

Invocation at the ribbon cutting of the new Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital, November 1, 2007, given by The Rev. Dr. Howard W. Whitaker

Ladies and gentlemen; Governor Corzine, distinguished guests, my friends and companions along the way—both those with and those without keys to the doors:
Welcome to *our* house.

From Hebrew scripture:

When the children of Israel first arrived at the Promised Land, they sent spies into the land to bring back reports of what they saw. The spies came back and said: “*You don’t want to go in there... the people we’re supposed to get along with are giants... we’d be like grasshoppers... it’s too dangerous!*” In spite of Moses’ reassurance to them that all would be well, the Israelites were too frightened of their future to go into the Land promised to them. And because they were frightened of the future, they had to wander around in the wilderness for another generation before their children could inhabit that particular piece of real estate.

We know people like that. Some of us work with people like that. And while we’re sorry that they’re going to wander around in the wilderness for awhile,

We’re standing at the threshold of our future, and we’re going in.

And from a Native American tradition:

On the third day of Creation, just before all forms of life were to multiply, the Holy One looked at what had been made and observed: “*I see that what some of you value most is survival, while what others yearn for is opportunity and growth. So I will give you each a choice. If what you want most is stability, then I will give you the power to regenerate any part you lose, but you must stay rooted where you grow. If, on the other hand, you prefer mobility, you may also have your wish, but you will be more at risk. For then I will not give you the ability to go backward... you will not have the ability to return from whence you came.*”

Those that chose stability, we now call trees. Those that chose opportunity became our ancestors. And like our ancestors, we have chosen growth and change... and

We’re not ever going back.

So please join me in affirming our identity and asking blessings upon our new work.

Blessed be art thou, Creator of Life and Giver of Health: Look upon this place and help us understand the slow motion miracle we see: That things which were cast down are being raised up, Things which had grown old are being made new And *this* is how we are to fashion *our* lives and work. Remind us that: We cannot save people unless we serve them. We cannot lead people unless we love them. We cannot be healed unless we trust. We cannot take on our new life, until we are ready to lay down our old one. Let your healing power shine forth from this place, until we are all One.

Peace be to this house and all who dwell in it. Amen.

