



*Douglas C. B. Kraft*

*Unitarian Universalist Society • 2425 Sierra Blvd • Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 483-9283 • doug@uuss.org*

*Joan Barbara Lee  
Memorial Service, August 15, 2008*

Walking on a spring afternoon  
to oak tree not yet spring leaved above your bones ...

Can I give you this day  
just once again?

The sun so warm – blooms cloud thick –

Spring is for rebirth

Can you live again – at least this one more day?

No, it is I who must live on to witness

gentle green, fragrant white, shouting yellow

and I who go on to make another day of love for others,

knowing of the shortness of springs.

For you, I weave a garland of dandelions and encircle the oak.

You know I was here this day

You trust me to remember

In taking love to another on this day of new life.

*– Joan Lee (Remembrances)*

Good morning. Welcome. Thank you all for coming. I'm Doug Kraft, lead minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society. On behalf of Arnie and Joan's family and our congregation, we welcome you here today.

We are gathered here because of who Joan Lee was. And we are gathered because of who she is.

It is confusing to know which verb to use. Do we speak of her in the past tense or the present tense? Is she truly gone or is she still here in some ways? In our minds we know she died. We have her ashes here in this beautiful urn given by a shaman friend.

Yet, I just spoke to her a few weeks ago. Not long before that she was teaching yoga classes. She was such a strong, loving, live-filled person. In my heart, I can still feel her clearly. It seems impossible that she could be gone that quickly.

Who knows what really happens to us when we die. We may have our beliefs. But they are just guesses. Is she gone? Is she still here in some mysterious way?

So we gather here today in love, grief and perhaps confusion. And we don't gather to fix all these feelings. There is nothing wrong with them. Nothing is broken. This is how life is. We gather so we can be with this together.

And to help us be with each other and with Joan, I started with Joan's own words. She wrote the poem to her son Michael.

Joan loved this church. She worked and played here: music, art, poetry, youth, religious services. She graced us with many of her gifts. And when her son Michael died, she brought his ashes to be buried here – right out there. I can picture her on a spring day walking amongst the oaks to the “tree not yet spring leaved above [his] bones ...”

And there amidst “the sun so warm” and the “blooms cloud thick” we can feel a mother’s love and grief as she asks Michael “Can you live again – at least this one more day?”

That yearning could weigh a person down. But Joan’s heart was huge – Joan’s heart *is* huge. Her love was/is unrelenting. Grief turns to poignancy which turns to life: “it is I who must live on to witness / gentle green, fragrant white, shouting yellow / and I who go on to make another day of love for others / knowing of the shortness of springs.”

Even as she remembers him, she leaves a garland of dandelions and takes “love to another on this day of new life.”

I imagine Joan speaking to us through this poem. We are all hurt by life. It is in the nature of being that we ache from time to time. And we are all woven together as closely as dandelions in a garland. She felt this in her love a nature, her love of family, her love of the poor, the elderly, the disenfranchised and the oppressed. She was a powerful woman. She was not long intimidated by anyone or anything. And her power came from her huge heart more than her sharp mind.

We gather here today with some of that universal love and grief and confusion and poignancy and yearning for her to be alive with us, “at least one more day.” We gather here because of who she was. We gather her because of who she is.

We come to embrace our grief, to remember the gifts she gave us and as best we can to send her our love and blessings as her journey continues beyond our touch.

### *Meditation / Music*

I invite you to join me in some silent meditation during which will hear Joan play to us on the cello from an amateur recording done several years ago.

I invite you to close your eyes or let them come to rest some place undistracting. Let your attention come into your heart. Let your attention come to the heart of all of us.

Let’s be with whatever is in our hearts at this time.

There is no need to make anything up or pretend. Whatever you find is just fine. Joan of all people would only want us to be just exactly what we are.

So let’s just be with her in our collective stillness.

...

Blessed be.