



Unitarian Universalists in Covenant Greensboro's Downtown UU Church

2020 Sermon Series

A Fresh Perspective

By Rev. F. Nelson Stover

The 2020 sermon series at the Unitarian Universalists in Covenant Church in Greensboro focuses on developing the socio-spiritual framework that fosters creative engagement in shaping the future of our emerging Universe. During a year when social media, the public air waves and personal conversations will be filled with debates over alternative solutions to pressing social issues, this sermon series will explore ways of responding to these concerns from the perspective of a peaceful heart. Each month, a pair of worship services will be dedicated to one particular issue and the deeper journey into the world of Spirit that is evoked. The first sermon in each month's pair will provide an overview of the two dynamics; the second service of the month will allow congregants time to share and reflect on their own life experiences in the larger context.

Links to YouTube versions of the first sermon in each series will be available on the UUs in Covenant website and on a special page of the Emerging Ecology website – <https://emergingecology.org/fns>.

This series draws heavily on the research work done on The Other World, a realm that gives meaning and purpose to those who openly and honestly face the challenges and opportunities that arise when facing the world as it continually unfolds. For background information about the Institutes' work on The Other World visit <https://icaglobalarchives.org/collections/exploring-inner-life/the-other-world/>. In the following descriptions the annotations refer to the relevant topography of The Other World and the particular Trek relevant to each sermon (i.e. *Care-X* implies *The Mountain of Care*, Trek X).

Check the UUs in Covenant website (www.UUCovenant.org) to confirm the themes for each Sunday of the month including which services will focus on this series. The Unitarian Universalists in Covenant meet for worship each Sunday from 11:00 to noon at Scuppernong Bookstore, 304 S. Elm St., Greensboro, NC. During the Covid-19 pandemic all services are being streamed over Zoom at meeting #930-959-271.

All are welcome!

Summaries of the 2020 Sermon Series

Two Worlds (January 5 and 19) – Societal, ecological and interpersonal dynamics present creative opportunities and raise persistent challenges for individuals' lives and groups' well-being in *This World*. *The Other World* also manifests itself in our daily lives. In *The Other World*, Mystery, Consciousness, Care and Tranquility infuse every moment with meaning and transparency. When individuals and organizations connect to *The Other World*, new opportunities and perspectives enshroud the daily activities of *This World*. Both worlds constantly intertwine in everyone's lives. This sermon is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/S5K1QeY4RtE>.

Climate and Compassion (February 9 and 16, *Care-X*) – When Care without limits engulfs us, then the well-being of the trees and needs of future generations become opportunities for creativity rather than unbearable burdens. Getting beyond the fear of disaster and predictions of doom occurs when unbounded Care becomes our daily mode of existence. Even though the urgency seems overwhelming, the act of acknowledging our care allows us freedom to begin necessary forward-looking reformations.

Guns and Profound Acceptance (March 8 and 15, *Consciousness-VII*) – As society embraces ever larger communities – from tribes to cities to a planetary community – the need for self-sufficiency becomes transformed from physical protection to psychic well-being. Protecting self and community require new skills and foundational understandings. The journey from physical protection to interpersonal growth provides a framework for devising new systems of safety for ourselves and one another.

Immigration and Comprehensive Responsibility (April 5 and 19, *Care-XI*) – When the whole Planet has been populated and there is nowhere else to go, everyone becomes our neighbor. When individuals and groups understand themselves as responsible for every part of the whole, questions about the presence of outsiders become answerable in fresh ways. Fear transforms into acceptance when *us* and *them* merge into *all of us*.

Jobs and Individual Inventiveness (May 3 and 17, *Consciousness-VI*) – When individuals awaken to the possibilities that lie within themselves, new opportunities for sustenance arise. As the expansive power of the economic engine fueled by consumption wanes, new economically viable possibilities emerge for individuals and organizations.

Taxes and Structural Care (June 7 and 21, *Care-XII*) – The Universe is on a journey toward complexity. In the 21st Century, this is experienced through the emergence of ever-larger societies bound together through the laws and structures they create and maintain. In this context, taxes (and offerings) become a vital part of balancing resource distribution throughout the entire society. This process also ensures the wherewithal to maintain the relationships and services essential for a healthy society.

Health and the Inescapable Mystery (July 5 and 19, *Mystery-II*) – No one lives forever; sometimes the awareness of finitude becomes inescapable. Social systems of care which acknowledge the spiritual aspects of terminal illness raise deeper questions about living and dying. Health care includes both ways to maintain vitality and processes to support individuals to die with dignity. Available on YouTube at: https://youtu.be/q1eqNkHx_bA.

Diversity and Being Hopelessly Enamored (August 2 and 16, *Mystery-IV*) – When you find yourself hopelessly enamored with Being, everything and everyone becomes loveable. Diversity, what's the problem? Generally, however, sameness seems safer. Finding contemporary ways of moving beyond the comfort of conformity requires ingenuity and compassion. Available on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/hASpR5whp-A>.

Terrorism and Problemless Living (September 6 and 20, *Tranquility-XIV*) – When life seems full of problems, lashing out is one response. Living beyond problems is another possible response to every moment. It's a choice everyone makes every day. Finding ways to enable individuals and groups to move beyond the immediacy of their anger to find the wonder of daily living provides a challenge to caring communities everywhere.

Social Media and Perpetual Certitude (October 4 and 18, *Tranquility-XIII*) – Social media provide boundless information from all perspectives. The question becomes: how do you know what is right and wrong, what is true or false? Resolving this uncertainty beckons a person beyond the rational, beyond conventional ways of thinking. Finally, a person acts from this broader perspective. Voting requires a decision, finally you just decide, for yourself and for the Planet.

Education and Deep Awareness (November 1 and 15, *Consciousness-V*) – Familiarity with facts provides important life benefits; knowing beyond the surface opens even more doors of possibility. Both are important yet require different modes. Finding ways to include and support both aspects of human growth expands the context of the on-going dialogues.

Beckoning Beyond (December 1 and 15) – Religious people and the congregations of which they are a part only have one gift to give – the gift of authentic life. What clues do we have for beckoning others to authentic life and how do we demonstrate the structures and practices which enhance the journey to profound living?

Unitarian Universalists in Covenant *Greensboro's Downtown UU Church*

We are brave, curious, and compassionate thinkers and doers. We are diverse in faith, ethnicity, history and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to make a difference for the good. We have a track record of standing on the side of love, justice, and peace.

We have radical roots and a history as self-motivated spiritual people: we think for ourselves and recognize that life experience influences our beliefs more than anything.

We need not think alike to love alike. We are people of many beliefs and backgrounds: people with a religious background, people with none, people who believe in a God, people who don't, and people who let the mystery be.

Mission: To enable the search for meaning from a peaceful heart, living lives of integrity and service.

Vision: In this fellowship we call UUs in Covenant, we have gathered seeking a higher purpose and deeper life than we might find alone. We are grateful for everyone who joins us in our service and in our covenant. Our covenant reflects our values statement. We seek to enable all who join us to live the life idealized through our covenant with each other. We pledge to listen deeply and respond with open hearts and minds. We embrace membership in the community as a gift and a commitment. The relationships we form here are based on the needs of the soul, needs that render us vulnerable and dependent on each other's grace, mercy, and generosity of spirit. We pledge to be guardians of each other's spirit, to enable you on your spiritual journey, and to always believe in every person's worth and dignity.

About Rev. F. Nelson Stover

Rev. Stover completed his BSc in Computer Science at Purdue University and received a B.Div. from Chicago Theological Seminary. His dissertation focused on the church's role in social change. In 1970, he was ordained by the United Church of Christ in Michigan; by mutual agreement, he pursued a social ministry.

Working with the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), Nelson conducted human development training programs for individuals at all levels of society for the next two decades. During this time, he and his wife, Elaine, spent five years in India and extensive periods in Australia, Belgium and Egypt.

His lectures and writings focus on foundational principles and practical actions relevant for developing mutually enhancing relationships between the human and non-human worlds. Nelson may be contacted at StoverN@Bellsouth.net.