

**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.

**This is My Song**

This is my song, O God of all the nations  
A song of peace, for lands afar and mine  
This is my home, the country where my heart is  
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine  
But other hearts in other lands are beating  
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean  
And sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine  
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover  
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine  
Oh hear my song, thou God of all the nations  
A song of peace for their land and for mine

**GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRIT - Carol Caouette**

Strong is What We Make Each Other (Mary Grigolia)  
Strong is what we make each other, strong is what we make each other  
Flowing through me, flowing through you  
breathing life, breathing life.

Pain and vision intertwining, pain and vision intertwining  
Flowing through me, flowing through you  
breathing life, breathing life.

Love and justice guide our journey, love and justice guide our journey  
Flowing through me, flowing through you  
breathing life, breathing life.

**WELCOME - Jillian Lampert**

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

Welcome especially to visitors today. If you're new to our community, you're invited to join our ministers in a very brief welcome gathering right after the service. And all are welcome to join us at 11:15 for Cyber Social

Hour, where we can meet and chat informally in small groups. We'll put links to both gatherings in the Chat box.

Today's service is completely different (in a good way, we hope) from what we do normally. Today kicks off our 2021 Pledge Campaign, asking all of you to help fund next year's budget with a generous gift to keep our church strong. Today we'll hear from service participants Rev. Sara Goodman, Nico Van Ostrand, and Carol Caouette, with music from our Choir, directed by Thaxter Cunio. But we'll also hear – and see - brief messages from a beautiful line-up of members and friends, children, youth and adults, along with updates from our President and Treasurer. We are thrilled this morning to welcome special guest Peter Mayer, who's with us live from his home studio in Stillwater! Peter, thank you so much for joining us today! We'll hear several songs from Peter: old favorites that are sacred to us now, as well as two newer pieces. And near the end, our minister, Victoria, will bless us with a brief reflection. It's a full hour, supported behind the scenes, as always, by Erin Scott and Anna Gehres.

Welcome, everyone! Together we are here to grow our souls and serve the world in love.

### **GREETINGS FROM THE 2021 PLEDGE CAMPAIGN EVAN BOYD video**

**STRONG IS WHAT WE MAKE EACH OTHER**

This Sunday is the kick-off for our pledge drive that begins in June 2021 to 2022

We are excited to have Peter Mayer assist us!

2020 has had an effect on all of us: Challenge, adversity, frustration, loss, loneliness but we are resilient.

In the pledge letter composed by Troy Stein, a member of the pledge committee, there is a beautiful summary of metaphors using the word "soon" and concludes with "soon we will light the chalice together in the same space and proclaim the opening of our service in the church." TOGETHER!

Running a church organization requires funding: for ministers, staff, building expenses and the many programs that engage us here at WBUUC that help each of us and our community. I KNOW that everyone that attends our church ECHOES a theme that is a part of the foundation of all of us when you participate in the "IN THIS I BELIEVE" service. You BELIEVE IN WBUUC! YOU BELIEVE IN EVERYTHING THAT WE DO HERE. YOUR HEART AND SOUL ARE STRENGTHENED by attending this church and the program.

To keep our church and programs strong, to keep the staff that we have, please make a pledge as soon as you can. Pledge a gift that works for you and if you can, increase it by 2% or more from last year's pledge. Some households have more challenges with the COVID-19 virus and are unable to make a pledge and your increase of 2% or greater will help us carry through this difficult time. If you have never made a pledge to WBUUC please, please consider making one now and continuing it yearly.

Help our community stay strong, grow our souls and serve the world in LOVE! The easiest way to pledge is to go on line to the church website and click on the word PLEDGE on the top right. Thank you on behalf of the ministers, staff, Board and the pledge committee.

### **CALL TO WORSHIP - Rev. Sara Goodman (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.

*Adam and Katie Heathcote will light the chalice.*

**LIGHTING THE CHALICE** Katie and Adam Heathcote (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

**MUSIC** The Morning **Peter Mayer**

See how the night is over

The dew is on the clover

The first light in the sky is forming

No foe am I afraid of

No force for I am made of

The same light that made the morning

See it come, the sun triumphant

Splendid as a thousand trumpets

Rising on the rooftops and the trees

Sweeping out the evening shadows

Giving out its gleaming gold for free

I can't hold onto sorrow

It's always gone tomorrow

Fading away at the first bird calling

There is hate but there is more love

I know, for I am born of

The same light that made the morning

So in the eastern sky, you'll find me

At the break of day, when I'll be

Back again to make another start

Coaxing opening morning glories

Telling hopeful stories of the heart

See how the night is over....

**GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD - Nicolet Lyon**

All of those here provide essential financial support to WBUUC. I cannot express how grateful the Board and I are that you were able to step up and anchor WBUUC through a tough year for everyone. The congregation

rose to the challenge. Many members were able to pay their pledges in advance last year, allowing the Board to move forward with a budget reflecting minimal reductions in minister and staff salaries. The entire Board was very pleased to be able to re-instate full salary for ADRE Nico Van Ostrand and Lead Minister Victoria Safford in December after carefully monitoring church finances. In addition, WBUUC was the recipient of a generous anonymous donation that paid off our mortgage in full. This helpfully reduced overhead expenses and Jim will provide an update this evening on our current status.

That being said, it's important to note that part of the reason for last year's financial success was that the budget was very lean. Although the Board is initially planning on a similar budget for 2021-2022, it will be necessary to increase the budget at some point to align with the intention to re-open church physical facilities. The Board, our ministers, and staff are thinking hard about how and when to safely do that. Victoria will have more to say about WBUUC's Protocols Advisory Team, who are guiding the process.

From an operations standpoint, I must tip my metaphorical hat to Victoria, Sara, Jack, Amy, Nico, Anna, and Erin for entirely re-inventing church on a dime – both in terms of speed and cost. Programming has been active, vibrant, and well attended. And not just Sunday services, which regularly draw upwards of 200 devices each weekend, but lay and staff led programming throughout the week. Our ministers and staff adjusted existing programming and invented new programming and then sometimes re-invented their new programming as they learned what worked during a pandemic and what didn't. I cannot emphasize enough how proud the Board and I are of this work and the level of service and professionalism demonstrated by Victoria and her team.

Although programming was largely forced to move online, our members did not forget how to connect in analog ways. Throughout this year, homemade meals were made and delivered to grieving members and those who needed a little TLC. The pastoral care committee wrote dozens of hand-lettered cards to support members and friends that they couldn't visit. Amy and Nico delivered boxes of RE materials to families who couldn't come and get them. Several members donated their stimulus checks to the minister's discretionary fund which allowed Victoria to help some families pay their rent. These things are not virtual. We are still serving the world and growing our souls in love - together.

Our next task, as a congregation, is to figure out how we can move forward with whatever church looks like with our core values. Courage, reverence, compassion. I thank all of you for your support on behalf of the Board and I thank you for your support as a person who joined this congregation as a young teenager – most of you have known me since then – who needed a place to go and be seen.

### **GREETINGS FROM THE TREASURER - Jim Van Ostrand video**

The church is in a strong financial position thanks to careful expense control and the overwhelming generosity of the congregation.

A few financial highlights to share:

Last year when we re-budgeted for the year in response to the pandemic, our biggest concern was the uncertainty that was ahead of us. To provide some firmness to the pledges, we asked for pre-payments from anyone who felt they could, and were able to collect \$480k in prepaid pledges at the beginning of the fiscal year – over half of our operating budget. This provided security during a time of immense uncertainty, and allowed Victoria, the staff, and lay leaders to plan for programming despite the unprecedented times.

I imagine that many who responded to that request are on this call, and we thank you. Thank you! Thank you!

We were also fortunate at the beginning of the fiscal year to receive an extraordinarily generous offer to pay off the remaining balance of the church's mortgage. Prior to the pandemic, the board and the FOC had put together a plan to retire the mortgage, but that was put on hold. This gift was timed perfectly to replace that plan. We received \$178k to retire the mortgage, which eliminated a \$30,000 annual obligation in principal and interest.

This winter we received another anonymous gift of \$75,000 for the board to use toward the operating budget, which we believe will help with expenses related to an eventual return to the church someday.

And you may remember that last spring we obtained a PPP loan in the amount of \$136,800 through the CARES act. We are currently working with our bank on filing for forgiveness of that loan, as provided in the act. You may have heard that a second round of funding has become available, but we do not qualify for that. Thanks to the generosity over this past year, the church's financial position is quite healthy. However, we continue to face uncertainty about the year ahead and for that reason continue to be cautious about spending.

**MEMBERS' TESTIMONY - Gallagher Family** - no text available

**MEMBERS' TESTIMONY - Jack Peterson**- no text available

**MUSIC Peter Mayer:** Church of the Earth

The ceiling is high  
To let your soul rise  
Up to the angels who teach you to fly  
And when you're weary of clouds  
When you come down  
It welcomes you home  
To this hallowed ground

It's gilded in gold, gilded in rust  
For heaven below and heaven above  
The heaven we know here in this world  
Here in our holy church of the earth

The windows are wide  
So darkness and light  
Mystery and Beauty meet you inside  
And there's room enough  
To hold all of us  
Gathered in friendship  
Gather in love

Church of life  
Ancient and bright  
Life that inside us shines  
Life that we share  
This is our prayer

That we may always find  
The heaven we seek  
Here at our feet  
Here in this sunrise  
In this heartbeat

### **STORY - Nico Van Ostrand**

This morning's story is a retelling of "Repairing Our Mistakes with Love," by Jaelynn Pema-la Scott and Erika A. Hewitt

Two friends, Lita and Jen, met up to share a meal together one day. Jen noticed that Lita was frowning and that her eyebrows were pinched together. "Are you okay?" asked Jen.

Lita looked even more sad at the question. "I was so excited to show you this beautiful bowl I have — but it broke this morning, and now I'm feeling upset. Can we try to fix it?"

"I didn't break it," said Jen.

"I know you didn't break it," said Lita, "but can you help me fix it anyway?"

Jen raised her eyebrows. "You mean help you fix it even though I didn't break it? I just need you to understand that I'm a good person. I don't go around breaking bowls." Jen wasn't sure why, but she was feeling hurt and a little bit angry.

Lita took a deep breath. "It's important to me that we figure out how to fix this bowl, because it means a lot to me. And I'd like you to help, because you mean a lot to me."

Jen realized that her hurt and anger weren't helping to fix the bowl, and in fact might even be hurting her friendship with Lita. "Okay, then: do you have any ideas about how we could fix the bowl?"

The friends thought for a while: "We could try glue . . . or tape . . . we could ask all our friends to chew a piece of gum and use it to stick the pieces back together . . ."

"Wait! I have an idea that might actually work! It's called kintsugi."

"What's kintsugi?" asked Jen.

"Kintsugi is the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery and ceramics: gold is used to highlight the beauty of the imperfections that remain when a broken item has been repaired."

"So what I'm learning is that the point of kintsugi isn't to hide the broken parts, right?"

"That's right!" Lita was actually starting to feel excited at this idea. "The gold is used to remind the user, over and over, that something that was once broken is whole again and it has a different beauty."

Jen nodded thoughtfully. "In a way, that's what happens when other things break, right?"

“What kinds of things?”

“Like, relationships. Friendships. Sometimes we hurt each other’s feelings, and it’s like the thread between two people breaks. But as Unitarian Universalists, we don’t ignore that: we try to rebuild the relationship so that it’s stronger than it was before.”

The two friends finished their meal together, and spent the rest of the afternoon carefully repairing Lita’s beautiful bowl.

This story reminds us that a community, like Lita’s broken bowl, may break or experience hardships -- like white supremacy, or a global pandemic, or the smaller, but still difficult cracks between individuals -- yet it is possible to reconnect. Not by pretending the crack never happened, but by acknowledging hurt, drawing the separate pieces together again with a line of gold, with love and covenant, forever changing the community through healing.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE OFFERING - Jillian Lampert**

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 - Covenant, by Carol Caouette**

Covenant

To cross the river, to blur the line between your memory of sorrow,  
My fear of the unknown.

We have the courage to wade into the waters, to swim against the current  
And tread a deeper course.

This is our covenant: to dwell together peacefully,  
To seek the truth in love, and help each other grow.

**MEMBERS’ TESTIMONY     Bob Gagner video - no text available**

**MEMBERS’ TESTIMONY     Mary Rogers video - no text available**

**MUSIC   Peter Mayer:** When It Gets Dark

If you’re stressed and get depressed with politics and traffic jams  
And Google news has frightened you, and CNN has made you mad  
And talk of the environment has left you spent and pessimistic  
For the future, just remember that

Lurking at your feet there is enchantment underneath the ground  
Forces that have brought you here are wielding all their power now  
The air, the sun, the water and the soil are conspiring  
And magic things are happening

CHORUS:

When it gets dark in your heart  
With the world and all its worries, well you just might find  
A little light if you start  
To make a little garden in your little back yard

For when you plant a seed, you see, you conjure up the mystery  
That turns the earth to flesh and bone, the very stone to you and me  
That causes all the atoms to combine, to be awake, to be alive  
To be a blade of green reaching for the sun

So don't despair, just get out there beneath the sky, beneath the rain  
Beneath the stars, that's what you are, the very light from which you came  
And that same light is in the land and in your hand and in  
And that very little seed you plant

CHORUS:

When it gets dark in your heart  
With the world and all its worries, well you just might find  
A little light if you start  
To make a little garden in your little back yard

And ignite that spark of life

## **SERMON Victoria**

*When it gets dark in your heart with the world and all its worries, just remember that lurking at your feet there is enchantment underneath the ground. Forces that have brought you here are wielding all their power now, and magic things are happening...*

*See how the night is over. The dew is on the clover. The first light in the sky is forming. No foe am I afraid of, no force, for I am made of the same light that made the morning...*

Peter, we are so grateful to welcome you back this morning. Your music comes today at exactly the right moment, these lines which are brimful of joy, relentless reminders, right when we need them. Here where we're clinging on the precarious rim of snow-melt and pandemic melt-down, comes your assurance that up over our heads and under our feet and all around us, still shining, are miracles. Not just the beauty of the living world, but our capacity still to notice it, to cherish it, respond to it, even now, especially now, when we feel so winter-worn and Covid-weary, so frazzled and frightened and kind of numb – thank you for reminding us with your art, your poetry, your presence, that this life is lovely, and a gift.

We're stretching an old muscle now, hope, testing to see if it flexes. Millions of people, many of you, have been vaccinated. We still have a long way to go, the last leg of a long journey still ahead of us, but now at least we can begin to imagine anticipating things, and most of them are not big, flamboyant, ostentatious things but little things, ordinary things, basic necessary things (a clasped hand, a hug, a shared meal, a visit with someone beloved). It is a joy and a relief to know that our powers of anticipation, the muscles of hope, are still pretty strong, just as the spring light now is strong on both ends of the day, and though we may still get another blizzard or two or more, you know that snow won't last. The birds are loud in the morning, and they won't stop

singing now; there is no turning back as this earth turns our hemisphere toward spring, toward green, toward light. The ice will soon crack and robins will fly out, and flowers and baseballs and kayaks and bikes. Covid's vice-grip will soften – we can see it now - and we will come out, blinking in the light of it.

We don't know yet what that looks like. We know, but can't yet know really, that nothing will be quite the same. We won't be again the same, and some small part of us is beginning quietly to wonder whether that might be a good thing. Nico told us the story of the mended bowl, the broken container soldered with gold, kintsugi. There are whole songs about that, and old sermons – and it's a beautiful image for this time that we're in, this tender threshold of a time, between our old life, which in some ways is shattered, and our new life ahead which we will have to piece together - a new life which we have the opportunity to piece together. Together. All year we've been asking (exactly a year), what from our old lives will we carry forward – and what might we leave behind? What from what we've learned in Covid time will we carry forward – what we've learned and discerned about community, connection, loss and love and death and family and faith? Did you find your faith, or lose it this year? Or both? Mine feels like the broken bowl, pieced back together with gold, all the cracks visible now, the fissures, the faults, visible and glittering, in their honesty. The strength of it, therefore, is maybe stronger than before, the strength of the faith I carry forward: faith in the living world, faith in the larger Love that holds us in its hand, whatever that mystery is, and faith in the resilience of people – my faith not heroes, not in saints, but in people. And let me be very specific: I'm talking about you, your resilience, your resistance to despair, enticing as it is, your persistence, in showing up week after week, for zoom church (which, let's admit it, is strange), for screen school, for work from home, or no work, or work on-site in dangerous conditions, your persistence in showing up through loneliness and loss, some of it just about unspeakable, humbles me, bedazzles me, keeps me keeping on. I think of you, specifically, you in this community, and my faith in this wild and sacred journey we call life is restored, as if with gold. I think of you, this church community, which cannot congregate but is still in every way a congregation, and I think of the line, *how can I keep from singing?* Our lives flow on in endless song, above earth's lamentation.

You turned on a dime, as Nicolet said, to online services, online theme circles, book groups, classes, pastoral care, one on one meetings for mutual support when your spirits were flagging (or someone else's were, and you showed up), and the lovely, random jumble of cyber social hour. You've brought prayer shawls and meals to the sick and the grieving, come by for cocoa and candles and Christmas Eve coloring pages, you took home our hymnals and showed up singing for church in your Sunday best pajamas. You not only maintained but fastened commitments to justice partners in the wider community – immigration work and Project Home, People Inc., serving those who live at the devastating intersection of poverty and mental illness, and the local food shelves rising to the new tidal waves of food insecurity, and all this, too is church, these covenants, these circles of care beyond our own comfort. Our choir, led by Thaxter, learned to sing alone together, because they really can't keep from singing, and I know it saves their lives a bit to do this, to make these beautiful recordings, and they save us in turn, along with Carol's steady voice and presence every week. *Hold on*, she tells us, *just a little while longer, everything is gonna be all right*. Carol, when you sing it, we believe it, without any real evidence at all. You bring us to church. You all do. The men's group has met, week after week, online and outside, connected more strongly than ever before, and behind the scenes, Erin and Anna hold us together, teaching old dogs and un-herd-able cats all kinds of new tricks that one year ago we would not have believed we could master.

In April, about a month from now, and in May, we'll be holding congregational conversations about when we'll meet again, in person. You're all invited, urged to log in and attend with your questions, suggestions, your hopes and concerns. It's time to start imagining in earnest, for real, how this is going to work, coming back on

site. Re-opening, of course, is more complicated than it was to shut down. But today I'm thinking more about the moment that we're in right now, and how this, too, is real.

Churches are not buildings. As beautiful as our building is, gilded in god, gilded in rust, our church of the earth, the building is not the church. The church exists in the memories and dreams of its people, in the shared sorrows and joys of its people, which is to say, in stories: the streams of our individual stories all flowing together, and flowing also (because all water is connected, even metaphorical water), our confluent stories flowing also into the river of history. A church is not a building, obviously- a church is the faith of its people, the courage of its people, the conviction of its people, the deepest doubts and the love of its people, a love that shows up all among us, close to home, in community, and a love that shows up ferocious and brave in the world. That's what this pledge campaign is asking you to support, to fund, to maintain: this community of youth, adults and children, bound not by creed, but by covenant, who mean to grow their souls and serve this world in love. Transform this world with love, and our own selves along the way.

Peter sang to us,

*The first light in the sky is forming. No foe am I afraid of, no force – for I am made of the same light that made the morning.*

We believe that here, believe that these elements that comprise our bodies and our minds are made of star-stuff, made of light, that we are one with one another, and the water and the squirrels and the trees. We hold to science here, and wonder.

Peter sings,

*I can't hold onto sorrow... There is hate, but there is more love. I know, for I am born of the same light that made the morning.*

We believe that, too – that we are called to use the precious gift of life, the unlikely miracle of life, to bring more love, brave love, into a broken human world, to piece it back together with courage and compassion.

Tomorrow, as you know, jury selection begins for the trial of the former officer who murdered George Floyd last May. I believe the church exists, our church exists and we exist, each one of us, to shine light in this world, to shine hope, to shine truth, to shine beauty, make love where love is not. It is hard and holy work. The church exists within the fractured bowl of human community, not in any way removed from the scars and wounds of white supremacy, hatred, lies, oppression. The church exists to preach and teach the brokenness, as well as all the beauty of this life. The church exists to tell an old story, a gospel of radical love, and radical transformation, of persons and peoples, nations and neighborhoods, the possibility of that, where the old world and the old ways are shattered so new power and new strength, new voices, new wisdom can emerge, voices and wisdom that in fact have been there all along, if only we'd all been listening. The church exists to listen for and sing with all its heart a new song.

We don't know yet what will happen in the days ahead. We only know we are called to show up, whether in the streets or in our hearts, and how we show up is a sacred choice. We can set an intention, to be open, to be brave. We hold our breath, our blessed breath, and pray that love will win, and that from such love comes justice, which is requisite for peace.

I invite you to join in a spirit of prayer:

Spirit of life, god of a thousand names and beyond all naming,  
We are the threshold now,  
glad and hopeful in this moment,  
and fearful in this moment.  
We don't know what lies ahead; we never do.  
May we carry forward in the days ahead  
the strength and love of our beloved church community,  
its wisdom, its laughter, its courage, which none of us can muster alone, but only gather from each other.  
May we carry forward, into the next day and the next, the compassion we have found here,  
as we strive as best we can to seek the truth in love,  
and to help one another.  
Amen

I invite you now to take a breath, and speak aloud or silently the names of those you're holding in your heart,  
trusting that all of us are here to hold them with you.

AMEN.

Peter's going to sing for us one more time. *Blue Boat Home* is in the green hymnal, #1064. You can also find the lyrics in the service transcript in the chat box.

**MUSIC** Peter Mayer: Blue Boat Home  
Though below me I feel no motion  
Standing on these mountains and plains  
Far away from the rolling ocean  
Still my dry land heart can say  
I've been sailing all my life now  
Never harbor nor port have I known  
The wide universe is the ocean I travel  
And the Earth is my blue boat home

Sun, my sail and moon, my rudder  
As I ply the starry sea  
Leaning over the edge in wonder  
Casting questions into the deep  
Drifting here with my ship's companions  
All we kindred pilgrim souls  
Making our way by the lights of the heavens  
In our beautiful blue boat home

I give thanks to the waves upholding me  
Hail the great winds urging me on  
Greet the infinite sea before me  
Sing the sky my sailor's song  
I was born upon the fathoms  
Never harbor or port have I known

The wide universe is the ocean I travel  
And the Earth is my blue boat home  
The wide universe is the ocean I travel  
And the Earth is my blue boat home

**CLOSING WORDS Jillian Lampert**

Please join me in the closing words:

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

**FAREWELL - Rev. Sara Goodman**

Thank you all for being here today, and thank you, Peter Mayer, for sharing with us the gift of your music. In this pandemic year, so many of us have relied on your beautiful songs to keep our spirits strong and hopeful.

Friends, please make a pledge to support our church financially. There's a link in the chat box to our website, or you can call us up or email. You can do it online; you can mail it in – this year especially, it would really help if you get your pledge in early (like today) so we can move forward with confidence and hope.

Be well, friends. Sending you love from all of us, Strong is what we make each other!

**POSTLUDE** “Haba Na Haba” WBUUC Choir and Youth Choir