

Home Worship for July 5, 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 navigate our new circumstances together, and we look forward to the day when we can greet one another in person once again.

The Worship Committee

CENTERING THOUGHT: “Let There Be Light” by Rev Andrew Pakula

Let there be light
The light of joy, the light of happiness, and the light of contentment
May it illuminate our paths and fill our lives with peace

And let there be dark
For it is from our dark places that we are brought forward
Tried and tested
And impelled toward growth
It is in these places that we realize compassion and learn to love

And there was day and there was night.
And there was joy and there was sorrow.
And it was good.

CHALICE LIGHTING: “For the Memory That Heals and Holds from the Soul Matters Collection.

At the beginning of our services we join Unitarian Universalists throughout the world to light our chalice, the symbol of our faith. Its flame reminds us that we are part of something much greater than ourselves.

We light this chalice in honor of the memories that hold and heal us.
For stories we tell of those whose heroism inspires our own.
For the pictures of loved ones who have passed
 in whose images we see our better selves.
For the work of remembering that we stand on the shoulders of others
 who paved the path on which we walk
 and blessed us with advantages we didn't earn all on our own.
May these memories of those who came before
 inspire us to pass on a better world to those who will come after us.
May their light guide our way.

MEDITATION: “Each Breath” by Rev. Leaf Seligman

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.

We pause in the stillness to rest for a moment, to quiet ourselves so that we can feel what stirs within us. Each breath draws us closer to the pulse of life and with each exhalation we make room for something new. May we find in this gathering the comfort of those who care. May we encounter patience along our growing edges and compassion in our most tender spots. Here may we find the inspiration and encouragement we need to face our challenges and nurture ourselves. And in the presence of suffering across the globe may we redouble our efforts to practice kindness where we are, with the hope that the light of our actions travels like the light of faraway stars. May our gestures of compassion and generosity seed possibility. May we travel humbly with one another, choosing reconciliation over resentment as we try to live right-sized. When life presses in and shifts us off balance, when pain assails us, when frustration mounts, may the rhythm of our breath steady us and bring us back to a place of gratitude.

STEWARDSHIP OF OUR CHURCH:

Heather Christensen reminds us that “every congregation depends on each of its members by your commitment of time, energy and resources” to help make the Unitarian Universalist vision of a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy a reality.

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.

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

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 for the private concerns of our members and friends. Together in silence we send wishes of joy, comfort, and courage to those celebrating joyful events, or struggling with loneliness, loss or illness.

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 Heide Cottam

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.

For many, the 4th of July is a celebration in, at best, irony and, at worst, of willful ignorance.

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 neither 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 have not yet borne 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 bore 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.

(optional, on the fourth of July): On the Fourth of July, most Americans will light up the sky in celebration of 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.

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.

Pray with me now.

God of our Hearts, Spirit of Life,

We humble ourselves before Love. We take to our knees in protest of the violent acts against humanity and we commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

We face ourselves as individuals and as a people. We acknowledge our complicity in racism, xenophobia, and the brokenness which allows them to flourish in these lands. We see the harm we are inflicting on others and the new cycles of brokenness we cause. We commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

We do not turn away from our victims of mass incarceration, police brutality, depraved immigration policies, oppression of human rights and freedom. We hold the entirety of the experience – their suffering and our responsibility – and we commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

We see each other's tears and know we play a part. We commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

We humble ourselves to each other, knowing we cannot change the past but we can build a different future. We commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

God of our Hearts, Spirit of Life, we commit ourselves to the work of abundant love and healing.

Amen.

CLOSING: “We Are One” by Amy Zucker Morganstern

Never has it been more true than now:
We extinguish this flame,
But the sparks within us remain alight.
From each of us, in our supposed solitude,
The signals buzz hum, sparkling through space one to another,
Connecting us invisibly
But palpably.

We are one.
And from every window,
Our light shines.

Amen and Blessed Be