

## **Homily: Abundance**

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Once upon a time when I was serving another congregation, volunteers and I met a few times to clean out the Religious Exploration space in preparation for the beginning of a new school year. Finally it came down to the day when some things had to get thrown out. My volunteer buddy ruthlessly discarded torn paper, half-completed activity folders, and empty toilet paper rolls. It was hard for me to let some of those things go. When it came to the scraps of yarn, I just couldn't do it.

Yarn is a religious artifact for UUs. At congregational retreats, at youth and young adult conferences, and in seminary classes—time and time again I've been part of the construction of an "interdependent web." Participants toss a ball of yarn between them, naming their connections, holding onto a piece of the yarn as a visible reminder of the links between and among us. It is a powerful, visible, and kinetic activity; just the sort of thing to get us out of our heads for a minute and to make our theology more accessible to everyone, regardless of learning style.

The yarn in question, however, was not neatly balled up, ready to become an instrument of spiritual growth. I think I managed to rescue one or two large enough skeins that we might use in the classroom. The rest were short bits and tangled clumps. Humbled by the volunteer's example of boundary-setting, I removed the chaotic yarn bits from the building. I probably should have thrown them out, but I took them home. I re-wound the strands into little balls, a few at a time when I was watching TV or waiting for a phone meeting. For a while, the tiny balls of yarn just sat in a cardboard box, taking up valuable real estate next to my desk.

I was rescued from my extra baggage by one of my UU friends. My friend posted to Facebook that she was looking for bits of yarn that her homeschool co-op class could use for a craft project. Apparently, small pieces were just perfect. I like the idea that there are real pieces of yarn and invisible threads connecting the children and youth in my former congregation to the kids in her class.

That being said, I also recognize that it was not necessarily strategic of me to keep stuff hanging around that neither I nor the church could use. My impulse came from a place of scarcity, a fear of letting go of what I don't need because I'm worried that I won't have what I do need some time in the future. If this is a world in which each individual is in a contest for survival of the fittest, it is tempting to hoard things like food, water, and art supplies.

The thing is, if we're talking about survival of the fittest in terms of the actual data, animal species that can cooperate in social groups have a distinct evolutionary edge. When we gather food together, groom together, and look out for each other through birth and death, we are more likely to thrive in our environment. Focusing on scarcity drives us apart. Cooperating is associated with abundance. An attitude of abundance helps us to be fully present in the world as our whole selves. We have less need of reserving some part of our souls just in case.

Collectively, we are enough. We are worthy people. We are kind enough, smart enough, spiritually grounded enough, powerful enough to experience joy in this life and to increase right relationship in our world. We can figure out how to share wisdom and resources. We can let go of what we don't need in faith that what we do need is possible to achieve. We can be ourselves, because enough is enough; we don't have to be perfect.

I know that there is a lot on our minds and hearts. We have a lot to work on, and there are no guarantees. My faith tells me that facing uncertainty together will take us further than turning away out of a sense of scarcity. We are enough to start. Let us begin again in love. So be it. Blessed be. Amen.