

*February 21, 2010: "The Unitary Universal Pull to Evolve"*  
**Lay Speaker Joan Nelson**

**CALL TO WORSHIP: We are being called! Yes! Us! We are being called to stop clinging to false illusions of security. We are called to start operating at a new level of awareness.**

**Humanity is wobbling. — Precariously. — On the cusp of a major shift into a new reality. Our new reality includes extraordinary advances in science, technology and strategic relations of all kinds. The new reality requires a *major shift in morality and ethics* in all areas of human behavior. **Bottom Line:** At a deep level, we are being called to yield to a primal impulse: The pull of the great *Unitary Universal dance of evolution*.**

**Yielding to the primal pull isn't *easy* in today's hectic, stressed-out world. Yet, it's absolutely *essential* in today's deeply-disturbed world.**

**As long as we've been invited to the evolution dance, we would be advised (by our own higher deeper selves) to use this time, to ground and balance our lower, wobbly selves. Who knows, we might even learn to dance this one with some kind of grace and style.**

**READING:**

**The Nursing School at Dominican University is training students to work with Marin citizens who are...shall we say... "older?" As in maybe needing canes, or walkers and grab bars. A student approached me walking across the campus asked me to volunteer for an evaluation. "Who? Me?" I thought. "Moi? Grab bars?" Alas, yes. Me. "I'll show them," I thought as I bounced in enthusiastically and sat down with a group of 3 students who asked me lots of questions: beginning**

with, "Have you had any falls in the past year?" "Nope. Not this year," I said. "In the past 12 months," they said. Again...Alas. "Yes. Twice in 2009." They put check marks in little boxes on their individual computer screens, each screen with my name at the top. Then they had me stand up. And walk. And breathe. Sit down. Stand up again. And bend over. And turn this way. And that way.

Next, they had me watch a video about slippery throw rugs, and grab bars while they compared the little squares in their computers.

Then they came back and gave me a list of "Suggestions for Safer Living." At the top of the list was: Dancing.

"Dancing!" I thought. "You've got to be kidding." My dancing development was totally arrested way back in childhood. I flunked out of Miss Pruett's dancing school. I even flunked out of Square Dancing. In fact, I was too embarrassed about my 2 left feet to dance at my own wedding(s). I'm not about to learn to dance now.

Bottom line: My recognition of the power of gravity is somewhat impaired. And I know it.... I thanked the students, folded their "suggestions," stuck them in my pocket, and wobbled home... Carefully...Contemplating my relationship with the sidewalk. And the ground beneath the sidewalk. And the layers of earth beneath the ground beneath the sidewalk. And the molten center of the spinning planet way, way beneath the sidewalk.

Gravity, as today's children's story said, was "born with a bang" about 14 billion years ago. Out of a tiny singularity—in a split second of cosmic co-incidence—gravity became the ground from which the whole of existence has evolved. (Including our mental constructs of the whole of existence.)

Eons later came the notion of God. Some folks think that there was God *before* gravity. They spend a lot of time dancing on the heads of tiny little pins. But they never seem to stop dancing long enough to think it through.

When you do stop to think about it, the notion of God is simply the *evolution of an idea*. It began with the polytheism of many gods all at once. Then evolved into a thunderous angry-human type of being. Then to an abstract, transcendent entity. All this was invented by us folks, known in science-speak as "homo sapiens": Meaning wise. As in "Wise guys."

This evolution of God began during the hunter-gatherer epoch. Eventually Homo Habilis and Homo Erectus evolved into brainy sapient guys who had the unprecedented ability to know stuff and to know that they knew it.

But when it came to the "un-known", they lost their balance and started to wobble on the edge of fear. To alleviate the fear, they grabbed on tight to their imaginary grab-bar God, and started to cling to it with an intellectual death grip. *This clinging, I think, has arrested the development of civilization. And we have a lot of catching up to do...*

On the brighter side—here at the dawn of the third millennium—we are witnessing a *new recognition* of that same basic impulse: That universal pull toward unity. The evolutionary urge that was misinterpreted to create an illusory grab-bar security. This impulse is now being recognized as a powerful force in un-arresting our development. And not a minute too soon.

The choice is ours. We can go on with arrested development as usual. Or we can yield to the pull of Universal Unity when it tugs at our sleeve. And, boy is it tugging, now.

(.....anthem)

*Sermon:* On one hand, we are a case of *arrested* spiritual evolution—fraught with uncertainty and fear. On the other hand, we have the potential for *perpetual* spiritual evolution—which is, yes, fraught with uncertainty and fear. *If you think spiritual evolution is all about peace and serenity, you can think again.*

The future ain't gunna unfold by its unconscious self. It is being created, right now, by our engagement with gravity. Not just the kind of gravity that keeps us from flying off into space. But the serious "gravity," or "gravitas," of our here-and-now world situation.

The good news is that the human condition is always changing. The wobbly-on-the-edge news is that the direction of the change is uncertain. And *it's up to us.*

The only way to steady the wobble is to *recognize* ("re" "cognize" *re-think, recognize*) the big primal urge. That one great impulse that is—was—and ever shall be: That nagging yearning to progress, advance, grow develop. To evolve—personally and collectively: The Unitary and Universal yank at the sleeve that won't let us alone.

**Unitary:** pertaining to, or characterized by singularity: *We are pulled by the singularity that we UUs refer to as the "interdependent web of existence."*

**Universal:** pertaining to, or characteristic of the whole. Affecting, concerning, or involving all. From ancient astrology to modern string theory and black-holes—and even beyond—science is also dancing on the edge of the Universal Unitary mind. Sometimes dancing in the dark. But dark often leads to light. In fact, I've been reading about some physicists who are getting closer to the long-sought unified theory of the whole. But they, also, are trying to get their conditioned thinking

**minds around a *unitary, universal mind that's so big that it can't be contained in a theory of any kind.***

**I've been wondering, seriously, for a while if we will have enough time to un-arrest the world's arrested awareness of the unitary universal whole.**

**In a sermon in October, I promoted the vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest, paleontologist and evolutionary mystic. His notion? "Homo Progressivus." Teilhard stressed that informational knowledge has increased and will continue to increase. But that it will be up to "Homo progressivus" to get humankind to operate from the deeper knowledge, true awareness, of the connectedness itself.**

**Since then, I've been reading about a guy named Jeremy Rifkin, who goes beyond "Homo Sapiens and Progressivus" to "Homo Empathicus." This guy is—of all things!—an economist!:... Somebody who figures out how to make the most money by producing and distributing stuff.**

**He says that we have to recognize (re/cognize) the whole human story: Re/think it in terms of sympathy, caring and compassion! ... The best part is that this guy is actually advising world leaders on economic sustainability.**

**It looks to me like Rifkin is one indication that we are starting to recover from the false security of our developmental arrest.**

**But, with a mainstream culture that still clings to that false sense of security, recovery is a wobbly process. So we tilt a little too far. Then we compensate by tilting in the other direction. Once again, too far.**

**Now, I've got a problem here. It's the dancing thing. My brain and feet are still at war. (Somewhere near my belly**

button...which IS my center of gravity, I'm told) I deliberately avoided our recent sock hop because I knew I couldn't cling to a chair all night. And that if I tried to dance, I'd start to tilt a little too far, balance, tilt again ...wobble...and all that.

But, you know what? Like everyone else, I've been invited to the dance of evolution. And, and I want to accept this invitation. And I want to dance all night.

We all came to the evolution dance together. All of us are engaged with the Unitary and Universal pull. Although we tend to resist the pull, we've passed the point of no return. And we can't go back to our chairs.

This is where we UUs are crucial. We're on the "A" list of people invited to the dance. We're ahead of the curve in that we're not hampered by the illusion that God is going to save us from ourselves. And we're relatively well grounded in awareness of the connection of everything.

We *allow* ourselves to be pulled by the gravity of the planet. So why don't we allow ourselves to be pulled—or at, least *stop resisting* the pull—of the still small voice of our creedless religion?

Whether we recognize it or not, we are "Evolutionaries." With a capital "E." If we aren't yet fully aware of the Unitary Universal mind, then our spiritual practice should focus on *becoming* aware of it.

I figure that if an economist can choose a moral narrative for corporations, we Unitary Universal Evolutionaries can certainly get off our wobbly perch on the edge of awareness...And get it about the nature of consciousness itself: That we are creating what is.

**But...we have to let go of the false security we imagine is coming from our wobbly chairs: The false security of illusion, wishful thinking, and self-deceit. I, for one, still deceive myself. For example, I was so not willing to take responsibility for my part in the direction of the future, that I reverted to magic and played a psychological trick on myself. I substituted Obama for God and really believed my wish might come true: he would fix the world.**

**Beliefs die hard. This is why I'm interested in economists. My father was an economist. He left the house every morning and hung out at on Wall Street. (Really Lehman Brothers, at 1 William St.) I never understood exactly what it was that he did there; but around the house, he always talked about what he called "R I." That stood for "rugged individualism." He got that notion from Libertarian thinker, Ayn Rand, who promoted what she called "ethical egoism." My dad called it "R I" and hammered it home to anyone who would listen. "Every man for himself. I-got-mine. You-get-yours. But don't take it from me."**

**No wonder my mother said those two big books—"Fountainhead" and "Atlas Shrugged," were only good as door-stops.**

**Were he still alive, I don't think my father would be able to give up his R I belief and go along with Homo Empathicus.**

**Freedom from familiar beliefs can be really scary. In fact it can be terrifying, when your vision of reality doesn't keep up with the shifting world situation.**

**Nevertheless, we know the shift is happening when an economist tells us that if we develop more empathy, we can play a crucial part in what he calls the "greatest evolutionary transformation the world has ever known."**

**FIRST: we need to *own the problem* that has arrested our spiritual development. The problem is our limited vision of the Unitary and Universal: Our vision got arrested along with everything else, in the clash between the physical world and the world of pure being.**

**To help understand the clash between spirit and matter, try closing your eyes for a few moments. (Or not. Like everything else, what you do is up to you.) See if you can imagine your way back to before the almighty bang, and just drift back to before there was anything.**

**Just for fun, imagine yourself in a non-material state of being. Not thinking. Not feeling. Just being. That's all. Pure Being. Being be-ing being.**

**This is hard to do. Because the physical world is so much with us, that we can't remember nonphysical being.**

**Unless you're a metaphysical genius of some kind, all you can do right now is imagine. But it's good to remember that cell biologists have gone beyond imagining, and are beginning to perceive the literal matrix of Being that underlies our extraordinary world with all its complex oneness.**

**Meanwhile, we have a lot of development to un-arrest in the realm of moral, ethical evolution. We need to put into practice our awareness of our part in evolution. The best news is that the primal impulse to evolve is manifesting in each of us. You might not always recognize it as such, but you are (from time to time) inspired by and aligned with the invisible force of "Being" that is, was, and ever shall be.**

**Recall a moment of expanded consciousness. Perhaps the sudden recognition of a sunset...a moonrise. A meeting eye-to-eye, or heart-to-heart with another being. Perhaps in the deep**

**focus on a particular athletic, artistic or musical activity. Or at the moment of orgasm.**

**Simply recall a moment—no matter how brief—when you knew—intuitively—without thinking—just being present with being itself—you knew that you were part of the universal, unitary whole that is, was and ever shall be.**

**At the same time, you may have been aware that life, the way it's being lived by much of humanity, doesn't make sense and that something has to change. And that the change can only begin with you.**

**Nevertheless, these Unitary Universal moments are the latest expansion of the Big Bang of Being that's inviting us to the dance of evolution.**

**We can't *survive* without the kind of gravity that holds us and our planet together. And we can't *evolve* without acknowledging the gravity of the current state of humanity. And then learning to dance with it.**

**This kind of dancing is scary for folks in a culture with arrested development. So let's take a few minutes, here to ground ourselves in the Unitary and Universal gravity.**

**These moments of awareness are easier to come by if you start with the physical world of your body. If you haven't already closed your eyes, see if you are willing to do that now, and center into your chair, fully aware of the gravity that's keeping you in touch with the floor... and the earth below the floor. And the layers of earth below the earth below the floor.**

**With a renewed appreciation for the force field that holds you here, allow yourself to be aware of its pull. And adjust your physical reality so that your body is relaxed and aligned with this place on this hill on our shared planet.**

**Next, allow yourself to be fully aware of inspiration: Inspiration of air into your lungs. And inspiration of wisdom into your brain.**

**Take a few deliberate deep inspirations and envision yourself in alignment with the pull of the Universal, Unified whole. Imagine being, just being—being with the wholeness itself.**

**Now, reflect on your current stage of development moral, ethical, spiritual. What is your overall relationship with the pull to evolve? Notice a time when you avoided or resisted the pull. We all shrink from the tug from time to time, by pretending to ourselves that we didn't notice a higher or deeper option, or choice.**

**You know what you need to do. Think of something that you've said or done that (because it diminishes you in your own eyes) you wish you hadn't done. Or something you didn't say or do that (because you feel diminished) you wish you had done.**

**We're looking at a time when you took a short-cut to avoid your own growing edge. You felt the primal pull to do something specific that would move you ahead in terms of personal evolution.**

**Perhaps you resisted the pull toward a relationship with someone or something that you thought was too advanced for little ole you.**

**Maybe you wimped out on an opportunity that you recognized as a challenge to create a more rational loving and generous environment.**

**This is just an exercise. The purpose is not to beat yourself up. The purpose is simply to re-cognize where you are**

**right now in terms of personal evolution. There is no right or wrong place to be. So just notice where you are.**

**Re-cognize that it's not just about you. You are an individual expressions of our collective species' struggle to evolve.**

**All of us are members of a culture that's just beginning to come out of a state of arrested development. We are life itself, finally getting it that we are creating our own evolution.**

**Notice that you have just re-cognized your own resistance to the pull. This re-cognition, itself, frees up some of that original energy that's still waiting to burst forth in a more evolved way.**

**So, allow your body-mind to experience the truth: that you are a Unitary and Universal human dealing with the larger evolutionary predicament that began a long time ago. Allow your personal journey to be enlightened by the recognition that, because everything is one, every bit of effort you make in the right direction is helping to uplift and move the world's evolution.**

**At this point we must join with the growing number of evolutionaries (scientists, economists and others) who are beginning to feel the impulse to deliberately contribute to evolution.**

**So allow yourself to align with the pull—however the pull feels to you. And know that you, I, everyone in this room, everyone in Marin. Everyone everywhere is, right now, the latest expression of the big bang in motion.**

**As for engaging in the epic worldwide reality shift, we are Evolutionaries in training. We need to be willing to dance in the dark, for a while, as we practice maintaining a deeper**

**awareness of the Universal and Unitary whole. So, for now, inspire a couple of deliberate deep inhalations and notice again, your relationship with the chair, the floor, the gravity.**

**Let's see how much of this awareness we can maintain as we progress from this inner space into the shared space of the next hymn. Phil will wait one minute before he announces the hymn.**

**Benediction:**

**Will the coming era be more workable? More equitable? More humble? Easier to steer? Only if humans in general, and you and I in particular, align and realign ourselves with the pull to evolve. So allow yourself to inspire a couple of deeper inspirations, and remember: You can tap into awareness of the Universal and Unitary whole any time. Any place.**

**If it helps, you can try dancing: Even in the dark:**

Dancing in the dark 'til the tune ends  
 We're dancing in the dark and it soon ends  
 We're waltzing in the wonder of why we're here  
 Time hurries by, we're here and we're gone

**And we can face the music together  
 Dancing in the dark, dancing in the dark  
 Dancing in the dark**