

"ONE CHURCH, MANY PERSPECTIVES"

a Homily Delivered by Rev. Gerald L. Davis, Adjunct Minister
at All Souls Unitarian Church, Sunday, November 13, 2011

I am about to tell you why I want to go. You see, I speak a lot about possibilities, Church, because possibilities give me hope. And if I have hope, maybe I can make something good happen. Let me tell you something about what possibilities have brought me.

We sometimes hear about the *first*—blah, blah, blah. The first African American to—blah blah blah; the first female to—blah, blah, blah. We know about these firsts, see. We hear about the firsts, but Church, you know, when you do something for the first time, you change forever what was. You can't go back to what it used to be because it has changed. The first has gone in there. So what happens when the first, who is different, brings a different flavor to what has been done? What happens is that everybody benefits. You see, I believe in diversity, Church, because diversity attracts diversity.

You know, when you walk into a place and you belong to a community that is not well-represented in that place, you tend to look to see who in your community is present. You like to know that you're not the first. But if you are the first, you know—well, that means it is gonna be changed from now on.

Church, let me tell you a few things—and I know my time is limited—but I just want to say a few things. When I attended my first General Assembly in Nashville, Tennessee, I did not know what to expect at a UUGA. But Church, the music was flowing, people were moving around, and I said, "Well, now—these folks have a little diversity." And then somebody stood up on the platform and said, "You know all this good music we're singing—it's in your hymnal." And I said, "Well now—these folks have been doing this for a long time because they've put it in their hymnal." So I got to looking through the hymnal, Church, and I found Duke Ellington. And I said, "Any church that has Duke Ellington in the hymnal, it is diverse!" Okay, so I'm saying to you that right here and now, where we are, yes; we have some diversity present.

But Church, I'm saying to you that we have a decision to make about staying still and moving on. Now some may say, we're going to work hard, no matter where we

are—and that's true. Some might say that and you're going to hear it. But I'm here to tell you, Church, if you stand still where you are, you're going to be where you are. You're not going to get larger. Diversity will be wanting to come in, but there's no room. So I'm saying it's time to move on.

Why downtown? Because when you're downtown, you're not north side, south side, east side, west side, you're downtown! And maybe some folks on the south side, north side, east side, west side will feel pretty good going downtown. They'll say, "Well, yeah. This church is for *all* people. It's not just a south-side church or a whatever -church. It's the all-peoples' church!"

So I'm saying I like that. I like that kind of diversity. Also, if you are downtown, you're close to where the action is, Church. You see, you have now become an urban congregation and an urban congregation is dealing with all kinds of things that affect the city. We're talking economic, political, socio—all the things. You know, Occupy Tulsa ain't outside; they're downtown. When you go to any "Occupy", in any city in the United States or abroad, they're downtown. Why? Because that's where the center is and I want to be where the center is.

Church, let me tell you something. Moving downtown doesn't mean that automatically it's going to be alright. No, it's not. No; we are called to be the conscience of the city, and the conscience of the city says, "Don't forget the least of us." You see, Frederick Douglass said, "All those folks who want freedom, but disparage agitation, want the crops without plowing the ground." You see, you're going to have to have a little agitation, where you know there needs to be agitation.

There's an old song called "Eyes on the Prize". "Keep your eyes on the prize; hold on." (Singing) You all know that song. There's a verse in that song and it says, "Keep my hand on freedom's plow,"—you know how it goes—"Wouldn't give nothing for my journey now. Keep your eyes on the prize; hold on, hold on." (Singing)

Church, that's what we're going to have to be doing—keeping our eyes on the prize and our hand on freedom's plow—because when you're downtown, you're not escaping the issues. When you're downtown, you're saying, "We're leading!" When you're downtown, you're saying, "Follow us!" When you're downtown, you're saying, "We know what the prize is. Keep your eyes on it. Hold on!"