

Draft

**THE COMING OF THE GREAT PUMPKIN**  
**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Clemson**  
**October 31, 2010**

Happy Halloween, everyone and special thank you to everyone who has taken part in today's service – the children and youth in particular, the RE staff and teachers, parents, the music folks and all of you.

There is a world someplace where Snoopy is actually flying a biplane and challenging the Red Baron.

It isn't this world.

There is a world where Lucy always pulls the football away and Charlie Brown always falls flat on his back.

There is a world where Sally always threatens to slug Linus if he dares take her hand and there's a world where Charlie Brown never can win a softball game.

That is not in this world.

And if you believe Linus in the video clip this morning, maybe someday the Great Pumpkin will appear in the place where people are the most sincere and worthy.

That can happen in this world and it can be right here.

How could that be so?

Well, first and foremost, we have actually had the Great Pumpkin in the guise of Chris Bellinger here this morning with us. That's pretty significant right there. But might the actual Great Pumpkin visit us? There's the question.

What else can make it so? Here's a brief comment from Linus about the Great Pumpkin: **"...in writing to the Great Pumpkin, while trying to convince him that your pumpkin patch is sincere, you are not to ask for anything specific, but wait for and accept whatever he brings."**

So here we are in the Pumpkin patch called Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Clemson, South Carolina. How do we measure up on sincerity since that's a primary condition for the visit of the Great Pumpkin?

Well, I can say that all I've seen of you is that you're really sincere about helping others in the larger community.

And speaking as the interim minister, you're really easy to learn to love. I hope that counts for a bit on the positive scale.

What else do we know about this world we live in compared to the imaginary world of the Peanuts Gang?

We know that people grow up and often leave their childhood foibles behind. The Charlie Browns of this world won't always lose softball games nor will their friends always pull the trick of yanking the football away from them.

The Sallies of this world will find it's acceptable for someone to hold their hand and they don't need to slug anyone.

This world we live in, of course, is not a cartoon strip and the running gags change with every generation. There is no predestined fate here every Halloween with Linus slipping home disappointed yet again or comfort blankets always needed.

So here we are on Halloween Sunday of 2010. Our annual Stewardship campaign ends today. Hopefully most if not all of you have given your envelopes with pledge cards to Bob or Sandra or mailed them in.

I can't tell you myself whether the Great Pumpkin in person made it here today. I do know from Linus' words that we have to accept whatever he brings us. We aren't supposed to ask for anything specific but just be sincere and trusting.

As you know, pumpkins contain seeds. The pumpkins the children brought in today are carriers of the next generations.

What seeds have you planted with your pledges and your gifts?

This will be the question that you answer.

Those seeds might ask us to keep the ground fallow for a year while we work on programs like conflict resolution and a covenant of right relationship. We might choose to look at our mission in this larger Clemson community. Who knows? We'll find out soon.

Linus never speaks of leaving a gift or a message for the Great Pumpkin as is often done for Santa Claus.

I wonder if that's one reason the Great Pumpkin never shows up in his pumpkin patch.

If I were to leave such a message for the Great Pumpkin here at UUFC (and remember we still have quite a few hours for Halloween – it can still happen!), I would leave him a message about your gift of sincerity but I would call it your gift of grace.

There's a book called "Ordinary Grace" by Kathleen Brehony that is relatively new and I'd like to do a class on it sometime. She writes about the incredible deeds of grace arising out of the inherent goodness of the human heart. She wonders how our world would be if religions did not declare the inherent sin and moral turpitude of all people. Instead, she wonders, what would it be like if the truth of inherent human goodness was affirmed rather than denied? She says that ordinary grace arises out of that truth. She then

says that people who channel ordinary grace have some common characteristics.

So my message would say something like this:

**“Dear Great Pumpkin,**

**We here at UUFC are very sincere people. We care about each other and the world around us. We want a beautiful world but we try to take it a day at a time. We know that we are supposed to accept whatever you bring us and that is fine. In order to help you decide, we would offer you some themes of who we are and hope to be. We aren’t perfect but these are what we hope to be gifts of grace. Perhaps you can leave ways that will help us along that path:**

**We feel at a deep level a strong and clear connection with other beings.**

**We have an abiding faith in the goodness of others.**

**We believe that helping others is not a service but rather a privilege and a blessing.**

**We try to be humble.**

**We have a sense of humor. We describe ourselves as being happy and we try to give the impression of being physically and emotionally healthy people.**

**Our impulses to do good are immediate and instinctual.**

**We are able to turn negatives – even deep suffering – into positive energy and grace.”**

So we still have some time left on Halloween and who knows, maybe the gifts will be here tomorrow and next week and in the years to come. Miracles can happen.

May it become so.

Peace, amen, shalom, blessed be, Namaste.