

Spirit of Love, Giver of Life, be with those whose homes and lives have been disrupted yet again by the uncanny forces of nature. Be with those who survive and have lost family and friends. Let us remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be here today, together in this beautiful sanctuary. Let our good fortune remind us to cherish and to appreciate others, and to respect those whose origins and ideas are different from our own. We come in reverence for life. We come in appreciation for those who have paved the way for the freedoms and privileges we enjoy. Let us not forget how blessed we are, and let us not forget to share our blessings with others. Let our leaders be guided by wisdom and responsibility and courage to follow their consciences. And may we set an example for them to follow. Let us be together in silent meditation.

Spirit of Life, come unto me.
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

Reading: The Reverend A. Powell Davies

One of my favorite ministers was A. Powell Davies, of the All Souls Church, Unitarian in Washington, DC. Rev. Davies led and organized the integration of restaurants in Washington. His church was a beacon of religious liberalism for the entire Washington area. Fledgling fellowships meeting in schools and in homes in the nearby suburbs used to amplify his sermons as they came through a telephone line from his pulpit to their eager ears. My home church, River Road, was one of those churches that now has several hundred members.

And one of my favorite Davies sermons is entitled, "The Stutter of Demosthenes." Davies throws out a challenge to us that I quote here because it inspires me so and because it feels to me like it fits as we begin our annual stewardship drive. I ignore his sexist language that was typical in his time.

“...Man is a puny creature whose very weakness has compelled him to become the master of the earth. He had to make this conquest to survive at all: and so he made it.

“Now, having mastered the earth, it is required of him that he master himself; that once again, his weakness, his insufficiency shall goad him to his new achievements.

“That is the way it always was. Attainment comes through what we do with means inadequate to gain our ends. Thought would never have reached its noblest powers of flight if from the beginning it had been winged. Language would never have overflowed into poetry if it had not stammered when it overtaxed itself in prose. Longing would always have been madness if it had not surpassed itself in love. Man would never have been man if, in a world unknown and full of mystery, he had not struggled until he grew a soul.

“It is what we do not have and reach for – what we do not have and reach beyond – that turns our shuddering into boldness and audacity, and kindles our earthiness to flame. It is out of our weakness that we learn what to do with strength; it is because, when we most desire to speak, our speech is faltering, that what begins as broken utterance ends as prayer.”