

"Finding Balance" ©
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd & Amy Buckley, DFF
September 8, 2019

Sounding of the Gong

Gathering Music *To a Water-Lily*, MacDowell Nick Stanford, Pianist

#Welcome Mary Strieff, President
Board of Trustees

Prelude *Excerpt from Impromptu in G flat major*, Schubert

Chalice Lighting Martino Family
(The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith)

Opening Words Rev. Lloyd

These words from Anne Morrow Lindbergh, from her book, *Gift From the Sea*, "Many bonds, many strands, of different texture and strength, [make] up a web that is taut & firm. The web is fashioned of love . . . It is woven of memories of meetings and conflicts, of triumphs and disappointments [, of shared language, and no language]; . . . of likes & dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental. It is a web of instincts and intuitions, and known and unknown exchanges. The web of [love] is made in the day-to-day living side by side, looking . . . and working outward in the same direction. It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself."¹

#*Opening Hymn 361 *Enter, Rejoice & Come In*

As we prepare to sing our hymn, you will find the hymnals under the seat in front of you, unless you're in the front row where they were on your seat. We invite you to share hymnals.

¹ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 73-74.

Installation & Covenant: Director of Faith Formation, Amy Buckley

**Congregational Covenant
with
Director of Faith Formation, Amy Buckley
September 8, 2019**

Rev. Jeanne: I'd like to invite those members present, who were on the Director of Faith Formation Search Team, to rise: Kathy Helmrich, Search Chair; Benna Lehrer, the Faith Formation Team Chair; Jere Armen and Jennifer Swenson, Members-at-Large. They worked tirelessly for a year, not only to determine what this congregation and its children need, but also to find someone who will fill this half-time position well. We thank you for your work.

We are grateful to accept Amy Buckley, our current vocal leader, into a second staff position, serving as our Director of Faith Formation, effective August 1st.

And so it is our privilege to welcome Amy into her new role. At this time, we covenant with her as she does with us, so that the spirits of our children, their families, and other members of the congregation may be fed, grown, and nurtured into the fullness of life.

- I invite Mary Strieff, our President to come forward to lead the congregation in Amy's installation.
- I invite Amy to come forward.
- I invite all members to stand in body or spirit and read from the pink insert in your Order of Service.

Let us begin.

Amy, what have you to say to us?

Amy: As your new Director of Faith Formation, I will walk with you, as together we create and care for your faith formation program. Will you walk with me? Will you bring your energy and talent to support the programs we create together?

Congregation: We will. We will share our vision with you, and work with you to make it real. Will you help us to learn and grow?

Amy: I will, and I will learn and grow alongside you. I will honor you by dealing with you honestly, directly and with respect.

Congregation: And we will share our thoughts that relate to you and your work with you directly, so we can solve problems together. Will you do your best to attend to the details of this work, while holding the big picture?

Amy: I will. Will you strive for forgiveness and offer to help when something important to you does not get the attention that you would like to see?

Congregation: We will. Will you take risks in your work? Will you encourage us to take risks and try new things?

Amy: I can promise that the path I choose will not always be the safe one – I will take some risks, and I will make some mistakes; when I do, will you assume that my intentions are good, and help me to correct mistakes, and – when I mess up – to return to covenant with you?

Congregation: We will.

Minister: In the spirit of our deep congregational values, we covenant with you, Amy Buckley, as our Director of Faith Formation. We will walk with you in a partnership to strengthen the life of our congregation, and Unitarian Universalism; even as we seek to respond to new realities with faith, courage, and vision.

Welcome!

Story

Amy Buckley, DFF

Hello friends and welcome! Did you all have a good summer? I know I did. I rode my bike (BIKE PIC), I went to Mystic and I had seven friends from Sweden visit for a week. The days were long and lazy and on several evenings we would make a fire pit, roast marshmallows and watch the fireflies in the yard. Do you like marshmallows? Did anyone else try to catch a firefly like me (FIREFLY PIC)? But then summer started to feel like it was coming to an end... The first day of school was approaching and I had to buy my daughter some new clothes and school supplies. My daughter, Viviana, is four, and she started kindergarten this year. How many of you have been to kindergarten? Adults, you too? Do you remember that first day? Or how about the memory of putting your first (or my case only) child on the bus? Were you nervous? I know I was. After a long summer of peace and tranquility I was starting to feel a little off balance... Worrying thoughts started popping in my head about things I had no control over. And I started to become consumed with anticipation. Does anyone know what anticipation is? Not only was I worrying about my daughter, but I was worrying about my new job here SUUS... Do you ever feel worried or unbalanced? Sometimes after a long time away from riding my bike, I worry that when I get back on I won't remember how to do it. But guess what, every time I return it's like being home again and I get right back on and feel confident

and whole as I feel the breeze and a sense of being at peace even while in motion. I also feel at peace and balanced when I'm here at SUUS. All the worry and anticipation; remember what that word means? All the worry and anticipation that I've had this past month is now at ease by being here with you at our faith home; a place where we explore deep questions and develop meaningful relationships. I hope that SUUS is a place that brings you balance, and like riding a bike, every time you return it feels like home (BIKE PIC).

Now we are going to go back to our seats and I want you to think about what things make you feel balanced and at home.

Offertory Words

September Share the Plate

Here, we share with generosity what treasure we have with others whose needs are greater than our own. Our Share the Plate collection donates 50% of our cash offering each week to a designated community program that serves others. This month your cash contributions will go to: *Uganda Call to Care, a non-profit that brings water to rural Africa through the good will of volunteers and charitable donations. It was founded and is run by our own Martha Hoffmann. Since 2007, this organization has drilled 62 wells, bringing water and life to over 40,000 people. You can help bring water to more people by contributing cash today.*

And yet, while some people die of thirst in one part of the world, other people living in the Bahamas and our southern states suffer from too much water and destruction. Would that there could be a perfect balance in all these places. Still, we know that water is essential to life and living. In this, our water communion, we celebrate the life-giving properties of water while holding in our hearts prayers for those who are suffering from the effects of Hurricane Dorian. Let us find ways to support those effected. In your Announcements Insert, you will find the addresses of two Unitarian Universalist organizations where you can direct additional funds to hurricane survivors.

Please give as generously as you are able.

Offering & Offertory Music

The Water is Wide

Scottish Folksong

*The water is wide
I cannot get over . . .
Nor have I wings
With which to fly . . .
Oh give me a boat*

That can carry two . . .

We both shall row

My friend and I.

Reflection *Finding Balance*

Rev. Lloyd & Amy Buckley

Rev. Lloyd

Welcome Home! Welcome Home! Sounds good doesn't it? As we return home from our various summer experiences to this spiritual community, this home for the soul, we slip once again into a familiar world, one where we gather to remind ourselves of what is truly important in life.

PAUSE

When I say the word "home", I am struck by how many ways that word can be interpreted. Most-often people think of a house. But, for some, it is more than just a building, home is a place of comfort, perhaps a place of love and family.

I think the word "home" means even more than that. In its broadest and deepest sense, it means a people or a place to which one feels connected, it represents something that resides at our core, brings out our best selves, is the ground of being from which we draw strength and by which our identity is, at least partially shaped. This kind of "home" is not always the house in which we were raised or the house in which we live. It isn't even always found in our chosen relationships. This kind of "home" is a place on earth or in the mind that inspires us to get in touch with the few things which truly bring purpose to our lives. It is the place where we find ourselves, find our creative energy, find the heart of the meaning of life.

Sounds good – but it's not so easy to find, is it? Or, once, found, held on to . . . For sure, major life events get in the way, but perhaps more significantly are the daily events that distract us and lure us into complacency about finding and holding onto this deeper sense of home in our lives.

PAUSE

I imagine that all of you, perhaps some more than others keep short and long lists of things to do. Each of us has a different calendar to which we give our time and energies each year. Some of us have more flexible schedules, some don't. Some of us create daily or weekly lists that guide us in how we spend our lives. Some never make lists, responding first to others' priorities.

I don't know about you, but each year, I battle with the paradox of creating my lists, and then being governed by them. I struggle with the great number of people and things to which I devote my time and energy, and then I struggle to find retreat and respite from those responsibilities. For me, very often, I try to practice life with Zen-like meditative mindfulness . . . and then . . . I keep falling off the wagon (so to speak) to move on to the next item on my list of things to do. I keep thinking I can do both in the moment, tending to those I choose to care about and my responsibilities, and practicing mindfulness at the same time. I believe others can do it. But, it's hard for me to find an ongoing balance (like riding a bicycle) where I can do both in same the moment! I see-saw back and forth, chastising myself for not being more mindful all the time, and yet also disappointed if I somehow let "the team" down. That team could be my family, my friends, the board of this congregation, or you. It is a perpetual struggle, and I wonder if any of you ever experience this same kind of see-saw between spiritual self-care and fulfilling your responsibilities?

Can I see a show of hands?

PAUSE

This struggle becomes most apparent, to me, on summer vacations or other retreats. There, I am separated from my lists and responsibilities, and cast adrift to live in the moment, according to what my basic needs are at that moment. Sometimes, in these moments of retreat, it is even possible to put the watch in the drawer (*remove watch*), and simply get up when rested, eat when hungry, play when moved to, sit in reverence of something beautiful, sleep when tired, and perhaps, simply engage in casual, purposeless, inquisitive, thoughtful conversation with someone you've lived with for a very long time, but who is no longer quite as familiar as they once were.

When I picked up Anne Morrow Lindbergh's book, "*Gift from the Sea*," I didn't expect her to speak to this particular topic of balance in our lives. I didn't really know what to expect, except that it had a nice cover ;-).

She wrote, saying,

Amy Buckley, DFF

"[what I want, first] of all --- [is] to be at peace with myself. I want a singleness of eye, a purity of intention, a central core to my life that will enable me to carry out [my]

*obligations and activities as well as I can. I want, in fact . . . to live 'in grace' as much of the time as possible . . . By grace I mean an inner harmony, essentially spiritual, which can be translated into outward harmony. I am seeking perhaps what Socrates asked for . . . when he said, 'May the outward and inward [human] be one.' I would like to achieve a state of inner spiritual grace from which I [can] function and give as I was meant to [give] . . ."*² *"To live in a state of grace, this most happy condition . . . where "one seems to carry all one's tasks before one lightly, as if borne along on a great tide . . ."*³

PAUSE

Rev. Lloyd

What I realize most as I study her reflections is that sometimes we suffer distraction because we have the *luxury* of entertaining too many distractions in our daily lives. She notes that it is a privilege to have so many choices. And, she that some practices are more likely to create a sense of inner harmony than others. One of them is the practice of simplification, of narrowing down the seductive choices presented to us, and focusing more deliberately on those that bring us closer to the home of our being and spirit, closer to the place from where inner harmony may arise.

One of the things I realize is that, at least at this point in my life, I'm probably not going to find that inner harmony in every moment of my life. There are dishes to wash, meals to prepare, lists to pay attention to, people that I want to pay attention to. It isn't a matter of me creating one perfect persona that glides along in inner perfect harmony with myself and everyone else throughout the day. It's more a matter of being self-aware that it is my responsibility to narrow my choices to those that most successfully sustain and ground me, and to practice this self-discipline in such a way that some corner of the day or week, allows me to get in touch with that home within, where the spirit dwells.

I also realize in thinking about this, that the only thing that I have control over, that any of us have control over, are those spiritual practices we choose to include in our lives that help us assure that what we do is congruent with the inner person we wish to be. There will always be outer distractions vying for our time, pulling us this way and that, threatening whatever "outer harmony" we wish to create. But, that outer harmony, however fragile it may be, is completely, totally, undeniably dependent on the degree to which we choose to nurture our inner harmony, and help others to do the same. That is what we are about, here at Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society.

² Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 18-19.

³ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 19.

But, it's not such an easy thing to do, is it? It is so easy to forget our best intentions . . .
Maybe this will help:

Lindbergh speaks of the concept of "multiplicity."

Amy Buckley, DFF

*Today we would call it "multi-tasking." "[In this year of 1955] . . . life . . . in America is based on the premise of ever-widening circles of contact and communication. It involves not only family demands, but community demands, national demands, international demands on the good citizen, through social and cultural pressures, through newspapers, magazines, radio programs, political drives, charitable appeals and so on."*⁴
*"The pattern of our lives [has become] essentially circular. We must be open to all points of the compass: [our partner]; children; friends; home; community; . . . stretched out; exposed; sensitive like a spider's web to each breeze that blows, to each call that comes. How difficult for us, then, to achieve balance, in the midst of these contradictory tensions . . ."*⁵ *"The present is passed over in the race for the future; the 'here' is neglected in favor of the there"*⁶ *This is not a life of simplicity but the life of multiplicity that the wise [ones] warn us of. It does not bring grace, it destroys the soul."*⁷

PAUSE

*"How desirable and how distant is the ideal of the contemplative, artist or saint – the inner [indivisible] core, the single eye."*⁸
*"[With] . . . new awareness, both painful and humorous, I begin to understand why the saints [were] rarely married . . ."*⁹

PAUSE

Rev. Lloyd

Instead of achieving constant mindfulness, she allows herself to consider that life is not a matter of keeping the sea saw of inner and outer harmony perfectly balanced like a sea saw that goes neither up nor down. But, rather it is creating opportunities for "alternating rhythm[s] between these two extremes; a swinging of the pendulum

⁴ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 20.

⁵ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 22.

⁶ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 24.

⁷ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 20.

⁸ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 22.

⁹ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 22.

between solitude and communion [with self and others], between retreat and return."¹⁰
She challenges us to ask these questions of ourselves . . .

Amy Buckley, DFF

1. "[Are] we [only] . . . successful . . . at the periphery of [our lives but] not at the center?"
2. "[What have been the real causalities of our modern lives? Are they] . . . the here, the now, the individual and [our] relationships?"¹¹ ???

Rev. Lloyd

And, I ask you, "What needs doing to create a spiritually sustaining community that helps people grow into their own personhood?" Lindbergh gives a taste of what is necessary . . .

Amy Buckley, DFF

" . . . [Good relationships have a pattern like a dance and [are] built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same [intricate] pattern, [joyfully] . . . swift and free . . . // To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand, only the barest touch in passing. Now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back – it does not matter which. Because . . . the partners [move] to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it."¹²

Rev. Lloyd

She names that no relationship, and no community, stays the same as it was in the beginning, nor stays the same throughout all the years. She points out that it is only in the here and now, that our relationships exist, and that as time, circumstances and distractions occur, our relationships change. In that very change is the intermittency of life. And, in the intermittency of life is the adventure calling us to grow . . . in the moment . . . on our own terms and . . . in response to the dance of life. She says,

Amy Buckley, DFF

"We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap [away] at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity, when the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is its growth in fluidity [and in] freedom[.] [In] the [same] sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass . . . [so, too] each cycle of

¹⁰ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 24.

¹¹ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 117-118.

¹² Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 96.

*the tide is valid; each cycle of the wave is valid; each cycle of [our] relationship[s] [with each other] is valid.*¹³

Rev. Lloyd

Here, in this spiritual home, we stretch to know each other, to understand the other and we grow in the stretching. We affirm, as Lindbergh states, that

Amy Buckley, DFF

*"[It] is the unknown with all its disappointments and surprises that it is the most enriching."*¹⁴ *"When we start at the center of ourselves, we discover something worthwhile extending toward the periphery of the circle. We find again some of the joy in the now, some of the peace in the here, some of the love in me and thee."*¹⁵

Rev. Lloyd

May this congregation be the spiritual home where we learn to dance effortlessly with each other, allowing each their own personhood, and accepting the gifts each offers to the whole.

May it be so.

Water Communion

Today is a special day for us. It is the day we regather to intentionally form our faith community once again. And, when we do so, we celebrate water communion by sharing the waters of our lives.

At this time, I will pour in our vessel the water of many other communions across the years.

You are invited to share with us water that is meaningful to you. This year, I ask that if you choose to speak, rather than saying where it is from, please share with us **why** it is meaningful. For example, it represents a time of solitude where you could rest; or, it comes from a time when family gathered together to have fun. **Why** is it meaningful? (Rather than where did it come from.) If you have not brought water or forgot to bring it, you may symbolically pour water from this pitcher, representing a time when water was meaningful to you. Please come forward as you are ready.

¹³ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 102.

¹⁴ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 111.

¹⁵ Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift From The Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) 120.

Please rise in body or spirit as we bless this water together, water which will be used in future rituals. The words are in your Order of Service.

***Communal Blessing of the Water** *(J. Lloyd)*

Source of all life, that draws us from the womb, calls us from the ocean, and renews life eternally; we ask your blessing on this water. May it be blessed by the spirit that dwells within our hearts and our beloved community.

So may it be.

***Hymn 100** *Peace Like a River*

***Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice**

Please remain standing as you are able and join hands as you are willing.

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. We extinguish this flame but not the commitment to ourselves and one another to seek out and find inner and mutual peace. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.