

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Thoughts collected in honor of Margaret Ruth Poore by Judy Fjell January 20, 2014

Why are we here?

Not why are we here, but why are we HERE? Why are WE here?

Here in this sanctuary. Together. Right now.

There are many ways to honor Margaret's memory. We could take a walk or go for a drive in the Montana she loved so deeply. We could sort through our pictures of her or write her a thank you letter. We could talk about her with friends, chuckling and sniffing at our shared memories. We could sit with a box of Kleenex and just allow ourselves to weep softly or wail for the fact that she is gone from this earth. We could write in our journals. We could post on Facebook. We could get together with friends for a game of poker, laughing all the way - that was something she certainly loved to do. We could channel our feelings into a song or a picture. We could knit a sweater. We could sit quietly, our hands on our laps, eyes closed, hearts open to the teachings of the Universe. We could kneel and pray. We could remember Margaret with a gift to something she loved. We will each do many of these things outside of this hour. But why are we here? Right now? In this sanctuary? Together.

There is something significant about being here together in this time and place.

When Margaret came into this world, she entered with a wail and a shout and a belly deep cry. And everyone was glad to hear it. The news went out. The cigars were passed. A child was born and that child was Margaret Ruth Poore!

But we were not all there, in fact probably not one person in this room was there when she was born. Why are we here right now? In this sanctuary? Together.

We will see many pictures today from Margaret's life and we will hear stories about her. From her childhood - with her family, on her tricycle, on that rail fence with the Montana sun shining on her golden hair. With her beloved friends and cats. With her laughter. With her students, as Margaret brought them new ways to learn and to communicate in the world when the usual ways, the typical ways were not easily accessible. With the faraway sister she so longed to meet. With the bounty of beautiful, delicious food she loved to eat.

When Margaret was in the hospital here I shared a story with her about a young woman I had recently met. A woman who for eight years nurtured a dream to come to America. A dream to be herself. A fierce determination not to live life alone, behind a burka, in a nightmare of shame uttered constantly by her father, her family, and her world. There was not a ghost of a chance that this woman could realize this dream. Yet somewhere on the internet or in a library she had found the work of Louise Hay and it spoke to her. She found the importance of setting intention. She set the intention. She packed her bags.

One day, miracle of all miracles, she found out that she had her visa and she would indeed be coming to America. Her own sister, who had laughed at her and mocked her for "packing her bags" was rendered speechless as she zipped them up and went off to the airport. And now she is not alone. She is living here, grateful every day, no, every second, for the freedom she has in her life. She can make choices about where to go, what to wear, what to say, what to think, whom to talk to. A woman who was captive but is now set free.

Before Margaret left for Billings last Sunday to have surgery, she chose to come to this sanctuary to worship with this Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. She chose to be with people who place importance on spending time together at least once a week in worship, asking important life questions, occasionally finding an answer or two, or at least a few good guidelines for a peaceful and meaningful life. She chose to sit in the beautiful light of this sacred space with the comfort of music, and the beauty of each others' singing voices. She chose, despite her own physical exhaustion, to be with us. She was not asking "Why am I here," which she had done on going during her life, she was making a statement. She made a decision and with Pam and Cassandra's help was able to be here. She was saying "I want to be here with all of you. I am in relationship with the world and with all of you. WE are here together, and I am not alone."

As we spend time today with Margaret and explore our relationship with her, it is important to know that she was never alone, even when by herself. She knew the presence and love of the one she called "MotherSpirit." She believed that "Spirit" comes to us in whatever guise we cloak it. She told me that at least twice, this Spirit came to her as Jesus but as her life unfolded, that "Spirit" returned in many forms. Ultimately she knew that no matter how she named it at a specific time in her life, she experienced an ongoing spiritual presence of "the other." This was a great comfort to her. Twelve years ago she wrote: "From these (spiritual) experiences the insight I have gained is that I am loved, and that love is the root of all; the reason we are, the reason we grow, the reason we are in relationship with other humans and our world and our MotherSpirit."

Now it so happens that the woman who packed her bags for America was in our midst last Sunday in this sanctuary at this very UU. When we sang "In the morning gratitude, then at noon gratitude, in the evening gratitude, and at bedtime peace," she burst into tears. The simple song stated in such a brief and direct way the profound truth she experiences second by second. Her physical self has been united with her spiritual longing. She is eternally grateful. She has experienced "the Spirit" here. There is no turning back. She knows in a new way that she is not alone.

And something else she told me about being at the Sunday morning worship in this sanctuary. She had never before experienced people singing together. That it was not the same in her country where prayers are directed to the great god, and only to the great god. Where she comes from, everyone faces the same direction in worship. There is no hand holding, there is no sharing a hug during the service, there is no looking in each others' eyes, there is no shared

silence, there is no shared laughter, there is no singing of words and thoughts together, there is no shared "a-ha" when we feel or realize the same thing.

She was experiencing here for the first time what Margaret knew so well. This was why Margaret had made it a point to be here.

Why are we here? Margaret knew that an essential part of that question is the "we." She could do the "I" on her own, and she could experience the Spirit" in many ways and places, but she needed to be with others in sanctuary to know the comfort of the "we."

Margaret and this woman met last Sunday and hugged and sang together and had their picture taken together.

Two weeks ago, when Margaret was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, on top of her congestive heart, she knew that she was in a pickle. But she had done her homework, her heart work. She knew about setting intention. She knew that she, like every human being, like every solitary woman, must pack her bags for whatever journey lay ahead. She was prepared to fight a good long fight for her life if that was what was required, but she was also prepared for other possibilities - quiet and eternal rest with a deep hope for resumption of life somewhere, who knew where, with her beloved kitties. Her bags were packed. She wasn't sure of the destination but she knew she was continuing on a journey and she was prepared.

Early Thursday morning when Margaret left this world, she left it rather quietly and peacefully. Yet not without a sound and not without consideration of what was of utmost importance to her in this life. Before she died she made a point of calling many friends and family to say goodbye. She wanted one last chance for communication with those who have been dear to her. She wanted to be with her family members before departing. And that wish was granted. She was blessed.

And so are we. That is why we are here. We are not alone. As much as we may love silence and solitude there is a time for being together. In shared silence, shared thoughts, and shared song. It fuels us for the times when we feel SO very alone. The times when we wail and shout and cry from our bellies for who-knows-what. Or for the times when we, too, will make those very last phone calls and slip our skins for the beyond.

Margaret, thank you for calling us together. You have called us today to be a "we," and that is why we are here. Right now. A unique and eternally important gathering.