

OPENING WORDS  
Robert Dottin  
Sunday, May 13, 2018

Good morning, my name is Robert Dottin. Welcome to All Souls and Happy Mother's Day. I am deeply grateful to my own mother, in Trinidad, for the many gifts she imparted to me. Gifts such as thinking critically, relying on evidence and showing empathy for others, all guided me toward science and Catholicism. However, she was happy, that in the late 80s I found a religious path called Unitarianism that was more compatible with science.

Genetics took me to many countries and I joined Unitarian congregations during my long stays in Prague, Oxford and Paris. In 1998, I attended a genetics conference in *Kloster Irsee*, first a monastery, then a sanitarium and now a modern conference center in Bavaria. A single parent, I brought along my 7 year-old son, a member of RE at All Souls, my home base. While playing outside he discovered a sign near a graveyard at the back of the Center. When translated, it indicated that the interred were once residents of the sanitarium and victims of Joseph Mengele's eugenic extermination. Appalled that we should have a genetics conference there, the American scientists, many of whom were Jewish and I protested. The organizer apologized. He said he did not know the history of *Kloster Irsee*, but explained, "This is Germany. It's everywhere." So too are Germany's efforts to face its past as the graveyard signs publicly acknowledge. Today German high school students visit Dachau.

In the same vein, on April 26, Linda Rousseau, Adine Usher and I attended the opening of Bryan Stevenson's amazing National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, dedicated to the abuses of slavery and its aftermath, an important step toward reconciliation.

I saw the impact of the memorial on the thousands of attendees of all colors, including many Unitarians. I feel that my mother's wisdom, my son's puzzled discovery of the sign in the graveyard, and my Unitarian network, all connect to add meaning and purpose to how I choose to live my life.

And now please join me, as you are willing and able, in repeating the *Bond of Union*.

*In the freedom of the truth  
And in the Spirit of love  
We unite for the worship of God  
And the service of All*