



“This I Believe” Faith Statement Maureen Kampen

GOOD MORNING!

I’ve admired the Members and Friends who have come forward to share their “This I Believe” statements for the seven years that I’ve been a member of this congregation. I’ve wished I had the courage but was too afraid that I would get tongue tied or worse yet – burst out in tears and embarrass myself. Finally, trusting that I will do neither of these, I asked Mark if I could do a “This is Believe” as a way of saying Good-bye to this congregation before I leave and as a ceremony of committing the pulpit clothes that I’ve made over the last few years into your care and keeping. As many of you know, I am moving back to Santa Barbara where I lived for 20 years before coming here. I believe for each of us there is a place where the heart lives and although I love Asheville and the mountains and most of all this community of friends, it is Santa Barbara where my heart lives. So in preparation for leaving I want to tell you some of what I BELIEVE by sharing the journey in the making of these cloths.

The whole process of making these pulpit cloths began one Sunday morning when Stan announced that our 60th anniversary celebration was coming up shortly. I sat there and stared at our brown, chunky pulpit on that morning and thought “I’m going to make something for this space to make it look celebratory. When the Anniversary service opened and I saw this quilt with the chalice and remembered the process of designing and constructing the quilt, I felt a thrill ... the thrill to feel that I had contributed something to the service. It made me feel more a part of the congregation especially as I received feedback from you I knew that it was enjoyed and appreciated. I also realized that if I was going to do this again, I’d have to make two. –Or get a new pulpit that had ONE front.

After the 60th anniversary celebration, Mark asked me if I would bring a group together to function as a “Sanctuary Arts” group. We never really had a name for the group of five that said they’d take on the challenge, we don’t have meetings, or a mission statement or a budget, we don’t even have a set name, but we work individually and as a group to enhance the worship experience. We put time and talent to work to bring more variety and beauty to our sanctuary. Elizabeth has pretty much taken up the lead on that task. She brainstorms ideas with us, we all contribute where our talent is, and then we gather up the ladders and materials and make it happen. I’ve loved being part of this group and hope any of you who would be so inclined will let Elizabeth know that you would enjoy being part of this creative endeavor.

THIS I BELIEVE

I believe in creation and evolution. Pretty radical? Not really....because I am relating these terms to the creative process and to our individual lives and the life of this congregation. For me, to have an outlet for my creativity is a blessing. The first time I realized how important and life changing the creative process could be was in 2002 when my husband was living with Alzheimer’s and I was having a hard time dealing with it. I went to a therapist who said, “What are you passionate about?” It wasn’t gardening or writing as she suggested, but QUILTING. So she helped me pour my anger, frustration, and sadness into the creation of a quilt. She helped me learn vent my feelings through the quilt. I could then lay awake at night, not thinking about our devastating losses, but rather thinking about how I could channel that fear, anger, and frustration into the quilt. What colors? What shapes? What story would it tell? It was an unbelievable relief – a life changing creation. I believe having the opportunity to express our creativity is vital to each of us. Our creative spirit deserves the time and respect. Feeding our creative spirit is important. For me it is vital. So that was the beginning of expressing myself and my passion through fabric creations. I will be glad to explain some of the symbolism to you after the service but now I want to get on to the pieces that I have made for our pulpit.

THE FLAME

I was thinking of the CHALIS as perhaps our primary symbol and thought that would be a good follow up cloth well, pair of cloths. I worked with the idea of the chalice; the flame and it eventually came to be this representation of the flame. No chalice but a flame. This is where evolution almost always comes into the creative process for me and “I Believe” it is essential to let that happen. I wanted the flame to stand out – using the satin and bright colors and then providing a warm background with the suede and the rust.

THE PATH OF LIFE

This is one of my favorites because it was made as a community effort. I guess it was last year sometime when, with Elizabeth’s leadership, we planned a Saturday of creative activities all over the campus. I said that I would set up a spot in Jefferson House where people could come and help create a pulpit cloth. Many of you had your hands (and Thumbs) **POINT OUT PATH** in this creation. You were in on the cutting, the stamping and the fusing of this piece. It evolved up to the day of hanging with the quilting around each thumbprint to make it look like rocks in the path to adding roots and small symbols to the tree, And then when I saw the wonderful graphic, white “windows” that Richard Oversmith had designed to be hung in the sanctuary... I went home and looked at the curtains in my studio and knew that was exactly the piece of fabric that I needed to finish our pulpit pieces. (two curtains are now sill length rather than floor length.) In that manner the cloths evolved and the creative process finally was complete and the creation ready to hang.

CANDLES WITH GINGKO

With Spring approaching I was searching for a image, again thinking of a chalice when I came across a picture on the internet with a tall candle surrounded by leaves. I had made some Gingko leaves for another project and love their shape so I just started putting it together with Gingko leaves, tall blue candlesticks and a bright yellow for the flame. It slowly evolves as I try one thing and then change it and change it again. But that’s the process and if you believe you can do it, it will happen. You’ll stand back and say,

“That looks great”. You will know when it’s right. I believe that not only do you have to let the work evolve but the creative process also needs some limitations. For me, this time it was –keep it Spring-like, use some blue to go with the other things we were doing in the sanctuary, represent growth – and letting the candles represent the chalice.

WOVEN STRANDS

This was created for the kick-off for the fund drive 2 years ago. The idea was to make a background onto which we could fuse other figures. I had thought at first that each Sunday it could be changed to represent how we were doing on the fund drive but as a committee we agreed that our emphasis was to be community building through the fund drive. So the design morphed into SHOWING THE COMMUNITY - Working and playing together. I fused these dancing figures, holding hands dancing, playing and working together. Later, when we needed a cloth to go with the snowflakes (made by the congregation) and hung in the sanctuary, I took off the dancing congregation and fused snowflakes to this background.

SHAPE POETRY

I wanted to make a pulpit cloth especially for Poetry Sunday and was looking for ideas (again on the internet) and I discovered “Shape Poetry”. A form used since the 1600’s. I found an example of an ecclesiastical poem about God’s disappointment that we do not soar like the lark but have disappointed the Lord, etc. etc. It is written in the form of a dove with wings outstretch. Then there were the more fanciful such as the airplane, and a quote from Alice in Wonderland who marvels at the mouse’s long tale (tail). By now I’m beginning to feel like I have my own private ART Gallery and an appreciative audience. How lucky can I be?

BARGELLO

This set was created to coordinate with theme of “What this Congregation means to me.” There was no particular inspiration for the body of the cloth, I merely enjoy doing a “bargello design” which is a design taken from weaving. The fringe on the bottom was made from the comments that members of the congregation had written on large sheets of paper as an exercise during coffee hour. Jules had taken pictures of people holding up

their large pieces of paper with their word or words written in large letters what this community meant to them. I like the idea of the words of the congregation being incorporated into the piece. So for weeks later we could read “acceptance” “the music” “Mark”, etc. People asked how I got the words on the strips. It is fairly easy to run fabric through a printer when it is backed with a stiff paper. I use freezer paper. So, I type the words into the computer and then run the fabric through the printer, cut it into strips and there you are. I added the fussy yarn when I realized the printed strips look too bare.

CELEBRATION

This is my most recent – created very quickly when I decided I wanted to have a special pulpit cloths for Sally Beth’s ordination. I awakened on the Monday before her Friday ordination with the idea that I could use an Obi that had been in my stash for about three years (an Obi is an elaborate sash worn around the waist over a kimono). This gorgeous Obi had been given to me by someone I hardly knew in hopes that I would find a use for it someday. So I cut it in half, added a bit of edging trying to decide what I needed to do something to make it wider. I decided to make a separate piece, weaving colored ribbons to match and enhance the Obi. Although that looks pretty easy, I was still changing fabrics on Friday morning. But Friday night it was a joy to see how beautiful these looked with the other surrounding colors and Sally Beth in her beautiful suit that looked like it had been planned to tie perfectly in to our whole color scheme.

As you can see, I believe in both evolution and creation.

I just want to end with a little story that I express my feeling for this community and the feeling within this community. My grandson said it the best. Alex is 7 years old, having been adopted by my daughter and her husband two years earlier. He had lived in an orphanage in the Ukraine since he was very young. Both of his parents had died. I had picked up Alex after school and I wanted to spend a little time checking out an Antique Store in this little Midwestern town before picking up the older brothers from middle school. I told Alex he could have a piece of cake while he waited. The ladies in the Antique Store were serving homemade Angel

Food cake with seven minute frosting that day. Anyone else remember what those slices of cake look like? It doesn't get much better. Twenty minutes later I was done browsing and Alex was done with his cake and we headed for the car. While driving to the middle school, Alex said, "I know why they call it Angel Food Cake, Nana." "Tell me why Alex." "Well, Angel Food Cake is so light and airy it could almost fly, and Angels can fly...and it's so white...and angels are very, very white, and it's just so good and angels are so, so, very good." I had to laugh, and said, "Oh, Alex you are such a great kid... what do you think makes you such a great kid?" His immediate response was, "Oh, that's easy Nana, it's LOVE." And that it is.