

Worship
March 10, 2019

Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church

Thought for Contemplation: *"If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."* Wayne Dyer

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introit

Time Change Song

McIntyre/Hughes

CHALICE LIGHTING Leo Robinson, Reader; Ethan Scott, Chalice lighter

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 bless and be blessed
as we share in this journey.

Anita Farber-Robertson

HYMN *Gather the Spirit* #347

CHILDREN'S TIME Rev. Anita

Have you ever heard about rules that tell you who you can like and who you can't like? Who you can love and who can't love? Seems pretty silly.

What if there was a rule that short people couldn't like tall people? Couldn't play with them in the playground, and when they grew up, if they loved each other, they couldn't get married?

Doesn't make much sense does it, since people fall in love all of the time, often with people who their friends or family or country don't really like.

It has been an issue for a long time.

And countries try to make rules about it. Other countries, and ours too.

We used to have laws in this country a long time ago, what said white people and black people couldn't fall in love, or if they did, they were not allowed to get married. That seems pretty ridiculous now. In those days the way some people looked at things, it was as if different colored people were also somehow different on the inside, not all just people. But as more

people got to know people of different colors, they often began to like each other, and some loved each other, and wanted to get married.

When we stopped looking at it as being about colors, and looked at it as being about love, it looked very different. People have a right to love whomever they want. When we understood it as a right, it looked very different. When we noticed the love, instead of the color, the laws got changed.

But we still had laws that said men couldn't marry men and women couldn't marry women. The way people looked at things, marriage was supposed to be between two people who were different. And men are like men and women are like women, so they thought they couldn't get married.

But when we stopped looking at it as being about gender, about men and women, and looked at it as being about love, it looked very different. We do see that people have a right to love whomever they want. When we understood it as a right, it looked very different. When we noticed the love, instead of the gender, the laws got changed.

So next time you start thinking that someone can or can't do something because of their color or where they are from, or what kind of parents they have, or where they live, or whatever else it might be, try looking at it differently- asking if they want to do it, and if they know how or can learn. When we help people follow the things that they love, the possibilities are amazing- for them and for us.

Song (seated) Go Now in Peace #413

(Children are invited to go now to their program)

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

JOYS AND SORROWS

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

READING: *If There is to Be Peace* by Lao-Tse reader: Beth Miller 11:00 am

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.”

ANTHEM *Hands across the Aisle*

READING *Kindness* by Naomi Shihab Nye

reader: Tim Vogel 9:00 am

Before you know what kindness really is

you must lose things,

feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.

You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

From *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems*. 1995 by Naomi Shihab Nye.

OFFERING

SERMON **Thought for Contemplation:** *“If you change the way you look at things,
the things you look at change.”* Wayne Dyer

Justice: The Love and Kindness Connection

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the award for the best grown corn. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about

how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors. “How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?” the reporter asked.

“Why sir,” said the farmer, “Didn’t you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn.”^[1]

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”^[2]

Ann Marie Murphey takes comfort and wisdom from the farmer’s story. She notes:

So, it is with our lives... Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.^[3]

Lao-tse says something that on the surface may sound different...but I hear it as a different spin on the same essential truth:

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.”

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”^[4]

What Lao-tse and the farmer understand, is that we are individuals with choices, inextricably embedded in a complex system of life. They are naming the connection between the first and last principles of our faith: the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the interdependent web of existence, of which we are a part. When we understand that truth, that essential bedrock truth, really understand it, deeply, as a core of our faith and our life, we look at things differently.

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”^[5]

And we are changing the way we look at things all the time, if we are aware and awake, and engaged. And then, what we look at changes too.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.^[6]

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”^[7]

Yes, the first and last principle, recognizing that our individual experiences and that of others, are all tied together in one inter-related system called “life on this planet.” Such an important foundation. But once we engage and accept those two, we are called deeper still. We are called by our second principle to affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations. The ancient wisdom and the poets wisely tell us that often the place we begin to create justice, equity and peace in the world, is by cultivating them in ourselves.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.

You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.^[8]

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”^[9]

Lao-Tse says:

If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the heart.

The prophet Micah says that what is required of you is to:

Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.^(Micah 6:8)

And the poet says:

It is only kindness that makes sense anymore,

...and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread^[10]

They are telling us, that when there is a change of the heart, there is change in the world.

And so it is, that people who so deeply want to heal the world, have always gathered together, as we have gathered together, in faith communities, to know the deeper truths of the human soul, of sorrow and hurt, of longing and healing. We come seeking the peace in the heart that will bring peace to the world; we seek a kindness to our inner being, that will bring a healing kindness to our world, a strong kindness, a wise kindness, a kindness that has known sorrow and seen devastation and loved the world right through it. A kindness that compels us to work for peace, for justice, for a fair and healthy planet.

Somewhere, inside of ourselves, we know that not only do we want to experience those things out in the world, we need and long to *be* the things of which we dream, inside, not just “fixing” the outside world out there. The intersectionality of life, its health and its injuries, and therefore, its opportunities and challenges, means that we can pick up the work anywhere and start. It is all good and it is all essential, because it is all interconnected. And we know it isn’t easy.

This year's Common Read for the Unitarian Universalist Association's member congregations, that means us, A2U2 is *Justice on Earth, People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class and the Environment*. It is a wonderful collection of essays by Unitarian Universalists working for justice in a variety of settings, revealing many ways in which a congregation can effectively and mindfully engage in justice making, ways that understand the connections between race and class and environment, and the connections between body, mind and spirit. The ideas and the projects described, are incredibly, and delightfully congruent with the things you said you wanted for us, in our house meetings.

For those of you who have read all or part of this book already, I encourage you to join us next week at 12:30 to discuss the book and the opportunities and possibilities it suggests to us as we move forward, working together. If you haven't read it yet, you might want to start, or come, listen and get your interest piqued, your curiosity awakened. After all,

"If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."^[11]

Dear ones we have gathered here, in this community, to transform lives through the power of love, the lives of others, and our own. We are in a unique moment in the story of this congregation. And so, I wonder, in this time of transition, reflection, and introspection, in what ways might we change the way we look at things? How might we change the way we have always seen the world, this place, and ourselves, to let in what was hidden, empowering us to see what is yet to be seen, and to love what is yet to be loved?

Amen, and blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *Standing on the Side of Love* #1014

BENEDICTION

CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated for the closing music)

^[1] AnnMarie Murphey, posted on Oregon State University <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/engage/?tag=aaron-avner>

^[2] Wayne Dyer

^[3] AnnMarie Murphey, posted on Oregon State University <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/engage/?tag=aaron-avner>

^[4] Ibid

^[5] Ibid

^[6] Naomi Shihab Nye, *Kindness*

^[7] Ibid

^[8] Ibid

^[9] Op cit

^[10] Ibid

^[11] Ibid