

Our Dreams—Another’s Nightmare  
Rev. Bill Breeden  
UU Church of Bloomington  
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Surely dreams were concomitant to the awakening of the human spirit. Is it not difficult to imagine a person incapable of dreaming? The biblical record is filled with dreams, remembered ones of course, and it was the custom to have them interpreted. The Talmud states that, “A dream not interpreted is like a letter which is not read.”

I want to do a little interpreting this morning. You are invited to do the same. But before we do, let me tell you of some waking dreams that have come to pass, that is, they have taken on flesh and blood. Actually, they put me in mind of a dream of the OT prophet Ezekiel. So let me first share his dream with you. If you want to look it up later, it is found in the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel says that he was set down in a valley filled with dry bones. Now I don’t know if he really means full. I’ve seen a lot of valleys but to think of one full of bones is beyond me. Over in Owen County we’ve got gullies, down in Daviess County we had hollers. I can get my mind around the idea of a gully or holler filled with bones, but a valley? Suffice it to say there were a lot of bones. Now the Spirit of the Lord, (if you don’t like Lord, maybe the Spirit of Life, there is an interesting phrase at the climax of this dream that leads me to believe that substitution is warranted,) so the Spirit of Life asked Ezekiel if he thinks these bones can live. Ezekiel says, “I reckon you’re about to tell me.”

And so he does. He says, “prophet speak to those bones and say this, “The Spirit of Life is going to cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

And I will lay sinews upon you and cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin, and put breath in you and you will know what life is.” Well, you have guessed or already knew how the dream goes. Ezekiel speaks to the bones, and he reported that there was a great rattling sound. I have to admit that I probably would not have stayed for the rest of the dream. That rattling sound would have been enough for me. But he stayed, and he reported that the bones came together, flesh came upon them, and then, here is that interesting phrase of which I spoke, Ezekiel said, “Come from the Four Winds O Breath, and breath upon these slain, that they may live.” The indigenous people of this continent prayed to the Four Winds, and so “Great Spirit” or “Spirit of Life” is a wonderful rendition of the meaning of the dream.

Hold that dream in your minds and hearts a bit, I think I will get back to it, and of course if I didn’t, I will have changed the text so you’d never know. Now to those waking dreams mentioned above. I would like to share them with you and call to your attention that we will be celebrating the long time members of this congregation in a couple of weeks. Surely their dream of a vibrant Unitarian Universality community has taken on flesh and blood right in this great Midwestern valley not known for its liberalism.

A second waking dream that has taken on flesh and blood is a personal one. For many years I dreamed of a church where the minister was not only allowed, but also expected to speak the truth, as the minister perceived it to be. It was here all along, because of the commitment of generations of liberal dreamers. Of course, with the Freedom of the Pulpit comes the Freedom of the Pews, or Chairs, meaning you are under no obligation to agree with said minister, although surely most of you do some of the time.

I will say that reality has actually overwhelmed that personal dream, because this congregation has exhibited the courage to do new things resulting in the Team Ministry of which I am a member and for which I am so totally thankful.

Now I would like to do some interpretation of a dream this morning, the American Dream. That dream is probably near the top of the list of items most often mentioned by politicians. Yet, as the Talmud stated, “A dream not interpreted is like a letter which is not read.” The American Dream is often said but rarely read. What is it? Our Congress just passed a budget bill. I doubt if you could find a single member of congress who has read all of it. Surely it must represent the American Dream as projected by those who produced the bill. If we read the American Dream as represented by the budget, it is obviously a nightmare to many. It is not a dream to the more than 20 million additional poverty-stricken people who will lose their health coverage under Medicaid, most of them women and their children.

It is a dream to the industry of death, but a nightmare to those needing health, education and welfare, the necessary accoutrements for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The American Dream projected by the experts that dream of planting the seed of democracy in the Middle East is a national nightmare for all of us, and it is a literal hell for those who happen to live in the field of our planting. To be sure there were a few who interpreted this dream of war early on. The General who predicted it would take at least 200,000 soldiers was relieved of duty. In fact, his interpretation turned out to be true. Lawrence Lindsay, the President’s own economic adviser in 2002, dared read the dream in real terms as costing at least \$200 billion, rather than spout the official rhetoric that claimed “The oil will pay for the war after the first

year.” He was forced to resign. His interpretation turned out to be too optimistic.

**Julian Borger in Washington**  
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**The Guardian**

The Bush administration has said it is planning to spend \$120bn (£68bn) on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars this year, bringing their total cost so far to \$440bn.

The spending request, which will soon be presented to Congress, marks a 20% increase over last year, despite plans to draw down US troop levels in both war zones in the coming months. The administration also plans to ask for a down payment of \$50bn on war costs next year. The requests are expected to pass easily.

The spending on the Iraq conflict alone is now approaching the cost of the Korean War, about \$330bn in today's dollars. Meanwhile the cost of the overall "war on terror" - relabeled The Long War in the Pentagon - is already close to half a trillion dollars, and will soon equal that of the 13-year Vietnam war.

The defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, once predicted that the Iraq war would cost \$50bn.

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate and Columbia University economist, has calculated that the Iraq war could ultimately cost \$2 trillion, including lost productivity because of casualties and foreign deployments of reservists, as well as the long-term impact of disability payments and general economic disruption.

Donald Rumsfeldt's predicted \$50 billion dollar dream war has the potential to be a \$2 trillion dollar nightmare.

We need to interpret, to read, the American Dream. We also need to dream it anew. Having just celebrated the life of Dr. King, and now in the process of celebrating African American History Month, let us not fall into

the absolution trap. There are those who seem to think that praising the late Dr. King absolves this nation of its sins, past, present and future. The only absolution is found in birthing of New Dreams. The Talmud states, “All dreams follow the mouth.” When the nation speaks the language of war, of bigotry, of religious intolerance and hatred, then the nation’s dream will follow the same.

So too, when we speak the language of peace. We can dream the dream anew. But it requires intentionality. Microsoft doesn’t recognize that word, but if it wasn’t one, it is now. By the way, the word intention in relation to surgery means, “the process by which a wound heals.” We could spend some time there, but we are not going to this morning. I just ask you to chew on it a bit. Intention, the process by which a wound heals.

Listen to some words about daydreaming before we try a little of it.

**“I was trying to daydream, but my mind kept wandering.” ~Steven Wright (comedian)**

**A daydream is a meal at which images are eaten. Some of us are gourmets, some gourmands, and a good many take their images precooked out of a can and swallow them down whole, absent-mindedly and with little relish. ~W.H. Auden**

Let us not be given to swallow the prepaid, focus group tested, canned American Daydreams. Such dreams, coated with sugar, please the mouth for an instant and lie on the stomach like a stone. “All dreams follow the mouth.” The mouth follows the heart. Let us daydream in earnest,

holding images in our mouths, rolling them across our tongues, fully tasting that which we cherish, that for which we long in our heart. In so doing we may realize a rebirth of the hunger for freedom, justice and peace in this nation. Intention, the process by which a wound heals.

**All religions will pass, but this will remain: simply sitting in a chair and looking in the distance. ~V.V. Rozanov**

**Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in reverie. ~Henry David Thoreau**

The indigenous peoples speak of looking forward seven generations before taking the next step. And, as mentioned before, they called upon life from the four winds. Thus we may, if we so desire, bring life from four directions to inspire our daydreaming with the hope for something new. I have given up trying to figure out what is possible. Such a search assumes the impossible. Perhaps it might serve us better to consider what we want to see in Seven Generations, which may very well be determined by what we choose to be now.

The American Dream as marketed around the world today is a nightmare to the Earth—the Earth shudders in her sleep. Have we not experienced her turmoil? The purpose of this morning’s message is to encourage you to daydream about the reality you want your great-great-great-great-grandchildren to live. That is the beginning you see. We can work back, but we have to look way down the road.

When I was learning to drive a truck at the age of 16, I had to cross the river bridge at New Albany, IN. There was no interstate, just a narrow

bridge. When I entered the bridge another truck entered the opposite end. I didn't think there was room for both of us. My older brother, sensing my fear, said, "Look to the end of the bridge and drive through it! Don't look at that truck! Don't look at the bridge! Look to the end of the bridge and drive through it!" You see, if you try to look just ahead a bit, if you concern yourself with what is immediately in front of you, you start to wobble. A friend reminded me of the first lesson in landing an airplane. The instructor has to get the student to look to the end of the runway, not at the ground right below the plane. If you want to get to the goal, you have to look past it.

It is not only the American dream with which I hope you will be intentional, but also the dream of this UU community. Rev. Macklin and I attended the Heartland UU Minister's Association conference this past week. It is good to share ideas and dream dreams together with other UU ministers in the Region. We are thankful that this congregation is seen as being one of the leading congregations with regard to our commitment to social justice, and with regard to our giving witness to the liberal religious tradition, which is at its heart the Humanist tradition, because we are, all of us, human beings.

Is there a common dream that we may share as a community? It is easy to delineate the nightmares. We know there is a common dream among the so-called religious right. It is the commonality of their dream is one of the secrets of their rise to power. The exclusivity of that dream results in nightmares for the majority of the earth's population. The nightmares are obvious to those who with eyes to see and ears to hear.

But, can we not do more than simply bemoan the nightmares? Can we dream anew? Can we find a common dream of a world where every

person will have the simple right to live? Can we dream of a world where every person, regardless of gender, sexual preference, race, religion, or nationality will have the right to love whom they will and know the joy of family, the gifts of children, in so far as said person does not abuse the rights of another?

That dream, it seems to me, is the expression of the seven principles of this faith, and it is my hope that we can at least hasten the day when that dream will be reality.

Ezekiel said to those bones, "You shall live!" I believe that a small group of people committed to a common dream may bring new life to the dry bones of our national character. I believe we can begin the process of connecting the sinew, reshaping the body of democracy, and then the day will come when a generation of people will call to the four directions, **"Breath into this body that it may live again."**

Join in a bit of common daydreaming. In the coming weeks sit and gaze into our future as a community and be a part of creating a common daydream of justice.

Lastly a bit of dialogue from Barbara Kingsolver's [Animal Dreams](#)

**Codi: "So you think we all just have animal dreams. We can't think of anything to dream except our ordinary lives."**

**Loyd: "Only if you have an ordinary life. If you want sweet dreams, you've got to live a sweet life."**

~Barbara King solver, [Animal Dreams](#)

As Rev. Macklin and I traveled to Northern Indiana and back, we discussed our dreams. To be honest, we are not clear on them yet, but we are intentional about dreaming them. We believe it begins

with living sweet lives, and we give thanks for this community and the sweetness of the Spirit of Life therein.