

## **Let Us Play, 29th August 2021**

**Led by Ann Kader**

**Opening music** Warmth of the Sun's Rays, Hang Massive

[https://youtu.be/EXnGu9RA\\_OQ](https://youtu.be/EXnGu9RA_OQ)

### **Chalice Lighting words**

As is our custom here, we light the chalice and see  
The flame of truth burns bright.  
Fed by the vision of each of us  
Rising from the heart of all of us  
Let its light shine out as our lives shine out  
Brightening the dark places of the world  
Bringing wholeness and peace

**First hymn** Purple book no 199 Weaver God, creator

Weaver God, Creator, sets life on the loom,  
draws out threads of colour from primordial gloom.  
Wise in the designing, in the weaving deft;  
love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

Called to be co-weavers, yet we break the thread  
and may smash the shuttle and the loom instead.  
Careless and greedy, we deny by theft  
love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

Weaver God, great spirit, may we see your face  
tapestryed in trees, in waves and winds of space;  
tenderness teach us, lest we be bereft  
of love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

Weavers we are called, yet woven too we're born,  
for the web is seamless, if we tear, we're torn.  
Gently may we live - that fragile earth be left  
love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

*French carol tune arranged by David Dawson, words by Kate Compston*

**Story** A funny Sufi story about prayer called 'Too Much Prayer'

It starts with a little five year old boy whose name was Johnny. Johnny was a very bright little boy and he told his dad that he'd like a baby brother. His dad said "ah, yeh". His dad was very bright, and he said that maybe there was something he could do to help. So he thought for a moment and he said, 'I'll tell you what, Johnny. If you pray every day for two months for a baby brother, I guarantee God will give it to you.'

Strange guarantee. Dad must have known something that Johnny didn't. Johnny responded very eagerly to his dad's challenge, and he went to his bedroom early that night to start praying for a baby brother. He prayed every night for a whole month, but after that, he began to get a little sceptical and doubting a little. So he checked around the neighbourhood, and he found out that what he thought was going to happen had never, ever occurred in the history of his neighbourhood. You just don't pray for two months and ba- boom, a new baby brother. So Johnny quit praying.

After another month, guess what? Johnny's mother went into hospital. When she came back home, Johnny's parents called him into the bedroom. He very carefully, cautiously walked into the room, not expecting to find anything, and there was a little bundle lying right next to his mum. His dad pulled back the blanket, and there was not one but two baby brothers. His mother had had twins.

Johnny's dad looked down at him and said, "Now aren't you glad you prayed?" Johnny hesitated for a moment, and then looked up at his dad and he said, "Yes, but aren't you glad I quit when I did?"

## **Prayer**

Great Healer

Touch us with your judgement

And confront us with your tenderness

That, being comforted by you,

We may reach out to a troubled world,

Through love and peace

Amen

Divine Spirit

(touch your fingertips to your forehead, saying) Open my mind to remember your presence

(touch your fingertips to your mouth, saying) Open my mouth to speak your wisdom

(touch your fingertips to your heart, saying) Open my heart to extend your love

(hold both hands out, open, palms up, saying) Open my hands to serve you generously

(hold arms wide open, saying) Open my whole being to you

(Bow to the loving presence in you).

*A prayer for the World, by Amie Petrie Shaw (an American Universalist)*

For all who die in war

We lift up our hearts

For all who live in suffering in the aftermath of violence

We lift up our hearts

For our world

We lift up our hearts

For a planet that will find peace

We lift up our hearts

For the young and the innocent

We lift up our hearts

For the weary and war torn

We lift up our hearts

For those who would pray

We lift up our hearts  
For those too angry to cry  
We lift up our hearts  
For all of us, for the many names of God  
We lift up our hearts  
Amen

### **Quiet time and reflective music**

#### **Poem on play by Jenny Justice**

We forget what it is like  
To laugh, to play.  
We forget what it is like  
To simply exist in moments of joy.  
The one thing that separates adults from kids -  
Is not age, not time, not wisdom,  
Not responsibilities, bills, work or the things  
We label as “adult” that are just “bad” habits dressed up  
As something we’ve earned a right to do - drink, gamble, use people, use each other,  
Be snide, be snarky, suppress feelings -  
No, what makes an adult an adult, it is the inability  
To play without fear, to play without restraint,  
To play without feeling foolish -  
We forget, we forget, we forget - and we mourn a bit, sure - Because of the bills,  
because of the work, because we confuse things like bars and drinking or parties or  
thrills for play  
When they are not play.

Play is an endeavour of the spirit  
Playfulness is an attitude of pure glee,  
Playing is curiosity in action, discovery, pretending -  
Play is approaching each moment as new,  
Full of beautiful possibility, of imagination

Play is Grace and laughter  
Even when falling and crawling - play is  
Using our bodies, hearts, minds and spirits  
To explore the world around us with kindness and awe.  
We forget this, we forget this -  
We have to remember  
We have to make time  
All of us,  
Children, adults, men and women -  
We have to remember to play.

### **Address**

I was going to call this service “Let us Play” not “ Let us Pray”. Our theme this month has been play and creativity. I could talk till the cows come home about education and learning through play but that’s not what this service is about. It is about the spirituality of play.

Today and tomorrow is the Notting Hill Carnival and if things were normal, I would be there this weekend. Sundays is more for the children. Our whole school community and the wider community would come together during August. The people making the amazing head-pieces and costumes would make them in my school and a lot of them were given to us after the event for the children to play with. Children, staff, parents and the wider community came together to dance and play for the two days which brought us all together even if just for that short time. I felt this was a spiritual time of play because the love and respect for all our diversity was there for the world to see.

I think of today and all the troubles in the world so should we still cultivate play? I believe a spirituality of play is needed now more than ever so that children and young people can grow into adults who are able to live good, well balanced lives where laughter, joy and hope are ingrained in their being. Also play will help us all to build up reserves and strength to face the serious problems of the world.

I think about two friends of mine who are going through tough times and struggling. Days go by for them just trying to keep their strength up. We used to meet once a week for lunch, now it is probably every couple of months so they can relax, talk but also laugh.

Well we met at our usual cafe and I was thinking and said “can you jump, or when you get older are you still able to jump”. Each of us got up went outside on the pavement and tried to jump. It was hilarious. The cafe wasn’t that busy and three of the staff came to ask what was going on and they ended up jumping. We all ended up laughing so much that it took away all the troubles even if only for 10 minutes and also made the staff laugh. Have you tried to jump lately, give it a go if you haven’t. Play or a spiritual release. Think about it.

Most religions tell us not to take ourselves too seriously. Hindus when talking about the creation of the Universe don’t call it the work of God, they call it the Play of God. There is usually a sort of Holy Fool in each religion, the Sufis have Nasrudin, St. Francis had his order of jesters. We have always had clowns. All tell stories. All tell us not to take ourselves too seriously.

We may think the stories may be a bit silly like the one Sheila read earlier but they are telling us what a spiritual practice is play. Play feeds our joy and wonder, play makes us laugh, it heals us. It comes from our deepest self, our divinity. God wants us to play. Most of us don’t play enough, we’re too busy or too serious or earnest. Maybe when people say “you need to lighten up” we should remember God has given us play and that light side of us.

There is an Apache myth of the Creator giving human beings the ability to talk, to run and to look. But he was not satisfied until He also gave them the ability to laugh. Only then did the Creator say “Now you are fit to live”.

Play and laughter are so essential to our wellbeing. As we get older, we forget the joy of play but let’s get it back. Play let’s us have adventures, let’s us express ourselves, use our intuition and imagination. Matthew Fox says:

“There is a mystic in everyone of us, yearning to play again in the universe”

**2<sup>nd</sup> hymn 88 (P) Let it be a dance we do**

*Let it be a dance we do.*

*May I have this dance with you?*

*Through the good times and bad times, too,*

*let it be a dance.*

Let a dancing song be heard.

Play the music, say the words,  
and fill the sky with sailing birds.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Learn to follow, learn to lead,

feel the rhythm, fill the need

to reap the harvest,

plant the seed.

Let it be a dance.

*Let it be a dance we do.*

*May I have this dance with you?*

*Through the good times and bad times, too,*

*let it be a dance.*

Everybody turn and spin,

Let your body learn to bend,

and like a willow in the wind,

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

A child is born, the old must die,

a time for joy, a time to cry,

take it as it passes by.

Let it be a dance.

*Let it be a dance we do.  
May I have this dance with you?  
Through the good times and bad times, too,  
let it be a dance.*

Morning star comes out at night,  
without the dark there is no light,  
if nothing's wrong then nothing's right,  
Let it be a dance.  
Let it be a dance.  
Let it be a dance.

Let the sun shine, let it rain,  
share the laughter, bear the pain,  
and round and round we go again.  
Let it be a dance.

*Words and music © Ric Masten*

### **Benediction**

May that which strengthens you, sustain you.  
May that which lights your way, ever guide you.  
May that which brings you happiness, be always with you  
And may love and peace never be a stranger to you.

**Closing music** 'I hope you dance', Ronan Keating

<https://youtu.be/hbJruWd6bmU>