

Home Worship for May 24, 2020

The following material is offered for those who want to create a common at home service this Sunday with your families, a few friends, or individually. We wish you all good health as we continue to navigate this period of separation together.

The Worship Committee

CENTERING THOUGHT: “In Faith” by Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe.

This is a congregation that gathers in faith. Not faith in one religion or one god or any one way. We gather in faith of the power of diversity, the power of love, and the hope of a world transformed by our care. We gather in faith in ourselves and those around us. Not a faith that requires perfection or rightness in one another. Rather, a faith that in our shared imperfection we may learn to stumble and fall together. Faith that we will help one another to rise and to try again and again. We are Unitarian Universalists.

CHALICE LIGHTING: “Afraid of the Dark” by Andrew Pakula.

We join now with Unitarian Universalists throughout the world to light our chalice, the symbol of our faith. The flame reminds us that we are part of something much greater than ourselves.

*In sightless night, terrors draw near
Nameless fears of talon and tooth
Hopelessness yawns before us—an abyss
Alone and unknown in the gloom, longing for the dawn
O sacred flame blaze forth—wisdom brought to life
Guide us—
With the light of hope
The warmth of love
The beacon of purpose and meaning
Because we are all afraid of the dark
Let there be light*

MEDITATION: “Eternal Mystery” by Carol Meyer (Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection)

We recommend that you follow our worship practice of reading the meditation aloud, then follow it with silence for contemplation, meditation or prayer according to your own spiritual practice.

May we open ourselves ever more fully to that Eternal Mystery which lures us onward toward life and creativity.

May we find the courage to live our faith, to speak our truth, and to strive together for a world where freedom abounds and justice truly does roll down like water.

May we know the fullness of love without fear, and the serenity of peace without turmoil.

May we hold one another in the deep and tender places with compassion, and may we grace one another by sharing our own vulnerabilities, being ever mindful of the divinity within that makes soulmates of us all.

Amen and Blessed Be.

STEWARDSHIP OF OUR CHURCH:

Even though we cannot meet together at our church building during this time, our expenses are ongoing. Please remember to continue to honor your pledges, and if you are able to donate as you would have to the offering plate and First Sunday Lunch basket.

Thank you to all who have continued their giving and pledging by sending checks through the mail or via their bank. Another way to donate is to click on [give now](#) which takes you to the church's website Giving page where you can click on DONATE. You can donate by credit or debit card and do a one-time or recurring payment. (Although the church uses PayPal, you don't have to be a member of PayPal to donate.)

COMMUNITY—Joys and Sorrows. “Circle of Care” by Lisa Bovee-Kemper (adapted).

Lisa Bovee-Kemper reminds us that “In religious community, we share our joys and our triumphs, our sorrows and our broken places. In this circle of care, we make space for the complexity of life, the myriad experiences that bless and break our hearts. The truth of human experience dictates that on any given day, we each come to the table with hearts in different places.” It is especially so during this period of isolation from one another.

We set aside this time then, to share the joys and sorrows of the members of our church family and to lift each of them up in our thoughts. We send:

- Shared joy to those who are celebrating good news or joyous events in their lives to wish them well.
- Comfort to those who are struggling with loneliness during this time of isolation from friends and family, and those who are mourning the loss of a loved one.
- Strength, courage and restoration of health to those who are ill.

If you are able to please drop a stone for each of these in a bowl of water and let the ripples remind you that what affects one of us affects us all.

SERMON/HOMILY: “Bearing Witness” by Heidi Cottam (Source: UUA WorshipWeb)

Here’s a quiz about time travel posed by a friend of mine: Suppose you had a time machine but it only went back in time to specific events. If you used the time machine, you could only be a witness; you could not influence the events in any way and no one would be aware of your presence.

Would you use it?

Would you use the time machine if it would return you to a Cape Cod whale hunt, where you would observe – but could not interrupt – the harpooning and slow death of a whale? Could you tolerate that?

Would you watch Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps in the Second Punic War, which resulted in the tortuous death of war elephants? Or Julius Caesar’s death by betrayal?

It’s an interesting proposition: bearing witness to significant but uncomfortable moments in world history. Changing nothing, but seeing the truth of it play out.

Given the opportunity, do you think you would take advantage of this imaginary time machine?

Bearing witness is an act of compassion, of empathy, of solidarity, and of justice. Bearing witness is holy. Humanity is at its most powerful and transformative when we experience the truth of one another.

Some of you may be thinking to yourselves that you don’t need to see pain up close and personal to feel empathetic or to understand injustice. None of us here needs to observe from the edges of a slave auction to know how terrifying and depraved those auctions were. We don’t need to spend a day at any of the 40,000 extermination and concentration camps from World War II to know what happened in them is unspeakably horrific.

Except it isn’t just about knowing that these things were wrong: it’s about understanding, in our bones, what it means that the history of genocide is now built into every Jewish family’s DNA, and slavery into every African-American’s. It’s about facing our sins against humanity. It’s knowing the crimes of which are capable.

Every day, news headlines are filled with evidence that we, as a country, have failed to fulfill the ideals of “liberty and justice for all.” We are a nation founded on the genocide of indigenous people and the enslavement of men, women, and children of Africa.

In the two extreme examples I’ve mentioned already -- American slavery and the Holocaust -- there have been two vastly different outcomes. After the Second World War, Germany, as a country, faced what it had done. They

looked at it squarely, without excuses or failed reasoning, and began to rebuild their country on the foundational premise that they could never let it happen again. In fact, this is where the simple phrase "Never forget" came from: it began as an admonishment to themselves to keep them from returning to path of their vilest acts.

Germany bore witness.

America has not yet faced our history of slavery, nor the malicious colonization and oppression of the Indigenous peoples. We did not come out of that time and acknowledge what we'd done. Instead, we made excuses or tried to compromise with racism in other ways; some looked away in apathy; others have looked away in discomfort. We cannot yet make it right because we do not yet bear witness to our truth.

Every week, Black Americans are murdered because we haven't been able to reconcile our past and rebuild from it.

Children are being held in cages in camps because we have not yet borne witness to our own concentration camps of WWII. We still want to call them internment camps and justify that they weren't the death camps of Auschwitz or Dachau.

This Memorial Day many Americans will celebrate a land proclaiming to be free; we'll hear talk of liberty and justice for all and our unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We'll remember the brave men and women who fought for those ideals. But will we take time to remember those to whom these rights are not extended equally, or will we rest comfortably in our own privilege?

It is easy to look away right now. This is hard and uncomfortable and terrifying. Bearing witness to what is happening around us now is hard. It is also easy to feel hopeless. We are on a path bloodied with our past violence and walking towards war and genocide.

I implore you today, do not turn away and do not lose hope. Face what we are doing and have done. Find hope that there are more and more voices rising against our sins. And if you cannot find hope, then become it. Ready your lives to be the sanctuary for others. Resolve today to become the change we wish to see in our own country and in the world. May it be so.

CLOSING: "Blessed By Our Connections" by Susan Karlson (adapted)

Go your way blessed by our connections to one another, to the spirit of life.
Walk lightly that you see the life that is below your feet.
Spread your arms as if you had wings and could dance through the air.
Feel the joy of the breath in your lungs and the fire in your heart.
Live to love and be a blessing on this earth.

Amen and Blessed Be