

Order of Worship
Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church
March 24, 2019

Thought for Contemplation: “Surprise yourself every day.” Anna Quindlen

INGATHERING CHIMES
WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
CHALICE LIGHTING Miles Goodwin

Chalice of light
 Brighten our days
Chalice of warmth
 Open our hearts
Chalice of memory
 Renew our hope
Chalice of vision
 Guide us in love this day.

-Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP Mark DeWolf

I'd like to ask you now to reach inside yourself and touch that special place in your heart where love blooms and grows. Know that it is love which brought you here...and love which keeps you alive. Know that you are not alone, that the love which blooms inside you is shared by the sisters and brothers who surround you, who, like you, have known not only loss, not only fear, but also the joy of saying “Yes” to the beauty of life....

Welcome, this first Sunday in spring, as we say “yes” to the beauty of life.

HYMN *Enter, Rejoice, and Come In* #361

CHILDREN'S TIME *Bob Moseley*
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: *The World I Live in* by Mary Oliver reader: Barbara Murray 11:00 am

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with *Maybe*?

You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.

OFFERING

HOMILY

Maybe

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that

hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Believable?

With Mary Oliver I say:

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with *Maybe*?¹

Believable?

Maybe.

I have found that if I restrict myself to the possible, and the believable, my imagination hunkers down and my capacity for creative problem solving, and inspirational envisioning disconnects from its source, deflating.

There is a reason why one of the first rules of brainstorming, is that it is forbidden to criticize or critique any idea, no matter how weird, wild or implausible it may seem. Every idea, sedate or outlandish, gets listed with equal footing. And when we are all finished spinning fantasies together with practicalities, magic happens, and something new, and different and compelling emerges.

¹ Mary Oliver *the World I Live In*

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with *Maybe*?²

Nothing.

...about 175 years ago in a large stone cathedral, on a Saturday afternoon, the sexton was doing the cleaning and arranging that was necessary to be ready for Sunday morning worship. Doing his last check high up in the choir and organ loft, he heard footsteps. Heavy footsteps, coming up the stone stairway. He was startled.

He turned to see a man in slightly tattered traveling clothes coming toward him.

“Excuse me, sir,” the stranger began. “I have come quite a distance to see the great organ in this cathedral. Would you mind opening the console so that I might get a closer look at it?”

The sexton refused at first, but the stranger seemed so eager and insistent that eventually he relented.

‘May I sit on the bench?’

The sexton told him that was absolutely out of the question.

“What if the organist came in and saw you sitting there? I’d probably lose my job!”

² Mary Oliver *the World I Live In*

The stranger was gentle, but persistent, and the sexton gave in.

“But only for a moment!” he added.

He noticed right away how comfortable the stranger looked sitting on that organ bench. He seemed right at home, so he was not that surprised when the man asked him if he could please be allowed to play the organ.

“No! Definitely not!! No one is allowed to play the organ except the cathedral organist.”

The stranger’s face fell. His deep disappointment was obvious. He reminded the sexton of how far he had traveled and assured the poor fellow that no damage would be done. Finally, the sexton took heart and relented. He told the stranger he could play the instrument, but only a few notes, and then he would absolutely have to leave.

Overjoyed, the stranger pulled out some stops and began to play. Suddenly the cathedral was filled with the most beautiful music the sexton had ever heard in all of his years in that place. The music seemed to transport him.

In what seemed like all too short a time the dowdy stranger stopped playing, slid off the organ bench, and started down the stairway.

“Wait!” cried the sexton. “That was the most beautiful music I have ever heard. Who are you?”

The stranger turned for just a moment as he said,
“Mendelssohn.”

The disheveled dowdy stranger was Felix Mendelsohn, one of the greatest organists and composers of the nineteenth century.³

—
You wouldn’t believe what once or
twice I have seen. I’ll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.⁴

If this sexton had not been willing to take a risk, going out of his comfort zone, and even out of his acceptable practice, he never would have gotten to have the experience of being totally transported by the music of Felix Mendelsohn. And Felix Mendelsohn would never had had the chance to play that great cathedral organ.

They need not be literal angels in your head, but if you carry within yourself the real possibility of the unimaginable happening, sometimes you can see it, see the inkling of it, and even let it in.

There is something called the Chinese bamboo tree. The Chinese bamboo tree takes five years to grow. For the first five years, you have to tend it, water it, protect it, and you cannot see it. It is under the

³ James Hewitt, *Illustrations Unlimited*

⁴ Mary Oliver, *The World I Live In*

ground. Nothing is happening that is visible. And then, in the fifth year, it breaks through the surface, and astonishingly, in five weeks, grows 90 feet tall! Ninety feet, in five weeks. To anyone who comes by and watches you when you are watering and tending to it for those first five years, it looks like you are wasting your time, watering something that shows no progress. They might laugh at you. Make jokes. Ridicule you for tending to that flat piece of earth where nothing is happening. But sometimes in life it takes that long to nurture the amazing thing that is secretly preparing itself to emerge with grace and strength and beauty. Ninety feet of growth in five weeks! Amazing.⁵

You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.

On this day, in these times, my friends, I wish you angels in your head; angels in your head that will permit you to see what is aching to be seen, to dream what is yearning to be dreamed, and to bring into being what just might possibly actually come to pass. Maybe.

Amen and blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *We Are Going* #1020
BENEDICTION
CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated for the closing music)

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