

**Music:** Video 'Lux Aurumque' by Eric Whitacre 2 mins 8 seconds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ty3HVeAkdc>

**Welcome:** Good morning and Welcome wherever you are, and however you are joining us: especially if you are joining us for the first time. An especially warm welcome to the Edinburgh Unitarian congregation, who are joining us live for the first time via the wonders of Zoom. We will have the pleasure of hearing one, Ailsa Aitkinhead, playing piano for us during our time of reflection. However we join in, every one is part of our community, all connected in spirit, and all equally valued – so, welcome!

**Chalice Lighting:** As is our custom, we start by lighting our chalice flame, as a symbol of our free religious faith. If you are at home and have a candle, you may like to light it now.

“To worship is to stand in awe under a heaven of stars, in wonder before a flower or a leaf in sunlight, or a grain of sand. To worship is to illumine the common path, to kindle a light in the window of the Eternal.”

As it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent, Christel will light two advent candles for us.

**Introduction:** Our Service today is offered by our Poetry Group, members and friends of this church community, which has met every month for over 20 years. Despite the hiatus of the Lockdowns, the group is still going strong, though sadly one of our group, Camilla Blackman, died in the summer, and is much missed. Our theme today is 'The Rebirth of Wonder' appropriate for this time of year, with Christmas just 3 weeks away. The poems as often happens, almost seem to arrange themselves into 3 categories, the natural world', the Divine' and a pair looking forward to the wonder of Christmas. Our final poem is a longer one, which we will do as a joint reading.

**Opening words** by Albert Einstein: “The most beautiful emotion is the mystical. It is the power of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that which is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms – this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong to the rank of a devoutly religious man”

So, let us sing our **1st Hymn: no 9 in the Green book, "So Simple is the Human Heart"**  
the words will appear on the screen.

**1<sup>st</sup> set of Poems: Wonder inspired by the natural world**

**1) 'The Wonderful World' by William Rands chosen by Thelma, read by Janice Lyons**

Great, wide, beautiful, wonderful World,  
With the wonderful water round you curled,  
And the wonderful grass upon your breast,  
World, you are beautifully dressed.

The wonderful air is over me,  
And the wonderful wind is shaking the tree—  
It walks on the water, and whirls the mills,  
And talks to itself on the tops of the hills.

You friendly Earth, how far do you go,  
With the wheat-fields that nod and the rivers that flow,  
With cities and gardens, and cliffs and isles,  
And people upon you for thousands of miles?

Ah! you are so great, and I am so small,  
I tremble to think of you, World, at all;  
And yet, when I said my prayers to-day,  
A whisper inside me seemed to say,  
"You are more than the Earth, though you are such a dot:  
You can love and think, and the Earth cannot!"

**2) 'Birth of the Foal' by Ferenc Juhasz, chosen by Jeannie, read by Caroline Earl**

As May was opening the rosebuds,  
elder and lilac beginning to bloom,  
it was time for the mare to foal.  
She'd rest herself, or hobble lazily

after the boy, who sang as he led her  
to pasture, wading through the meadowflowers.  
They wandered back at dusk, bone-tired,

the moon perched on a blue shoulder of sky.

Then the mare lay down,  
sweating and trembling on her straw in the stable.  
The drowsy, heavy-bellied cows  
surrounded her, waiting, watching, snuffing.

Later, when even the hay slept,  
and the shaft of the Plough pointed south,  
the foal was born. Hours the mare  
spent licking the foal with its glue-blind eyes.

And the foal slept at her side,  
a heap of feathers ripped from a bed.  
Straw never spread as soft as this.  
Milk or snow never slept like a foal.

Dawn bounced up in a bright red hat,  
waved at the world and skipped away.  
Up staggered the foal  
its hooves were jelly-knots of foam.

Then day sniffed with its blue nose –  
through the open stable window, and found them –  
the foal nuzzling its mother,  
velvet fumbling for her milk.

Then all the trees were talking at once,  
chickens scrabbled in the yard,  
like golden flowers  
envy withered the last stars.

### **3) 'Winter Trees' written and read by Caroline Earl**

What do they think of me

These gentle sisters?  
Do they gaze, as I do  
With tender awe  
And admiration untold?  
If I stayed  
Would they welcome me  
To share unreservedly  
Their precious garlands  
Of Ivy and Moss?  
Would they draw me in  
And enlighten me  
Their secrets whispered  
So softly  
On this winters day?  
When I go  
Will they think of me  
As I will them?  
To store and use the memory  
As a precious balm  
For a weary soul.

**4) 'Shining Things' by Elizabeth Gould, chosen and read by Kathy Gilbert**

I love all shining things —  
the lovely moon,  
The silver stars at night,  
gold sun at noon.  
A glowing rainbow in  
a stormy sky,  
Or bright clouds hurrying  
when wind goes by.

I love the glow-worm's elf-light  
in the lane,  
And leaves a-shine with glistening

drops of rain,  
The glinting wings of bees,  
and butterflies,  
My purring pussy's green  
and shining eyes.

I love the street-lamps shining  
through the gloom,  
Tall candles lighted in  
a shadowy room,  
New-tumbled chestnuts from  
the chestnut tree,  
And gleaming fairy bubbles  
blown by me.

I love the shining buttons  
on my coat,  
I love the bright beads round  
my mother's throat.  
I love the coppery flames  
of red and gold,  
That cheer and comfort me,  
when I'm a-cold.

The beauty of all shining things  
is yours and mine,  
It was a lovely thought of God  
to make things shine.

**5) Earth Song by Erna Colebrook, read by Kathy Gilbert**

I am a child of fire,  
for all the earth's beginnings

sing in me.

I am a child out of time  
born of pain  
for all the earth's deaths  
end with me.

I am a child born of love  
out of light,  
for you meet me here.

I am a child full of joy  
born to live  
and all the earth's surprises  
dance in me.

I am a child born of spirit  
wholeness unfolding  
adorable silence  
and all the earth's journeys  
well up in me.

**6) 'All the Wild Wonders' by Elizabeth Honey, chosen and read by Delphine Holman**

For you my sweet babe I wish fish in the seas  
Birds in the trees and all the wild wonders  
Tigers in jungles: all the wild wonders for you  
My sweet babe

For you my sweet babe I wish carpets of wild flowers  
Beetles and butterflies and all the wild wonders  
Bright birds of paradise: all the wild wonders for you  
My sweet babe

For this wish to come true

We have so much work to do

All the wild wonders

All the wild wonders for you

I wish

I wish wind for the albatross

Clear flowing rivers and all the wild wonders

Forests of giants: all the wild wonders for you

I wish

**Prayers:** Let us turn to a time of prayer and reflection:

Let us pause and hold in our thoughts and prayers all in our own church community, in our city, and in the wider world, experiencing worry, sickness and general misfortune, for we are all connected in some way, even with those we have never met.

We pray for all whose lives have been lost or changed forever, due to the pandemic, in UK and around the world. As the numbers of those developing the illness rises, may everyone behave sensibly to lessen the possibility of spreading it, to help keep us all safe, especially the most vulnerable. We pray that there be a better sharing of the vaccine around the world, for none of us is truly safe until all are safe.

We pray that within our own country, the intolerance and hatred shown by some people towards those whom they perceive to be different in any way, cease. May better understanding and a spirit of kindness prevail to heal the wounds and prevent more. We hold in our thoughts the innocent young people and children who been hurt or killed, abroad and sadly, within our own country. We pray a time will come when *all* children will be safe and free from hunger, pain and fear, so that they can grow up able to enjoy fully all the world's wonders natural and man-made.... *AMEN*

And a prayer by the late Rev Pat Womersley, who was a Minister of this church many years ago:

Creative and Loving Spirit – You are incomprehensible in your otherness,  
Yet accessible to us in our everyday experiences of living and relating,

And revealed in treasured moments of disclosure.

You are recognizable in gifts of grace that bring blessings even in the darkest times.

Help us to be more responsive to your untiring invitations to open our hearts and change our minds.

May we venture more courageously into unknown territory,  
Allow ourselves to feel both joy and sorrow more sensitively,  
And acknowledge how little we know and appreciate the inner reality of others.

May we honour the uniqueness and value of their experience and hardwon wisdom,  
Respect their vulnerability, and never allow our caring and concern to limit their freedom to change and grow.

Above all, may we be thankful not only for your precious gift of being, but even more for continuing possibilities of further becoming *AMEN*

**Let us turn to a short time for contemplation, for our own silent prayers, followed by, Ailsa Aitkenhead of Edinburgh congregation, playing piano for us. (Ailsa played 'The sunken Cathedral' by Debussy)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> set of poems: Wonder inspired by the Divine**

**1) 'Angels' by Jan Dean chosen and read by Viv Colville**

We are made from light.

Called into being we burn

Brighter than the silver white

Of hot magnesium.

More sudden than yellow phosphorous.

We are the fire of heaven;

Blue flames and golden ether.

We are from stars.

Spinning beyond the farthest galaxy



In an instant gathered to this point  
We shine, speak our messages and go,  
Back to the brilliance.  
We are not separate, not individual,  
We are what we are made of. Only  
Shaped sometimes into tall-winged warriors,  
Our faces solemn as swords,  
Our voices joy.

The skies are cold;  
Suns do not warm us;  
Fire does not burn itself.  
Only once we touched you  
And felt a human heat.

Once, in the brightness of the frost,  
Above the hills, in glittering starlight,  
Once, we sang.

**2) 'The Kingdom of God' by Francis Thompson, read by Christine Avery**

'In no Strange Land'

O world invisible, we view thee,  
O world intangible, we touch thee,  
O world unknowable, we know thee,  
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
The eagle plunge to find the air--  
That we ask of the stars in motion  
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars!--

The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;--  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,  
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
Cry;--and upon thy so sore loss  
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
Cry,--clinging Heaven by the hems;  
And lo, Christ walking on the water  
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames

**3rd set of poems looking forward to the wonder of Christmas**

1)..'BC:AD' by U.A. Fanthorpe chosen and read by Janice Lyons

This was the moment when Before  
Turned into After, and the future's  
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing  
Happened. Only dull peace  
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans  
Could find nothing better to do  
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment  
When a few farm workers and three

Members of an obscure Persian sect  
Walked haphazard by starlight straight  
Into the kingdom of heaven.

**2) 'Sheep Dog', by U.A. Fanthorpe chosen read by Janice read by Viv Colwille**

After the very bright light,  
And the talking bird,  
And the singing,  
And the sky filled up wi' wings,  
And then the silence,

Our lads sez  
We'd better go, then.  
Stay, Shep. Good dog, stay.  
So I stayed wi' t' sheep.

After they'd cum back  
It sounded grand, what they'd seen.  
Camels and kings, and such,  
Wi' presents – human sort,  
Not the kind you eat –  
And a baby. Presents wes for him  
Our lads took him a lamb.

I had to stay behind wi' t' sheep.  
Pity they didn't tek me along too.  
I'm good wi' lambs,  
And the baby might have liked a dog  
After all that myrrh and such.

**Joint reading of "I am Waiting" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti read by Delphine, Viv, Kathy,  
Caroline, Sheila, Delphine.**

**DELPHINE**

I am waiting for my case to come up  
and I am waiting  
for a rebirth of wonder

and I am waiting for someone  
to really discover America  
and wail  
and I am waiting  
for the discovery  
of a new symbolic western frontier  
and I am waiting  
for the American Eagle  
to really spread its wings  
and straighten up and fly right  
and I am waiting  
for the Age of Anxiety  
to drop dead  
and I am waiting  
for the war to be fought  
which will make the world safe  
for anarchy  
and I am waiting  
for the final withering away  
of all governments  
and I am perpetually awaiting  
a rebirth of wonder

#### **VIV**

I am waiting for the Second Coming  
and I am waiting  
for a religious revival  
to sweep thru the state of Arizona  
and I am waiting  
for the Grapes of Wrath to be stored  
and I am waiting  
for them to prove  
that God is really American  
and I am waiting  
to see God on television

piped onto church altars  
if only they can find  
the right channel  
to tune in on  
and I am waiting  
for the Last Supper to be served again  
with a strange new appetizer  
and I am perpetually awaiting  
a rebirth of wonder

**KATHY**

I am waiting for my number to be called  
and I am waiting  
for the Salvation Army to take over  
and I am waiting  
for the meek to be blessed  
and inherit the earth  
without taxes  
and I am waiting  
for forests and animals  
to reclaim the earth as theirs  
and I am waiting  
for a way to be devised  
to destroy all nationalisms  
without killing anybody  
and I am waiting  
for linnets and planets to fall like rain  
and I am waiting for lovers and weepers  
to lie down together again  
in a new rebirth of wonder

**CAROLINE**

I am waiting for the Great Divide to be crossed  
and I am anxiously waiting

for the secret of eternal life to be discovered  
by an obscure general practitioner  
and I am waiting  
for the storms of life  
to be over  
and I am waiting  
to set sail for happiness  
and I am waiting  
for a reconstructed Mayflower  
to reach America  
with its picture story and tv rights  
sold in advance to the natives  
and I am waiting  
for the lost music to sound again  
in the Lost Continent  
in a new rebirth of wonder

### **SHEILA**

I am waiting for the day  
that maketh all things clear  
and I am awaiting retribution  
for what America did  
to Tom Sawyer  
and I am waiting  
for Alice in Wonderland  
to retransmit to me  
her total dream of innocence  
and I am waiting  
for Childe Roland to come  
to the final darkest tower  
and I am waiting  
for Aphrodite  
to grow live arms  
at a final disarmament conference  
in a new rebirth of wonder

## DELPHINE

I am waiting  
to get some intimations  
of immortality  
by recollecting my early childhood  
and I am waiting  
for the green mornings to come again  
youth's dumb green fields come back again  
and I am waiting  
for some strains of unpremeditated art  
to shake my typewriter  
and I am waiting to write  
the great indelible poem  
and I am waiting  
for the last long careless rapture  
and I am perpetually waiting  
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn  
to catch each other up at last  
and embrace  
and I am awaiting  
perpetually and forever  
a renaissance of wonder

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "I Am Waiting" from *A Coney Island of the Mind*. Copyright © 1958 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Reprinted with the permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation, [www.wwnorton.com/nd/welcome.htm](http://www.wwnorton.com/nd/welcome.htm).

**2nd Hymn: no 247 in the Green book, "A World of Wonder"**

**Closing Words:** *Adapted from words of Marta M Flanagan*

Spirit of Life and Love,

May we be inspired with gratitude for all the wondrous gifts life offers us,

May we hold precious one another and the world which provides us with sustenance, beauty and wonder, and may we be filled with the resolve to share them with all in need *AMEN*.

*Extinguish Chalice*

**Closing Music Video Louis Armstrong sings 'Wonderful World' 2mins 20 seconds**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-T6aaRV9HY>**