

Anchor Report
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Greenfield Group 2007 Fall Convocation
Attleboro, MA

Our brilliant, if slightly and endearingly and thankfully obsessive moderator, Bill Gardiner, called us to order at 3:00 PM EST. We spent the bulk of the next 90 minutes checking in, sharing stories of children and grandchildren—and occasionally parents; stories of parish ministry, interim parish ministry and ministry after retirement. Some of us announced we are at peace. Some are unsettled and/or healthily disturbed. We heard about surgeries and car accidents, haircuts and Thanksgiving meals, sabbaticals and vacations—including a rafting adventure over a Salmon River waterfall and a father-daughter trip to Germany. We heard about the Super Sonic Rock Opera and relief work in New Orleans, trauma response efforts in San Diego, a new condominium, Parkinson's disease and skin cancer. We heard about a degree earned, a Buddhist educational program anticipated, and the possibility of living with a spouse full time. We heard about building projects hitting bumps in the road and relationships with staff. We welcomed two prospective members, Barbara Fast and Lisa Freedman. We heard that Rosemary Brae McNatt, Marta Flanagan, Will Saunders, and Tom Wintle would not be with us for this convocation. We heard that Greg Chute has resigned his membership in the Greenfield Group to pursue his work in South Africa. We received greetings from "Saint" Charles Magistro and recent Greenfield Group member Charles Stephens. Nobody swore. The entire affair was civil and relaxed.

We were warmly and graciously welcomed to the La Salette Center by Father Fern, who also informed us that the church has become too intellectual for men. He expressed joy that more men are now seeking spiritual direction.

After a brief review of the Wednesday morning business agenda, we broke for happy hour and dinner.

We reconvened at 7:00 PM for Jim Sherblom's self-described "fairly dense" paper, "The Globalization of Economics and Finance." I realize right away it will be difficult to track conversations about such complex topics. I may miss some of the nuances. I'm sure I will be forgiven. Jim began by tracing the rise of the United States of America (USA) as the economic superpower of the 20th century and then forecasting economic volatility in the USA in the coming century. He discussed mathematical patterns (the 80/20 split) at work in our current economic system that explain and predict increasing inequities not only in the USA broadly, but even in the room among the members of the Greenfield Group. Given these patterns, he suggested that "without a values consensus it is possible and even likely that globalization will lead to greater inequities and a decline of control of democratically elected governmental bodies." In short, the USA has not yet experienced the full cost of globalization, but that experience is coming.

Jim discussed the recent economic histories of China and India and how they did not participate in the first wave of industrialization. China's current growth resembles that of the 19th century USA—adolescent capitalism—a phase. India is rapidly emerging as the world's leading high technology English speaking service provider. Only China exceeds India's growth rate. The USA will benefit most if current growth rate ratios with

China and India remain stable for the next 50 years. Key questions include whether growth in India and China will benefit their rural poor in addition to their urban elite, and to what extent environmental challenges will impact these economies. Clearly, the USA will not be the only superpower in the future.

Looking forward, Jim discussed the work of Joseph Stiglitz, who examines how the world might pull its lowest billion people out of abject poverty. Jim then looked specifically at the USA which may become the most rapidly downward mobile large country in recent human history. He asked, what will we tell our grandchildren who will need to pay for our high standard of living? Are we squandering the economic opportunities that remain available to us?

Jim fielded many, many, many questions—mostly technical—as we tried to fully comprehend the finer details of his paper. An underlying theme of our questioning: when will the USA wake up to its responsibilities? When will individual US citizens wake up to their responsibilities? Is there a new globalized religious thinking, not tied to traditional religion, that supports us in waking up to our responsibilities and to the new global realities?

Around 8:10 Tracy Sprowls Jenks read her response to Jim's paper. Tracy agreed with Jim that we in the USA are squandering our inheritance. She raised a variety of questions: about US history; about the ability of the earth to sustain further population growth; about the instability of capitalism; about the role and power of corporations to shape political and developmental decisions; about the need to reform the IMF and World Bank; about whether we are currently in a state of modern feudalism (which implies that corporate power often trumps governmental power, especially in poor countries). She concluded with a reference to Gil Rendle who reminds us that looking at everything as a problem is the old style of leadership. "Many situations we are working with do not have solutions, because they are not problems....They are the conditions of a changed world."

Our closing conversation ranged widely. Some highlights of the conversation included the following:

Sometimes economic negatives free up immense energy into new areas of positive creativity and innovation.

In our own churches, the whole idea of "vision"—what is it? Doesn't ministry happen one person at a time? So, in response to the realities of globalism, what is our work? Our job is to help people not only find and make meaning in their lives, but to help them identify meaning that is sustainable vs. meaning that will kill us.

Preparing for a globalized world: invest in vegetable gardens, install wood stoves for when the power goes out, learn how to make candles. Self-sufficiency is not liberal eco-mania. It is basic, practical living for a globalized world.

Man cannot be the measure of all things (i.e., "Life is the Greatest Gift of All"). That is not a sustainable theology. Unitarian Universalism (Universalism in particular) offers a theology of transcendent abundance. Who we are matters. That we are matters. What we have and own shouldn't matter as much. UU ministers can help people delink conceptions of self-worth from their material aspirations and possessions.

Frank Carpenter led evening chapel at 9:00. He invited us to reflect on becoming adults. Perhaps it is the job of ministers to help people grow up. Frank also invited us to name those who've helped us grow up and into the ministry. We did.

Carole Rosine led morning chapel at 7:30. She invited us to remember those who have passed away recently. We did. One hand washes the other. We are all still going through changes.

On Tuesday morning, our intrepid, soft-spoken Vice Moderator, Mary Harrington, called us to order a bit after 9:00. Bill Gardiner presented his paper, “The Politics of Globalization: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy.” His paper opened with a discussion of current trends in American politics leaning against free trade. He looked at arguments in favor of globalization, emphasizing there are real benefits that come with globalization. He talked about our reading from Thomas Friedman and offered these critiques in response to Friedman’s relatively positive view of free trade: 1) Globalization has had little impact on the two billion people living in dire poverty in the world; 2) globalization has improved the lives of millions of workers in some developing countries but even in those countries inequality between well paid workers and other workers is increasing; 3) the result for many people around the globe (including the USA) is what many commentators call “the race to the bottom” and witnessing the creation of “dual” economies—one economy for the rich, one for everyone else.

He then looked at the politics lying behind global capitalism. That politics is generally corporate-friendly and not supportive of workers, communities, or the environment. He offered a passionate critique of President Clinton’s support for the politics of global capitalism.

Bill then discussed the growing global resistance to the policies of global capitalism, including the work of UUs for a Just Economic Community, the UU Service Community, and such emerging international structures as the World Social Forum. He quoted John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO: “Our job is not to make societies safe for globalization but to make the global system safe for decent societies.” He referenced the Global Sustainable Development Resolution and the UUA’s 2003 statement of conscience on economic globalization. He concluded with a recommendation of the work of David Korten, author of *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*.

At about 9:50 Sue Suchocki Brown offered her response to Bill’s paper. She said she wanted to hear even more from Bill: more on the moral implications of globalization; more on values language; more on religious and theological language. She shared some experiences from her recent trip to Grand Bahama Island, which Bill’s paper helped her to make some sense out of. She talked about the high prices of food and transportation on the island and about her visit to the international bazaar which has suffered recently as tourism has declined after hurricanes forced the local anchor hotel—a Sheraton—to close its doors. She was amazed at and struggled with the positive light in which Christopher Columbus is remembered on the island. She made reference to the golden rule as the guiding moral principle occurring to her as she and Ron explored the many economic and political realities of Grand Bahama Island. She concluded with a question to Bill and to the rest of us: “What does a global ethic of justice really look like?”

A juicy question that emerged in our conversation was whether or not the challenge is to resist global capitalism and its more dire impacts, or to conduct global capitalism in the most compassionate and humane way possible. How are boundary conditions created so that corporations must pay attention and be accountable to constituencies that care about human and worker rights and the environment? No matter what form our resistance takes, the notion that ‘resistance is futile’ is not a reason not to

resist. For whom is the boat floating? This is not just about India and China and the USA. This is about everyone.

At 10:30 Brian Kopke presented his paper, “Globalization: Challenges to Congregational Culture.” What is the effect of globalization on our congregations? Globalization has the power to rob us of meaning. It is hard to live with meaning so thin and vapid. How do we respond? First, said Brian, it’s about what we choose—to read—to learn—to experience . . . rather . . . it is about what we ignore. Culture determines the extent of our blinders. We are all limited. UU clergy have blinders when it comes to business. We know how to work with and influence government. We don’t know how to work with and influence business.

How can we partner with business? Why are we not reading all the ruinous literature which guides the captains of industry in their decisions? Brian believes it is untenable for our students to graduate knowing so little about globalization and business. We are part of the problem which allows global trade treaties to continue to proliferate their bad sections in a big way – ‘we’ means UU ministers. He referred to Max Stackhouse’s reporting on the work of Judith Berling, who found that liberal seminaries are not educating students on global issues.

On green investing, Brian suggested it is possible to have an impact on our carbon footprint on the planet. But effective green investment requires deep research. Not all green investment opportunities lower the carbon footprint as much as we are led to believe.

On following the trail of influence, Brian discussed the origins of the social networking website, FACEBOOK, and its apparent connections to government and defense department efforts to collect data on people in unconstitutional ways.

Brian concluded that our congregations need ministers who are vigilant in gathering information to help maintain proper boundaries in a confusing world. We must be thirsty for information and learn how to share it in a manner which is reasoned and avoids conspiracies and proclamations of dire outcomes.

At 11:25 Martha Niebanck read her response to Brian’s paper. She summed up Brian’s “map” of collective UU identify as follows: “UUs are comforted by the meanings we create to offer seductive experience or personal transformation and moral superiority over contemptible *others*. Untroubled by our lack of influence over large forces we take refuge in our prejudices and the brain candy of self-righteousness.” She understands this mindset as the “sort of mindset a privileged person might practice unconsciously.”

In responding to Brian’s point that it matters what we choose to read and ignore, etc., Martha said: “Sermons matter. Sermons make a difference that doesn’t stop happening.” After doing the reading for this convocation, she did not land in quite the same place Brian did. She said she is not sure that more study and more collection of information will add to her vitality and her capacity to deal with the coming global crises. She said she looks to the work of cultural historian, Morris Berman, who calls for cultural preservation in the midst of chaos, akin to the Benedictine monastic tradition. She wants to be sure that our congregations are hospitable to people who have the knowledge, capacity and connections to respond well to globalism. She hopes that we all continue to ask, with John Womack: “The dog has caught the car, but what was the point?”

Our conversation ranged widely from questions of race and class, to Universalism, to cultural preservation, perceived 'dirty' businessmen, the building of pulpits, Houston and a glimpse of hell.

Our brilliant and thankfully slightly less obsessive Moderator, Bill Gardiner, called us to order a little after 3:00 PM EST. With great and giddy trepidation we "girded up our loins" for a fourth paper. After confessing that she never participates in the Tuesday afternoon session, Rosemarie Smurzynski presented her paper, "Globalization: Our Sense of Identity." A set of driving questions for Rosemarie: Who, what, and whose are we?

She began with a reflection on William Manchester's 1992, *A World Lit Only By Fire*. We are doing what Manchester did: trying to give a portrait of an age. Apparently unrelated events are actually related. To grasp an age we must understand all of it: its brutality, its ignorance, its delusions. Fail to grasp these and you fail to grasp the times. Yet, it is very difficult to grasp the whole when you live in the midst of it. We never really know in the present where we are heading. My task, said Rosemarie, is to be faithful. A quote from Manchester: "The only guide anyone ever has was the past, and precedents are worse than useless when facing something entirely new."

We broke into song, John Lennon's "Imagine."

Rosmarie asked a "big question:" How do we integrate or even acknowledge important information that comes to us, like Magellan's or the astronauts,' and how do we act on what we know?

Perhaps globalization is just one step toward the intergalactic. (Rosemarie is also a visionary.)

Rosemarie then turned more directly to issues of identity formation. Though she describes herself as an optimist, she said she does not see us working on our identity. How will the new metaphor, she asked, of a tiny blue green planet, no fences, no boundaries fit into our struggle of worldwide identity formation?

Rosemarie then turned to her reflections on Friedman's *The World Is Flat*. Chapter one she liked. We really are asleep. Globalization has been going on for centuries. We just haven't called it that until now. We still don't have a name for what we are witnessing today. Every piece of the world is being challenged. Friedman's conclusion she liked as well. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Facts and figures I can get from the internet. Imagination requires reflection. The internet makes us invisible. How do we develop global identity when we so easily hide ourselves from being fully known. Rosemarie asked us to pause when she considered how much President Bush's Post 9/11 'Batten Down the Hatches' mentality has wounded us and the world. Rosemarie felt that Friedman did not adequately use his imagination to identify a new global identity, but at least he appeals to time-honored liberal values as a part of how we must respond to globalization.

Rosemarie concluded with a reference to the work of Scott Thomas (who agrees with her). Coming to terms with the emergence of a truly multicultural global international society and taking its religious, cultural and social effects seriously, will be an important part of the politics of the coming century. But for now, we are too close. We look into a distant mirror. For now, faith.

At about 3:45 Wendy Bell presented her response to Rosemarie's paper. Wendy pointed out that, given her year of birth, she has never known a world without rocket

ships and moonwalks and pictures from space. Her generational cohort has always included some sense of the global. The ancient Hebrews participated in an oral, story based culture. We do not. Wendy asked, are we humans capable of forming identities that are not in opposition to some other identity? And another question—an addition to Rosemarie’s trinity of “who, what and whose are we?”—she adds: To whom are we accountable?—a question inspired by liberation theology, a question which can be restated as “who is my neighbor?” A quote from Wendy: “One reaction to complexity is a fabricated and imagined simplicity.” And the move to such simplicity often leads us to create boundaries and divisions. Another question: How might UUism be different today if we focused more on our seventh principle than our first? Another question: Against whom can we form a sense of global identity? There’s no one.

Wendy concluded, ministers are among the few remaining public transmitters of oral story. What identity stories will we tell? And how will we help our people to ask not only who, what, and whose we are, but to whom are we accountable? We have global responsibilities, and this is not something to fear. This is simply who we are.

Our conversation was wide-ranging. Some questions: Do we need a collective, global identity? How would the United States response to 9/11 have been different if we viewed ourselves as world citizens rather than patriotic Americans? I want to be able to choose with whom I identify. I don’t identify with everyone. Unitarian Universalists: we unite people around universal principles. Does identity begin with the individual who must know who they are before they can interact with the world? Or does identity begin with community? The western assumption that identity starts with the individual is globally a minority position and, we suspect, viewed by many as highly egotistical.

We began happy hour at about 4:40.

Josh Pawelek led *Change of Pace* at 7:00, bringing two games, “In the Manner of the Word,” and “The Name Game.” People laughed frequently. Something about Frank Hall and the Socianians. Something about Anita Farber Robinson and Angelina Jolie. Something about Bob Thayer’s Hollywood vows.

Mary Harrington led chapel a bit after 9:00. She reflected on parenting and how her life is different since her diagnosis of ALS. She confessed things for which she has no regrets. She invited the rest of us to share similarly. We did.

Wendy Bell led Wednesday morning’s chapel at 7:30. She talked about her experience of Advent as a child in the United Methodist Church. After a period of quiet reflection, she invited us to share the guests that are knocking at our door this season, whether hoped for or not. We did.

Our even more intrepid Vice Moderator, Mary Harrington, called us to order a bit closer to 9:00 than the previous morning. She invited Jim Sherblom to open up our final conversation. Jim asked, when we look at globalization, who’s playing and who’s paying? As clergy, we need to pay attention to the marginalized, who often pay but never get to play. How, he asked, will any of this change our own lives, or how we deal with our congregations? Here are some responses:

Business. Figure out ways to affirm the role of businesses and business people. Read more business articles.

Name the violence. Witness wars over resources. Consider peacemaking.

Fear—the negative impacts of globalization are truly frightening. Globalization creates deep divisions.

Visions of Armageddon.

How do we provide hope? Turn local.

Take a big step back. Take a longer look. Breathe in the bad in the world. Breathe out good. The world has known great horror and the human spirit has responded.

Microfinancing brings marginalized people into the game as players. What about micro-financing in Transylvania? What about in our decaying US inner cities? Our decaying rust-belt?

Tell stories of success. They are out there.

Oppose the international gambling movement. Think more in international terms.

Immigration rights. Worker Rights Center in Chicago. New Sanctuary Movement in Chicago. Learn more about the impact of globalization on Central and South America.

Local community building—because we ought to be doing it anyway—but in preparation for potential crises. Remember Y2K. Is there a correlation between a sense of the coming of the end times and having a place at the table? We're at a crossroads. How do we get our voice back without giving up who we are?

Concern about nuclear weapons.

How do you be a non-anxious presence in the midst of all of this?

There are many people on the planet who feel like Armageddon has already begun. Our readings were almost exclusively from North American white males. Let us pay attention to voices from the margins.

I'm wondering about the relationship of globalization to structural racism. Entrepreneurial skills are critical in people becoming players.

In response to fear: Who is the prophet and how are they profiting?

Invite responsible personhood from corporations. As persons mature, they go through developmental crises that feel like end times.

Sell end times pet insurance to our evangelical neighbors.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

Who we think we are changes how we behave in the world.

Christianity is always international. UUism has no international theological language or symbol that binds us to the larger world. (There is some debate over this.)

What is fair trade? Where does my Thanksgiving turkey come from? What is organic? What is free range? What do these corporate linguistic conventions actually mean? We can figure these things out and pass on the information.

I have to go to the place where I can be courageous despite the fear. How do I ask my congregation to go to that same place? I believe in building. Government is not gone. It does have a role to play. There is hope in impacting government. We have so much power! Perhaps we are afraid to use our power in a religious way, and thus we give it away. Let us not be embarrassed to use our power.

We all have fear. Does it determine our lives? We have to do what we can to support one another and minister to people who have the same fears. Save the world or savor the world.

At 10:00 Jim led us in a closing circle.

Respectfully and joyfully submitted,

--Josh Pawelek