

Final Campbell Service for Amherst, MA

July 5, 2019

Prelude

Welcome and Greeting

Steve Rice

Today we are diving in to our history to hear the story of Rev. Jeffrey Campbell and his sister Marguerite Campbell. Some of you may already know about Jeffrey from his time as our minister in the late 60s and early 70s. After hearing a little about Jeffrey and Marguerite at the Minns Lecture in Boston nearly three years ago, Roy and Laurie Goodman, Harry Purkhiser and Tristan Husby formed the “Campbell Family Study Group.” Since then, they have been researching the Campbells and working to bring their story out of history and into our lives.

We also want to recognize the work of our own Robert Romer, who has researched and copied a trove of documents to the study group that provide context and texture to Jeffrey Campbell’s time here at Amherst. Thanks, Robert.

Lighting the Chalice

The Campbell Family Study Group

Roy and Laurie Goodman, Harry Purkhiser

We light this chalice in memory of the courage of those who have struggled for freedom The persistence of those who've struggled for justice, And the love of those who've built beloved communities to carry on the light of hope. - Paul Sprecher

Introducing Rev. Jeffrey & Marguerite Campbell

Harry Purkhiser

Jeffrey and Marguerite grew up in Nashua in the early 20th century and attended the Nashua Universalist Church with their mother, Lillian Campbell. As adults, Jeffrey became a Universalist, then a Unitarian Universalist minister, and Marguerite worked for the Unitarian Universalist Association for many years.

The closest Jeffrey Campbell came to full-time ministry was here at the UU Society of Amherst. After some months as a visitor, Jeffrey was called by vote of the congregation on Jan. 22, 1967. He was in every sense of the term a “settled” minister in Amherst from 1967 to 1974. Campbell’s ministry in Amherst was “part-time” in that he had at the same time a full-time teaching responsibility at the Putney School in Vermont. He generally came to Amherst on weekends, and only occasionally during the week.

Despite their commitment to our faith, both Jeffrey and Marguerite faced racism and discrimination from Universalists, Unitarian Universalists, and the institutions of our faith throughout their lives because they were black.

The stories we will tell today will not all be easy to hear. We like to think that our spiritual ancestors have always been on the right side of history. Jeffrey and Marguerite's stories make it clear that this has not been the case.

However, it is important to hear and acknowledge these difficult stories for many reasons: to lift up the voices of those who often get ignored in our society, to remember our past so that we can do better in the future, to come to terms with the actions of our spiritual ancestors, and to figure out how we can honor the legacy of individuals who have not gotten the recognition they deserved in the past.

So I invite you to hear these stories today with an open mind and open heart, that we might learn from them, and work together to make our faith the shining light in the world we want it to be. Please rise as you are willing and able for our hymn;

* **Hymn #145 tranquil streams**

Story for All Ages: The Wonderbasket

Harry and Roy Goodman

THE PROMISE AND THE PRACTICE: REPAIRING OUR MISTAKES WITH LOVE

A Time for All Ages Story

by Jae Pema-la Scott, Erika A. Hewitt

This message for all ages involves two people, one of whom will need to bring forward a broken mug, plate, or bowl. These two leaders might hold a private rehearsal so that, in worship, this feels natural and playful — and yet meaningful. Please research pronunciation of the word "kintsugi," whose Japanese roots are KIN (gold) + TSUGI (joinery).

Roy - I'm so excited about today's Wonderbox... I wonder what is inside. Harry brought in a special box today and I think what's inside is going to be beautiful.

Harry comes forward sorrowfully with the box: "I was so excited to show you what is in this box (Open and show pieces of a broken chalice or bowl)— but it broke on the way here this morning, and now I'm feeling upset. Can we try to fix it?"

Roy (defensively): "I didn't break it."

Harry: "I know you didn't break it — but can you help me fix it anyway?"

Roy: "You mean help you fix it even though I didn't break it? I just need you to understand that I'm a good person. I don't go around breaking bowls."

Harry (patiently): "It's important to me that we figure out how to fix this bowl, because it means a lot to me."

Roy turns to the congregation: Do you think we should fix this bowl?

Harry: "Okay, then: do you have any ideas about how we could fix the bowl?"

Roy solicits suggestions, offering some themselves, if necessary. Possibilities to present to the children include:

- tape
- glue
- give everyone a piece of chewing gum, and then use it on the bowl

After several suggestions,

Harry brightens: "I have an idea, too! It's called kintsugi."

(keen-tsoo-gee: note that the "ts" is audible, and the g is a hard g, as in "gorilla." In Japanese all syllables are given equal emphasis)

Roy: "What's kintsugi?"

Harry: Kintsugi is the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery and ceramics. Gold is used to highlight the beauty of the imperfections that remain when a broken item has been repaired. As Harry explains, pass around photos of different examples of kintsugi.

Roy: "So what I'm learning is that the point of kintsugi isn't to hide the broken parts, right?"

Harry: "That's right! The gold is used to remind the user, over and over, that something that was once broken is whole again and it has a different beauty."

Roy: "In a way, that's what happens when other things break, right?"

Harry: "What kinds of things?"

Roy: "Like, relationships. Friendships. Sometimes we hurt each other's feelings, and it's like the thread between two (or more) people breaks. But as Unitarian Universalists, we don't ignore that: we try to rebuild the relationship so that it's stronger than it was before."

Harry: "I agree! The work of healing is all of our jobs, no matter how big or small we are. And when we repair our mistakes with love and with our covenant, we remember that our relationships are more beautiful once we have acknowledged hurt, asked for forgiveness, corrected our mistakes, and made a sacred promise to do better in the future." Let's think about this story about the brokenness from our past, so that our faith and our congregations can work to repair with beauty and love."

Roy: "When our children go to their classes, we adults will be thinking about a story of brokenness from our

Please join me in singing our departing blessing to our children and teachers as we now depart for their faith formation programs this morning.

"We hold you in our hearts as you go as you go...."

Offering

Offertory

Candles for Joy and Concern

Moment of Silence &

Musical Meditation

Honoring Rev. Jeffrey and Marguerite Campbell:

"I selected its church school before I passed my first decade..."

Roy

Jeffrey Worthington Campbell was born in Boston on March 1, 1910. His father, Jeffrey Sr., was Black and made his living, according to the Registry of Births, as a commercial traveler.

Jeffrey's mother, Lillian, was white. Her marriage caused a significant rift in her relationship with much of her family. Jeffrey's sister, Marguerite, was born in 1916. Jeffrey Sr. was killed in a racially motivated attack when Jeffrey was 12.

The family moved to Nashua around 1919. Young Jeffrey, after doing some "church shopping" with his mother and sister, decided to attend the local Universalist church. In an interview with Rev. Mark Morrison Reed, when Jeffrey was at the end of his career, he tells this story of how he decided on the Universalist church:

"When I was 9 years old my mother told me that I could go to any Sunday school of my choice and I tried the Methodist and the Baptists and the refreshments weren't there. The

Congregationalists provided seconds, and the Universalist put it down and let me help myself, so when, 15 years later the committee on ordination asked me why I had selected that particular denomination, there was nothing to do but tell them the truth and they still let me in.”

Jeffrey, Marguerite and Lillian became active members of the Universalist Church from the time Jeffrey made this important choice. Almost from the beginning of their time there, Jeffrey remembers suspicious whispers about he and his sister, as the only black children at the church. In his essay, “Personality, not Pigmentation,” Jeffrey writes of his early experiences of prejudice at the Nashua Universalist Church:

“By the time I was 12 years of age the paradox between intention and action of Universalism was shaking that little church... Self-satisfied, middle-class people that they were, they had nevertheless been attracted by a faith which preached the Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of Man. That message had struck sufficiently deeply for them to realize that they could not preach or accept that belief while excluding the only youngster of mixed parentage (in the Anglo-African sense) in the neighborhood. With each stage of my development, the paradox grew sharper. Should I take a role in this or that pageant? What would the conference say if I were to represent the church? Should I be asked to teach a class? Would it be safe to hold box socials where anyone’s daughter might...”

Despite this, the Campbells remained active in the church, and when he was 13, Jeffrey and his mother officially joined as members.

“I do not anticipate any success in settling him as a minister...” Laurie Goodman and Harry

Laurie: After high school, Jeffrey Campbell was accepted to the Theological School at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York. He was the first African-American to enter this school and his presence immediately presented a challenge and a soul-searching within the Universalist denomination. Though the dean of St. Lawrence, John Murray Atwood, recognized Jeffrey’s gifts and believed he should be given a chance, denominational officials were less sure it was worthwhile to support Jeffrey on his path to ministry.

In “Personality not Pigmentation,” Jeffrey wrote of his experience with the committee that granted him fellowship as a minister:

“I shall never forget the Committee on Fellowship which examined me for ordination. Thirty minutes on my theology and four hours on my politics and racial attitudes... Finally the committee voted ordination. It did so with more travail of spirit...They wanted their church to be the kind of institution which could unite its theory with its practice. Inwardly, they knew it was not, nor, within the limits of their imagination could they see it becoming such...Failure to ordain me would have been an even more flagrant confession of that same failure.”

Harry: Ordination and search for a settlement was also a fraught path for Jeffrey. When the Winthrop, NY Universalist Church wrote to the national Universalist office asking about

whether or not they should ordain Jeffrey, the response from Superintendent Roger Etz was less than enthusiastic:

“Personally, I have no color prejudice, and theoretically there should not be any in our churches. Practically speaking, however, there is bound to be, and I do not anticipate any success in settling him as a minister...I hardly know what to advise in regard to his ordination. Of course if it is carried through, he will expect us to try to find him a church, and frankly, I don't know where he can be located...My own feeling is that this problem ought to have been faced squarely by the school long ago, and that it was a mistake to let him feel he could finish his course and then secure a church.”

Laurie: Roger Etz was not far off in his predictions for Jeffrey Campbell's ministry. After graduating in 1933 and being ordained as a Universalist minister in 1935, Jeffrey was unable to find a permanent position in ministry. His race overshadowed all other considerations of his resume, despite supportive and glowing recommendations from the people who knew him. In 1938, the Unitarian denomination granted Campbell fellowship on the basis of his Universalist credentials. But this acceptance did not lead to any permanent ministerial positions either.

At times, Jeffrey was even attacked by other Universalists for his desire to serve as a Universalist minister. John van Schaik, editor of the Universalist publication *The Christian Leader*, wrote in an editorial in 1940 that it is fine if a "young colored man desires to enter a white theological school to get an education and has as his ideal the service of his race. If, however, he despises his race, wants to have nothing to do with it, insists that he intends to join the white race, serve white churches, marry a white girl, we should tell him to go elsewhere." Though he did not mention Jeffrey by name, the reference was clear.

Harry: During the mid 1930s, Jeffrey Campbell supported himself with part-time and temporary leadership positions, in the process becoming an activist and a leader in Universalist Youth ministry. In 1939, Campbell won a fellowship to study theology in England from the peace organization Fellowship of Reconciliation. Shortly after Campbell arrived in England, World War II began. During the war, Campbell declared himself as a conscientious objector, and supported himself after his fellowship expired by teaching returning soldiers and their families.

After his return to the United States in 1951, Jeffrey Campbell took a position teaching English Literature at the Putney School in Vermont. He remained on the faculty there for the rest of his life, while also trying, repeatedly, to gain a full-time position as a UU minister. He never succeeded.

His service to this church in the late 60s to early 70s was not an entirely happy one, for him or for this congregation. The Amherst congregation would have preferred to have a minister who spent more time at Amherst, but their financial resources were quite meager at the time so they could only pay him for part-time service. There is no evidence in the Amherst society archives that the problems were racial. The fact that although he was Amherst's settled minister, he did not spend as much time in Amherst as some would have wished was part of the problem.

As we can see from the many letters in the society's archives Campbell was also politically active, both locally and also with other individuals and groups across the country. Some members were happy to have their minister active in this way; other members were not. After some years, difficulties on that score increased. Also, near the end of his time in Amherst, the rising price of gasoline added to the substantial costs of commuting from Putney. Jeffrey became unhappy about the modest stipend that the very small Amherst congregation was able to provide. Eventually, unhappiness on both sides led to his dismissal in 1974.

He then went on to serve as on-call minister for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brattleboro, Vermont, a position for which he was not paid. He was also never invited to speak at the Nashua church.

“The saddest woman I have ever known...”

Laurie

Jeffrey was not the only Campbell to suffer from racial prejudice and discrimination at the hands of Universalists and Unitarian Universalists. His sister, Marguerite encountered similar resistance. In a letter to us from one of Jeffrey's daughters, Jocelyn referred to the woman she knew as her “Aunt Rita” as “the saddest woman I have ever known.”

In 1939, Jeffrey officiated the wedding of Marguerite and Francis Davis, a white man who studied theology at St. Lawrence University with Jeffrey. On August 12, 1939, the editor of *The Christian Leader*, John van Schaik, published an editorial entitled “Idealism and Realism in Mixed Marriages” in which he condemned mixed marriages because of the hardships they cause on the children. The editorial was a thinly veiled attack on the Davis-Campbell wedding, and more specifically Jeffrey Campbell's role as officiant of this wedding. In the editorial he wrote:

"Would it be right to withhold a Universalist pulpit from a man who has contracted a marriage of this kind? It would be right because the man cannot do the work. It would be right, as it would be right not to call a man who could not read, or could not enunciate, or had met with an accident that imposed a handicap not to be overcome."

In a letter to *The Christian Leader* in 1942, John Murray Atwood, Dean of St. Lawrence University, noted that the newly ordained Rev. Francis Davis, Marguerite's husband, still had no ministry. Because of Davis' skills and ability, in addition to the shortage of credentialed Universalist ministers, Atwood concluded that this could only be because of the racism directed at Davis' wife, Marguerite. Indeed, Davis never found a ministry, and instead became a social worker.

Like her brother, Marguerite was dedicated to the Universalist denomination, even though its leadership consistently rejected her and her service because of her race. In the 1950s, Marguerite began work with the Universalist Christian Association, and continued to serve the denomination after the merger at the newly formed Unitarian Universalist Association. Marguerite only retired from this work in the 1980s.

There is not as much documentation about Marguerite's life as there is about Jeffrey's, so we can only imagine what it would have been like for her to serve a denomination that continually refused to support both her brother and her husband in their ministry.

“The paradox between intention and action...”

Laurie and Roy

Roy: Throughout his life, Jeffrey Campbell did not hesitate to name the racism and discrimination he experienced at the hands of Universalists and Unitarian Universalists, perhaps most publicly in his 1940 article for *The Christian Leader* entitled “Personality not Pigmentation.” In that article, Jeffrey writes of many instances of “the paradox between intention and action” that he had experienced in the Universalist denomination. On the one hand, here was a faith that spoke of a belief in the “Universal Brotherhood of Man.” On the other hand, their actions said something different altogether. As Jeffrey put it in his article: “It is the refusal of men to act on the reality of their common brotherhood which has produced the Hell in which we blindly struggle today.”

Laurie: Throughout the article, Jeffrey writes not only of his disappointment in Universalism to live up to its ideals, but also his unwavering faith that it was a denomination worth supporting nonetheless. He describes Universalists as a “band of men and women who, in the increasing chaos, can see ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’” and is clear that he writes this article because he truly believes Universalism can and should become the faith it declares itself to be.

In letters to denominational officials later in his life, Jeffrey was also not shy about sharing his many negative experiences both while seeking employment and in his relationship with the larger denomination. At the same time Unitarian Universalists were becoming deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement, Jeffrey continued to struggle to find full-time work.

Homily: “I would still undertake the call...”

Harry

Though Jeffrey Campbell claims he became a Universalist because of the quantity of refreshments at Sunday School, it is clear that he stayed in this faith, and dedicated his life in service to it because he truly believed in the vision of universal love. Even near the end of his life, after all he had experienced, he wrote: “I would still undertake the call had I my life to relive.” His and Marguerite’s perseverance in this faith despite all the times Universalists and Unitarian Universalists failed to live up to their ideals was matched only by the perseverance of the racism and white supremacy working against them.

Jeffrey and Marguerite are not the only black Unitarian Universalists who have seen what our faith could be and seen it fail time and time again to live up to that vision. This is a common story, more common than we would like to admit. One of the reasons that Unitarian Universalists across the country are working to confront the racism and white supremacy in our midst is because we know this legacy, and because we know we can and should do better.

Like the broken chalice in the story Roy and I shared with us, we may not have directly been involved in these wrongs from our past, but we are still responsible for doing what we can to put that chalice back together, to own our past and learn from it. We inherit the legacies of our spiritual ancestors, both the good and the bad. We cannot change the past, but we can work to create a better future. We can still honor those from our past whose legacies have been forgotten.

Throughout his time searching for a congregation and waiting for his faith to live out its ideals, Jeffrey was told consistently to “Be patient a little longer.” This echoes the rhetoric often used against Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was often told to “wait for a better time.” We cannot wait any longer to truly affirm and promote the inherent worth of every person. We cannot ask people to wait for justice while we waste our time making excuses for ourselves or our ancestors.

You may be wondering at this point, what can we do? What can we do now to begin to right these wrongs? What does this story from our history call us to do now?

I offer three ways that we can honor the legacies of Rev. Jeffrey Campbell and Marguerite Campbell.

First, we can honor the Campbells by telling their story. We have begun to do this today, but today cannot be the only day that we speak about Jeffrey and Marguerite.

Second, we can honor the Campbells more by continuing our work to dismantle white supremacy in our faith and in society at large. Jeffrey saw what our faith could be if we truly lived out our ideals. Let us honor him by working to make it so.

It’s interesting to note that Nashua and Amherst have both benefited from the multi-week Ken Wagner workshop on “Resisting White Supremacy.” Ken’s honest and unvarnished look at how we are all swimming in the water of white supremacy has provided the framework and the motivation to dig deeper into this topic. You in Amherst are also doing a congregational read of “White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo with discussions in the Fall. I heard Robin speak at GA recently and she will challenge how you think about White Supremacy. I also am looking forward to reading her book.

In Nashua, we also wanted to honor Jeffrey and Marguerite in a very concrete way as well. As our study group did their research we discovered that Jeffrey and Marguerite are buried together in an unmarked grave in Nashua’s Edgewood Cemetery. We received the blessing of Jeffrey’s two adult daughters to create and install a marker for their grave that properly honors their service to our faith and to our world. After the Nashua church ran a successful Faithify campaign and raised over \$4,000 for this marker, last September we hosted a service of remembrance and reconciliation. We blessed the new marker during the graveside ceremony. During the memorial service, Executive Vice President of the UUA, Cary McDonald, apologized on behalf of the denomination to Jocelyn Campbell, Jeffrey’s daughter who attended. The UU Church of Nashua also announced that we had renamed our chapel The Campbell Chapel.

This marker and this named room celebrating Jeffrey and Marguerite does not excuse the past racism of our faith, nor will it correct this record. However, they do bring to the surface Black history that our faith has so far been content to leave in the history books.

In his chapter on Jeffrey and Marguerite, John Hurley writes, “Universalism, Unitarianism, and Unitarian Universalism turned their backs on Jeffrey Worthington Campbell, never recognizing

the gifts he could have brought to their ministry. And despite that failure of courage and imagination on the part of church leaders, Campbell never descended into bitterness and never regretted his call to the ministry. We are left to imagine what Unitarian Universalism would be today had Francis Davis, Marguerite Campbell Davis, and Jeffrey Campbell not been barred from the service they sought to give.”

We are left to imagine, and to do what we can to honor Jeffrey and Marguerite now. We are left to imagine, and to work to ensure that the future of our faith is free from the racism and white supremacy that so many black Unitarians, Universalists and Unitarian Universalists have faced. We are left to imagine, and to make sure we do better this time around.

May it be so.