

Dear Thomas Potter,

It has almost been a week here at UU camp, and I just looove it! Yesterday I won a plastic ring in a moonwalk competition. The day before that I watched an old movie and the audience dressed up and said all of the lines together. "I'll get you my pretty, and your little dog too." It has been hot and sunny all week, except when it has been cold and rainy. But honestly, I like them both. Plus, all the other campers are super duper nice to me. Maybe it's because I'm the minister. Or maybe it's because my wife is pregnant and you don't make pregnant ladies mad. But I like to think it's because we are the beloved community.

I'm sending this letter via worship service, because I think sending it through the US Postal Service may present certain logistical problems. Being that you've been dead over 200 years and all. But I hope you have a chance to read it anyway. I'd love for you to know that the church you built is alive and well. Not the actual building – that burnt down a long time ago. A new church stands there now. But here at oomac your church is doing just fine, and there's no fire strong enough to keep this community apart.

I heard you built that church of yours, and waited those ten years, because you were waiting for that preacher who would teach universal salvation. You were a crazy old coot, so they said. Your neighbors thought you were completely bananas. But that's universalism, isn't it, Mr. Potter? I mean, if God loves all her people, surely the flip side of that is that the salvation of the world is going to come from all her people – not just the saints and celebrities, but the crazy old coots, the angry young people, the quiet woman who blends into the background, the little girl doing a handstand on the talent show. Superheros come in all shapes, and most of the time, their capes are only visible when we are watching with love.

I heard you built that church because you knew that someday, someone like Jonathan Murray would come to your shore. That's the story we are told. But I know your secret. You weren't waiting for Jonathan Murray. You were waiting for us. All of us – from Jonathan Murray right through to me and my friends here at UUMAC. The love of your heart wasn't satisfied with a single preacher, great though he was. In some mysterious way, you had a glimpse of all of us. You saw a movement, growing throughout the world, a movement declaring "all shall be redeemed", all is beautiful in God's sight, all God's people are one. You saw the love of your heart emanating from your porch on Good Luck, New Jersey to Pennsylvania, Maryland, even to Tokyo and Walla Walla, names of places you don't even know exist. The love of Unitarian Universalism winging its way around the world without regard to challenges or obstacles or the Hawley Smoot Tariff Act. When we see the world through love, the heart glimpses things for which that the rational mind has no language.

I wish you could see this place, Thomas Potter. You'd have so much fun here at oomac. You could go wet water rafting, which is a little like white water rafting but involves more buckets. You could join in drama games and take part in important theological insights like how God created pizza, and then created the universe. I don't know if you'd

be in the crowd shaving Chris Buja's head or the crowd cheering on the US soccer team, through Twitter, but you'd be here somewhere. I could see you playing a rousing game of duck-duck goose. You would like duck duck goose, Mr. Potter. Everybody runs around like crazy, giggling and jostling and getting up and getting down, and everything ends up more or less just fine.

Best of all would be the people. Oh if you could meet our people, Thomas Potter! You'd be so proud, your eyes would well up. Gay and straight and lesbian and bisexual; black and white and Latino; abled and differently abled; in their eighties and in their eights. I wish you could see it firsthand, I wish you could rest after building your church and take note of the beauty of a Unitarian Universalist community. You'd see just what you welcomed at your door. It's beautiful. And the beautiful thing is the meeting you started keeps happening – the meeting keeps happening, everyone here is getting to know one another, everyone takes a turn being sanctified in the sacred space where one soul has the courage to meet another.

You'd see people walk across the cafeteria and smile at people they never met. You'd see senior citizens rush up to little kids when they fell off a bike right on their badonkadonk (or keyster, as some here may know it). You'd see people in this community feeling empowered by those around them and becoming things they never thought they could, people who are dance competitors and quarry swimmers and vespers leaders and baby catchers. People grow, they outstretch their arms, they learn that they're a little bit more than they thought they were, that they can be there for others in a way they once would have thought impossible. And all because we are willing to carry on the sacred practice of meeting one another and forming community, like you did that day with John Murray.

This community is so strong, Thomas Potter, that it quite literally saves lives. If you were here last year you would have seen the President of UUMAC taken to a hospital because of a brain tumor, a tumor his community noticed. You would have seen bedside visits. You would have seen a quilt being made by the community, and then purchased by the community at the auction, to wrap around this great man's shoulders when he needed it most. You would have witnessed what we like to call the "Unitarian mountain" – that being the mountain of cards that pile up when your community knows you need support. The love that was shown was overwhelming.

This year, as a former youth leader, a minister raised to ministry in part by this community, is in hospice care for a terrible disease, we are sending love and care and support this way from all the way in Pennsylvania. Your love reached across the Atlantic, now our love reaches across North America.

And our love is going to do so much more, I just know it. This movement is going to make sure *everyone* in America can marry the person whom they love. This movement you helped create is going to clean to help us all learn how to love the earth. The people of this bold and passionate covenant, this faith that somehow everyone is in this together, are going to make peace a living reality in our world.

I guess I'd better let you get back to whatever you were doing, Mr. Potter. I don't want you to miss the arrival of that boat.

Anyway, hope you're having a good summer. If you see my great-great-great-great-great grandparents, tell them everything's fine and I love them. And if you come next year, we'll have a button ready for you.

Your pal,

Bob