

“Autumnal Tints” ©
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd
October 20, 2019

Sounding of the Gong

Gathering Music *October (Autumn Song)*, Tchaikovsky

Nick Stanford, Pianist

#Welcome

Sue Rosen, Acting Secretary
Board of Trustees

Prelude *Op. 28, No. 15*, Chopin

Chalice Lighting

(The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith)

Opening Words

Rev. Lloyd

From Thoreau –

“To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again... ”¹

#*Opening Hymn 52 *In Sweet Fields of Autumn*

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.

New Member Ceremony

Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society
Antiphonal Covenant
between the Congregation and New Members

Minister:

I invite forward our President, Mary Strieff, and the Co-Chair of the Congregational Life Committee, Alice Fleming. I invite **Holley Anderson, and, Deborah McDonald**, to come forward. For over 57 years, among the most sacred moments in this congregation’s life has been those times when we welcome a new member. Today, we are pleased to

¹ <http://emersoncentral.com/beauty.htm> October 17, 2019.

welcome Holley and Deborah as new members of SUUS.

Congregational Life Co-Chairperson:

Here you will find curious minds and kindred spirits. We seek to be a people of good will, who assume good intentions, and who listen thoughtfully to one another, even when we may disagree. Here, we commit not only to your spiritual growth, but also the spiritual growth of all those who share our path.

Introduction of New Members

- Holley Anderson
- Deborah McDonald

Board President:

Holley & Deborah, those who choose to become members can claim a proud heritage of religious and spiritual freedom. In freely choosing to come together, we accomplish so much more than alone, working to create a community of love, justice, and peace.

Will the current members of this congregation please rise as we enter into covenant with Holley & Deborah?

Congregation: (please stand)

With joy, we welcome you as new members. We encourage you to speak your mind with compassion; to love without prejudice; to live with integrity; to respond courageously to the demands of justice; to work to fulfill the ideals of our congregational covenant, and to participate in our democratic process. We pledge to support you in your search for truth, to celebrate with you in times of joy, and, to help you in times of sorrow.

Minister: Holley & Deborah, is it your choice to join this congregation as a member?

New Members: It is.

A Blessing

Minister: May the embrace of our community offer comfort and courage in the unfolding of life's joys and sorrows.

Congregation: May we, in seeking truth and justice, become effective instruments of service to humanity; making fruitful, our common ministries.

Minister: May we, by our example, nurture into being the Spirit that is Life and Love.

Congregation: May its presence and our love endure.

Minister: So may it be.

Story

Laura Martino & Family

Offertory Words

October 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 total cash offering each week to a designated community program that serves others. This month your cash contributions will go to: *IRIS, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services. Since 1982, IRIS has helped refugees and immigrants establish new lives, regain hope and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut communities.* Please give generously.

Offering & Offertory Music

The Wood Song, Indigo Girls

Holley Anderson & Elise Morrison

Message/Candles

#Sing the Young People Out

Children's Recessional (see back of hymnal)

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 mic as you are able. Or, we will bring a mic to you, as needed.

Musical Meditation

Sarabande, Debussy

Nick Stanford

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

Reflection *Autumnal Tints*

Rev. Lloyd.²

Before I speak of Henry David Thoreau, let me first speak of his mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson. We pick up Emerson’s life, in his early 30’s, not quite mid-way to his full life of 79 years.

Almost two hundred years ago, on an autumn day in 1834, Emerson moved into his step-grandfather’s house, in Concord, to live with him. Emerson arrived, disillusioned, after first completing his Harvard Divinity School studies, and then taking a post as a junior pastor at Boston’s Second Unitarian Church³. New insights into biblical teachings, the rising of rationality and the age of enlightenment, collided with his grief over his first wife’s death, and led to a spiritual crisis for Emerson.⁴ As a result he had resigned his post as pastor at Second Church, traveled to Europe in the company of John Stuart Mill, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. There, he studied not only science, but also nature, integrating them religiously in his own mind. When he returned to live with his grandfather, he took one of the upstairs rooms for writing, and there began, his seminal work titled simply, “Nature.” Thus began, Transcendentalism, the turning point between an older Unitarian theology with still strong links to a liberal view of Christianity and a new theology rooted in nature and science, and, deeply informed by Charles Darwin’s radical naturalist observations. But, this new theology did not stop with merely science and nature (as though that weren’t enough!), it also borrowed from the religions of the Far East⁵, Hinduism and Buddhism,

² http://www.concordma.gov/pages/concordma_cemetery/sleepy October 17, 2014.

Rev. Jeanne: One of my favorite memories is of a weekend, many years ago, when my husband and I toured Concord, Massachusetts on a glorious fall weekend. The sky was blue, the air crisp, and the ground covered with brilliant and muted dry autumn leaves that rustled as we moved our feet through them. Some might call Concord our Unitarian Universalist “mecca”, it being to some, the sacred ground and home of our Unitarian luminaries of the 19th century, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott and her father, Bronson Alcott, as well as other Unitarians.

We walked that day, in the late afternoon, through autumn leaves of red and gold and green to the North Bridge, that spans the Concord River. There, one of the first military engagements of the Revolutionary War occurred. We walked across town and up the hill to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery nearby, where Emerson is buried on Author’s Ridge. Unlike the headstones surrounding Emerson, his marker is unique. It is a large pink granite boulder, waist high, rugged and rough. Instead of having a cross on it, it has pine cones and boughs on it. His wife’s headstone has tulips on it. Nearby is buried Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thoreau, and the Alcotts.

³ Note: Second Church was previously served by Reverends Increase Mather and his son, Rev. Cotton Mather, influential Puritan ministers.

⁴ Note: He no longer believed as his aunt Mary did (she being a strict and brilliant Calvinist) who insisted “it is the angel of consumption (tuberculosis) that dyes the cheek of feeding Nature with such hectic bloom.” Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 19 (e-book).

⁵ Note: Emerson would sponsor practitioners of these faiths to visit and speak in the United States.

in striving for a new understanding of the Spirit. The proponents of Transcendentalism believed "in the essential unity of all creation, the innate goodness of [humanity], . . . [in the] supremacy of insight over logic, and [in the value of] experience [to reveal] . . . [life's] deepest truths."⁶ And, essential to all this, is the understanding, the insistence that there is always yet more to be revealed. Life is open-ended, unclosed. Revelation is not sealed.

Many would follow Emerson to Concord. Seekers of religious freedom, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife, would live with Emerson in his own home, with others nearby.⁷ In September 1842, Hawthorne wrote, "Mr. Thoreau dined with us yesterday. He is a keen and delicate observer of nature...and nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, with friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden or wildwood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds, and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait that he has a great regard for the memory of the [native] tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well[.] [. . . Strange] to say, he seldom walks over a ploughed field without picking up an arrow-point, a spearhead, or other relic . . . as if . . . spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth."⁸

PAUSE

So too, Thoreau also came to live with Emerson and was treated as one of the family for two years.⁹ There he learned among many things, Emerson's philosophy of, "Do your work and I shall know you."¹⁰ Thoreau's pilgrimage to Walden Pond was less than two miles away from the Emerson Manse. There he spent another two years of his life, in a simple cabin he built in the woods. He was "comfortable living [there] on the outskirts of Concord, on the margins of society . . ."¹¹ . . . and in the bosom of Nature.

Robert Richardson has written, "We sometimes think of Henry Thoreau as an idler, a lazy saunterer, drifting blissfully and playing his flute through the Concord countryside

⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/602448/Transcendentalism> October 18, 2019.

⁷ Note: Henry David Thoreau's father, John, planted a vegetable garden for Hawthorne at the Manse.

⁸ <http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/nhhd1.html> October 17, 2019.

⁹ Thoreau, Henry David. "Autumnal Tints". (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 21 (e-book).

¹⁰ Note: Emerson also said, "there is no release in all the worlds of God except performance." Thoreau, Henry David. "Autumnal Tints". (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 17 (e-book).

¹¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/11/revisiting-the-splendor-of-thoreaus-autumnal-tints-150-years-later/264291/> October 17, 2019.

without a care in the world. Thoreau himself encourages this view. But he was in fact a dedicated and carefully prepared observer who went on his afternoon walks with the equipment and purposefulness of an expedition leader . . . [The world into which Thoreau walked was . . . shaped by Darwin’s new observations on nature. It was] a world of fascinated excitement over the vast . . . finite riches of the earth, which [were] far more interesting than the empty concept of the infinite . . . [Darwin introduced] a fantastic and still-challenging world of discoverable if not yet discovered richness and variety of species. [It was a] richer more specific world, not . . . a poorer one.”¹² It was a world of nature with which Thoreau had fallen in love and which he wooed with deliberate and determined devotion and adoration for nearly a quarter of a century, taking in her beauty and accounting for all manner of things that he saw, on his daily afternoon walks that he called, “rambles.”

His great plan, his great dream, was to catalogue every single plant and species of being in the Concord area. He called it the “Calendar of Concord.” He intended to build it “up season by season, tree by tree, bird by bird, day by day . . . detail by details until it would flower into completion as an inexhaustible account of every natural happening . . . at the center of Thoreau’s universe, Concord, Massachusetts.”¹³ Such was the major project that consumed his years between Walden Pond and his death at age 44.

But, in February 1862, knowing that he was dying, he turned from this project that could no longer be completed in his lifespan, to pieces of the project that he could complete before his death in May. He started with Autumn.

“Autumnal Tints” was published that same year, in *The Atlantic Monthly*. It is a naturalist’s guide to truly seeing nature. But, it is also a study on life. “It is a statement about [Autumn] not as the season of death and decay, but as the season of fruit, of ripeness, of harvest – the richly satisfying culmination of the farmer’s year”¹⁴. “Thoreau [saw] and [celebrated] the season (and death itself) as nature’s own way of renewing life. He believed that if we could see properly, even fallen leaves on the ground could teach us how to die.”¹⁵ And, so, his words reflect his concern with how we open ourselves up in order that we might actually perceive beauty. “. . . the important word [being:] [perceive].”¹⁶ His concern was with “how [it is] [that we may] teach ourselves to

¹² Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 47 (e-book).

¹³ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 19 (e-book).

¹⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-richardson/fall-poetry-thoreau_b_1933541.html October 17, 2019.

¹⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/11/revisiting-the-splendor-of-thoreaus-autumnal-tints-150-years-later/264291/> October 17, 2019.

¹⁶ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 43 (e-book).

see more than we usually do.”¹⁷ “[For] Thoreau, to see everything means, to see every thing. [He once said], ‘the worst of me is that the desire of my eyes is so much . . . ! Ever so much more than the desire of my mind . . .’”¹⁸

He wanted to help people understand, to help you understand, centuries later, that “death is not annihilation and something to be feared but rather a necessary stage in the continuing cycle of nature, and thus something to be welcomed as much as any other aspect of nature . . .”¹⁹

At his death and by his bedside, “an old friend . . . could not resist . . . asking the dying Thoreau, [the following question,] . . . ‘You seem so near the brink of the dark river, I almost wonder how the opposite shore may appear to you[?]’ Thoreau’s answer summed up his life. ‘One world at a time . . .’”^{20 21}

And so, may it be.

Musical Interlude

Steve Ernst

Readings from Thoreau

Rev. Lloyd

A glimmer into the mind and eyes of Thoreau . . .

“We cannot see anything until we are possessed with the idea of it, take it into our heads – and then we can hardly see anything else.”²²

BELL

“A man shall perhaps rush by and trample down plants as high as his head, and cannot be said to know that they exist, though he may have cut many tons of them, littered his

¹⁷ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 43 (e-book).

¹⁸ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 50 (e-book).

¹⁹ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 19 (e-book).

²⁰ Note: “[By his studies on life and nature, he evolved for over 25 years a philosophy that] the passing away of one life is the making room for another. [This was] Thoreau’s hot central core.” Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 54 (e-book).

²¹ Note: “Thoreau is a first-class noticer, and he is our most articulate observer. He understood the power of and the need for directed attention carried out with the utmost intensity. He understood that we are what we give our attention to, and, long before William James put it in words, Thoreau understood that “attention and belief are the same fact.” Finally, Thoreau doesn’t just give you one autumn, he gives you the way to see every autumn.” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-richardson/fall-poetry-thoreau_b_1933541.html 10/17/19.

²² Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 47 (e-book).

stables with them, and fed them to his cattle for years. Yet, if he ever favorably attends to them, he may be overcome by their beauty. Each [humble] plant, or weed, as we call it, stands there to express some thought or mood of ours; and yet, [alone], it stands in vain!”²³

BELL

“Only if you are aware of how much you [don’t] see, have you any chance of seeing something new. Unless [our] minds . . . are particularly directed to the impressions of sight, objects pass . . . before the eyes without conveying any impression to the brain at all, and so pass actually unseen, not merely unnoticed, but in the full clear sense of the word, unseen . . . Objects are concealed from our view, not so much because they are out of the [sight] of our [vision] [but] because we do not bring our minds and eyes to bear on them . . . Everything depends on our volunteered, our willed attention, on our deliberate *intending* to see. [There] is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate – not a grain more.”²⁴ (emphasis added)

BELL

Of Autumn, in particular, he says,²⁵

“How beautiful, when a whole tree is like one great fruit full of ripe juices, every leaf from lowest limb to topmost spire, all aglow, especially if you look toward the sun! What more remarkable object can there be in the landscape? Visible for miles, too fair to be believed. If such a phenomenon occurred but once, it would be handed down by tradition to posterity, and get into [our] mythology . . .”²⁶

BELL

“A small Red Maple has grown, perchance, far away at the head of some retired valley, a mile from any road, unobserved. It has faithfully discharged the duties of a Maple there, all winter and summer, neglected none of its economies, but added to its stature in the virtue which belongs to a Maple, by [its] steady growth for so many months, never having gone gadding abroad, and is nearer heaven than it was in the spring. It has

²³ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 75 (e-book).

²⁴ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 44 (e-book).

²⁵ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 786 (e-book).
“Verily these Maples are cheap preachers, permanently settled, which preach their half- century, and century . . . and century- and- a- half sermons, with constantly increasing unction and influence, ministering to many generations . . .”

²⁶ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 565 (e-book).

faithfully husbanded its sap, and afforded a shelter to the wandering bird, has long since ripened its seeds and committed them to the winds, and has the satisfaction of knowing, perhaps, that a thousand little well-behaved Maples are already settled in life somewhere . . . [It's autumn,] it has finished its summer's work before all other trees . . . It flashes out conspicuous with all the virtue and beauty of a Maple . . . We may now read its title . . . clear. Its *virtues*, not its sins, are . . . scarlet.”²⁷

BELL²⁸

“How they are mixed up, of all species, Oak and Maple and Chestnut and Birch! But Nature is not cluttered with them; she is a perfect husbandman; she stores them all. Consider what a vast crop is thus annually shed on the earth! This, more than any mere grain or seed, is the great harvest of the year. The trees are now repaying the earth with interest what they have taken from it . . . They are about to add a leaf's thickness to the depth of the soil. This is the beautiful way in which Nature gets her muck . . . We are all the richer for their decay. I am more interested in this crop than in the English grass alone or in the corn. It prepares the virgin mould for future cornfields and forests, on which the earth fattens. It keeps our homestead in good heart. For beautiful variety no crop can be compared with this. Here is not merely the plain yellow of the grains, but nearly all the colors that we know, the brightest blue not excepted: the early blushing Maple . . . blazing . . . scarlet, the mulberry Ash, the rich chrome- yellow of the Poplars, the brilliant red Huckleberry, [all these by] . . . which the hills' backs are painted. . . The frost touches them, and, with the slightest breath of returning day or jarring of earth's [axis], see in what showers they come floating down! The ground is all party- colored with them . . . It is pleasant to walk over the beds of these fresh, crisp, and rustling leaves. How beautifully they go to their graves! how gently [they] lay themselves down and turn to mould!— painted of a thousand hues, and fit to make the beds of us [still] living. So they troop to their last resting place, light and frisky. They put on no weeds, but merrily they go scampering over the earth, selecting the spot, choosing a lot,

²⁷ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 580 (e-book).

²⁸ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 661 (e-book).

“Perchance, in the afternoon of such a day, when the water is perfectly calm and full of reflections, I paddle gently down the main stream, and, turning up the Assabet, reach a quiet cove, where I unexpectedly find myself surrounded by myriads of leaves, like fellow- voyagers, which seem to have the same purpose, or want of purpose, with myself. See this great fleet of scattered leaf- boats which we paddle amid, in this smooth river- bay, each one curled up on every side by the sun's skill . . . all patterns . . . some with lofty prows . . . like the stately vessels of the ancients, scarcely moving in the sluggish current,— like the great fleets, the dense Chinese cities of boats, with which you mingle on entering some great mart, some New York or Canton, which we are all steadily approaching together. How gently each has been deposited on the water! No violence has been used towards them yet, though, perchance, palpitating hearts were present at the launching. And painted ducks, too, the splendid wood- duck among the rest, often come to sail and float amid the painted leaves . . .”

ordering no iron fence, whispering all through the woods about it,— some choosing the spot where the bodies of men [and women] are mouldering beneath, and meeting them half- way. How many flutterings before they rest quietly in their graves! They that soared so loftily, how contentedly they return to dust again, and are laid low, resigned to lie and decay at the foot of the tree, and afford nourishment to new generations of their kind . . . They teach us how to die. One wonders if the time will ever come when [those of us who boast faith in our immortality], will lie down as gracefully and as ripe,— with such . . . serenity . . .”²⁹

BELL³⁰

Amen

***Hymn 54** *Now Light is Less*

***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 our place in creation. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Please be seated to sing our closing song.

Closing Song 95 *There is More Love* Somewhere*
There is more love somewhere.
I’m gonna keep on ‘till I find it.
There is more love somewhere.

*hope, peace, joy

Silent Reflection

Let us sit together in silence we as we reflect on the message and meaning of today’s service.

²⁹ Thoreau, Henry David. “Autumnal Tints”. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) 676-692 (e-book).

³⁰ From the last paragraph in Walden Pond, “Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.”