

“Living the Life”

October 12, 2008 – Elon Community Church, UCC

NYE 2008—What is NYE? The NYE is the National Youth Event which happens every four years as a gathering of the Youth of the United Church of Christ. This year, in July, approximately 3000 youth, young adults and adults gathered on the campus of University of Tennessee in Knoxville. What a celebration! There was music, there was dance, there was storytelling, there were workshops, and there was worship! Not to mention there was also fellowship, meeting new people and getting to know one another better. The theme for the week was Living the Life—Living Love, Living Green, and Living Peace. As our youth learned this concept of “Living the Life,” I too learned a little more about what it means to be Living the Life—Living Love, Living Green, and Living Peace and I would like to share some of those reflections with you this morning.

Living Love—What does it mean to live love? It can mean many things as we learned at NYE. One of the concepts we learned about was to love one another no matter what our faiths or religions may be. On the first morning we were there, we heard a young man by the name of Eboo Patel. As you can probably guess by his name, he was not Christian. He was a Muslim. He learned early on how cruel people can be if you are not from the same background as they are. Eboo has founded Interfaith.org.. This is an organization that brings young people together to do a service project—it might be building a Habitat House, it might be working at homeless shelter, or it might be serving a meal at a soup kitchen. Eboo brought to our attention that we all have in our principles of our faiths the bottom line is to serve those less fortunate. Eboo says, “We are all good Samaritans, whether we are Hindus, Budhists, Janes, or Jews, Atheists, or agnostics, we all want to help others.” Eboo introduced us to one young lady that was on his staff. She told us her story. She had been a staunch Evangelical saved Christian girl since high school. She went off to college and in college she found those who believed just like her. She was the model Christian girl on campus. One day, while in the library, she was asked by a Muslim young man, to “tell him about her Jesus.” They became friends and she began to accept him for who he wasn’t and did not condemn him for his faith. This made some of her friends a little uneasy but she knew that it was okay to be friends with this young man.

As Phillip Sheldon and I listened to these stories and learned about this organization, we both talked about how good it would be to have Eboo come speak to our congregation. We have a new Spiritual life center in the works for the future and that building is going to bring together folks from many faiths. How great it would be for Eboo to come and to encourage us as we struggle with the idea of having people of many faiths worshiping as the do, right here.

That evening, our “living love” lesson came in worship from a young lady I have previously spoken about. The young lady, Kathleen Stuck, is a fifteen year old girl from South Dakota. She was born into the Pechanga Indian Tribe in California. She had a drug-addicted mom who ended up putting her and her brother into foster care. They were taken to South Dakota to live and eventually were split up. Kathleen was adopted by a wonderful family in Brentford, South Dakota. Through this new family she found the love she was looking for. Kathleen, in her sermon says “We need to love everyone no matter the color of their skin, their sex, their economic status or their life choices.”

Living love...How do you live love? Think about it!

Living Green. On the second day of our event, we started the morning out listening to Julia Butterfly Hill. She is a young lady who sat in a redwood tree for 738 days in protest of them cutting down the redwood trees in California. She wrote a book The Legacy of the Luna that talks about her experiences in the tree. She encouraged the youth to take a stand when it comes to protecting our environment. She talked about the simple things they could do like taking their own cup places and filling it up rather than using Styrofoam. She said “Living green is about honoring God to the best of our ability every moment of every day. It talks about in the Bible about how all of creation sings the glory of God. We need to look at our every day experiences and ask how our choices can sing the glory of God.”

After she spoke, two teens from the Ohio Conference took the stage and offered us a challenge. Each day we were presented with Styrofoam plates, and cups and a set of plastic utensils. They had figured out of the course of three days how many utensils would be used and it was an astronomical amount. The youth challenged us to reuse those utensils each meal and therefore cutting down the amount of plastic being thrown away.

Here at Elon Community UCC, we are a green church. We engage in projects such as the planting of trees last March at Cedar Rock Park that helps our environment. ECC works at being environmentally friendly. WE have designated waste cans for recycles, a composter, and we have a Green Committee that makes us aware of tips on how to be green.

Do we carry this message to our homes? Do we recycle correctly? Are conscious about taking our own cup into Starbucks or our local coffee shop? Are we willing to wash our plastic forks and spoons and reuse them? We need to be aware of our environment and the waste in our society and be willing to “live green.”

The young people were made aware of what it means to “live green.” Are you aware? Do you want to be more aware? I am sure the Green Committee here at ECC would love to have you come and join them.

Living Peace—We talk about peace. We would like to see peace in the world. We will even sing about it later in this service when we sing “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” What does it mean to be “living peace?”

On Sunday at the National Youth Event, we heard from our General Conference Minister, John Thomas speak to the you about living Christ centered lives that will help you to show peace to the world. Quite ironically, a man was going into a local Universal Unitarian Church and killing two members of the church and injuring others. Later in the day, youth at the conference then reached out, and through a graphetti rock, there was a message written to let the local church know that the youth of the UCC were praying for them.

Peace on Earth. We offer that greeting often at Christmas, because that is what the angels sang when Jesus was born...and the rest of the line... “And good will towards men (and women). But unfortunately, our world is full of war and unrest. Times are turbulent. We are at war not only with other countries, but among ourselves and within ourselves. The stressful economic times, makes folks do bad things...A financial advisor in California shoots his wife, his mother in law and his three children and then turns the

gun on himself. This is a sign of this terrible unrest—a sign of the lack of peace in ourselves.

Maybe it is time to look at our Christ centered lives to spread that “peace on earth and good will towards men.” We share the peace of Christ every Sunday with each other, but do we ever stop to think about what it means to have the peace of Christ. I challenge you—Let’s live Peace...let’s pray for peace throughout our nation and our world.

So go from this place Living the Life in Christ?—Living Love, Living Green,
And Living Peace. Amen