

**Full Text of the Service at White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church
Sunday, November 29, 2020**

PRELUDE MUSIC

Come Into This Place of Peace

Come into this place of peace, and let its silence heal your spirit
Come into this place of memory, and let its history warm your soul
Come into this place of power, and let its vision change your heart.

Voice Still and Small

Voice still and small, deep inside all
I hear you call, singing
In dark and rain, sorrow and pain
Still you remain, singing.
Gentle and deep, softly like sleep
Ever you keep, singing
And in the end, there like a friend
We will transcend, singing.

GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRIT

Bells of Norwich

Loud are the bells of Norwich, the people come and go;
Here by the tow'r of Julian I tell them what I know.
Ring out the bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again, I know.

Love like the yellow daffodil, the flower in the snow;
Love like the yellow daffodil, is lord of all I know.
Ring out the bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again, I know.

Ring for the yellow daffodil, the flower in the snow;
Ring for the yellow daffodil, and tell them what I know.
Ring out the bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again, I know.

Loud are the bells of Norwich, the people come and go;
Here by the tow'r of Julian I tell them what I know.
All shall be well, I'm telling you, let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again, I know.

Bright Morning Stars

Bright morning stars are rising, bright morning stars are rising,
Bright morning stars are rising, day is breaking in my soul.

Oh where are our dear mothers, Oh where are our dear mothers,
Oh where are our dear mothers, day is breaking in my soul.

They are sowing seeds of gladness, they are sowing seeds of gladness,
They are sowing seeds of gladness, day is breaking in my soul.

Oh where are our dear fathers, oh where are our dear fathers,
Oh where are our dear fathers, day is breaking in my soul.

They are in the fields a'plowin', they are in fields a'plowin'
They are in the fields a'plowin', day is breaking in my soul.

Oh how can I be lonely, my friends are all around me.
Their loving arms surround me, day is breaking in my soul.

WELCOME

Good morning, and welcome everyone, to White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. I am Annie Vail, serving on your Board of Directors.

We are a congregation in the free faith tradition, a community of youth, adults and children, dedicated to pluralism in the spiritual search and ethics grounded in action. Our mission is to grow our souls, and serve the world, in love.

Service participants today include Amy Peterson Derrick, Sara Goodman, Chris Kasinger, Victoria Safford, and Carol Caouette, supported by Anna Gehres and Erin Scott. Music today is from Carol Caoeutte and the WBUUC Choir, directed by Thaxter Cunio, with technical assistance from Steve Goransen.

Today, after the service at 11:15, we hope that you will join us for Cyber Social Hour. It's a fun way to meet others, see old friends, and share a little conversation in small facilitated groups. We'll put the Zoom link and easy instructions in the chat box.

We're glad you're here! Welcome to our church.

And now, a special announcement from the 2020 Auction Committee.

Video Announcement

Hello! I'm Nicolet Lyon and a Board member of WBUUC. We're so excited to be able to launch the 2020 Service Auction. As you've heard, this year, the auction will be 100% online and will be held over four days. The theme is, appropriately, "Till We Meet Again." We want to thank our

generous donors and the members of this year's Auction Committee. As you'll see from the catalog, there are many opportunities to connect with others virtually, learn a new skill, or buy gifts for your loved ones, all while financially supporting the vitally important work of our church. This is a generous, creative community, so we hope you'll take lots of time to look at the catalog. Mark the items that interest you and be sure to check back to increase your bid. Remember that the bidding will close at 9:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 6th. And now for some exciting news about our two Fund-A-Need opportunities.

Hello, I'm Reverend Sara Goodman and it is my pleasure to introduce our "When We Meet Again Fund." The money donated to this fund will be directed to technology upgrades to our church – changes that will support continued online programming, even when we can get back together physically. The funds will also provide resources for improvements aimed at keeping everyone healthy and safe when we return to the building. Beyond that, we may be able to use these funds to add a tech-related staff position. An anonymous donor has offered a matching gift of up to \$10,000 for this fund, so your dollars will be doubled if you give through the auction site now. Let's see how high we can reach!

Hello, I'm Reverend Jack Gaede and I am proud to introduce our other special Fund-A-Need opportunity. This one is to support the brave and bold work of Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism. Black Lives UU helps to lead Unitarian Universalists in focusing on anti-racism and transformation of our world, by harnessing love's power to combat oppression and foster healing as a spiritual and political imperative. As with the other fund, there is a matching gift – this one is for \$2,500, so all gifts up to this amount will be doubled. Please be generous as we make this community gift to Black Lives UU.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Rev. Rebecca Edmiston Lange, adapted)

Come in

Come into this space which we make holy by our presence.

Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths,
fears and anxieties, loves and hopes,
for here you need not hide, nor pretend,
nor be anything other than who you are
and who you are called to be.

Come into this space where we can heal and be healed, forgive and be forgiven.

Come into this space where the ordinary is sanctified,
the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected.

Come into this space –

Together we make it a holy space.

Chris Kasinger will light the chalice.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE Chris Kasinger **NO TEXT AVAILABLE**

OPENING WORDS (in unison)

Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our great covenant:
to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another

HYMN

Give Thanks

Give thanks for the corn and the wheat that are reaped,
For labor well done and for barns that are heaped.
For the sun and the dew and the sweet honeycomb,
For the rose and the song and the harvest brought home.

Give thanks for the mills and the farms of our land,
For craft and the strength in the work of our hands,
For the beauty our art and the poets have wrought,
For the hope and affections our friendship have brought.

Give thanks for the homes that with kindness are blessed,
For seasons of plenty and well-deserved rest,
For the earth and the air and the glorious rain
For the bright days of summer, and winter again.

STORY - Amy

Stories can be useful not just because they can teach us new things or remind us of life lessons; sometimes stories are important just because they can make us feel something.

Maybe you've had the experience of hearing a story, and as you listen, something is sparked inside you-- maybe it was a feeling of wonder or excitement or warmth, or it might have been worry or sadness or anger. You might not have even known why a story made you feel that way--and that's okay. Sometimes the power is just in the holding space for noticing and naming.

When we practice this noticing and naming, we can find a deeper meaning and connection in sacred texts and stories, especially when the story gives us more questions than answers.

So let's take a breath together, and as I read this morning's story, I invite you into this practice together. As you listening to the words, also listen inside, and just notice what this story sparks in you.

When the Horse Runs Off, adapted by Sarah Conover

Long ago, in a country where the mountains are among the world's loftiest, there lived an old farmer and his son. The boy spent his days attending to the work of the farm and their one horse—a beautiful stallion. After years of careful training, the horse ran swifter and smoother than any other in the region. But one day, they awoke to find their cherished stallion missing.

The son was heartbroken. Neighbors gathered round the two and lamented their great loss. But the father gazed calmly past the villagers to the surrounding high peaks. "We shall see," he said. "We shall see if this is good or this is bad."

After a week, the magnificent horse returned, followed by an equally fine, wild mare. Father and son soon trained the new animal. This time the neighbors praised the old man's remarkable luck—he was now the wealthiest man in town! He owned the two very best horses! But the farmer simply smiled and remarked, "Who knows if this is lucky or unlucky? We shall see. We shall see."

And so it came to pass that one day, while racing their splendid horses across the field, the son fell off and broke his leg badly. While the boy was tended to by the doctor,, the villagers bemoaned the family's terrible misfortune. But the father, calm as ever, took comfort in his boy. "He is safe" replied the old man. "his leg will heal in time. We shall see. We shall see."

The very next week, a battalion of soldiers marched into the village. A war to the north was underway, and all young villagers were needed immediately.

But alas, there was one young villager left behind in his bed—for it was obvious his wounds would take many months to heal. The neighbors envied the farmer's good fortune! The old farmer looked out across his fields at the two fine horses grazing. He looked at the lovely way the sun caught the tops of the jagged peaks in the distance, smiled, and said "We shall see. We shall see."

MEDITATION - Rev. Sara Goodman

Join me in a meditation or prayer - find a comfortable place for your body - relax the places in your body where you are holding tension. Breathe several deep breaths - feel the air in your lungs.

As we find our connection to our bodies, let's remember our connection to the holy. Our physical form is present today in the space we are each occupying. Each space we enter, each spot our body touches is related to others around us - we share electrical energy through breath, sound waves, body heat. Have you been in the presence of others, or are you staying isolated? Do you have pets, or do birdwatching out your window? Our gaze can rest upon something or bore into it. How are you interacting with what's around you today?

Can you hold your attention on the parts that feel unknown, uncomfortable? We are alone, yet not alone in this. We are apart, yet we gather together. We are in between times, and yet ever in the present moment.

What does this present moment bring you? Do you grieve, mourn loved ones, struggle every day? Do you find joy in family, in nature, in baking, in watching cheesy holiday movies? Do both grief and joy move through your life fluidly?

Beloveds, let's embrace the holy nature of humanity - the only thing certain is not knowing. We don't know when or how we will be together, but we know that "till we meet again" we will hold each other in uncertainty and in love.

We hold so many folks in our hearts every day here - those who are lonely - those who are suffering - those who have lost loved ones. We hold those who are celebrating, those who are plodding along, those who find things to love in this time. We hold you all.

In this silence, speak aloud the names of those you are holding in your hearts, that we can share in holding it all together.

-Silence, Amen

OFFERING -ANNIE

To sustain our online programming, Sunday services, pastoral care, and our work in the wider world toward justice and equity, your church needs your financial support. Please be generous today! Click on the link, or send us a check - we're all in this together!

OFFERTORY Interlude - Chip Davis

FIRST READING from Andre Dubus

SARA

Making sandwiches while sitting in a wheelchair is not physically difficult. But it can be a spiritual trial; the chair always makes me remember my legs, and how I lived with them. I am beginning my ninth year as a cripple [*his word*], and have learned to try to move slowly, with concentration, with precision, with peace. The memory of having legs that held me upright at this counter is the demon I must keep at bay, or I will rage and grieve because of space, and time, and this wheeled thing that has replaced my legs. So I must try to know the spiritual essence of what I am doing.

On Tuesdays when I make lunches for my girls, I focus on this: The sandwiches are sacraments. And each motion is a sacrament, this holding of plastic bags, of knives, of bread, of cutting board, this pushing of the chair, this spreading of mustard on bread, this trimming of liverwurst, or ham. All sacraments, as putting the lunches into a zippered book bag is, and going down my six ramps to my car is. I drive on the highway, to the girls' town, to their school, and this is not simply a transition; it is my love moving by car from a place where my girls are not to a place where they are; even if I do not feel or acknowledge it, this is a sacrament. If I remember it, then I feel it too. Feeling it does not always mean that I am a happy man driving in traffic; it simply means that I know what I am doing in the presence of God.

SECOND READING from W.S. Merwin

VICTORIA

Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you

we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
smiling by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
our lost feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is

THIRD READING from W.S. Merwin SARA

Just Now

In the morning as the storm begins to blow away
the clear sky appears for a moment and it seems to me
that there has been something simpler than I could ever
believe
simpler than I could have begun to find words for
not patient,

not even waiting,
no more hidden
than the air itself that became part of me for a while
with every breath
and remained with me unnoticed

something that was here unnamed
unknown
in the days and the nights,
not separate from them
not separate from them, as they came and were gone

it must have been here neither early nor late then
by what name can I address it now
holding out my thanks

MUSIC

To Sing With You is Home To Me

To sing with you is home to me,
A compass at the close of day
to guide my soul in deeper ways
as o'er the years I roam.
To sing with you is home.

To sing with you is home to me,
a throng of friends together breathe.
We set the ancient spirits free
and drink the blended tone.
To sing with you is home.

To sing with you is home to me,
beneath the sky all black and bright
We join the loud and holy night
of galaxies unknown.
To sing with you is home.

SERMON Holding What is Holy

Last week, as soon as it was available, I downloaded Minnesota's new contact tracing app, Corona Aware-Mn. It feels like such a tangible, in-your-hand way to be part of a global solution, literally connected to this vast, interwoven, community intention to do the right thing. For a few hours I was checking every hour to see if I'd had any exposures, even though I've been here, alone, in this building for weeks, or alone in my own house with Ross. I know the app's not perfect; it hinges on so many thousands of factors and decisions made or not made by hundreds of thousands of people across the state. It's one of a hundred million little, tiny, maybe helpful pieces in the mechanism of pandemic management. I wondered what it would feel like

to get a notification of exposure, and the more I thought about that this week, together with hearing, as we all are now, about people I know and people I love, including some of you, who've gotten sick, I realized this app may not have enough features for me. If it does ding to tell me I've been exposed to someone with Covid-19, I want it to send a message right back, through all the carefully encoded, confidential scrambles of algorithmic anonymity. I'd want to click and send a note, right away, that says, *"I don't know who you are, but thank you. Thank you for signing up and typing in your encoded number and letting us all know. That you did this while you're sick is amazing. And even though we know it isn't, I think that must have felt risky. So thank you, and – I'm sorry. I'm so sorry you're sick. I hope your case is really mild. I hope you're getting better. And do you need anything, anything I can make appear magically through this app, since I don't know and don't need to know who you are? Do you need tissues? Or tea? A grocery run? Can I walk your dog or make you soup or watch your kids? I really hope your family doesn't get sick. I really hope you're not alone."* As with all technology I want this app to do more than it's built to do. I want it to send that note, connect me to the dog and the children and the tissues. I want it to bring flowers to the nursing home. And I want another feature. We'll call that first one the Tenderness feature; I also want an Outrage feature, one where every time it notifies me of another exposure, I can register how much I hate Covid-19, and the catastrophic Federal non-response to it, and the careless, selfish behavior of reckless people, and I want a place on the app where we can check some boxes, input other data regarding our current status: *"Angry – check. Scared – check. Anxious- check. . Lonely –check. Bored. Stressed. Not sleeping. Only sleeping. Depressed. Financially uncertain – check, check check. Fuzzy- brained. At wit's end – check."* I don't know if contact tracing for outrage is a good idea or not. Sometimes it feels like there's this thin veneer of normalcy shrouding everything unnaturally, and maybe it would be a kind of comfort to know when we've been in close proximity, exposed, to other people's fury or bewilderment. That might feel, strangely, comforting.

This week on Thursday I put down my phone and turned on the computer, and found, as maybe you did, much to my surprise, that beauty and laughter and a slender filament of real connection could be cast across the miles, across these months of isolation; that we could do Thanksgiving in this brave new world, two of us in person sitting together/not together with our family of friends glowing on the screen, a beloved circle of rectangles toasting, optimistically, the future, and sharing stories from the past. To see them, to be with them, in their houses was a poignant blessing. *"To sing with you is home to me - a compass at the close of day to guide my soul in deeper ways; a throng of friends together breathe; beneath the sky all black and bright, we join the loud and holy night of galaxies unknown."* To be with them was home to me on Thursday night, for just an hour, just that little while, and then we switched off the screen and there in our house it felt again like we were far from home, bereft again, a bit. It is so important in these times, these days, to put on a brave face and to carry on "as if," to encourage each other and maintain our own mental health, but I think it's also important – I think we're learning how important it also is, sometimes - to peel off that mask, sometimes, and just howl our sadness, our frustration and our fear. That's also, in moderation, good for mental health, and it's also how we encourage each other, acknowledging to each other that the pain of this is real – holding our rage and our confusion as holy as our hope.

Minnesota's Dr. Michael Osterholm was quoted in the New York Times last week, one of four public health super-stars interviewed about Thanksgiving. They're all Covid experts, and each was asked how the science guided their family's holiday planning, and asked also to share their own plans. Osterholm said this: *"I plan to spend the day with my partner. Just the two of us celebrating all we have to be thankful for in our lives. We will do virtual celebrations with our kids and grandkids. Maybe even find a new magic trick to do for them. And I will spend part of the day doing something I've never done before on Thanksgiving. I will call a number of people in my life to whom I owe so much. I will thank them for their love and kindness and remind them that I'm so very glad they were born."*

I love that. And you know, it's not too late to call. It never is... until it is. Maybe we're learning to be braver in these times, more honest, better stewards of the brief, brief time we have upon this earth. Why not pick up the phone? Why not tell someone you love, or even someone you just like, "to speak with you is home to me?" *I'm very glad that you were born.*

In one of the readings, Sara shared with us the beautiful testimony of Andre Dubus, who says when he makes sandwiches for his children - mustard, bread, ham - and puts them in their plastic bags and drives them to their school, it is a sacrament. It's not an easy thing: he was a big man in a very small kitchen, in a wheelchair. Elsewhere in the essay he tells how he had to preplan, every single time, every motion of this activity, opening this drawer, then that one, to grab the cutting board, the knife, the mustard and the bags in the right order, and loading everything into his lap before making the sharp turn to the counter, because otherwise he'd have to back all the way out of the narrow kitchen in his wheelchair and start over. A sacrament, he says, not because it was hard, or saintly, but because it was deliberate, love made tangible on purpose. He talks about the drive to their school and says, *"It is not simply a transition; it is my love moving by car from a place where my girls are not to a place where they are; even if I do not feel or acknowledge it, this is a sacrament. If I remember it, then I feel it, too. Feeling it does not always mean that I am a happy man driving in heavy traffic; it simply means that I know what I am doing in the presence of God."*

It's not a pious thing, but it is a sacred thing, a mindful thing, to move through your day like that, to move through your days, your whole life like that, to know what you're doing and for whom and why. It's not a particularly special thing, making this lunch and driving it across town; it's a tedious thing, a daily thing, it's just a thing, but "it is my love," he says, scraping the knife, rolling the chair, moving by car, and all of it done in the presence of God. Dubus wrote as a Catholic but I think he's saying something universal here, that somehow it matters to hold what we're doing and how we do it mindful that it is part, we are part, of a larger, interwoven, communal intention to do good, to be good, to bring love forth out from inside us -small amounts, small gestures, as we're able, when we can, and on the days when we can't, when we ourselves have not a single drop to share, not an ounce of courage or compassion or time or hope, it matters then, equally, to receive these things from others with gracious and exhausted thanks, even if the only others in our lives right now are the trees outside your window, or the moon and stars at night, or the sun that rises every day. "I know what I am doing in the presence of God," he

says. I know what I am doing in the presence of the holy mystery and the presence of other people, some of whom I know and most of whom I don't, all of it larger than myself and yet connected to me. It's possible, he says, to remember this sometimes, to feel it.

The poet W.S. Merwin says a similar thing.

*"In the morning
the clear sky appears for a moment and it seems to me
that there has been something simpler than I could ever
believe
simpler than I could have begun to find words for
not patient,
not even waiting,
no more hidden
than the air itself that became part of me for a while
with every breath
and remained with me unnoticed*

*something that was here unnamed
unknown
in the days and the nights,
not separate from them, as they came and were gone;
it must have been here neither early nor late
by what name can I address it now
holding out my thanks"*

There's a beauty and an order to this mysterious world that we know so little about, except by observation and experience, by noticing, paying attention, as Russel Rogers said last week, understanding that some things are more eternal and more infinite than we ourselves will ever be, and within all this, we have a small amount of agency. In response to what we see and what we know, all the things that happen to us and around us, lovely things, terrible things, lonely, hard and frightening things, sorrowing things and in response as well, and often at the same time, to gifts and grace and luck and life, we have agency to bless or curse the world, participate in its unfolding, to move as if our motions were a sacrament - or not.

This is the final Sunday in a month when our theme has been "Outrage – the practice of holding what is holy," and if ever a monthly theme could inform and infuse and illuminate a whole year of months, an entire 2020 of months, this theme, "outrage," might be the one. So many things to make us, rightly, angry and anxious and upset. And also, cautiously hopeful. And also, mightily grateful. As always, the outrages and the beauty come tumbling toward us all together – just in larger quantities this year, larger doses. I feel sometimes as if a single body, or a single soul, is not a large enough container to hold it all at once. I've been thinking in this month of outrage about Job, the strange, sad figure in the Hebrew Testament, who is made to hold so much, and

who next to Jesus himself, and Mary, may be one of the most familiar characters in the entire Bible. It's no wonder why that is.

Job is renowned, you may remember, for the countless slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that God heaps upon him, and for his famous patience – but Job is not in fact patient, not in the actual text, not at all, nor acquiescent, nor polite, nor, when his life is ripped to shreds does he just shrug and say, “Oh, that’s okay, I don’t mind, I’ll be fine. I’ll just keep calm and carry on!” He doesn’t say that. He’s a cauldron of outrage. All that famous patience was a later interpretation, by Christian writers mostly, over many centuries, theologians prizing Job’s suffering over his dignity again and again, and holding him up as a model of passive virtue. He’s not passive; he’s aggressively upset. The story is old, older than its writing, a story handed down by oral tradition, touching a nerve in the human psyche that maybe we can recognize, something about suffering. In the story, Satan, who hasn’t yet fallen into hell, who still lives upstairs with the other angels, makes a bet with God, that even the most righteous, pious person will curse God to God’s face when good luck turns to bad, when bad things happen to good people. God takes the bet, and allows terrible things to happen to Job, the most faithful man God knows. Job’s livestock all die, his money is stolen, his home is destroyed, his wife and his children are murdered, his body is broken and covered with sores, and his friends, who come to comfort him, pour salt in every wound. They’re afraid to speak ill of God, even though God’s behaving terribly, and they reason that Job must have done something to make God mad; his suffering is proof of this. Something he did or something he said, or something about him, something inherent in him must be wrong or unworthy, because God is a just God, always right and always fair. Job is not patient with this, because it’s twisted and it’s cruel; he’s desolate and outraged. He never doubts God’s power, he admits there must be reasons that he himself will never understand, but he rages, and it occurs to him that all around him there are people like himself, good and honest people who suffer for no reason, and also oppressors and tyrants who are rewarded, never punished for their evil. He rails at God: *“Why did you let me be born? Why couldn’t I have stayed in the deep waters of the womb rocked to sleep in the dark? Is my life not wretched enough? You set me free and then trap me, like a cat toying with a mouse. [This is Stephen Mitchell’s translation.]. And now I am in agony, the days of sorrow have caught me. Pain pierces my skin; suffering gnaws my bones. Despair grips me by the neck and shakes me by the collar of my coat. I cry out and you don’t answer; I am silent and you don’t care. If I ever neglected the poor or made the innocent suffer, if I did not share with the hungry, or if I ever abused the helpless, if I ever pledged allegiance to silver and gold, or took any credit for my wealth, or shut out a stranger or turned a traveler away, it would be different. I swear by God, who has wronged me and filled my cup with despair that while there is life in this body I will tell you, this is not right.”* If Job had the Outrage feature on the app on his phone, he would use it.

Like so many stories in the Bible, it’s hard to find the point of this, and scholars long have argued. In the end, in the text, God rages back, more at Job’s friends than Job himself, and says, “Look, I never told you I was kind, or just, for that matter. I made this whole cosmos, and I never said that what happens here is fair. It’s powerful, inscrutable, beautiful, terrible, infinite, eternal –but this cosmos isn’t fair.” It’s to that reality that Job bows in the end; he’s not patient so much as honest, and courageous. He bows to the mysterious chaos of this life, and the fact

that whatever we know of justice and mercy and meaning and comfort and compassion and healing and hope are the holy work of humans here on earth, not capricious Gods. Sorrows come sometimes, with no explanation, no justification. Plagues and sorrows come – there is no justice there, and sometimes very little mercy, beyond what we carry to the scene ourselves, what we make of it, together; the kinds of people we decide we're called to be for one another.

Andre Dubus speaks of this when he talks about the sandwiches and moving through his narrow kitchen. "I have learned to try to move slowly, with precision, with peace. The memory of having legs that kept me upright at this kitchen counter is the demon I must keep at bay, or I will rage and grieve without ceasing. I must try to know the spiritual essence of what I am doing." Not to deny the outrage and the grief, but to honor them by holding them side by side with sacrament. To be a whole, not partial, person means holding what is holy, all of it – our outrage and our love, our deepest fear and wildest hope, all at once, together.

"Listen," says the poet W.S. Merwin, in the second poem we heard:

*"Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
smiling by the windows looking out
in our directions*

*back from a series of hospitals
back from a mugging
after funerals
we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you"*

Not because we're glad for sorrow, or indifferent to it, or stoic; not because we're complacent or pious or lost in denial, but because we can hold the gratitude and the rage at once, the hope together with our fear.

*"over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
... we are saying thank you"*

because this life is beautiful, even as it is unjust – we can hold it all together, if not alone, then all together.

*“in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you...*

*we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is”*

The days are getting darker, literally, and we know that this is not an easy time and there are no easy answers. How much solace can we bring and be to one another? How much hope and tenderness can we kindle for each other? We're starting to find out. We're only just beginning to imagine how large love could be, how large our love of life and each other might be.

Silence

HYMN

What Wondrous Love

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul.
What wondrous love is this that brings my heart such bliss
And takes away the pain of my soul, of my soul,
And takes away the pain of my soul.

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down
When I was sinking down, sinking down.
When I was sinking down beneath my sorrow's ground,
Friends to me gather'd round, O my soul, O my soul,
Friends to me gathered round, O my soul.

To love and to all friends I will sing, I will sing,
To love and to all friends I will sing,
To love and to all friends who pain and sorrow mend,
With thanks unto the end I will sing, I will sing.
With thanks unto the end, I will sing.

CLOSING WORDS - Annie

May peace dwell within our hearts, and understanding in our minds
May courage steel our will, and love of truth forever guide us.

FAREWELL

Friends, thank you for joining us. If you're not receiving our EMAIL NEWS, please go to our website and sign up! This is the best way - and the only way - to find out what's going on at

church. We know your inbox is flooded with email right now. We promise that the eNews will be brief and crystal clear.

At 11:15 join us for Cyber Social Hour. It's actually just half an hour of easy conversation in small groups with friends old and new.

We're sending love to today from Woodbury, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Stillwater and from 328 Maple Street in Mahtomedi, Minnesota.

Farewell, and stay well, friends, from all of us. So be it. See to it. Amen.

POSTLUDE

What a Wonderful World

I see trees of green, red roses too;
I see them bloom for me and you.
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

I see skies of blue and clouds of white,
the bright blessed day, the dark sacred night.
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky
are also on the faces of people going by.
I see friends shaking hands, saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying "I love you."

I hear babies cry, I watch them grow;
they'll learn much more than I'll never know.
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

Yes, I think to myself what a wonderful world.