

Service Sunday  
First Unitarian Society  
Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman  
August 18, 2013

## Doing Loving Deeds for Others

*“Al shloshah d’varim ha-olam omeid. Al ha-Torah, v’al ha’avodah, v’al gemilut chasadim – The world stands upon three things: On Torah, on prayer, and on loving deeds.”* It is not enough to study and pray – we are obligated to go out into the world and get involved in the society we live in, to roll up our sleeves and do loving deeds for others.

Today we will build, cook, organize, and garden. We will work on economic justice issues, care for the poor and sick, we will contribute our time to community organizations that are the lifeline for so many people in Dane County.

We do this out of generosity to the needy among us, out of a belief that we have a responsibility to our neighbors and our neighborhoods, and out of a commitment to our own communities. We are here to connect with each other as we work side by side, and to teach ourselves, our children, and each other the *mitzvah* – the sacred obligation – of making the world just a bit less broken. We are here to participate in *tikkun olam*, literally, the repair of the world.

In our society today growing economic inequality has created suffering for so many of our neighbors. We come together to recommit ourselves to reaching out to others. Each nail we pound or fence we mend wards off the cynicism and despair that can envelope us if we are not careful.

We do these acts of kindness not because they are an end in and of themselves, but because they are a beginning, because they change the world in which we live just a tiny bit, and because they change us, making us more loving and patient, making us more committed to creating a world in which there is no more despair and degradation.

As we gather here today, let us open our eyes to the parts of our society that we too often do not see, to the poverty, hunger, homelessness, and illness that plague our world.

Let us work with compassion and dedication, with generosity and kindness.

Let us pray with our hands and our feet, with our tears and our sweat.

Let us commit ourselves to the difficult work of continued involvement and heed the words of the great Rabbi Tarfon: “*Lo alecha hamlachah ligmor. V’lo atah ben chorin l’hibatel mimena* – It is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

Let us remember that this is holy work.

And let us say, Amen.