

Full Text of the Service at White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church
Sunday, January 17, 2021

PRELUDE MUSIC

Wade in the Water (African American Spiritual)

Wade in the water, wade in the water, children
Wade in the water, God's a-gonna trouble the water
See that band all dressed in white (God's a-gonna trouble the water)
The leader looks like an Israelite (God's a-gonna trouble the water)
See that band all dressed in red (God's a-gonna trouble the water)
It looks like a band that Moses led (God's a-gonna trouble the water)

Guide My Feet (African American Spiritual)

Guide my feet while I run this race
Guide my feet while I run this race
Guide my feet while I run this race
For I don't want to run this race in vein (this race in vein)
Hold my hand while I run this race
Hold my hand while I run this race
Hold my hand while I run this race
For I don't want to run this race in vein (this race in vein)
Stand by me while I run this race
Stand by me while I run this race
Stand by me while I run this race
For I don't want to run this race in vein (this race in vein)
Search my heart while I run this race
Search my heart while I run this race
Search my heart while I run this race
For I don't want to run this race in vein (this race in vein)

GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRIT

Freedom Never Dies

(from Langston Hughes's *Ballad of Harry T Moore*; *Sweet Honey in the Rock*)

Freedom never dies, I say, freedom never dies
No law can kill the dreams we hold, freedom never dies
It seems I hear Martin's voice, from the earth his blood still cries
No law can kill the dreams we hold, freedom never dies
It seems I hear George's voice, from the earth his blood still cries
No law can kill the dreams we hold, freedom never dies
It seems I hear John Lewis speak, from the earth his blood still cries
No law can kill the dreams we hold, freedom never dies

Sun Don't Set in the Mornin' - Southern Folk Hymn

Sun don't set in the morning, sun don't set in the morning, lord
Sun don't set in the morning 'cause light shines over the world, yes
Light shines over the world.

Oh pray on, keep a-prayin' people, pray on, keep a-prayin' people
Pray on, keep a-prayin' people, light shines over the world, yes
Light shines over the world.

Rain don't fall from a blue sky, rain don't fall from a clear blue sky,
Rain don't fall from a blue sky, 'cause light shines over the world, yes,
Light shines over the world.

Water don't rise when the stars glow. Water don't rise when the stars glow bright.
Water don't rise when the stars glow, 'cause light shines over the world, yes,
Light shines over the world.

We are the ones

We are the ones, we are the ones we've been waiting for
And we are dawning, we are the rising sun.

WELCOME Laurie Wenker

Good morning, and welcome everyone, to White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. I am xxxx, 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.

Service participants today include Carol Caouette, Nico Van Ostrand, Rev. Sara Goodman, and Victoria Safford, supported by Anna Gehres and Erin Scott. Music today is from Carol Caouette, and the Choir, directed by Thaxter Cunio, the Charlotte's Web ensemble, and the choir of the Poor People's Campaign, led by Yara Allen.

Your Pledge Committee has a gift for you and your household: a paper luminary to place in your window or yard, and a pack of hot cocoa, to warm your spirit as the winter settles in. You can pick these up here at church, right outside the front doors, any time - gifts of thanks to all of you for supporting our church in so many ways. "Strong is what we make each other."

Watch for the Enews this week on Monday and Thursday for news about upcoming classes and programs for children, youth and adults. Spirit in Practice with Rev. Sara Goodman begins this week - all are welcome to explore and share practices to sustain your soul and strengthen community.

Today, at 11:15, please join us for Cyber Social Hour. It's a fun way to meet others and share conversation in small facilitated groups. We'll put the Zoom link and easy instructions in the chat box.

Welcome to our church. Together, we grow our souls and serve the world in love.

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

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.

Kate Booth will light the chalice.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE Kate Booth

This month's theme... Courage... certainly speaks to me. This time last year, I was four weeks away from taking on what, in my mind, was an insane challenge.... Climb Kilimanjaro to raise funds for H2O for Life. What was I thinking? As the time drew near the mental preparation was taking much more effort than the physical one. Cheryl Strayed, a NYT best-selling author of a book you may know called Wild, also published a book of quotes with the title "Brave Enough". And that became my question... Am I brave enough? What would it take to get me to trust my capability?

The answer lied in reaching out to others, gathering support/expertise and trusting others to fill me with courage. And fill me they did. I took one hundred supporters' names on my shirt with me to the summit. With their support and all the information I dragged out of Bob Gagner and his wife Chris, I found success. I was brave enough!

This story relates to how I feel about the members of our church and our pastors. You all fill me. You give me the courage to stay true to myself. The courage to strengthen the person I want to be. The courage to continue to live our covenants... to live and act with an open mind, a loving heart and helping hands.

I light the chalice to thank you for the beauty of mutual support that increases our capability to take on that next challenge.

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
Carol's going to lead us in the first hymn.

HYMN Keep Your Eyes on the Prize/Keep Your Hands on the Plow
Hold on, hold on, keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Hold on, hold on, keep your hand on the plow, hold on
Freedom's name is mighty sweet and soon we're gonna meet
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
We've got our hands on the freedom plow, we won't take nothin' for our journey now
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on
The only chains that the people can stand is the chain of hand in hand
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Gonna board that old Greyhound and carry the love from town to town
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on
Now the only thing that we've done wrong is stay in the wilderness far too long
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Hold on, hold on, keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Hold on, hold on, keep your hand on the plow, hold on

STORY - AMY

Adapted from a Thai Folktale

The sun was setting on a warm summer evening in a glorious kingdom nestled deep in the mountains. The King and his advisor had just finished a very satisfying day of work, indeed. And so, they decided to treat themselves to a delicious plate of puffed rice and honey as they sat on the balcony to watch the sunset over the village.

The sidewalk beneath them was busy, full of bustling villagers on their way back to their homes from the markets. But the king was only interested in reviewing the business of the day; mostly boasting about this success and that.

Suddenly, a noise caught the attention of the King; he paused as he leaned over the balcony to find the source of the unpleasant sound.

But as he leaned over, a drop of honey fell from his plate and onto the railing of the balcony. The source of the sound now identified, the King then quickly turned his attention back to his advisor, picking up right where he had left off.

As the King carried on, his advisor, noticing the honey, reached into his pocket for his handkerchief to wipe up the drip. But at once, the king reached over to stop him, "It is no worry of ours, my trusted advisor; someone else will tend to this. Let us continue our conversation." And so they did.

But as the king continued to talk, his advisor couldn't help but notice that the honey began to drip from the balcony, onto the busy street below.

The advisor interrupted, "Sire: the honey has begun to litter the street below. Perhaps I could just take a moment to clean it up. I worry an unassuming passerby might end up in the sticky mess."

"Nonsense," replied the King with a snort, "I am sure someone will come and clean it up eventually. It is no worry of ours. The big problem is that you have interrupted my train of thought. Shall we get back to our conversations?"

The king continued his speech.

Before long, the honey began to attract flies to the sidewalk.

The King's advisor took notice, but the King remained oblivious, and there seemed no end in sight for the King's speech. The advisor hesitated to interrupt again.

A few moments later, the swarm of flies was pounced on by a gecko, who drew the notice of a cat...who caught the attention of a passing dog.

The King's advisor rose to his feet in a panic as the gecko tried desperately to flee the cat who was now being chased by the dog. "Sire," he said desperately, "I regret to interrupt you once more, but there is quite a commotion on the street, below, and I just think if I could just do something..."

"Why should we be concerned?" replied the King. "It is just a few creatures who squabble. Do not concern yourself with these matters-- we still have much to discuss! Someone else surely will tend to it...besides, why should we draw more attention to these creatures when they will likely go away on their own? It is of no worry to us."

But just a few moments later, the owners of the cat and dog arrived on the scene to try to intervene. Before long, a crowd of villagers had gathered as an argument broke out between the two. In just moments, the argument between the two grew and grew until it seemed that the entire village was yelling.

This got the King's attention.

"Your majesty," said the advisor softly, "shouldn't we do something?"

The king held up his hand, "We mustn't meddle in the affairs of the villagers. It isn't of our concern. Besides, we have plenty of rice and honey left to eat, and look at this glorious sunset. If we busy ourselves with these other matters, we shall certainly miss out on the sweetness of our own evening. Let us continue our talk in a quieter location."

But as the noise from the street grew louder and louder, the commotion from the street, at last, spilled into the palace.

The advisor could ignore this no longer. He knew what he must do. Ignoring the requests of the king, the advisor stood in place, "Sir. What started as a drop of honey has led to great suffering, and should we do nothing, the suffering will continue to grow. Even you can no longer hide from it." The advisor paused, intently watching the face of the king for a response. "Sire, I must advise you to act, though ending the fight won't be enough, for as long as the honey remains, harm will continue to befall our great village."

The King considered the words of his advisor and he knew them to be true. For what could have been remedied right at the start will now take years of great care, and even still the kingdom would never be the same.

MEDITATION - Rev. Sara Goodman

Friends, join me in the spirit of prayer and meditation.

Find a comfortable place for your body, breathe in deeply and hold it for a brief time before releasing it.

That's where we are today friends, in the held breath time. That fullness and discomfort between breaths, full of hope and anxiety, waiting and yearning. Take a breath, hold it for a brief time, and feel that tension in your body.

Feel the tension and then release it, release it with your breath. Allow your shoulders to release, allow the muscles that have been clenching - maybe in your jaw, maybe in your shoulders, maybe somewhere else, let those muscles take a break for a time. Right here, right now, we are safe. In this moment, and always, we are whole and holy.

If you can, and haven't already, close your eyes or rest your vision softly on a beloved object. Imagine yourself and your loved ones wrapped in a big soft warm blanket, enveloped in warmth and comfort. As you imagine this, say their names in your heart, or out loud.

As we hold close those whom we personally love, let's also extend that warmth and comfort to those in our community who are struggling - with hunger, with addiction, with mental health, with anxiety, depression and so much more in these challenging times - wrap them up close to your heart.

And finally, let's send out a prayer - to the holy, the spirit of life, the named and unnamed, all-that-is - we are sending a prayer of protection, a prayer for quelling the storm, a prayer for transition and transformation. May those who are coming into leadership be safe and hold the offices they take up with deference and humble hearts. May those who are releasing leadership, let it go - and turn their eyes towards sunnier skies. May those who seek to do harm find that

harm is out of their reach. May we always remember that the Long Arc of the Universe bends towards Justice, and live our lives making it so.

Make it so.

Al Mitchell will tell us about today's special collection.

OFFERING INTRODUCTION - Al Mitchell

Good Morning

I am Alan Mitchell. I am one of the co-chairs of our social action committee.

We are taking a special collection today for a local nonprofit organization called every meal, whose goal it is to fight child hunger.

Every meal was started about ten years ago by a group of teachers at an elementary school in Minneapolis, to serve a kindergartner class with a bag of non-perishable food for the weekend. Today, because of the coronavirus pandemic, kids are out of school and many families are having difficulty putting food on the table. As a result, the every meal organization has expanded its operations with a winter meal program designed to provide food bags to kids throughout the week.

Relying on donations and volunteers, every meal now distributes food bags at numerous locations throughout the twin cities. These food bags contain hearty, stable food products that kids can pick up and take home.

The organization now serves 200,000 meals a month in 31 school districts across Minnesota.

Thank you for helping to feed hungry kids.

Every financial gift to our congregation goes to support the programs we've come to rely on as anchors in our lives: gathering space and materials for children, youth and families, choral rehearsals and music, classes and small groups, justice work and public witness, pastoral care, rites of passage, Sunday services. You can contribute to the offering today by sending a check, or by following the easy prompt to "text-to-give." Thank you for your generous support!

OFFERTORY - Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing (instrumental) Carol Caouette, piano

READINGS - Rev. Sara Goodman

FIRST READING from Andy Kim, Congressional Representative from New Jersey
Last week, he was surprised that pictures of him went viral, showing him in his suit and tie on his hands and knees in the capitol building, picking up trash and broken glass left by the white mob on Wednesday. This comes from a radio interview.

It was terrible to see this room that I love so much treated in that. I just picked up a trash bag and spent about an hour and a half picking up trash. Honestly, it was kind of therapeutic, a solace. I could just focus in on a tangible task, making the room as beautiful as I could – a way to literally pick up the pieces of our democracy.

I'll be honest it's hard. I'm still processing it, and yesterday I saw uniformed service members quartered here for the first time since the Civil War – more military in the Capitol now than in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. There's a lot to process.

I worked for the State Department in Afghanistan. I have seen what radicalization can do. I'm fearful. I worry that it's happening right in our own country. There are real threats that are calling for thousands of people to come and encircle the capitol, encircle the Washington monument, try to block the president-elect from entering the White House. I will be at the inauguration, and I will not feel 100 per cent safe. What we saw on January 6 is that anything is possible.

I called my mother while the insurrection was happening. She was crying as if she was here too. I remember my mother and my father bringing me to the Capitol when I was a child. They grew up in Korea, in the aftermath of the Korean War. My dad grew up in an orphanage as a polio survivor, and ended up here, with a PhD in genetics. Their story is so poignant. They brought me to the Capitol and taught me to love and respect this building.

The reporter said: "It's hard not to notice that after the ransacking it seemed to be mostly people of color in the rotunda cleaning up a mess made by white rioters. What do you make of that?"

Rep. Kim replied: I don't think you can not see the contrast. I spoke with some of the guards and the cleaning staff; one of them said, "I could see in that photo that you love this building as much as I do." For people who are immigrants or children of immigrants or people in disenfranchised communities or minority communities – we don't take anything for granted.

That is scary for me as a father raising two baby boys in America, and that's why I'm recommitting myself to doing everything I can to try to fix it.

This is not going to just go away, like a light switch on January 20 when Biden comes in. We need to recognize just how bad the problem is and it's gonna be a long-term effort for all of us.

SECOND READING from the book of Psalms, number 15, translated by Stephen Mitchell

Lord, who can be trusted with power,
and who may act in your place?
Those with a passion for justice,
who speak the truth from their hearts;
who have let go of selfish interests
and grown beyond their own lives;
who see the wretched as their family
and the poor as their flesh and blood.
They alone are impartial
and worthy of the people's trust.
Their compassion lights up the whole earth,
and their kindness endures forever.

MUSIC

They Say That Freedom is a Constant Struggle (African American Spiritual)

They say that freedom is a constant struggle, they say that freedom is a constant struggle

They say that freedom is a constant struggle, oh, lord, we've struggled so long

Well, we must be free, we must be free.

They say that freedom is a constant dying...

They say that freedom is a constant mourning...

They say that freedom is a constant sorrow...

They say that freedom is a constant hunger...

SERMON

The Pulse of Morning

I was listening the other day to an old recording from 1930 of "Happy Days Are Here Again." It was an old bar-room song that was somehow taken up by Franklin Roosevelt's campaign team and became the anthem of his presidency, and then the unofficial anthem of the Democratic party. It's upbeat and rollicking and cheerful; when Prohibition was repealed, someone changed it to "happy days are beer again." It's suitable for any long-awaited, overdue, desperately-needed celebration:

Happy days are here again. The skies above are clear again

So let's sing a song of cheer again: Happy days are here again

Altogether shout it now. There's no one who can doubt it now

So let's tell the world about it now. Your cares and troubles are gone.

There'll be no more from now on...

I haven't dragged that out since 2012.

The version I like best, though, and the one that I need now, was recorded for TV in 1963 by Judy Garland and Barbra Streisand. It's a medley of this old song and "Get Happy," which was a signature show-tune for Garland: two loud, brazen, unabashedly happy songs sung by those two glorious, powerhouse voices, but in this duet so quietly, so poignantly, so sorrowfully intermingled, back and forth, and in a melancholy, minor key:

So long sad times Go long bad times

We are rid of you at last

Howdy gay times Cloudy gray times You are now a thing of the past

Shout hallelujah

Come on get happy Throw all your cares away

Shout hallelujah

Come on get happy Get ready for the judgment day

They sing it like people who are supposed to be happy, but can't help feeling shaky with sadness and doubt. Or maybe like people who really ought to be in despair, but can't help but give in to the stirrings of hope. I think that's my inauguration anthem. It's all mixed up for me as

we all lurch toward Wednesday, stopping first – and bowing, with reverence, gratitude, continuing amazement every year as our sluggish understanding of our history deepens – stopping first on Monday, on the way to Wednesday, to honor the life and legacy and revolutionary dream-work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. We'll bow our heads and raise our fists and take up the work undone, and then move past Tuesday on to Wednesday, to the Capitol again – and this is all mixed up for me. Such relief. Such anger. Such exhilaration. Such exhaustion. Such apprehension. Grief. Shame for our nation and its people. Pride for our nation and its peoples. Such focused new resolve (I feel it rising), energy, excitement. Such numbness and inertia, as the full weight of what we've been through settles on the heart and in the bones and living history of us all.

And meanwhile – Covid.

And meanwhile – climate.

And meanwhile – all the other day-to-day catastrophes and miracles: people we love in our congregation, and beyond, who are sick and in trouble, and not just with Covid-19 but all the other so-called normal things; people we love who are dying; or getting married, or having children, or being children or loving the lovely snow, birds at the feeder, more light in the morning and more light at night – everything turning toward light, and toward darkness, at once. How are we supposed to feel this week of all weeks, following last week of all weeks, and more weeks to come, the future rolling on?

All of this is okay, all the feels, as they say, okay and important; the rage, the relief, the dread and the hope, or so says a circle of leaders I consulted this week, confessing my confusion and concern that Sunday was looming (this Sunday, right now) and I just had nothing, nothing whatsoever, to bring. That wise council – in fact, our beautiful staff team, at Thursday's tech rehearsal – told me all of this is right and fitting, and in no particular order. For all of us, it's such a glad and anxious time. It reminds me, strangely, of a time some years ago when I had a toothache, a memorable toothache. They gave me something for the pain and I was elated to the point of everlasting joy, to where I almost forgot about the pain entirely – but also, underneath, there was anxiety, because the pain was still in there somewhere, just muffled now, lurking, and only vaguely throbbing.

Mixed feelings. Someone told me this week that the sparkly lights I saw behind her on a little tree in her living room on Zoom are Inauguration Lights – and I love that. She said that that those same lights last week were Impeachment Lights, and before that they were New Year's lights, holiday lights. Someone else told me that they're leaving their winter lights up for as long as it takes this year, until they no longer feel lonely on pandemic lockdown. All of this seems so smart to me, all these signal flares, all the tools to help us navigate turbulent water, to help us steer clear, without drowning, through the sea of ambiguity, this oceanic anxiety about what's coming next and how to get through it and what all we ought to be doing.

Last week I shared the brilliant words of Rev. Jacqui Lewis, crying out so plaintively, tweeting out so powerfully, about being so tired of living in this country where "Black grief is a threat and white rage is a sacrament." I'm thinking now about a comrade and a friend of hers, Rev. William

Barber, from North Carolina, who said way back in 2016, right after that election, “Well, now the mule is kicking. A dying mule always kicks the hardest,” and that’s a dangerous time, he said, when the mule kicks back, kicks hard, but also a hopeful time, because you know that it is a reaction, ugly, yes and potentially deadly, but also pitiful and desperate, to a mighty change already undeniably underway. I want to believe that. I want to help to make that true, true enough to believe in. Rev. Barber, founder of the Poor People’s Campaign for a Moral Revival, said further:

“The story of our struggle for freedom is not linear: every advance toward a more perfect union has been met with a backlash of resistance. When African-Americans became full citizens during Reconstruction, violence rose up, the violence of the Klan and lynching, and the voter suppression of Southern Democrats. The same backlash followed the legislative victories of the “Second Reconstruction,” the civil rights movement of the 20th century. Richard Nixon’s “law and order” campaign of 1968 was an intentional effort to appeal to race hatred and fear. It was called the “Southern Strategy,” and he rode that wave.

This latest wave we’re in could not have been possible without the election of Barack Obama. His successor began by waging a crusade against Obama’s citizenship, the perfect way to touch the psychic wound in America once more, the fundamental racial fear, and ignite attacks on black people, brown people, immigrants, Muslims and the LGBTQ community. He touched a wound passed down since the lost cause religion of the 19th century.

If we are willing to see ourselves as we are and have been, we will also see our potential for prophetic resistance, even in times like these. For we are also the heirs of great dissenters who’ve stood for right in perilous times. When the Jim Crow laws of the solid South were upheld by the Supreme Court in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson, only one justice — John Harlan of Kentucky — dissented. But his dissenting opinion laid the groundwork upon which Thurgood Marshall built his case over half a century later in Brown v. Board of Education. When three civil rights workers were brutally murdered in the first days of Freedom Summer, black and white students chose to press on together, challenging Mississippi to its core. Last week Georgia elected a Jewish senator and a black senator.

A dying mule always kicks the hardest. We will continue to build the moral coalition that is already a majority in this country, holding race and class together and not as separate issues.

Yes, we have difficult days ahead. But our fore-parents were up against more, with less.”

What if what we saw last week, what we’ve seen these past four years, four centuries, were the reactionary death throes of a lie that cannot live forever, the last gasp of the lie, and not the rise of fascism reborn? I want to believe that. I want to live into the hard and holy work of that possibility, to help to make it solidly true. And that’s why the rush to platitudes, the rush toward easy, shallow speeches about unity and healing our divisions scares me almost more than flashes of violence. Of course we want to heal, but we want to heal properly, and do our first work first. When I had that horrific toothache, I went to urgent care at night. They filled the tooth and sent me home with something for the pain which I swallowed gratefully, but before the night was out the exposed nerve sealed inside woke up, went white-hot wild and the untreated infection raged through my whole body. The next day, a dentist had to lance that wound, drain it, dig down to the root cause, down to the bone, scrape it clean, flush it with water and antibiotics, and tell me it would be a while before they could even begin restoration. To save that tooth from

the sickness inside it was hard, excruciating. We have to do our first work first, and with courage. We don't want to plaster over what is ailing us with platitudes.

The King holiday reminds us every year that part of that first work for us as Americans together begins with dreaming together, and wondering out loud, asking hard and necessary questions that are therefore beautiful, because they want the truth. Near the end of her latest and brilliant book, "Caste," historian Isabel Wilkerson writes,

"We look to the night sky and see the planets and stars, the distant lights as specks of salt, grains of sand, and are reminded of how small we are, how insignificant our worries of the moment, how brief our time on this planet, and we wish to be part of something bigger than ourselves, to magnify our significance, to matter somehow as more than the dust that we are.

Even the longest-lived of our species spends but a blink of time in the span of human history. How dare anyone cause harm to another soul, curtail their life or life's potential, when our lives are so short to begin with?

The species has suffered incomprehensible loss over the false divisions of caste: the 11 million people killed by the Nazis; the three-quarters of a million Americans killed in the Civil War over the right to enslave human beings; the slow, living death and unfulfilled gifts of millions more on the plantations...

Whatever creativity or brilliance they had has been lost for all time. Where would we be as a species had those millions been permitted to live out their dreams or live at all? Where would the planet be had the putative beneficiaries been freed of the illusions that imprisoned them, too, had they directed their energies toward solutions for all of humanity, cures for cancer and hunger and the existential threat of climate change, rather than division?

A holiday – holy day - is a good time for holy reflection, especially when that holiday precedes as it does the solemn and serious spectacle of a peaceful transfer of power. It's good practice to pray before a ritual commences.

It has been and it is and will be for a while an exhausting time, confusing, painful, sad and shattering time – and now we must go forward, with courage, not into the future that awaits us, but into the one we help shape, together with millions of others, even though our hearts are tired and our hands don't feel so strong. "Now is the time," says my colleague, UU minister Qiyamah Rahman, "Now is the time to call on the memories of the ancestors who thought they could not walk another step toward freedom—and yet they did."

It's a centering, steadying prayer for remembering the beauty and bravery and strength for survival woven into the fabric of our nation's story, even the most tragic chapters, and a good reminder, her prayer, that among our own ancestors, each one of us, there surely were people who survived and overcame all manner of devastation and discouragement with courage and love (which sometimes are the same thing). I think of Rep. Andy Kim, picking up the garbage

last week, and speaking to his mom from the Capitol, a space she loved, while it was under siege. She came from Korea and made a life here, made a family here and raised a child who would be elected to the Congress and count it as an honor to keep the house clean. Qiyamah's words are about her people, her own ancestors, but I invite you as you hear her prayer to take a breath and think of yours, maybe blood ancestors, maybe teachers and mentors and guides, the ones who made it possible for you to come this far, and maybe to go further.

"Now is the time to call on the memories of the ancestors who, when the darkness of their lives threatened to take away the hope and light, reached a little deeper and prayed yet another prayer.

It is that time and place to remember those who came through the long night to witness another sunrise.

It is that time and place to remember the oceans of tears shed to deliver us to this time, to remember the bent knees and bowed backs, to remember the fervent voices asking, begging and beseeching for loved ones sold off.

Time to remember their laughter and joy, though they had far less, and a little reason for optimism, yet they stayed on the path toward a better day.

Time to hold to the steadfast hands and hearts and prayers of the ancestors that have brought us this far.

Time to make them proud and show them, and ourselves, what we are made of.

Time to show them that their prayers and sacrifices and lives were not in vain and did not go unnoticed, nor have they been forgotten.

Did you not know that this day would come?

Did you not know that we would have to change places?

Did you not know that just as our ancestors were delivered that you would also be delivered?

Have you not seen the greatness and power of the Creative Energy in the Universe called God that moves and has its being through human agency?

Have you not seen God in your neighbors' faces? In the homeless? In the battered woman?

The trafficked child? The undocumented worker? The dispossessed?

It is that time and that place to know that it is our turn, that we must leave a legacy for our children. And all the children.

We are the ones we've been waiting for!

Amen and Blessed Be."

For just a moment, all together, even while we are apart, let's take a breath and hold silence all together.

-silence-

These words come from Maya Angelou, from her inaugural poem, "On the Pulse of Morning," from January 20, 1993.

"Each of you, a bordered country,
Delicate and strangely made proud,

Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.
History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Take it into the palms of your hands,
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
For a new beginning.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
May you have the courage
May you have the grace to look up and out
And into your neighbor's eyes, and into
Your neighbor's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope –
Good morning.”

All the music that we're hearing and we're singing here today is borrowed music in a way, born out of the past and the present of the African American tradition. Some of the slave songs, the sorrow songs, arose from melodies and rhythms carries all the way from Africa; some of this music is new and no less powerful or true. We talk a lot about appropriation and misappropriation of other people's work, especially their art – this has been a problem for white people, including and perhaps especially well-meaning and progressive white people, for a long time. Isaye Barnwell, historian and composer, has worked for years with Unitarian Universalists and others, to help us understand this, building communities of singers, and she says, use it all. Sing the music, learn the music – but only if you tell the stories also, only if you set it in a context, so its sacred power

is respected, honored, cherished, because these songs are sanctified. This is work that we've been trying to do, with Carol's help, and Thaxter's, for a long time.

Keep your hand on the plow, eyes on the prize, for freedom never dies, but it is a constant struggle, and a constant sorrow, a mourning, a dying, a constant hunger, not in any way easy, and never satisfied once and for all. Keep your hand on the plow, and stay vigilant, awake. This music was made and is still being made, by people who knew and people who know what white America, is capable of on a daily basis, and so much of it, this music, is about love, so much it is about hope, so much of it is about standing the storm, carrying on, so much of it is about faith. Guide my feet, hold my hand, search my heart, while I run this race – for I don't want to run this race or live this life or breathe this breath in vain. You want it to matter. You want to be on the right side of history. You want to survive, and survive with your soul intact. That this music exists is a gift to us all.

Thomas Dorsey's gospel hymn, Precious Lord, Take My Hand, was Martin Luther King's favorite hymn, one he often asked the choir of his church to sing. Whenever we've sung it here, I've wondered how it falls on your ear, not only the literal image of a big, strong God with big, strong hands reaching down to help, but also the unabashed expression of dependency, the full out acknowledgement of limitation, imperfection, exhaustion and despair: I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. We don't always sing like that in here, or talk like that or act like that, so vulnerable and exposed, so honest: hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand, lest I fall. This song is a prayer. It's one thing to hum it, but to sing or pray it out loud is a show of significant trust, and maybe in that trusting, in that risk of disclosure, lies a key to resilience - for surely we can't be nor even pretend to be sturdy and hopeful and powerful and brave all the time, not in these times. Lead me home is a line for people who intend to keep on keeping on for a long, long time, for the long, long haul. It's not "lead me home to heavenly glory and feather rest on pillows of clouds (and denial)." It's "lead me back to the true home of my conviction, guide me back to my center, to my deepest commitments and covenants with those I love and this world I cherish." It's "lead me home to my brave and hopeful heart, and to my people, and my trust, my unshakable faith, that this life is a holy gift, and my whole purpose on the earth is to be worthy of it, and grateful, and laughing and loving and courageous." This song about weakness is an anthem of courage and hope.

When I'm weary and worn, when I'm dazed and confused,
when yet another fire is burning on yet another continent,
when yet another glacier melts into the ocean,
when yet another makeshift boat sinks beneath the weight of desperate people, drowning in despair,
when yet another missile is launched by a deluded leader,
or a factory closes,
or a pipeline runs through sacred land,
or a wall is built where walls do not belong,
or a gun fired,

or another person or a thousand people die of a disease that doesn't need to kill them in these numbers,
or when a country loses its way, and is given yet another chance to start again, begin again, to dream again, of liberty, justice and equality,

take my hand, hear my prayer, guide my feet, lead me home to what I know is true and good and right and maybe even possible.

HYMN Precious Lord, Take My Hand (#199 in the grey hymnal)

Precious lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light,
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear, precious lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall,
Take my hand, precious lord, lead me home.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near, and the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand;
Take my hand, precious lord, lead me home.

CLOSING WORDS -Laurie Wenker

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

FAREWELL - Victoria

Friends, thank you for joining us.

*If you are new today, join Sara directly after the service for a 15 minute Newcomer Orientation.
At 11:15 join us for Cyber Social Hour. It's actually just half an hour of easy conversation - we hope you'll come.*

We're sending love to you today from Maple Street.

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

POSTLUDE We Won't Be Silent Anymore {PPC Choir, recorded}

Oh, somebody's hurtin' my brother and it's gone on far too long
Yes, it's gone on far too long, I tell you it's gone on far too long
Oh, somebody's hurtin' my brother and it's gone on far too long
And we won't be silent any more.

Oh, somebody's hurtin' my sister and it's gone on far too long
Yes, it's gone on far too long, I tell you it's gone on far too long
Oh, somebody's hurtin' my sister and it's gone on far too long
And we won't be silent anymore.

Somebody's takin' our health care and it's gone on far too long
yes it's gone on far too long, yes, don't ya know that it's gone on far too long
Yes, somebody's hurtin' my children and it's gone on far too long
And we won't be silent anymore.
Did you hear somebody's poisoned the water and it's gone on far too long
Yes it's gone on far too long, oh, it's gone on far too long.
Yes, somebody's ignoring our elders and it's gone on far too long
And we won't be silent anymore.
Don't you know somebody's tellin' some lies, y'all and it's gone on far too long
Well, it's gone on far too long, oh it's gone on far too long
Oh, somebody's tellin' some lies and it's gone on far too long
And we won't be silent anymore.