

## **Plymouth Unitarians 10th October 2021**

'Looking after ourselves and others', led by Ann Kader

### **Welcome**

Good morning everybody. Welcome to our church. It's lovely to see you all and welcome to everyone on Zoom or on Facebook or just reading the service. Today is World Mental Health Day and it represents your inner and outer mental health and we have to look after our mental health so part of the service will touch on that.

And the service itself should have been called Safeguarding Sunday but I thought that that would turn everybody off. I'd change the title but churches and religious places across the country are doing safeguarding services today so part of the service is about safeguarding.

### **Chalice lighting words by Ally Barrett**

May this place be one of nurture where we all may come to know how endless love sustains us as we live, move and grow. May we live life in all its fullness.

### **First hymn 142 (P) 'Shining through the Universe'**

Shining through the universe  
runs the golden thread;  
woven in along with white,  
black, yellow, green and red.

Cooling water burning fire,  
metal, wood and clay,  
in the earth's five elements  
the gold thread marks the Way.

If we try to pick it out  
from the fabric fair;  
when the threads are pulled apart  
the gold's no longer there.

Under heaven, over earth,  
north to southern pole,  
if you trace the golden thread  
the Way will calm your soul.

“Turn your feet along the Way”,  
sages taught of old;  
live life well and tread the path  
marked by the thread of gold

*Music by David Dawson, words © Roger Mason, based on the Tao Te Ching*

### **Story of the Good Samaritan**

Luke 10: 25 to 37, New Living Translation

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question. 'Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?'

Jesus replied 'What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?' The man answered 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.' 'Right', Jesus told him. 'Do this and you will live.' The man wanted to justify his actions so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied with the story. 'A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem down to Jericho and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up and left him for dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along but when he saw the man lying there he crossed to the other side and passed him by. A temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there. He also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along and he saw the man and felt compassion for him. Going over to him the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he took care of him.

The next day he handed the innkeeper for two silver coins telling him 'Take care of this man. If his bills run higher than this I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

'Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by the bandits?' Jesus asked. The man replied, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Then Jesus said, 'Yes, now go and do the same.'

I would like to tell you another little story. Some of you were at the dance the other week and Christina from Romania was dancing the last piece and she invited me to her dissertation and I expected it to be dance but it wasn't it was a monologue plus film plus dance. And I just feel I'd like to share this with you. So I can't remember it and I can't do it in the way she did it because I'm not an actress, but she was talking about coming over here from Romania and saying to her parents 'You know I really want to go and study in England' and her mum and dad didn't want her to because they wanted to buy a new car. They didn't want to give her the money basically but someone else said 'Well that's ridiculous, you can't speak English' and she said 'Yes I can'. She said 'I have academic English and I have pop music English' and then she came here feeling really quite confident, and actually the students all met at McDonald's and the first thing the person said to her was 'Coffee to go love?' and then she thought 'I don't know what they're saying' and you know it just made me think. We could link that to the Good Samaritan story. Even if it just made me think of how you feel if you're going to live in another country and I think sometimes we need to stand back and think about that. So I just wanted to share that story with you really. So now we'll have some quiet prayer time.

## **Prayer**

Divine Spirit,

We come to you in the knowledge that you hold us all in your unconditional love.

We lift to you those who are vulnerable and need protection. Give them safety, comfort and peace.

We lift to you those who are hurting and whose trust has been broken.

Give them healing, restoration and justice.

We thank you for all who give their time, knowledge and skills to make communities

safer.

Give them your wisdom, guidance and grace.

For ourselves, we ask you to help us help the vulnerable, the oppressed, the voiceless and the forgotten. Help us to see them as you see them, to value them as you value them and to nurture them as you desire.

Help each one of us play our part in creating safer places for all.

May it be so.

Amen.

Prayer adapted from a prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero

Divine Spirit

Grant us

A vision of your world filled with love

A world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor

A world where the riches of creation are shared and everyone can enjoy them.

A world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect.

A world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to work towards this world.

May it be so.

Amen

**Reflection** followed by music

'Art thou troubled', George Frederick Handel, words by WG Rothery, performed by Brandon Hornsby-Selvin (tenor) and Adam Podd (piano)

**Address**

As I said earlier today is Safeguarding Sunday in churches across the country. I'm the Safeguarding officer for this Church. I'll come back to this later in my address.

We belong to a body called Thirtyone eight who advises churches if there are any safeguarding issues. They did send us a download of a service for today but it didn't really fit in with our church, so I've written my own and that's why it's called looking after ourselves and others.

Let's start with looking after ourselves. As is always said, you can't look after others until you've looked after yourself.

You may or may not be into mindfulness or meditation but you could start a self care journal, jotting down how you feel daily, tracking your sleep, your habits - there may be some you might want to change, three things you may be grateful for, friends to phone. You could add pictures or mandalas to colour.

Another way to look after yourself is through movement , even a 10 min walk or stretch will make you feel better . Reading, cooking , napping or just daydreaming is looking after yourself. This is not selfishness.

We all let self care go by the wayside because even if we are working or retired, life is busy. Remember it is important to take time out and do at least one thing each day for our mental health.

Moving onto looking after others. Caring about each other, animals and our earth is part of our innate divine dna. Sometimes it is hard but let's keep trying.

I heard a beautiful, caring story last Sunday before church. I didn't want to talk, I wanted some quiet, as sometimes I have a coffee and like to watch the boats on the pond. A woman I hadn't seen since before first lockdown asked if she could sit with me. I really didn't want her to -but she told me a lot about the rebuilding of Plymouth after the war and she told me this beautiful, caring story.

Her sister was going to get married. All the neighbours collected their coupons for her to have a wedding dress. The two sisters had been in a shelter the night before and that morning they returned home to find only the door of the family house standing. Everything else was gone but their granddad was standing there with nothing but the wedding dress. He knew how important it was and somehow managed to save it. What a wonderful example of love and caring about someone else.

Let's try to be kind and compassionate to each other. This can be by through words or actions. Are you willing to put your own concerns aside and see that our loved ones are looked after and have the best quality of life they can? This shows love and compassion but also I think a meeting of souls. This is not always easy and we will

fail many times often through sheer tiredness and also because we are human, but let's keep trying.

Moving onto safeguarding, and here I'm talking about church. We do have a safeguarding policy, as do all religious institutions and we need everyone in church to feel safe and secure. If you ever feel unsafe or see something you don't feel comfortable about, please let me, Kate or one of the committee know.

I'd like to quote from Unitarian Universalist safe covenant: Covenant is Latin for "come together "

'The wellbeing, strength and reputation of our church depends on a sense of fellowship among our congregation. It thrives in an atmosphere of trust, respect and co-operation. Within such an atmosphere, differences of opinions and their resolution through compromise or consensus can enhance a sense of community.

I'd like to finish with a covenant which is from Unitarian Universalist Faithworks .

1. We build our church on a foundation of love and covenant with each other.
2. To freely explore our values and honour our diversity as a source of communal strength.
3. To accept responsibility for our individual acts and promote justice and peace
4. To celebrate the joys of discovery, embracing the fullest measure of our humanity.
5. To communicate with kindness and support.
6. To serve with compassion and commitment.
7. To openly share laughter and tears.
8. To show reverence for the divine in all that it is.

Maybe we could think about a covenant for our church.

## **2nd hymn 186 (P) "We are travellers on a Journey"**

We are travellers on a journey  
which brought us from the sun,  
when primal star exploded  
and earth in orbit spun;  
but now as human dwellers

upon earth-planet's crust,  
we strive for living systems  
whose ways are kind and just.

We are travellers on a journey  
which grows from human seed,  
and through our birth and childhood  
goes where life's path may lead;  
but now we are delving deeper  
in quest of greater worth  
and reaching unknown regions  
and planets of new birth.

We are travellers on a journey  
through realms of inner space  
where joy and peace are planets  
that circle stars of grace;  
and when we find the stillness  
which comes at journey's end,  
there'll be complete refreshment,  
a resting place my friend

*Words © Andrew McKean Hill*

**Benediction** from Autumn Lore by Kathleen Jenks

May we make wise choices in how and what we harvest,  
May Earth's weather turn kinder  
May there be enough food for all creatures,  
May the diminishing light in our daytime skies  
Be met by an increasing compassion and tolerance in our hearts.