

**Call To Worship**  
**Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists**  
**August 31, 2008**

Panhandling is a hard subject to get a purchase on. The United States Census Bureau hasn't yet taken to toting up the panhandling population of the country. The Gallup Poll hasn't gotten around to giving us a sliced and diced rendition of how panhandlers are likely to vote in the next election. We can see the shadow of this elusive demographic, though, in the spate of aggressive laws being passed to banish them or at least contain their activities. Cities all across the country are doing it. They undoubtedly are reacting to the growing presence of people doing what James Finn Garner, the author of Politically Correct Bedtime Stories, calls "supporting themselves outside the reigning capitalist paradigm."

Here in Williamsburg, though, panhandlers are as rare as hens' teeth. No question about it -- we have a shortage of panhandlers. [pause for laugh] A person venturing out to lighten his load of spare change in our fair city is likely to return home with his pockets disappointingly full.

Now, would anyone in his right mind suggest we need to do something about this? Is there some great benefit on which we are missing out by not having our streets dotted with people begging for money? Are you at least willing to suspend disbelief for an hour while we live in these unlikely-sounding questions? If so, then come, let us worship together.

Please stand as you are able now and join in singing our opening hymn, #99, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."