

From Future to Present

Rev. Heather Concannon

April 29, 2018

UU Area Church at First Parish in Sherborn

Now is the time in our service for our sermon
And I actually need everyone's help to start our sermon off
So if I could have everyone's attention, kids and adults,
We'll begin.

Okay. I'd like everyone who has talked to a friend in the last year to raise your hand or stand up.

Look around. Notice who is standing.
Thank you, please be seated.

Stand up or raise your hand if you feel like you've grown in some way in the last year.

Stand up or raise your hand if you've learned something in the last year.

Thank you, please sit down.

Stand up or raise your hand if you've taught someone else something in the last year.

Notice who is standing up... and please be seated.

Raise your hand or stand up if you've helped someone else in the last year.

Thank you, sit down.

Raise your hand or stand up if you've asked for help in the last year.

Thank you, sit down.

If you have felt pain or sadness in the last year, please raise your hand or stand up.

Stand up or raise your hand if you've given someone a gift in the last year.

Okay, sit down.

And last one: stand up or raise your hand if you have asked a really big question in the last year, one that felt hard to answer.

What did you notice?

What I noticed is that it wasn't just kids standing up for these questions, and it wasn't just adults, either.

I noticed that almost everyone stood up to say that they've talked to a friend, asked a really big question, helped someone, asked for help, learned something, taught something, given a gift, and grown in the last year.
Every single person in this sanctuary.

One of the most important things, you've heard me say before, about our church is that we are a multigenerational community
That people who are kids and grown ups and elders and our grandparent's ages and our great grandparents ages and our grandkids ages are all in this room together,
And that we are learning how to be people from each other and with each other.

But we don't always talk about what it means to be a multigenerational community.

And here's what I think it means:

I think it means that we really respect the different stages that each of us are at
Understanding that people at every age and stage have something to teach us, and that people at every age and stage have something to learn.
And that no one developmental stage is "better" than another.

Okay, now I have a poll that is just for the people who are under the age of 18 in this sanctuary, our children and youth.

Kids and youth, raise your hands if you've heard an adult say "kids are our future" or "the youth are our future".

Okay, thank you.

And raise your hand if you've ever heard an adult say a sentence that started "well, in the *real* world..."

Okay, thank you.

I think that when we say these things to or about young people, we are implying that their experiences at their developmental stage are less valid, less relevant, and less important than the developmental stage of adulthood.

I actually think it's disrespectful to the real human experiences that young people have.

And yes, at different points in human development, there will be different things that we will be able to take responsibility for, or different things that we will be right for us at different times in our own lives.

But when we say that youth are our future,
We imply that they are not also our present.

And I want to say, to all of the young people in our community:

We value you for who you are and what you offer today, here, now,

Not for what we see you as being potentially able to offer in the future.

We celebrate you for the real experiences you have here, now, today,

Because your experiences of love, of struggle, of pain, of questioning, of growth

Your experiences are very big, and very real

And they are just right for where you are right now

And that's amazing that you can bring that to a community like this church.

This spring, I asked the children of this congregation three questions about our church

Because I know that for many children in our congregation,

This is not just the faith home of their parents, or of their families,

But this is their personal faith home, as well.

I'd like to share some of their answer with you.

When I asked "what's your favorite memory of church",

I heard:

the Harry Potter January class!

Making a carrot car with out of legos and a carrot during the January class

Being in the Halloween haunted house, hanging out with the older kids and scaring people

And painting a picture for Art in Bloom.

When I asked “What’s a time that you’ve learned something from church that helped you in your life?”

I heard:

That one of our young people learned what other people think God is, and it was helpful because it helped her understand more about the book series she is reading.

One young person said that he remembered that Nathan said that prayers don’t change things they change people, and people change things. It really got me thinking, he said, that its really important that we try to change things more, that we don’t just stay away from situations, if someone is getting bullied, to step up and help them.

And when I asked “What do you think our church values most?”

These young people said:

Being respectful to the environment,

Including people. It doesn’t matter what race you are or religion you are or whats your backstory.

Loving people and being generous

Equality for every single person, no matter what you look like,

And love.

Thanks to Liam, Cameron, Taylor, and Elisha for these answers.

What these answers say to me is that this church matters to young people

That this is a church for people of all ages

That young people in this church are building community,

Making meaning

Taking what they are learning here and trying to make the world a better place,

Just like each of us is, young or old.

And so,

As we celebrate today our children’s faith formation programs,

I take these moments to honor the way that people of all ages

Bring gifts of wisdom, love, help, service, and generosity to our community

And that people of all ages are seeking help, love, answers, and companionship in this community.

May we find moments to see these gifts in one another

Celebrating the many diverse and beautiful gifts that each of us brings,

Young and old and somewhere in between

Because we are all here, together, now.

And we are enough.
May it be so, and amen.