every human being—well most all.

I believe in community; that we are all kin and cousins, white, black, red and yellow. English, French, Jew and Gentile, Asian and European, gay and straight, Eastern and Western, Hispanic and African. I truly believe the family of human kind is one

I believe in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning: in science, medicine, philosophy, history, religion and psychology; in all intellectual endeavours.

I believe in beauty; beautiful music, art, sunset rises and sunsets.

I believe in love of one human being for another, and in compassion of toward others. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

I believe in sharing--- ideas, emotions, joys and concerns, dreams and fears. I believe in dialogue and debate, research and reading, critical study and learning.

I truly believe that the Unitarian Universalist principles of freedom & acceptance, justice & equality, peace and responsibility, are all worth standing up for. I hope and bet that you do also. So may it be!