

A Chorus of Living Faith
A Religious Celebration of Free Faith and World Community

“Faith is the Substance of Things Hoped For”

“All Human Action, All Good Endeavor, All the Progress of Civilization, is the Work of Faith”

All Souls’ Church (Unitarian)

A. Powell Davies, Minister

“The Faith Behind Freedom,” the declaration of faith and purpose which is spoken chorally in this service, was prepared at the direction of the Program Committee for the 1943 Anniversary Meetings of the American Unitarian Association. The committee which drew together the source material and gave to the statement its final form was composed of the Rev. A. Powell Davies, chairman; the Rev. Delos W. O’Brian and the Rev. Dale DeWitt. It was arranged for choral speaking by the Rev. Vincent B. Silliman, who directs the Speech Choir today.

Washington, D. C.

February 11, 1945, at 5:00 P.M.

[Silliman’s handwritten note: “This was an interesting project with a very impressive outcome. Senator Burton led the congregational part of ‘The Faith Behind Freedom’ toward end of service. See also back page.”]

Leader:

Having this faith,
and believing in its power to shape the future,
we desire that from the present struggle of the nations
shall come a moral victory of all mankind.

Congregation and Speech Choir:

Our purpose is
to build a World Community of free and equal men,
dedicated to equality of rights and obligations,
and governed by the laws that free men make.
To such a World Community we look for lasting peace,
knowing that peace is built on unity,
and unity on freedom.
No world, half slave, half free, can bring us lasting peace.
We seek complete and universal freedom.
Our purpose is a world of liberation
not only from the tragedy of war
but from the tyranny of hate and greed,
and from the barrier of race and class,
And we look for freedom
through a better regulation of the world's prosperity:
freedom from poverty,
freedom from want.
We seek a world more equal in its opportunity,
free from hereditary privilege
and from entrenchments that defy the common good.

We look for equal justice,
equal economic treatment,
equal privileges,
irrespective of nation, color or creed . . .
There is no room for prejudice in a free man's world . . .
And we seek these things here in America,
having in mind especially
our fellow-citizens, the Jews and Negroes,
that we may be worthy of our place among the nations
and of the coming freedom of the world.
We earnestly desire an end to nationalism,
that love country may be freed from selfish interest.
Above the state must be the family of nations,
and beyond all other human love,
the love of all mankind.
Finally, we look for growing freedom through cooperation,
Freedom in the service of the World Community,
Freedom through the Brotherhood of Man.

Leader:

But we realize
that when we have said these things
we have not done them.

Congregation and Speech Choir:

We propose to do them,
both as citizens of a free country
whose freedom is their birthright,

and as disciples of a free religion
to whom it is a sacred trust.

Leader:

Mankind is buying with its blood and agony
the chance to build a better world.

Congregation and Speech Choir:

Let us begin to build it.

The time of opportunity . . . is . . . now.

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN “Faith of the Free” (Tune 363)
(Words on following page)

BENEDICTION

ORGAN POSTLUDE

Fantasia in G Minor

Bach

Faith Of The Free

Faith of the larger liberty,
 Source of the light expanding,
Law of the church of man to be,
 Old bondage notwithstanding:
Faith of the free! By thee we live –
By all thou givest and shalt give
 Our loyalty commanding.

Heroes of faith in every age,
 Far-seeing, self-denying,
Wrought an increasing heritage,
 Monarch and priest defying.
Faith of the free, in thy dear name,
The costly heritage we claim,
 Their living and their dying.

Faith for the people everywhere,
 Whatever their oppression,
Of all who make the world more fair,
 Living their faith's confession:
Faith of the free! Whate'er our plight,
Thy law, thy liberty, thy light
 Shall be our blest possession.

Purpose we gratefully receive,
 Since life is more than pleasure,
Gospel to them that do believe,
 For none may hide such treasure:
Faith of the free! We hail thee now;
With burning hearts we make the vow
 To serve thee without measure. Amen.

-- Vincent B. Silliman

Music

under the direction of

Lewis Corning Atwater, Organist-Director

Mrs. Henry T. Parrett, soprano	Anna K. Molster, contralto
George Irving Chandler, tenor	John Yard, C.Y., U.S.N.R., baritone

Copies of the full text of "The Faith Behind Freedom" may be had in Pierce Hall where tea will be served for those who find it possible to remain, or in the vestibule upon leaving the Church.

[Silliman's handwritten note: "Since I am enclosing this order of service, I may as well report further that the hymn printed here went splendidly! V. S."]

The Faith Behind Freedom
A Declaration of Faith and Purpose

First Presented At The
United Unitarian Advance Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts, May 27, 1943

UNIVERSAL FREEDOM

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal;
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights;
that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

– Thomas Jefferson, Author of the
Declaration of American Independence,
1776, and prophet of Unitarian
Free religion as the faith of the future.

UNITARIAN FREE RELIGION

“I am a living member of the great family of all souls . . . This is the bond
of the Universal Church: no man be excommunicated from it but by the
death of goodness in his own breast.”

– William Ellery Channing.
Pioneer and leader of American
Unitarianism, 1819.

ALL SOULS' CHURCH
UNITARIAN
SIXTEENTH AND HARVARD STREETS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

1945

The Faith Behind Freedom

I. The Struggle to be Free

At a time of world upheaval when all things are called in question, it is well that men should search their hearts and know what faith they hold and whether it can shape the present miseries towards a happier future. Many beliefs, once confidently held, have crumbled with the coming of the modern age: others are falling now before the fury of the storm. To cling to these beliefs means trusting in the effectual. We cannot build the future with a worn-out creed.

Nor can we build it out of emptiness and unbelief. We need a faith that truly reckons with an age of transformation; that knows the inner meaning of events; that sees the coming victory of humanity within the present tragedy and loss.

This faith has long been growing and has now begun to claim the future. It was held by Jefferson and Lincoln as the hope of universal liberation and in rejection of the creeds. It was proclaimed by Channing as the essence of original Christianity; by Emerson as pure Religion; by Parker as the faith that builds the brotherhood of man. What Whitman prophesied it as the true religion of tomorrow. It has been voiced by prophets, sung by poets, declared by pioneers of liberty through many centuries, in every land. It is the faith behind freedom.

From the beginning man has struggled to be free. Through countless generations, he has fought to liberate himself from limitations in the natural world about him, from fear and ignorance, from the tyrannies imposed by other men. In this he has fulfilled a natural law of

life, which, as it climbs to higher levels in the scale, requires the growth of freedom. Once reached, this higher level cannot be debased without disaster. Retreat from freedom, therefore, or its degradation, is defiance of a natural law, which now, as always, must invite calamity. Man, to be equal to his future, must be free.

But freedom cannot live unless it grows. The time has come to make it universal. When, in the 18th century, it was declared that all men are created equal and endowed with freedom as a natural right, not only was a new and different kind of nation dedicated to a universal principle, but the declaration heralded the freedom of the world. This is the deeper issue of the present war. The age-long struggle has achieved its universal scope. The earth is now a neighborhood. Mankind is bound together in a common fate. Freedom must in the end be indivisible. And therefore, we believe the world must come to be a single, free community. Until it does, wars will increase and nations, strong or weak, must face the ever-present danger of destruction. The world is now too small for anything but brotherhood; and brotherhood, before it can be universal, must be based upon the principle that all men are created free.

This is the hope of freedom, but behind it there has always been a freedom-building faith. Freedom cannot be maintained by faiths that foster ignorance and superstition, and thus become the natural tools of tyranny. Whatever fears the naked light of truth will seek its shelter in oppression. Only beliefs which in themselves are liberating are equal to the purpose of a liberated world. Hence, we believe that freedom grows from free religion, that only a free religion can be universal, and that every other freedom is based on freedom of the mind.

II. Declaration of Faith

A true religion knows no barriers of nation, race or class, and no exclusion through a creed. Its unity is its purpose; its covenant is brotherhood. As no man can be good enough to be the master of another, so no man can be wise enough to bind another in belief. Hence, we reject all orthodoxies and proclaim the Free and Universal Church.

And in the freedom of this Church, knowing that all beliefs derive their substance from the meaning that we find in life and from the faith we have in man, we make the following affirmations, offering them to all to whom they are persuasive and as the basis of a faith for freedom-loving men:

We believe that religion and life are one and the spiritual world is part of the natural world. We take our stand with modern knowledge, knowing it as fallible but knowing also that it supersedes a less enlightened past. We respect the timeless wisdom of those ancient teachings which continue to persuade us, and revere the prophets of all ages and of every land. We honor the precepts Jesus taught as being original Christianity. But we remember that, no matter what our heritage, it is the living truth that makes us free.

We believe that man is both a child of earth and of the wider mystery of the universe. We face the facts of evil, ignorance and tragedy without evasion or pretense – and equally without dismay. For man has yet to reach his fullest stature and is not imprisoned by the limits of his understanding. He has the power of more growth, of loving and creating beauty; and through spiritual awareness, great intensities of insight and imagination. He is, no matter what the mystery of his being, a living soul.

The meaning of his life is not defined by what degrades it but by what it moves towards. The truth that man resists takes deeper root within his conscience, and though he crucifies his benefactors, memory never lets a prophet die.

We repudiate the fear that brings retreat to many modern minds: that human progress has resulted in insoluble dilemmas and incurred the wrath of God through being due to human pride. No moral benefit ensues from such distortions of the fact of human evil, none of which are curable by superstitious fear. The evil man creates is grim and tragic; but it must be conquered by humility combined with moral courage – not abasement – and through the free religion that can build a better world. Modern man is not condemned by modern progress but by the insufficient spread of it. It is ancient ignorance and ancient fear, together with all other ancient evil, that have held him back. It is wider freedom, leading to greater brotherhood, that will bring him on his way.

We believe experience reveals a Mystery more sublime and wonderful than human life, and which exceeds our understanding. In this we see the source of mind and spirit. We recognize that each of us must name this Mystery as his thought directs, but that the language of the heart has called it God. We cannot hope to comprehend the Uttermost; we know it as 'a power in the life', upon which we may rely. But we believe that God in human history must think through human thoughts and work through human hands. No thought of God is true that undermines the need for courage or lessens our responsibility. Hence, man is challenged by the highest measure of his spiritual awareness, as well as by conditions in world about him, to achieve a life of freedom through his power to think, and choose, and

share the guidance of his destiny. This is the soul's emancipation, the source of sacredness in human rights, the final and religious ground of freedom.

III. Affirmation of Purpose

Having this faith and believing in its power to shape the future, we desire that from the present struggle of the nations shall come a moral victory for all mankind.

Our purpose is to build a World Community of free and equal men, dedicated to equality of human rights and obligations, and governed by the laws that free men make.

To such a World Community we look for lasting peace, knowing that peace is built on unity, and unity of freedom. No world, half-slave, half-free, can bring us lasting peace. We seek complete and universal freedom.

Our purpose is a world of liberation not only from the tragedy of war but from the tyranny of hate and greed, and from the barriers of race and class. And we look for freedom through a better regulation of the world's prosperity: freedom from poverty, freedom from want. We seek a world more equal in its opportunity, free from hereditary privilege and from entrenchments that defy the common good. We look for equal justice, equal economic treatment, equal education, equal privileges, irrespective of nation, color or creed. There is no room for prejudice or persecution in a free man's world . . . And we seek these things here in American, having in mind especially our fellow-citizens, the Jews and Negroes, that we may be worthy of our place among the nations of the coming freedom of the world.

We earnestly desire an end to nationalism, that love of country may be freed from selfish interest. Above the State must be the family of nations, and beyond all other human love, the love of all mankind.

Finally, we look for growing freedom through cooperation, freedom in the service of the World Community, freedom through the Brotherhood of Man.

But we realize that when we have said these things, we have not done them. We propose to do them both as citizens of a free country whose freedom is their birthright, and as disciples of a free religion to whom it is a sacred trust. Mankind is buying with its blood and agony the chance to build a better world. Let us begin to build it. The time of opportunity is now.

NOTE – The source of spiritual authority for Unitarians, is the individual conscience. While there is a general body of belief, modern-minded and progressive in its emphasis, the variations which enrich it are unusually wide. All members of the fellowship are free to hold their own beliefs and equally at liberty to state them.

The present declaration was prepared in 1943, at the direction of the Program Committee of the American Unitarian Association, upon the basis of contributory statements from groups of Unitarian Ministers and Laymen, whose conviction is that in their heritage of free religion, as held by Jefferson and Lincoln no less than Channing, Emerson and Parker,

and historically centered in the struggle for a universal, free humanity, they find the faith that meets the challenge of the present hour. The committee which drew together the source material and gave to the statement its final form was composed of the Rev. A. Powell Davies, Chairman, the Rev. Delos W. O'Brian and Rev. Dale DeWitt.