

Order of Worship

Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church

December 1 2019

Thought for Contemplation:

Every day is a god, and holiness holds forth in time. I worship each god, I praise each day splintered down, splintered down and wrapped in time like a husk, a husk of many colors spreading, at dawn fast over the mountains split. Annie Dillard

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION Terri Grover 11:00am

CHALICE LIGHTING reade:Annalise Capone-Sprague, Lighter: Miles Goodwin

Let this chalice be a light in the darkness

Let this chalice be a light of hope

Let this chalice lift our spirits and open our hearts. Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP *Keeping Watch* by Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz

In the morning,
When I began to awake,
It happened again-

That feeling
That You Beloved,
Had stood over me all night
Keeping watch,

That feeling
That as soon as I began to stir

You put Your lips on my forehead
And lit a Holy Lamp
Inside my heart.

HYMN *People look East* #226

CHILDREN'S TIME *God In Between* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Song (seated) Go Now in Peace #413 9:00am

(Children are invited to go now to their program)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION Lay Leader 9:00am

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

JOYS AND SORROWS

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

SHARING OUR JOURNEYS Connie Cross

OFFERING

READING: *Self Portrait* by David Whyte

It doesn't interest me if there is one God
or many gods.
I want to know if you belong or feel
abandoned.
If you know despair or can see it in others.
I want to know
if you are prepared to live in the world
with its harsh need
to change you. If you can look back
with firm eyes
saying this is where I stand. I want to know
if you know
how to melt into that fierce heat of living
falling toward
the center of your longing. I want to know
if you are willing
to live, day by day, with the consequence of love
and the bitter
unwanted passion of your sure defeat.

I have heard, in *that* fierce embrace, even
the gods speak of God.

ANTHEM
SERMON

Self Journeys The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

I love God. That is a truth about me. The God I love is probably not the God in whom you don't believe, but might be. There are so many Gods in which or whom we can disbelieve:

The God who is a big old white man with a long beard who lives in the sky. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you almost do.

The God who sneaks around watching everything you do, waiting to catch you doing something you ought not do, waiting to shame you or punish you. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you do, or almost do.

The God who micromanages the universe, who makes things happen to you or to others. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you do, or almost do.

The creator God who infuses everything that lives and grows with value and meaning. The loving God who cherishes. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you do, or almost do.

The God of love and healing who holds those who hurt, whose love is boundless, and acceptance unfailing. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you do, or almost do

The God of the natural world, that supports life, accepts its cycles and affirms that it is good. Maybe you don't believe in that God. But maybe someone you love does. Maybe there are moments when you do, or almost do.

And there are others- as many others are there are people in the world. So, when I tell you that I love God, you don't really know to what it is that I feel accountable, or grateful, what values it carries by which I try to shape my life, what sustenance I draw when I feel weary or afraid. You can only know it the way you can know it from any other person who tells you they know or love God, or that they don't know or don't care. You know it by how we live our lives, what values we embody, by whether we are kind or generous, compassionate or caring, relational or simply self-absorbed.

I do know that the kind of God in which we believe shapes the kind of person we are, as does whatever ultimate truth it is to which we have hitched our lives. If that God, that Ultimate is harsh, unforgiving, disapproving, it is unlikely that we will be happy or kind, compassionate

or forgiving. If our God, that Ultimate, is about love, about cherishing, forgiving, compassion, it is likely we will find it within ourselves to be that way, or aspire to it.

That is why I am so sustained and moved by the God Hafiz loves, the God who lovingly keeps watch.

In the morning,
When I began to awake,
It happened again-

That feeling
That You Beloved,
Had stood over me all night
Keeping watch,

That feeling
That as soon as I began to stir

You put Your lips on my forehead
And lit a Holy Lamp
Inside my heart.

and the God Annie Dillard loves, when she says,

"Every day is a god, and holiness holds forth in time. I worship each god, I praise each day splintered down, splintered down and wrapped in time like a husk, a husk of many colors spreading, at dawn fast over the mountains split.

"I wake in god. I wake in arms holding my quilt, holding me as best they can inside my quilt.

"Someone is kissing me – already I wake, I cry, ...I open my eyes...The god lifts from the water."¹

Our God matters, not because it is anyone's business or concern about how you frame the intimate Ultimate in your life, but because we become what we love, and what we become matters as Unitarian Universalists. We have values, and principles, and they matter.

There is an old saying in Unitarian Universalism- that we believe in Deeds not Creeds. If you look at our seven principles, you can see that it is still true. Our principles are not about our beliefs, but about our practices, the violations that trouble us are not about thoughts, but about behaviors that hurt.

And we didn't make this up. It came down to us through our biblical tradition, the one from which we still draw our values and our ethics. There is a reason why many Unitarians and Universalists have been so reluctant to separate ourselves from the traditions that gave us birth. They did more than give us birth. Through the prophetic tradition,

¹ Annie Dillard, [Holy the Firm](#)

they gave us humanism, our religious humanist passions and commitment.

It was the prophet Amos who thundered:

I hate, I despise your festivals,
And I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them:

...

Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
And righteousness like an everflowing stream.²

Deeds not creeds. Our prophetic tradition teaches that justice is what loving God looks like in public life, and righteousness is what loving God looks like in our private behaviors.

The prophet Isaiah cast a vision, an aspiration, God's aspiration for the reconciliation of all beings. We have come to call it the peaceable kingdom, inspiring poems, and songs, soul stirring art, and maybe you.

No more shall there be in it
An infant that lives but a few days,
Or an old person who does not live out a lifetime...
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit...

² Amos 5:21-22a, 23-24.

They shall not labor in vain, or bear children in calamity
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
The lion shall eat straw like the ox...
They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord. (Isaiah 65:20-25 selected)

We have entered Advent, the time of waiting and preparation, the time of discernment and reflection. Exactly what is it, in our deepest places, for which we are waiting, what is that thing that we want to have bloom and grow?

People have been having those yearnings and longings for as long as we have been gathering in communities of celebration and worship.

In this most sacred of times, let us be, in practice, the big tent of Unitarian Universalism, that opens wide, and welcomes in the Gods so many of us cherish, that kiss our foreheads in the morning, lighting holy lamps inside our hearts.

David Whyte says:

It doesn't interest me if there is one God
or many gods.
I want to know if you belong or feel
abandoned.

May these deep and sacred days be ones when each and every
one of us belongs, and no one is abandoned.

Amen and Blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *We'll Build a Land*

121

BENEDICTION

CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated for the closing music)