

Revolution by Resolution

CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS
OF WOMEN & RELIGION



Unitarian Universalist
Women and Religion

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Coming Out of Exile

© 1981 Surtsey Publishing
Words & Music by Carolyn McDade

Handwritten musical score for the hymn "Coming Out of Exile". The score is written on four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics: "We are com-in' out of ex-ile com-in' home We are". The second staff contains: "com-in' out of ex-ile com-in' home We are com-in' out of". The third staff contains: "ex-ile com-in' out of ex-ile We are com-in' out of". The fourth staff contains: "ex-ile com-in' home". The music is written in a simple, accessible style, with notes and rests clearly marked. The lyrics are written in a cursive, handwritten font.

REVOLUTION BY RESOLUTION:

CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS OF WOMEN & RELIGION

This worship service recalls the creation and passage of the Women & Religion Resolution at the 1977 General Assembly and the resulting significant changes within the Unitarian Universalist movement over the years since then. First presented Saturday, June 23, 2007, at the General Assembly, Portland, Oregon.

OPENING WORDS

Maria Mitchell (1818-1889), Singing the Living Tradition, #537

Small as is our whole system compared
with the infinitude of creation,
Brief as is our life compared with the cycles of time,
We are so tethered to all by the beautiful dependencies of law,
That not only the sparrows fall is felt to the uttermost bound
But the vibrations set in motion by the words that we utter
Reach through all space and the tremor is felt through all time.

FOUR DIRECTIONS

*adapted by Helen Popenoe, based on words written for
a Wheel of the Year service*

Air, fill our lungs.
Help us to bring freshness into our lives.
Let there be clear skies, clear minds
For us to see our way.
Let our words create a safe space to make connections.
Be here now.

Fire, help us emerge from within ourselves
To greet each other.
Let passion glow on our birthright
As we correct oppression.
Let our feeling selves out
From all hiding places to integrate our beings with wholeness.
Be here now.

Water, rain on us, quench our thirst.
Help us remember the ocean womb from which we came.
What makes all of us be connected.
Let our moods be flowing back and forth
Until all become one.
Let the drought of separation be over.
Be here now.

Earth, strengthen our resolve
Keep us centered.
Keep us grounded in our cause of freeing all
From the system of patriarchy.
Be here now.

OPENING SONG

"As We Come Marching, Marching"
Singing the Living Tradition #109

CHALICE LIGHTING

LEADER:

Take from the past not its ashes but its fire. (Anonymous)

RESPONSE:

The flame of our heritage lights the way to our future.
(UU Women's Heritage Society motto)

WELCOME

Welcome to this service of memory and hope. Thirty years ago at our General Assembly in 1977, an historic action was taken that would set in motion changes throughout our Unitarian Universalist Association. A business resolution called “Women and Religion” was adopted unanimously. This service celebrates the impact of the Women and Religion Resolution and challenges us to recommit ourselves to the unfinished work of ending sexism in Unitarian Universalism and elsewhere in the world.

THE LARGER CONTEXT

Come with us as we travel back in time 30 years. The second wave of the feminist movement was in full swing. Women were waking up to the realities of oppression in their lives—and they were refusing to be silent any longer. This was the era of consciousness-raising groups, the legalization of abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the United Nations Decade of Women. A far-reaching policy known as Title IX declared that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Women’s lives were changing—and so was the rest of the world.

The 1970s hit song “I Am Woman” epitomizes the way women were feeling as they woke up to their own strength and wisdom.

SONG “I Am Woman,” by Helen Reddy and Ray Burton

THE STORY OF THE RESOLUTION

The story of the original writing of this resolution begins with Lucile Schuck Longview. As a budding feminist in her 60s, she became aware of her life-long submersion in patriarchal consciousness. At the same time, she also began to note the extent to which biblical teachings sanctify women's inferiority to men. Challenged to improve the image of women, she decided to write a resolution to call the UUA to examine its sexism and set a positive feminist direction for the future of our religious movement.

She wrote the resolution during a snow storm, sent it out to women through the mail to get responses and received enthusiastic support for the idea. When they could get through the snow, Lucile invited a group of friends to meet with her before church around the butcher-block table in the basement kitchen at First Parish in Lexington, Massachusetts, to read her draft of the resolution and help in revising it. The one man present took it to work to get it copied and in the mail the next day.

To have the resolution included on the agenda of the upcoming General Assembly in Ithaca, New York, signatures had to be gathered from at least ten members from each of twenty-five different societies. Lucile and her friends sent letters to everyone they knew asking for support. When the resolution was presented, it had been signed by 548 women and men from fifty-seven congregations from around the continent.

When the resolution came before the representatives at General Assembly, only one amendment was made from the floor, that being to require that the UUA President to give an annual report on the progress of the implementation of the resolution. Then the women and men present gave unanimous approval.

The sponsoring women were rather stunned by the ease of passage. "They don't realize what they've agreed to," was their common thought.

The changes Lucile and her friends set in motion by their words and their actions have had far-reaching consequences in our shared life as Unitarian Universalists. We will be forever in their debt, as we continue to move forward in the continual creation of justice and equality within our religious movement and in the world.

Partially based on "The Women and Religion Resolution: The First Decade," by Lucile S. Longview, a report given at the 10th anniversary celebration, republished by the UU Women's Federation in 1996.

SONG "Coming Out of Exile," by Carolyn McDade (part one)

THE CHANGES BEGIN

(Reader stands off to one side and reads the Resolution words from a scroll.)

Whereas, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships";

FORMATION OF WOMEN AND RELIGION PROGRAM AND COMMITTEES

In 1977, when the Resolution passed, there was only one woman minister on staff at the UUA, the Rev. Leslie Westbrook. She talked with Moderator Sandy Caron and President Paul Carnes about how the UUA could put its resources and staff behind im-

plementing the resolution. President Carnes appointed the Rev. Westbrook “minister for women and religion.” Two different committees were established: (1) the Women and Religion Committee, a program committee charged with the development of materials and programs to implement the resolution; (2) the Affirmative Action for Women Ministers Committee, which worked with her office and the Department of Ministry to develop the affirmative action for women ministers program.

and whereas, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination;

CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN & RELIGION

District representatives were invited to a gathering at a retreat center called Grailville in southwest Ohio in late May, 1979, to explore ways to erase sexism within Unitarian Universalism. Leslie Westbrook, Minister to Women and Religion, encourages women to “look past the roles of lay woman, or minister, or director of religious education—to see the common bond and experience we share as women.” Carolyn McDade continued: “We must include one another in our identity—knowing we are one sisterhood.”¹

It was at this very first Women and Religion Gathering that the idea to revise the UU Principles was first discussed.

and whereas, some models of human relationship arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued;

¹ Opening Celebration, UUA Continental Woman & Religion Conference, Grailville, Ohio, May 25, 1979. Copy from Jean Zoerhide in UU Women & Religion files.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN IN MINISTRY

One of the first programs to be implemented was the Affirmative Action Program for women in ministry. Up till then women had been undervalued in UU religious leadership. Less than 10% of the UU ministers were women.

The committee trained a cadre of women ministers who were available to meet with congregational search committees to help them begin to consider women candidates. The program was tightly structured, and much of its design came from a similar program offered by the Presbyterian Church.

and whereas, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, there by tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

CONVOCATION ON FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Over three hundred people came to East Lansing, Michigan, for the first Convocation on Feminist Theology, held in November 1980, and more would have come, if there had been room. Beacon Press authors Carol Christ and Naomi Goldenberg gave keynote speeches, and “the core issues of patriarchy, put-down and prejudice in the spiritual life of Unitarian Universalism were studied.”

One of the few male participants, Randy Lehman-Becker, reported in the UU World that it was “a new, vital, open exploration of religious ground.” Women, he said, “are exploring more than just a superficial semantic change, more than a justification argument, more than a new debate over old elements. What I heard suggested was a search for a new rootedness in our religion,

one that would be as affirming for ... men as women—a religion that would seek to end concepts such as domination, authority and design and replace them with cooperation, growth, and process.”²

One of the most popular elements to come out of the East Lansing gathering was the Water Ceremony, created by Lucile Longview and singer-songwriter Carolyn McDade. Today the Water Ceremony is often used in congregational worship, particularly in the fall when people are returning from summer break.

At the Convocation, women who came from all around the continent were invited to bring water from their homes to pour in a common vessel to symbolize the overarching sisterhood that was woven across the continent. Today we have water coming from *(name the sources of water brought by 4-6 people representing a range of places served by your congregation)*. As we mingle these waters, let us remember that although we come from different directions, together we form one congregation.

Let us sing together the original Water Ceremony song, written by Carolyn McDade. As we sing, those who brought the water will bring some of the mingled water to you to use as a form of blessing, the blessing of this gathered community. Like rivers running to the sea, we're coming home to the spirit in our souls.

SONG “Coming Home,” by Carolyn McDade

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The Women and Religion Resolution went on to call for both personal and institutional change.

² *UU World*, Jan. 15, 1981.

therefore, be it resolved: that the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families;

CHANGING THE PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

One of the first institutional expressions to be challenged by Women and Religion advocates was what was then known as the “purposes and objectives” of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a statement hammered out by men, primarily ministers, who had gathered in 1959 for final negotiations between Universalists and Unitarians prior to the joining of the two groups. When the women gathered at Grailville in 1979, they agreed that the principles affirmed men but not women. “Nor,” said those present, “do they indicate a respect for the totality of life and for the earth, which we deem important.”³

It took six years for new Principles and Purposes to be developed and approved. This time the Bylaws Revision Committee was composed of four women and three men, with one of the men serving as chair—a significant change from the earlier all male committee.

As Lucile Longview reflected: “In ideology it is particularly significant that our Principles no longer endorse a world view based on hierarchical relationships with the male dominion over all. ... Instead ... the current principles embrace a sense of connectedness and respect for the totality of life ... That statement “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part” represents a shift of global proportions. A world view

³ Lucile S. Longview, “The Women and Religion Resolution: The First Decade,” UU Women’s Federation, 1996, 47.

based on respect for all existence is life giving. A world view based on dominion over all has led us into exploitation of the earth and its resources for the benefit, supposedly, of man—a view that has us on the brink of a man-made Armageddon.

and be it further resolved: that the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to encourage the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences to make every effort to: (a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future;

SEXISM AUDITS

In an attempt to address institutional sexism, an audit was created called *“Checking Our Balances: Auditing Concepts, Values, and Language.”* The Women and Religion Committee presented this process guide for congregational use at the 1980 Convocation on Feminist Theology.

In 1987, the Board of Trustees voted to follow the recommendation of the UUA Administration and the Women and Religion Committee and conduct an audit “to determine the status of efforts to eliminate sexism from the policies, structures, and practices of the UUA, its districts and congregations.”⁴

Actions suggested by the Audit Committee fell into three main categories:

1. The responsibility to correct administrative policies and procedures
2. The examination of ministerial practices and theological training, e.g. to examine the degree to which feminist

⁴ “UUA’s Sexism Audit: A Report,” *World*, July/August, 1988, 47.

perspectives have been included in theology and worship practices

3. Revisioning our Mission and Institutional Relationships.

The following year, a UU World article, "UUA's Sexism Audit: A Report," stated that "... the Board agreed to consult with the Women and Religion Committee and the Commission on Appraisal regarding the possibility of a review of the expectations for ministers and ministers' roles and the possibility of developing, articulating and disseminating throughout the denomination a vision of a gender-inclusive association."

However, there was a sense among many Women and Religion advocates that the UUA backed away from dealing with institutional sexism. Sara Best, editor of *Reaching Sideways*, one of several Women & Religion journals published in the 1980s, stated: "I am overcome by the administration's refusal to act on the results of their own survey."⁵

A later version of the sexism audit guide was published in 1991 as "*Cleansing Our Temple: A Sexism Assessment for UU Congregations*." Perhaps it's time to use this tool again to evaluate our progress today. As Helen Popenoe puts it: "If we in the Women and Religion movement fully participate in the new examination process of the Principles and Purposes, the vision of a gender-inclusive association could become a real goal for all UUs!"

(a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

One of the first projects to emerge from the Women and Religion initiative was the development of a feminist theology curriculum. Leslie Westbook initially asked Shirley Ranck to develop a

⁵ "UUA's Sexism Audit: A Report," *World*, July/August, 1988, 47.

study guide—which became the very popular and much loved curriculum *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, published in 1986. That was followed in 1994 with *Rise Up and Call Her Name*, by Elizabeth Fisher. These two programs empowered women to discover the divine in female form and re-imagine religion from a woman-centered perspective.

(b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future;

NEW HYMNBOOK

Early on many women realized that one of the most common and pervasive sources of sexist language was the hymns we sang every Sunday in worship. In the mid-1980s, the Board of Trustees commissioned the creation of a new hymnbook. Their charge was simple: to create an “inclusive hymnbook.” Marc Belletini, who served as chair of the Hymnbook Resources Commission that produced *Singing the Living Tradition* explains: “Because of the Women and Religion resolution, and its influential power during the days when we reformed our principles and purposes, we knew, we thought, what the board meant.”

However, as they spent the next six years in the complex process of developing the hymnbook, they discovered that not everyone agreed. Gender inclusive language was mocked by many. Plus there were many definitions of “inclusive.” Some were clear that it meant removal of ALL God language. Where some wanted “gender neutral,” others wanted “gender balanced.” Some felt that while “man” was exclusive, “mankind” was inclusive. Those on the committee didn't think so.

Some raised issues around the use of words like “dark” and “black” to refer to negative things. In a nation where brown and beige skinned people are routinely called “white” and “black,” the Commission felt this was powerful new territory for the concept of inclusive language. These concerns were sometimes in

conflict with language usage around the solstice service materials beloved of folks wholly committed to the Women and Religion resolution.

In reflecting on the experience of serving on the Hymnbook Resources Commission, Marc Belletini comments: "I think those of us who experienced the life-changing privilege of serving on this committee did a pretty good piece of work both expanding and embracing the idea of inclusiveness in a bound, made to be used book. And, gratefully, I think we each learned about the deeper revolutionary meaning of the Women and Religion resolution and the call to inclusion in our own lives too."

SONG "Coming Out of Exile," by Carolyn McDade (part two)

SUNSETTING THE UUA WOMEN AND RELIGION COMMITTEE

In 1996, nineteen years after the passage of the Women & Religion Resolution, the UUA Board of Trustees determined that the work of ending sexism was complete and declared the "sunsetting" of the resolution. Not everyone agreed.

The following fall representatives from district Women & Religion groups met in Massachusetts to deal with the changes that were on the horizon due to being sunsetted, which meant the defunding of the Women and Religion Committee. One of our accomplishments the UUA acknowledged in their farewell was the revision of the hymnbook. "But let me ask you," said Florida District's Pam Leavy and Gloria Marvin, "does changing the words in hymns so they are more inclusive of gender, race or sexual orientation mean that our work is done? Do changed words correct violations of trust between clergy and parishioners in the areas of sexual misconduct, violations of confidentiality and inappropriate treatment of women? We may seem to have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go."

At the end of the gathering, the group went out into the chilly, autumn air on the front porch to silently gaze at the moon. Helen Popenoe reports: "With our arms around one another looking upward in solidarity, Betsy Stevens from Pacific Southwest District quietly said, with firm certainty, something like, "We know the sun will rise tomorrow morning and so will the Women and Religion movement. We're here to stay. We're going strong." Then some of us said in response, "Onward to the Sunrise!"

And thus it is that the Women & Religion movement continues today—in regularly held gatherings in many districts and through the continental Women & Religion network. The first ever International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women is being planned for 2009, co-sponsored by UU Women and Religion and Southwest UU Women.

Even without the full support of the UUA, there have been ongoing efforts through Women & Religion to develop new curricula. *Unraveling the Gender Knot* was published in 2005 and *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: In Ancient Times* in 2007, thanks to support from the UU Women's Federation and the Fund for Unitarian Universalism.

As Rosemary Matson reminds us, the work of ending sexism is unfinished: "We do not want a piece of the pie. It is still a patriarchal pie. We want to change the recipe!"

LITANY OF RESTORATION

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, Singing the Living Tradition #576

The revolution launched by the Women & Religion Resolution has contributed to later efforts to end homophobia, racism, and discrimination against people with disabilities. We are coming more and more to understand the interconnectedness of all oppressions. The ongoing Women & Religion movement makes these connections and works to promote anti-oppressive attitudes, language, and behaviors.

We envision a future of restoration, like that described by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley in her Litany of Restoration.

RESPONSE

“Spirit of Life,” by Carolyn McDade

Singing the Living Tradition #123

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

- 1) We light this candle for women of the past and women who paved the way like Lucile Longview, Rosemary Matson, Leslie Westbrook, Shirley Ranck, Helen Popenoe, Carolyn McDade ...

You are invited to name others who led the way.

- 2) We light this candle for the present, for us, for our efforts to live in the ways of equality, for our struggles to bring about gender justice and the end of sexism.

You are invited to say your own names.

- 3) We light this candle for the future, for the generations to come, and for the influence we of today have on that future, by our words, our actions, and our visions.

You are invited to name younger people in your lives and congregations.

May these candles honoring women of the past, the present, and the future—light our way to a new world of gender justice. May we recommit ourselves to being the change we seek, to living now as if sexism and patriarchy were gone and equality of all peoples a reality.

CLOSING

The Women and Religion Resolution has literally turned the UU movement around. The words that were uttered 30 years ago have indeed set many things in motion—and the Unitarian Universalist movement will never be the same!

There's still plenty of work to do, however. Sexism is alive and hurting both women and men all around the world, and sometimes still in our congregations. May the words we utter today set in motion further changes that will bring healing and justice to our troubled world.

But for now, let's celebrate the changes we have already made and commit ourselves to continuing to “turn the world around.”

CLOSING SONG

“Turn the World Around,” *Singing the Journey*, #1074

CLOSING WORDS

by Lucile Longview

We celebrate the turn to a new consciousness. The first seeds of a reality based on nurturance and caring have been planted. We must not let them go unattended.

As we celebrate ... the Women & Religion Resolution, we must not relax as though our tasks were completed. We have barely begun. We must continually be aware of the sexism in the epoch that is dying and also contribute every ounce of energy available and every insight from our feminist consciousness to the new day that is being born.

GOING FORTH

“To the Four Directions,” by Joan Goodwin (1926-2006), *Singing the Living Tradition* #446

Coming Out of Exile

© 1981 Surtsey Publishing Words & Music by Carolyn McDade

we are comin' out of exile, comin' home
we are comin' out of exile, comin' home
we are comin' out of exile, comin' out of exile
we are comin' out of exile, comin' home

out of wilderness we come, comin' home...

sister, come and take my hand, comin' home...

all together we come, comin' home...

Coming Home

© 1980 Surtsey Publishing Words & Music by Carolyn McDade

Bearing words born new unto each day
Speaking bold where only silence lay
As we dare to rise and lead the way
 We're coming home, we're coming home

As the full moon waxes Into wane
Changing, yielding ail that she did gain
As from death she dares be born again
 We're coming home, we're coming home

To reclaim the thinking of our minds
Leaving shackles lying far behind
Bearing hope for every soul confined
 We're coming home, we're coming home

To create a world of toy and peace
Where the power of justice does release
Love abounding, wars forever cease
 We're coming home, we're coming home

Women and Religion
1977 Business Resolution
Unitarian Universalist Association

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to “affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships”; and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to encourage the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences, to make every effort to: (a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Unitarian Universalist Association to: (a) join with those who are encouraging others in the society to examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and (b) to send a representative and resource materials to associations appropriate to furthering the above goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the President of the UUA to report annually on progress in implementing this resolution.

Coming Home

Chorus:

Words and Music by Carolyn McDade

We're com-ing home to the spi-rit in our soul -

We're com-ing home and the heal-ing makes us whole

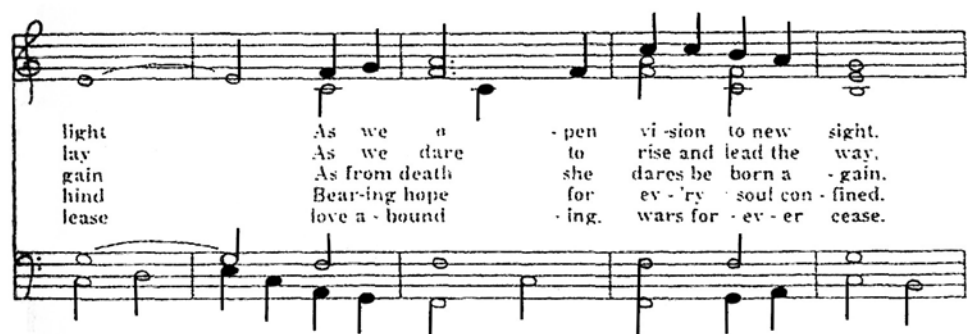
Like ri - vers run-ning to the sea - we're com-ing

Verse:

home. we're com - ing home. As the day is born
Bearing words full moon the
As the full moon the
To re - claim the a
To cre - ate a



wo - ven in - to night As the dark - ness lives with-in the
 new un - to each day, Speak-ing bold where on - ly si - lence
 wax - es in - to wane, Chang-ing, yield - ing all that she did
 think-ing of our minds Leav-ing shack - les ly - ing far be-
 world of joy and peace where the power of jus-tice does re-



light As we a - - pen vi - sion to new sight.
 lay As we dare to rise and lead the way,
 gain As from death she dares be born a - gain,
 hind Bear-ing hope for ev - 'ry soul con - fined.
 lease love a - bound - ing. wars for - ev - er cease.



We're com - ing home, we're com - ing home.



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