

Coming of Age Service
May 17, 2009

PRELUDE: *Seasons of Love* K. G.

OPENING WORDS: Layne Richard-Hammock

CALLING TOGETHER: *Credo* (Please rise in body or spirit)

AFFIRMATION: (Please rise in body or spirit)

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOMING YOUR NEIGHBOR

CHALICE LIGHTING: E. S.

CHALICE READING: Poem "Prometheus' Gift" written by L. W.

In a time when humans couldn't walk
When they would growl instead of talk
When there was no flame on any hearth
Nor any warmth in a human heart
And gods guarded the only flame
Hoarding it in justice's name
There was one god who looked below
And saw the creatures brought so low
He heard their cries, their desperate prayers
But the others scorned their lowly cares
So in defiance, he snatched a coal
From the hearth in that holy hall
And stole away down the mountainside
And chose compassion over pride
What he began is not finished today
And right can seem wrong when tyrants hold sway
Suffering and death still plague our lands
There are still empty stomachs, still begging hands
But each spark that's stolen, each candle lighted
Brings us yet closer to being united
For when the last ember is stolen from the gods' hearth
And it's all burning here, there'll be heaven on earth.

IMAGINE by John Lennon

Music by K. G., piano, E. H., saxophone, and M. V., guitar

TIME FOR ALL AGES: E. S. and K. G.

YOUTH SONG

OFFERTORY: *Colors of the Wind* by Alan Menken J. S.

PARISH CONCERNS AND PASTORAL PRAYER:

9:15 Service L. W. 11:00 Service E. H.

We have come to the time in our service when we lift up the cares and concerns of the members of our congregation, to be held in the loving embrace of this community.

Let us also be mindful of the many unspoken cares and concerns of others in our community, and hold them in our hearts.

Please take a moment now to focus inward.

As we come together today, in so many different places on our life's journeys, let us remember to listen to each other, to share our wisdom, our joys and hopes, our laughter, and our tears.

Of all the many places we might be, we find ourselves here, today, together.

Let us be grateful for this chance to create the community of love that we all hope for and appreciate one another.

Let us remember those who are not so fortunate, and reach out to them with our hands and hearts in whatever ways we can.

Let us seek opportunities to right wrongs, to mend what is broken, to heal our earth and its people wherever we find ourselves.

Together, young and old, let us always, in gratitude and compassion, in some small way, create heaven on earth.

So let it be.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMING OF AGE PROGRAM

Leaders: Michele H. and Julie H.

Good Morning!

My name is Michele H.

Today we gather to celebrate our eighth graders and acknowledge the work they have completed this year in the Coming of Age program and also, to recognize that they have arrived at a special place in their life's journey where they are leaving childhood and becoming young adults.

At the beginning of every church year, kids begin the Coming of Age class very suspicious, what's so great about this church class? How is it any different from the others? My friends, who graduated last year refuse to tell me anything about it! Everyone has one foot in and one foot out the door. However, by May something changes, maybe it's the magical, mysterious overnight or the planning for this service, but a shift occurs, and they step up to a higher level. They feel different somehow and in a good way.

Their credo that they will share with you this morning is a culmination of the year's work. Each of them has struggled with, rewritten, and reflected upon their lives to create these personal belief statements. The word credo is derived from two Latin words, "cor" meaning heart and "do" meaning to give. So the original meaning "cor-do", credo, is I give my heart. What we are privileged to hear this morning is not something they learned with their heads but something felt in their hearts. The Chandogya Upanishad says, "Within the city of Brahman, which is the body, there is the heart, and within the heart there is a little house. This house has the shape of a lotus, and within it dwells that which is to be sought after, inquired about and realized."

Julie Hanson – Coming of Age (CoA) Leader

Recently published by the UUA is a report on Youth Ministries. In its introduction it says: "In the world of our dreams, our faith communities are multigenerational, multicultural sacred spaces in which vital connections are made among peers and across generations. In the world of our dreams, our faith communities are life-giving and affirming places in which people with different life experiences are valued."

In our faith community we have embraced the Coming of Age program. In so doing, we have committed ourselves to working toward this world of our dreams. As a group these peers have created their own sacred altar and rituals for beginning our time together and closing our nearly weekly circle. Throughout this year they have allowed space for one another and found previously

undiscovered connections and respect for their differences. Our mentors have committed themselves to being available to their mentees inside and outside of these walls and have nurtured the personal development of these unique individuals.

For the last five years our faith community has dedicated one of our final services of the church year to these youth. By giving them this sacred space and the experience of building a service and sharing themselves with you, by showing up to witness, recognize and listen to their voices, we honor and affirm this important stage in their lives. Thank you for being here and playing a critical, life-giving role in the lives of these young people and our faith at large.

Call Michele and Julie back up – Appreciation Presentation

Six years ago Michele Hausman began the Coming of Age program as we now know it, and five years ago after mentoring that first year, Julie Hanson began partnering with Michele. Through their dedication, meeting almost **every** Sunday for past six full church years, and guiding eighth graders through a transformational process, these two women have gifted many, many of our youth.

This is the last Coming of Age class for Michele and Julie, at least for the time being. Please join me in expressing our heartfelt admiration and appreciation for their ministry with our most excellent eighth graders.

Next year's Coming of Age class will be facilitated by Barb Chessler, who has shadowed the class this full year, partnering with Ross Henderson, an experienced Coming of Age mentor.

<u>Mentors</u>	<u>Youth</u>
Joyce Whitson	J. S.
Ross Henderson	E. H.
Dave McClane	M. V.
Amy Stewart	E. S.
Melissa Logstrom	K. G.
Tracey Yingling	L. W.

J. S. Credo, May 17, 2009

I think I am someone who is just starting their journey and learning who I am. I think my purpose in life is to help make the world a better place. I really want to help animals the most. Some ways I might do this are by becoming a veterinarian or an animal rights lawyer. Right now I am planning to help out at a local shelter just for cats.

I believe that all beings are connected somehow. There is something that holds us together. It could be religion, music, love, or something else. I think what holds us together is love and music.

I'm not sure how to define love, but whatever it is, it holds humans and animals and the earth together. Love can hold us together, and it can also create wounds that might tear us apart. It's like everything on the earth—there is a good side and a bad side to it. Love means so much to me. My parents flew all the way to China to adopt a five year old girl that they didn't even know. Ever since the day my parents adopted me, I have always been loved.

Music can be so many things, but it has a way of bringing us together. Music is really important to me. It is in my life everyday—either I'm listening or playing. It is a form of beauty and peace, and we need more of that on earth.

I believe that there will be a time when humans will live in peace and love with each other and their surroundings. I'm not sure when this will happen, but I won't stop believing. It's the believers and dreamers that have changed our world and our lives, and I want to become one of those believers.

I believe there is a spirit in charge of the universe. It can take any form. It can be God to some people, or Buddha, or other names or things that people worship in other religions. But this spirit does not judge us on what we have done or what we haven't done.

I believe when we die we leave behind our bodies and a story and move on to another world. Everyone is accepted into this place. It's kind of like heaven, but you don't have to be good your whole life. If you had to be good your whole life to get there, then none of us would ever get to this "heaven" because no one is good all the time, and that is what makes us human.

E. H. Credo, May 17, 2009

When I was told to write a credo, I was not happy. At all. Instead of making a list, a poem, song, story, or rap, I'm going to relate all my beliefs to long boarding. But first, I'm going to say a few things about myself. I'm a vegetarian, I love to have fun, I like to be around people, I like to lead, I like to do well in school, and I love my friends and family.

When I long board, you never know what the road is going to be like. There could be road turtles, potholes, deer, excess tar; anything can be in your way. Life is the same way. I never know what to expect, but everything is easier with a positive attitude, I keep trying even when it's hard, and I have lots of determination. Basically, I have to set a path, but be ready to alter that path according to events that happened along the way.

Sometimes on my long board I go between 10 and 55 mph. It's a risk. You have to take risks in life. Taking risks makes me grow as a person. If I had only stayed on the green runs skiing, I would have never gotten better. Personally, I don't think anything would be much fun if you didn't take risks. I'm almost always up to trying something new if there's a possibility of it being fun. I enjoy the challenge, and I find out more about myself by testing myself.

Falling while long boarding hurts. It's also a learning experience. When you fall on your long board, or in life, you have to get back up and grow from the experience. Learn what you did wrong, and try not to do it next time. So technically, falling isn't all that bad. Sometimes in life, you have to fall, to get back up. You have to fail, to do better. You have to fall, to grow. When something bad happens to me, or when I fall, I look at it as a learning experience, and try to grow from it.

When you long board, you have to have good balance. I try to keep my life balanced between having fun, playing, homework, and my family. It's really important to me, because a lopsided life is not good.

When I long board, I'm always with friends. My friends mean a lot to me. Sometimes one of us is a spotter to watch for cars, we make draft trains and go down the hill together. I believe to be a good friend, you need to watch out for your friends. If someone falls down, you go back and help them. You don't go down the hill, watch them fall, and then point and laugh. Being with people is really important to me, because I'm a people person. I thrive having people in my life, and I couldn't do it without them.

My family is also really important to me. They're the ones who bring me to my long boarding hills, care for me when I fall, and are there to cheer me on. My family really means a lot to me, and I couldn't do it without them.

I would now like to end with a quote. Mark Twain said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

M. V. Credo song, May 17, 2009

This song is for those days when your feet are trembling down, look up to the sky, and the rain is tumbling down. When all you have is nothing but a smile on your face, This world will tear you down, but your smile will remain.

So let me see what's happening. I'm swimming in a sea that's filled with screams. Just let me catch my breath, I'm chasing a train that holds my dreams. And it slowly gets away, but I'm not going to let that get in my way.

This song is for the moments when you feel like screaming. Holding your tongue so the truth can't be seen. When all you have is nothing but your friends by your side. Pick up your guitar and scream at the lies!

So let me see what's happening, I'm swimming in a sea that's filled with screams. Just let me catch my breath, I'm chasing a train that holds my dreams. And it slowly gets away, But im not going to let that get in my way.

E. S. Credo, May, 17 2009

When I started this journey, I had no idea what to think. If it wasn't for my mom forcing me to go to the first meeting, I would not have been a part of this amazing process and met amazing people. On September 9 of 2008 I was asked, "What do I believe in?" and me being me, I thought to myself, "Oh that's easy, no problem." But it's not as simple as I thought it was. Over this course of time, I still did not know what I believed in. But during our four-hour solo time on our overnight challenge, I came to a realization that I believe in difference, equality, and love.

Adlai Stevenson once said, "I think that one of our most important tasks is to convince others that there's nothing to fear in difference; that difference, in fact, is one of the healthiest and most invigorating of human characteristics without which life would become meaningless. Here lies the power of the liberal way: not in making the whole world Unitarian [Universalist], but in helping ourselves and others to see some of the possibilities inherent in viewpoints other than one's own; in encouraging the free interchange of ideas; in welcoming fresh approaches to the problems of life; in urging the fullest, most vigorous use of critical self-examination." Difference is key to the world. Without difference, everyone and everything would be the same. I believe in difference.

Mother Teresa once said, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." All I really need in life is love. Love is the family I have. Love is my best friendships, Love is what I strive for; it's what I live for. I believe in love.

A Cuban proverb says, "When the sun rises, it rises for everyone." Equality is the state of being equal. Equality is for everyone. I believe in Equality.

If we have love for the differences between us, we will come upon equality.

Thank you, have a good day.

K. G. Credo, May 17, 2009

All I Really Need to Know, I Learned From My Parents

I learned when a boy pokes me in the back, it means he likes me.

I learned determination, that in the end, hard work will always pay off.

I learned when the stove is lit up, don't touch it!

I learned that if I want something, I have to work for it.

I learned that compassion isn't something to take for granted.

I learned when you're angry, kick a soccer ball, not your older sister.

I learned to always put others before myself.

I learned that though people make bad decisions, it doesn't mean that they're bad people. And I should always try to find the good in them.

I learned when you have \$10, don't spend \$20.

I learned that I have an opinion, and to always express it.

I learned that friends can be family, and that friends or family can be the people who get you through the hardest times of your life.

I learned that there are some things in this world that I can't change, and I need to use inner strength to help myself get through.

I learned gratitude, that a simple "thank you" can get you anywhere.

I learned that the red light means stop, the green light means go, the yellow light means go really, really fast.

I learned to expect the unexpected, and that everything in life happens for a reason.

I learned that music is a great way to express my feelings. Whether it's piano, singing in choir, or singing in the shower. I should always keep it a part of my life.

I learned that after a really hard day, I should put my feet up, and eat some Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, and the pain will go away.

I learned that spirituality is something I can find anywhere, if I look for it, and through all the hardships and heartaches, spirituality will help me through.

I learned if I make a mistake, I need to learn from it.

I learned respect; that I need to treat people how I want to be treated.

But the biggest lesson I've learned from my parents, is there are some things, my parents don't know. There comes a time, in everyone's life where there are some life struggles or choices that my parents can't help with. That doesn't mean I can't still receive some money every once in a while when I'm broke. But I need to learn to count on myself, and I'm at the age where I should stop always trying to learn from my parents and begin to learn from myself.

Thanks,

K.

L. W. Credo, May 19, 2009

Come closer friends and listen well. Gather round the dying embers, turn your backs on the creeping night. We can hold it at bay a while longer. There is one last story to tell. It is an ancient story, a human story. It is the story of myths and legends and fairytales and why we tell them.

From the earliest time when man gathered around a campfire, he has told stories. When monsoon rains pounded the soil of the first villages, when thunder split the skies, when wind wailed in reed-thatched roofs, we told of gods. When the harvest was good, and the fish ran, and life was easy, we said the gods were happy. And when crops failed, when children died and cattle were barren, we said the gods were angry. We made stories to explain what we did not understand.

But the story of stories continues, past those dark, primitive times. To this day it unfolds all around us. We tell stories all the time, to each other and to ourselves. We find reasons in the unreasonable, meanings in the meaningless. By telling stories, we make the world an easier place. Maybe the stories are true and maybe they aren't, but we live with them every day.

I am a writer and my passion is words. Stories are the way I relate to the world, the way I understand it and the way I understand myself. Stories are what I live for, what I delight in.

But the thing about stories is that they can be changed. You know that story about the half empty glass? Well, there's another story that says it's half full. And yet another that says, "Is that my glass? I think not! My glass was full, and it was a bigger glass!"

The trick isn't living with the story, or accepting it, or even understanding it. The trick is retelling it. Rewriting it. Remaking it. Turning it into something you can use, making it yours. Not every story has a happy ending, but the trick is making our own happiness every day, in small ways. Every evening when I turn out the lights, I want to be able to say, "And I lived happily ever after, at least for another day."

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WELCOMING EIGHTH GRADERS INTO YOUTH GROUP

Youth Group

L. - Introduces “Building Bridges” - Words of welcome from the Youth Group to the CoA graduates - Walk each individual over the bridge -Present friendship bracelet -Sing “Building Bridges” together

HYMN # 311 *Let it Be a Dance*

BENEDICTION “Youth Blessing” Layne Richard-Hammock

To the CoA Youth - There are two lasting bequests that we can give our children – one is roots and the other is wings. Coming of Age youth you are rooted in and draw strength from this loving community, and that will not change. It is, however, now time for each of you to stretch your wings. You have crossed a threshold this day, and the people of this congregation acknowledge the balance of feelings - of joy in your accomplishment and the bittersweet knowledge that you are children no longer.

To the congregation A blessing is the most meaningful of affirmations. A blessing touches the original goodness of the other – it binds us hand to hand – heart to heart – mind to mind.

Congregation - Please respond after each phrase – and we bless you

We wish for you a storm or two that you may enjoy the calm, and darkness...that you may see the stars...

... and we bless you

We wish you anticipation of high adventure and an everlasting sense of wonder, with the courage necessary to take risks and the discernment to choose well.

... and we bless you

We wish you companionship that you may appreciate solitude, and solitude that you may appreciate companionship - and compassion that you may have a friend and be friend.

... and we bless you

We wish you a rich and rewarding inner life, a hand to hold when you need it, and contentment on your journey – love much – laugh often – grow your wings and may integrity be always the wind that lifts you and carries you far.

... and we bless you

VALEDICTION

POSTLUDE: *Time of Your Life*, by Greenday: Recorded Music