

Service Title - Tea and Trains 20th February 2022

Beginning Music - David Garrett violinist “ A Wonderful World”

Welcome everyone whether you are on zoom or here in person.if you come every week, occasionally or this is your first time.

We welcome you all.

Chalice lighting words

Our different paths come together today.

Graced by the history of our free religious heritage.

Let us be mindful of the forces deep within which call us to be more than we are.

May this hour bring rest and renewal, comfort and challenge.

May we be reminded of our highest aspirations, and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again, that we are not isolated beings, but that we are connected - in mystery and in wonder to each other,

To this community and to the universe.

First hymn

Purple book no.142 - Shining through the universe

Story read by Sheila

A Subway station in Washington.

In 2007 Joshua Bell - a world renowned violinist played for about 45/minutes in the Washington DC subway.

It was a cold, January morning. Joshua played six pieces by Bach and during that time, approximately 2,000 people went through the station. Most of them on the way to work.

After about 4 minutes, a middle aged man noticed the musician playing, slowed his pace, stopped for a few seconds, then hurried on.

A few minutes later, the violinist received his first dollar as a woman threw money in his hat and without stopping, continued to walk.

About six minutes later, a three year old boy stopped but his mother tugged him along. The boy kept turning his head and had wanted to stop and hear the music. This happened with several

other children.

During the 45 minutes of his playing, only 6 people stopped and listened for a short awhile. About 20 gave money but carried on walking.

After an hour he finished playing. Nobody noticed.

Joshua Bell, a renowned musician, had played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, on a violin worth £ 3.5 pounds.

Two days previously, he had sold out a theatre in Boston where tickets were 100 dollars each.

Prayers

The first prayer is adapted from the prayer of La Faba found in a church on the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela.

Although I have travelled many roads from East to West.

If I have not discovered the freedom to be myself.

I have arrived nowhere.

Although I may have shared all of my possessions

With people of other languages and cultures,

Made friends with many

If I am not capable of forgiving my neighbour tomorrow

I have arrived nowhere

If I may have given encouragement or a bottle of water when
needed

If upon returning to my home and work

I am not able to create brotherhood

Or to make happiness , peace and unity

I have arrived nowhere

Although I may have had food and water each day
Contemplated the best sunsets
Seen all the diversity and beauty of nature
Enjoyed the kindness of friends
If in all that I have not seen the Divine
I have arrived nowhere

This prayer is by Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest

God, Lord of all creation, lover of life and of everything.

Please help us to love in our very small way what you love infinitely and everywhere. We thank you that we can offer just this one prayer and that will be more than enough,

Because in reality everything and everyone is connected, and nothing stands alone.

To pray for one part is really to pray for the whole, and so we do.

Help us each day to stand for love, for healing, for the good, for the diverse unity of all creation, because we know this is what you desire. We pray that all may be one.

We offer this prayer in all the holy names of God.

Reading followed by silent meditation and reflective music
chosen by Myron

This reading is from a book by Mark Bellatini
Titled “ Sonata for voice of silence” (a few words changed to
bring up to date).

He is a senior minister at the First Unitarian Universalist Church
of Columbus.

Let the sky above me unroll like a scroll,
And let me read upon it today's text for my life:
“ you are alive, here and now
Love boldly and always tell the truth.”

Let the wind arrange the naked branches
Of the maples and aspens and oaks
Into letters which proclaims this sacred text:
Your heart beats now
Not tomorrow or yesterday
Love the gift of your life and do no harm.”

Let the eyes and hands and faces
Of all beings
With whom I share this earth
Be chapter and verse in this great scripture text:
“ Life is struggle and loss, and also
Tenderness and joy.
Live all your life, not just part of it.”

And now let all the poems and scriptures and novels and films
and songs and cries and lullabies and prayers and anthems open
up before our free hearts.

Let them open like a Torah, like a psalm, like a gospel,

Like an apocalypse

And let them proclaim

“ Do not think you can take away each other’s troubles,

But try to be with each other in them.

Remember that you are part, not all,

Great, but not by far the greatest,

Small, precious brief breaths

In the great whirlwind of creation.

2nd hymn - purple book no. 186 We are travellers on a journey

Address

I love trains. You could say I'm besotted by trains. I would spend my whole life travelling up and down trains if I could. I don't think I went on a train until I was about 15, it was so exciting. They were corridor trains in those days and you could even stick your head out of the window.

While writing this, Sheila has just given me an old newspaper called "The Age of Steam" dated 4th July 1994. I can't wait to read it. Sheila's father felt the same about trains.

You may think, what a strange subject to give, I hope, a spiritual address on. I believe life consists of spiritual encounters but we don't always recognise them.

As always, words for titles , pop into my head and I have to work from that.

One spiritual encounter I had on a train was a bit before covid. I was on the train from Plymouth to Paddington. Some people would be going onto Heathrow from Paddington , so time was important. We'd hardly pulled out of Plymouth when the train broke down. We were told, it would take 40 minutes for an engineer to arrive.

We were all moaning and groaning. It was also a very rainy day. Quite miserable.

When suddenly after about 15 minutes, out of the window on the left there appeared the biggest, most beautiful rainbow. Good job it was before covid as we all congregated to the left side of the train to see it. Smiles and chatter everywhere. It was as though God had given it to us to cheer us all up, which it did. It took a lot longer than 40 minutes to get the train going again but while waiting, we all chatted and shared flasks of tea and sandwiches. A magical memory.

Caroline gave me a book titled “ American Dirt” by Jeanine Cummins.

It’s a novel about a young woman and her son fleeing Acapulco to get to Denver. Some of the journey they had to jump and be pulled up to the roof of trains. Many people were injured or died or were sent back at roadblocks. Although , a novel, we know this happens. I think about our lovely, young Syrian immigrants who help at our cafe and the hard journey they have taken whether by road, bus or plane.

I said I would come back to our story and not seeing the beauty.

The same thing happened to me. I was with my daughter on the tube in London walking through the tunnel from one line to another.

There was this young man just playing guitar and singing with his cap on floor in front of him for change. We walked past then my daughter said “ let’s go back and give him some money, he’s got such a beautiful voice and no electric stuff to amplify his voice”

We returned and stood and listened , only for about ten minutes as we had trains to catch, but when we stopped, others stopped to listen . He may not have been a famous musician but sometimes it is good to stop and as they say “ smell the roses”. On this occasion it was between train journeys.

I think of a train journey as an analogy for our life and I came across this piece of writing , which says it much better than I can.

The author is unknown.

It is called : The Train

At birth, we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel by our side. As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant I.e our siblings, friends, children, strangers and even the love of your life. However, at some station our parents will step down

from the train, leaving us on this journey alone.

Others will step down over time and leave a permanent vacuum.

Some, however, will go so unnoticed , that we don't realise they vacated their seats. This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes and farewells.

Success consists of having a good relationship with all the passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery to everyone is:

We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down.

So we must live in the best way, love and forgive, and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this , because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seats empty , we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I hope I can still be on the train for more stations but I will have to give up my seat at some point for others to take my seat.

I wish you a joyful journey for the coming years on your train of life. Reap success, give lots of love and be happy.

More importantly, thank God for the journey!

Lastly, I want to thank all those passengers who are in my train.

Benediction by John Donahue

On the day when
The weight deadens
On your shoulders
And you stumble,
May the clay dance to balance you.
And when your eyes
Freeze behind
The grey window
And the ghost of loss
Gets in to you
May a flock of colours,
Indigo, red, green
And azure blue
Come to awaken in you
A meadow of delight.
When the canvas frays
In the curaçao of thought
And a stain of ocean
Blackens beneath you
May there come across the waters

A path of yellow moonlight

To bring you safely home

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,

May the clarity of light be yours,

May the fluency of the ocean be yours,

May the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so May a slow

Wind work these words of love around you,

An invisible cloak

To mind your life.

Final music - The Liberators “ Over the Rainbow”