

**Worship**  
**September 8, 2019**

**Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church, Portland Maine**

**Thought for Contemplation:** *Attention is the beginning of devotion* -Mary Oliver

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHALICE LIGHTING.

We light this chalice  
As we gather again  
Calling us to our highest values  
Inviting us to the widest welcome.

Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP – *I Wake Close to Morning* by Mary Oliver

Why do people keep asking to see  
God's identity papers  
when the darkness opening into morning  
is more than enough?  
Certainly any god might turn away in disgust.  
Think of Sheba approaching  
the kingdom of Solomon.  
Do you think she had to ask,  
"Is this the place?" –Mary Oliver, *Felicity*

Welcome, to where neither you nor God need identity papers.  
Welcome, enter, rejoice and come in.

HYMN *Welcome Rejoice and Come In*

#361



Some days misery  
no longer loves company;  
It puts itself out of its.  
There's rest for the weary.  
There's turning back.  
There are guarantees.  
I can be serious.  
I can mean that.  
You can quite  
put your finger on it.

**Hymn# 308** *Blessings of the Earth and Sky (verse 1)*

***Sharing of our Waters of Blessings and Losses***

**Theme: WONDER**

**Reading:** *That Which Holds All* by Nancy Shaffer reader: Barbara Murray 11:00 am

Because she wanted everyone to feel included  
in her prayer,  
she said right at the beginning  
several names for the Holy:  
*Spirit*, she said, *Holy One*, *Mystery*, *God*

But then thinking these weren't enough ways of addressing  
that which cannot fully be addressed, she added  
particularities, saying, *Spirit of Life*, *Spirit of Love*,  
*Ancient Holy One*, *Mystery We Will Not Ever Fully Know*,  
*Gracious God*, and also *Spirit of this Earth*,  
*God of Sarah*, *Gaia*, *Thou*

And then, tongue loosened, she fell to naming  
superlatives as well: *Most Creative One*,

*Greatest Source, Closest Hope* –  
even though superlatives for the Sacred seemed to her  
probably redundant, but then she couldn't stop:

*One who Made the Stars*, she said, although she knew  
technically a number of those present didn't believe  
the stars had been made by anyone or thing  
but just luckily happened.

*One Who Is an Entire Ocean of Compassion*,  
she said, and no one laughed.  
*That Which Has Been Present Since Before the Beginning*,  
she said, and the room was silent.

Then, although she hadn't imagined it this way,  
others began to offer names:

*Peace*, said one.

*One My Mother Knew*, said another.

*Ancestor*, said a third.

*Wind*.

*Rain*.

*Breath*, said one near the back.

*Refuge*.

*That Which Holds All*.

A child said, *Water*.

Someone said, *Kuan Yin*.

Then: *Womb*.

*Witness*.

*Great Kindness*.

*Great Eagle*.

*Eternal Stillness*.

And then, there wasn't any need to say the things  
she'd thought would be important to say,

and everyone sat hushed, until someone said  
*Amen.*

**Hymn# 308** *Blessings of the Earth and Sky (verse 2)*

***Sharing of Our Waters of Wonder***

**Theme: PROMISE**

**Introduction:** Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a 19th century African American woman, born of free parents in the slave state of Maryland, was a member of the Unitarian Church in Philadelphia. She was a writer, lecturer, and abolitionist, who worked on the underground railroad before the Civil War and continued to work after the Civil War for racial justice. She was also an advocate of women's rights and was a member of the American Woman Suffrage Association. The writings of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper were often focused on themes of racial justice, equality, and freedom.

**Reading:** *Songs for the People* by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper      reader: Carol Jenkins 9:00 am

Let me make the songs for the people,  
Songs for the old and young;  
Songs to stir like a battle-cry  
Wherever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabers,  
For carnage nor for strife;  
But songs to thrill the hearts of (all)...  
With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the weary,  
Amid life's fever and fret,  
Till hearts shall relax their tension,  
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,  
Before their footsteps stray,  
Sweet anthems of love and duty,  
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,  
When shadows dim their sight;  
Of the bright and restful mansions,  
Where there shall be no night.

Our world, so worn and weary,  
Needs music, pure and strong,  
To hush the jangle and discords  
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,  
Till war and crime shall cease;  
And the hearts of (all)... grown tender  
Girdle the world with peace.

**Hymn# 308** *Blessings of the Earth and Sky (verse 3)*

***Sharing of Our Waters of Promise***

**REFLECTION**

The Rev Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

This summer has been difficult for some of us- presented challenges that were not on our radar screens- unexpected illnesses diagnosed, surgeries which made summer a time of healing rather than of play, losses of friends, of family and of pets-some already gone, others on the verge on leaving, and maybe other losses too.

With the uncertain economy, there may be a loss of economic security. With the mass shootings that are ravaging our country, our experience of horror may be coupled with feelings of vulnerability, rage, frustration or helplessness. The assault on immigrants and asylum seekers leaves some of us feeling like we no longer know or belong in our own country.

I know. I have those experiences, those losses too.

I resonate with Frances Ellen Watkins Harper who wrote 150 years ago:

Our world, so worn and weary,<sup>1</sup>  
Needs music, pure and strong,  
To hush the jangle and discords  
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

I resonate with her sorrow at the world so worn and weary, but I am not in despair, for she will not allow it. She soldiers on, and she does it with both grit and grace. She looks the world in the face, sees it realistically for what it is, and offers the balm of music and the faith of promise to keep on keeping on.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,<sup>2</sup>  
Till war and crime shall cease;  
And the hearts of (all).... grown tender  
Girdle the world with peace.

She loves the world, embraces it. How could I dare to be despairing with a woman and a faith like that, my faith, calling and

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Songs for the People

<sup>2</sup> Op cit

leading me on? Sometimes I can stand on her shoulders and see the promise she sees, and my heart knows the love that she knows. Maybe it happens for you.

And so, we are reminded, in the midst of our sorrows and our losses, to notice the blessings. They are no less than they ever were there, spread before us, if we will have them.

*Blessings*<sup>3</sup>

occur.

Some days I find myself  
putting my foot in  
the same stream twice;  
leading a horse to water  
and making him drink.

I have a clue.

I can see the forest for the trees.

All around me people  
are making silk purses  
out of sows' ears,  
Getting blood from turnips,  
building Rome in a day.

And they are, we are. Every day. Count them, all the ways people really are making silk purses out of sow's ears or building Rome in a day.

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<sup>3</sup> Ronal Wallace, *Blessings*

There was a woman interviewed on NPR this week.<sup>4</sup> Kathryn Holston is a PhD student in Economics. She goes to work dressed for business, in a skirt. A woman a few years ahead of her in the program told her that she would eventually have to get pant suits. Puzzled, she asked why. Apparently, there is an annual convention for economists that also functions as a matchmaking event for newly graduated PhDs in Economics. All during the convention, employment interviews are held- *in hotel rooms*. The interviewee, consequently, usually needs to sit on the bed during the interview. Thus, the more protective pant suit. This PhD candidate was horrified. She did some research and discovered that in fact, it was true. That was how interviews were conducted. She wrote to the professional body sponsoring the annual event noting how inappropriate was this custom. And the professional body decided to change its practice. Beginning this year, no longer will interviews be conducted in hotel bedrooms. The young woman was amazed. She'd expected it to take years to make the change. She only hoped it would have happened by the time she was interviewing for positions three years hence. But it happened now, the year she shined the spotlight on it.

All around me people  
Are...

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<sup>4</sup> Kain Ryssdal and Sean McHenry, NPR Market Place, September 4, 2019

building Rome in a day.<sup>5</sup>

Blessings are everywhere. Sometimes they just fall in our laps, and sometimes we need to reach up and pluck them off the tree in front of us.

And how do we know them? Recognize them? Receive them? It feels like magic. It makes no sense. That the more we let go and let be, the more we stand still, fully present, the more we receive. Hush. Hush. It is there, in the quiet, the wonder of all and the humble awe that enfolds us.

*One My Mother Knew*, said another.<sup>6</sup>

*Ancestor*, said a third.

*Wind*.

*Rain*.

*Breath*, said one near the back.

*Refuge*.

*That Which Holds All*.

A child said, *Water*.

Someone said, *Kuan Yin*.

Then: *Womb*.

*Witness*.

*Great Kindness*.

*Great Eagle*.

*Eternal Stillness*.

Wonder. Holy One, Spirit of Life, That which Holds All. What would you call it? Or do you need to call it anything. Meister Eckhart once said:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Shaffer, *That Which Holds All*

*If in your whole life the only prayer you ever said is Thank you,  
that would be sufficient.*

It doesn't need a name. Thank you is sufficient.

Blessed be. Welcome home. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *Spirit of Life* #123

BENEDICTION

CLOSING MUSIC