

**Order of Worship**  
**Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**January 13, 2019**

**Thought for Contemplation:** "When you eventually see through the veils to how things really are, you will keep saying again and again, 'This is certainly not like we thought it was!' -Rumi

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHALICE LIGHTING

Chalice of warmth,  
Soften what is cold within

Chalice of flame  
Light up what is dark within

Chalice of joy  
Lift our spirits and open our hearts.

Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come into warmth  
From the cold

Come into community  
From loneliness

Come into moments of song and of silence  
From a cacophony of noises

Come into this place  
To remember yourself,  
To renew your strength  
To find your own song  
To hear your own voice  
To join with others in the journey

That you may be  
strengthened and renewed  
to bless and heal our precious world.

Anita Farber-Robertson

HYMN *Though I May Speak With Bravest Fire* #34

CHILDREN'S TIME Bob Moseley

**Song** (seated) Go Now in Peace #413

(Children are invited to go now for a brief introduction to their program.)

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

JOYS AND SORROWS

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

READING: by Erik Wikstrom

Over and over again I find myself returning to the creation myth J.R.R. Tolkien wrote for the *Silmarillion*. In it--and this is the short version--Illuvatar, the One, sends out a chord which the Ainur (think angels) turn into a harmonized melody. Again and again, as Melkor (Evil) introduces discord, Illuvatar sends out new chords which incorporate the discord, and on and on the Ainur sing.

At the end of all their singing, Illuvatar tells the Ainur to open their eyes, to see what their singing created. They behold the universe—their song made manifest. And then, of a sudden, all that they have seen vanishes from their sight. "Now go," says Illuvatar, "and make what you have seen."

OFFERING

READING: by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from *The Nobel Lecture, December, 1964*

Something should remind us once more that the great things in this universe are the things that we never see. You walk out at night and look up at the beautiful stars as they bedeck the heavens like swinging lanterns of eternity, and you think you can see all. Oh, no. You can never see the law of gravitation that holds them there.

When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force of which all of the great religions have been speaking as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.

ANTHEM

SERMON

### **Make What You Have Seen**

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

When my mother was newly married, she invited her parents over for dinner. It was one of those high excitement, high stress events. She really wanted them to come. She was the youngest of five children, the last to get married and leave home. She was very excited to have the opportunity to be the host in her own home, to her parents. To be seen as the grown up she believed she was, and accepted as such, was so important to this youngest who, as she told us many times was referred to as “the baby” long after she was already in school, as if she didn’t really have a name.

She made a lovely dinner, with a carefully planned menu, and apple pie for dessert. Home made apple pie. She was proud of herself.

Her parents came, and she and my Dad entertained them, and then steered them to the table where they enjoyed a lovely meal.

When everyone was ready to push back, she cleared the table, brought in the coffee, and went back to the kitchen for the apple pie. As she lifted the pie and put it on a pie platter, she tripped slightly, and the pie went flying off the platter and onto the floor. Smash!

I do not know for how many minutes she stood there looking at the smashed pie. I do not know if she started to cry. She might have.

But something clicked in her. She straightened herself up, went to the cupboard, got out a large bowl and a large spoon and bent back down. Quickly, very quickly, she took the spoon and scooped up the smashed pie, piling it into the bowl. Then, standing up, straightening her apron, and her face, she walked out in triumph to her waiting guests holding dessert out in front of her as she announced, Apple Brown Betty!

How many times have you had to look at your smashed pie, whatever it was in your life, and reframed it as Apple Brown Betty?

Maybe it wasn't a disaster that pushed you to the reframe. Maybe you have been part of an event for which a person shows up with the expectation of an agenda that you realize is different from what you intended, and you wonder how they could possibly have misunderstood? Maybe you thought you were going to be talking about budgets, and the new arrival wants to talk about vision. You keep trying to explain to them that vision is good, but this conversation is about budgets, to which he or she keeps responding with more vision, until something clicks in your mind and you realize that that person is right. A discussion about budgets is always a discussion about vision.

What was discord, becomes harmony.

*Dale, playing discord into harmony*

Ruth Wakefield decided one day to make chocolate cookies, only to discover when she was already mixing up the cookie dough, that she was out of bakers unsweetened chocolate, the kind you melt before adding to the dough mixture. So, as a last-ditch effort to save her cookies, she grabbed some regular chocolate bars and broke the chocolate into little pieces and mixed it into the dough. She expected

that the pieces would melt as the cookies baked, and she would have her chocolate cookies. Only they didn't. They stayed stuck in the dough as pieces of chocolate. And that is the story of how we came to have chocolate chip cookies, invented by accident by Ruth Wakefield, the owner of the Toll House Inn. <sup>1</sup>

What was experienced as an introduction of discord, became incorporated into a most harmonious cookie.

Spencer Silver was working at 3M laboratories. He was trying to make a stronger glue. What he came up with was useless glue- weaker, not stronger. With his glue you could pull the things you'd just glued on, off really easily without leaving a trace. Not good for gluing, at all. He threw it away in some storage bin. Several years later a colleague of his took the discarded glue and spread it on little pieces of paper to mark pages in his hymnal...Post-Its were born.<sup>2</sup>

Someone took what was Spencer Silver's disappointing trash and turned it into a treasure. Discord into harmony.

### *Dale, playing discord into harmony*

These are important examples to remember these days; we are living in a period when discord seems to be reaching an all-time high. We are living in a world of imagined absolutes. Things are right or wrong. People are good or bad. Ideas get categorized and put into camps- liberal/conservative, soft/hard, enemy/friend. But it isn't true. That is not the way the world works, not really. And it is certainly not the way the world works, when it is working at its best.

The world, at its best, is problem solving. Evolution is a problem solving mechanism. Mistakes get incorporated into the gene pool.

---

<sup>1</sup> Business Insider, *15 Life-Changing Inventions that Were Created by Mistake*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/these-10-inventions-were-made-by-mistake-2010-11>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

When a helpful genetic mistake is incorporated into the next creative iteration of the species, life is richer, the gene pool stronger, the diversity an enhancement. Discord is surely an inevitable part of life unfolding and interacting. But so is the harmonizing. The effort to take what has seemingly gone wrong and repurpose it for good, to find the hidden harmony in the noise, or its potential for harmony, is an entry into the transcendent.

This experience, and its ubiquitous possibility, is true in our physical world, and in our social world. When people present as polar-opposites, we can often find they have needs or desires in common, that can be harnessed and reconceived from discord into harmony. We do, as human beings, have more in common than we have different. I have also found this to be true in our mental world, the thoughts we have and the feelings those thoughts generate are capable of transformation.

Several years ago, I was driving down one of the two main streets in Swampscott. I was late and in a hurry. Traffic was backed up for blocks. The traffic light changed. Cars finally began to move. On the right in the parked cars lane, was a big green smelly garbage truck. It put on its blinker and wanted to get into the stream of traffic. The car in front of me stopped to let it in.

“Oh no!” I screamed in my head. “Not a garbage truck, a slow smelly garbage truck! What kind of an idiot are you? I continued in my head, “that would let in a slow, smelly garbage truck for us to drive behind, when we are all trying to get to work?”

And then another voice in my head. I'd say the voice of the angels, or the Ainur, who said softly, “A compassionate person, Anita. That's who. A compassionate person who knows that even the garbage

truck driver is a person, a person who needs to get somewhere, a person who is doing their job.”

“Oh.” I said. I knew it was true. And my whole day was transformed.

### *Dale playing discord into harmony*

As Melkor introduces discord, Illuvinaar sends out the new chords which incorporates the discord, and on and on the Ainur sing.<sup>3</sup>

Is that not what we want? To sing of a harmony that is larger than the discord, that holds it all together?

Something should remind us once more that the great things in this universe are the things that we never see.

When I speak of *love*, (King said)... I am speaking of that force of which all of the great religions have been speaking as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.<sup>4</sup>

Is not love, the all-encompassing harmony that in these days of heightened discord we can bring to the temptation to ratchet the noise up one more notch, that can help us resist the desire to jump into the fray and throw in our own discordant contribution. Without love, and attention, we too can be the source of the discord.

Or, we can be the Ainur, the angels who keep scooping up the discordant notes and singing them into harmonies. We can do that. And when we have done it often enough, when we have sung over and over again, discords into harmonies, sung for ourselves such an

---

<sup>3</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *Silmarillion*

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1964

inspiring vision of the world, we can begin the work that Illuvatar, and King have shown us.

“Go now, and make what you have seen.”<sup>5</sup>

A little each day...a little more harmonious.

May it be so. With us, each day. Amen and blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* #126

BENEDICTION

CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated for the closing music)

---

<sup>5</sup>J.R.R. Tolkien, *Silmarillion*