

“The Fire of New Desires” ©
Flower Communion
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd
June 4, 2017

As we enter this sacred space together in fellowship and holiness, please turn off your electronic devices and respect others' need for silent reflection.

Gathering Music *Traditional Chinese Folk Music* Emily Phillips

Sounding of the Gong

Welcome Neil Schultes
Board of Trustees

Prelude *Mozart’s Romance, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, Mov’t 2*

Chalice Lighting & Bell
(The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith)

Opening Words Rev. Lloyd

179 adapted from Mark Belletini¹

We are here
as we are –

mortal, concerned, life-affirming,
turned toward joy, facing our woes –

to worship, to behold the mysteries of life and death
without shield of creed

May our celebration, help move us into that company who lived to unveil ever-deeper truth,
who yielded their faithfulness when history’s hard press was upon them,
who honed their lives,
no less fragile or strong than our own,
on the whetstone of [Love’s] demands and ecstasies, O love.

¹ **Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the Living** Tradition (Boston, Unitarian Universalist Association, 2015) 59.

Life of our own lives, we begin again.

****Opening Hymn #8** *Mother Spirit, Father Spirit*

Receiving The Flowers *Pachelbel's Canon in D*

(You are invited to bring your flowers forward or you may hand them to someone else to bring forward)

***Consecrating the Flowers – Unison Reading**

Flowers unfold slowly and gently, bit by bit in the sunshine. A soul, too, must never be pushed or driven but unfolds in its own perfect timing to reveal its true wonder and beauty. Our work is to be gardeners of . . . souls, wherever we are. Everywhere, seeds are beginning to germinate. Let us tend them with the greatest of care. They are very tender and delicate. Let us water them with love.

~ from The Findhorn Garden

New Member Ceremony

- Nancy Stanwood

#Sing the Young People Out

Before our children leave for their classes, we invite them to come forward and take a flower .

'Till we meet again (2x)

May peace go with you (2x)

Honoring Our Joys and Sorrows

And, now, if you woke this morning with a sorrow so heavy that you need the help of this community to carry it; or if, in the spirit of thankfulness, you woke with gratitude in your heart that simply must be shared, now is the time for you to speak.

Please come forward to the lectern as you are able. Or, we will bring a mic to you, as needed.

PAUSE

Let us reflect with reverence in our hearts for the joys and sorrows spoken and unspoken today.

Sung Meditation: Hymn #352 *Find a Stillness*

Offertory Words

204 adapted from John Morgan²

"In the end, it won't matter how much we have, but how generously we have given.
It won't matter how much we know, but rather how well we live.
And it won't matter how much we believe, but how deeply we love."

Let us now take the morning's offering.

Offering & Offertory Music

Morning Has Come, Jason Shelton

SUUS Singers

We thank you for your generosity of spirit and of giving.

Reflection *The Fire of New Desires*

Rev. Lloyd

Imagine those times in history when people were not allowed to speak their mind, to speak truth to power, to worship (or not worship) as they choose, to pursue refuge and liberty.

Imagine those times when power disparages mercy and thereby corrupts.

Such times come and go, and come again, and we are called, nonetheless, to lead one another towards peace and love and fairness. We are called to speak our truth with love and compassion for and to one another. We are called to lure, to entice, to invite out of the depths of one another the embedded love within us that seeks release through our hearts, minds, and hands. That seeks release through our best ways of being with one another.

Today, on the 95th anniversary of its creation, we celebrate with our Unitarian congregations around the world, the heroic heretic who created our Flower Communion ritual, Rev. Norbert Capek. In the 1920's, Rev. Capek was the minister of the Unitarian Church in Prague, Czechoslovakia³ where "he led a flock of religious liberals of widely varied backgrounds – Jews and Humanists, former Catholics, and Protestants. [His sermons focused] on ethics, religious liberty, and social justice."⁴

² **Lifting Our Voices, Readings in the Living Tradition** (Boston, Unitarian Universalist Association, 2015) 67.

³ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

⁴ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

Raised a Catholic, he became an acolyte at the age of 10, but was “soon disillusioned by [his] priest’s cynical attitudes and behavior toward [the] parishioners. At age 18, Capek resigned from the Roman Catholic Church and was baptized a Baptist. [He entered this faith] with his whole heart . . . [In time] founded almost a dozen Baptist churches from [the] Ukraine to Budapest.”⁵ During World War I, he worked hard, “writing, speaking, [and] sponsoring public meetings for the independence of Czechoslovakia . . .”⁶

Overtime, his faith evolved toward liberal religion and a free Christian faith [leading] him ultimately to resign his Baptist ministry. In his diary, he [wrote], ‘I cannot be a Baptist any more, even in compromise. The **fire of new desires**, new worlds, is burning inside of me.’”⁷ He was moving toward Unitarianism.

“In [the twenties], he and his wife began to build a vigorous nation-wide religious movement. In . . . 20 years, the Unitarian Church in Prague [became the largest Unitarian congregation in the world], with 3200 members. [Beyond the church] . . . some 8000 Czechs considered themselves Unitarian . . .

[But, the price paid to follow his conscious and lead others toward religious and personal freedom was high.] . . .

On [March 28th, 1941], Capek and his daughter, Zora, were arrested by the Gestapo. [He was charged with **listening** to foreign broadcasts [(which was a capital offense)] and **delivering sermons of high treason**. Zora was forced into a labor camp in Germany. Capek was sent first to Dachau [Germany], and then to Hartheim Castle in Austria,] where he died of poison gas.”⁸

“Subscribing to no theological system, Capek celebrated the ‘[soul’s] hidden cry for harmony with the Infinite’ . . . [He said], ‘Every person . . . is an embodiment of God⁹ and in every one of us God struggles for higher expression.”¹⁰ “The church’s task must be to place truth above any tradition, spirit above any scripture, freedom above authority,

⁵ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

⁶ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

⁷ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

⁸ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

⁹ Please note: Rev. Lloyd does not typically spell out the word, “G*d,” because the term is loaded with many misconceptions and preconceptions. That which is the spirit of life and community, the spirit of love and death, the spirit of humanity, cannot be relegated to one three letter word. Rev. Lloyd invites others to reconsider the meanings of this word, and, to contemplate whether it is a noun or verb. Is G*d Love? The reader is invited to expand their vision and understanding . . .

¹⁰ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

and progress above all reaction. [The truly religious person will have *these abilities*:] to have faith and confidence, the ability of hope, [reverence for life in the form of worship], . . . selfless love, and [the practice of being governed by one’s own conscience].”¹¹

PAUSE

In each day and age, people have sought to see the bigger picture, to create new ways of understanding that will make the world better, bring peace to the world, and guide us in how to address violence and oppression in our own times. We are indebted to those prophets who rise in every time and age, seeking truth. Not easy to control, they are often the heretics who somehow are able to step outside the world we take for granted, and name how we might try to do better. Heretics have that ability to see the larger picture, to step outside themselves and to remind us of the truly important things in life: faith, hope, reverence, selfless love, freedom of conscience.

Rev. Rebecca Parker¹² offers us these words . . .

“. . . our religious heritage has consistently protested the image of God as a sanctioner of violence. When [the Universalist,] Hosea Ballou, issued his treatise on the doctrine of . . . atonement in 1805 he objected to the God of violence who required the death of his son to save humanity. Universalism proclaims that violence does not save the world. Our hope, rather, is in the creative activity of love.

- Love[,] . . . the active, creative force that repairs life’s injuries and brings new possibilities into being.
- Love speaks out in the face of injustice and oppression, calling leaders to account when policies and practices are injuring people.
- Love tends the wounds created by injustice and evil and offers compassion in the presence of life’s suffering.
- Love builds communities of inclusion and friendship that break through the boundaries of prejudice and enmity.
- Love embraces the goodness of this world and seeks paradise on earth, a heaven of mutual respect.
- Love generates life—from the first moment of conception of a child, to the last moment when love creates a way for those who have died to be remembered with gratitude and tenderness.

¹¹ <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html> April 19, 2014

¹² <http://www.uuworld.org/2002/05/commentary.html> April 19, 2014

- And in the deepest night, when our hearts are breaking, it is the discovery of a love that chooses unshakeable fidelity to our common humanity that renews us and redirects us to a life of generosity.”

Positive change almost never comes without a few heretics and troublemakers to disturb the status quo. By our presence here today, we come seeking in each other new understandings, we come looking for the heretics in our midst to show us a better way.

May this congregation be a place where each of us is so embolden to preach and demand of others fair treatment and love for all. May Love command our lives in such a profound way as to leave others breathless. And, in their breathlessness, may they too be inspired to live lives of compassion, justice and Love.

So may it be.

[Invite the congregation to come forward to collect a flower from the communion of flowers.]

***Closing Hymn #108** *My Life Flows On in Endless Song*

***Closing Words**

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Extinguishing the Chalice

Sounding of the Gong