

'We are all one' - 20th June 2021

led by Ann Kader

Opening music Babog Song (Michi)

<https://youtu.be/9I4kvNK3D4k>

Chalice lighting words by Atticus Palmer

We call this light before us in hope that we may

Always remain a strong community,

Working together to make the world a better place.

When we are grieving or sad,

When we are challenged,

When we need help,

This flame guides us out of the darkness.

When we are cheerful,

When we celebrate,

When we accomplish a great task,

When we return to a place that makes us happy,

The chalice reminds us to share our happiness with others.

HYMN 147 (P) Spirit of earth, root, stone and tree

Spirit of earth, root, stone and tree,

water of life, flowing in me,

keeping me stable, nourishing me,

O fill me with living energy!

Spirit of nature, healing and free,

spirit of love, expanding in me,

spirit of life, breathe deeply in me,

inspire me with living energy!

Spirit of love, softly draw near,
open my heart, lessen my fear,
sing of compassion, help me to hear,
O fill me with loving energy!

*Spirit of nature, healing and free,
spirit of love, expanding in me,
spirit of life, breathe deeply in me,
inspire me with living energy!*

Spirit of life, you are my song,
sing in my soul, all my life long,
gladden and guide me, keep me from wrong,
O fill me with sacred energy!

*Spirit of nature, healing and free,
spirit of love, expanding in me,
spirit of life, breathe deeply in me,
inspire me with living energy!*

Words by Lyanne Mitchell, traditional Scottish melody arranged by David Dawson

Prayer adapted from Rev Justin Osterman, written June 2018

Divine Spirit

It's hard to know what to say

Hard to know what to pray sometimes

When fear, sadness, anger and confusion take over.

This world is so beautiful and so terrible at times,

People so magnificent and so malevolent.

It's hard to know how to feel

With all the wonder and horror happening at the same time.

Divine spirit help us to make things right and fair.
Make us kind and just.
Be in that small voice that speaks of love.
Be our calm amidst the storms.
Be the fragile flower, that catches our eye to remind us
That seasons come and go, in nature, in life, in history.
Be the kind eyes that remind us
That there are open hearts and hands all around

Waiting to love and help,
If we will only open ourselves to them.
Remind us in every way,
That we can choose how to respond in life
And help us choose wisely, act justly, live peacefully,
And embody every value and virtue that we wish to see in the world.
Help us to be and become our best selves
In thought, word and deed
Today and everyday of our lives.

Amen

Story - Hebrew myth of the angel Lailah. 'Before you were born' written by Howard Schwartz

Before you were born, your soul made a home in the highest of heavens in the treasury of souls. The angel Lailah watched over you and one day a heavenly voice announced to all the angels that the time had come for you to be born. Then the angel Lailah led you out of the treasury of souls and brought you down to this world.

Once you were here, Lailah told your soul to enter a seed then Lailah brought that seed to your mother and you started to grow inside her. While you were growing there, Lailah lit a lamp inside your mother's womb and read to you from the book of secrets.

As you slept Lailah taught you all the secrets in the whole world. She taught you 70 languages, the language of the animals and the language of the wind. She even taught you the history of your soul and she revealed the past and the future to you.

Most of all, she told you many good stories and even though you were asleep, you listened to all those delightful tales and you loved them.

Finally the time came for you to be born and the angel Lailah led you out into the world but the moment you were born, Lailah put her to your lips reminding you to keep everything she had taught you was a secret.

This is how you got the indentation in your upper lip. Can you feel it?
Don't worry, you have been learning all your life all those wondrous things.

Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh - piece of paper

Think of a sheet of paper

Can you see the cloud in the paper?

Without the cloud there would be no rain

Without the rain the trees cannot grow.

Think more deeply about the paper and see the sunshine in it.

If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow

And so there is sunshine in the sheet of paper.

Carry on looking and you will see the logger who cut the tree.

We know the logger cannot exist without the wheat from the mill.

And therefore even his bread is also in the paper

As is his mother and father .

Thich Nhat Hanh calls this "interbeing". I call it 'we are all one'.

Poem "Interbeing" by Thich Nhat Hanh "

The sun has entered me
The sun has entered me together with the cloud and the river.
I myself have entered the river,
And I have entered the sun
With the cloud and the river.
There has not been a moment
When we do not inter penetrate.
But before the sun entered me,
The sun was in me-
Also the cloud and the river.
Before I entered the river,
I was already in it.
There has not been a moment
When we have not been inter-been.
Therefore, you know
That as long as you continue to breathe
I continue to be in you.

Followed by silence and reflective music

Spirit to the sea, Josh Johnston

<https://youtu.be/C9umYc5iM9E>

Address

We may all look differently, think differently but our inner beings are interconnected. Life shows these connections constantly, sometimes in unforeseen and mysterious ways.

For instance, last week in Rev Kate's Service during reflection, I felt that my dear friend Diane was with me. She had died some years ago but did so much for our church. I felt strongly she was listening to Kate's Service and agreeing wholeheartedly to what Kate was saying.

I think past, present and future connections are there ready to be made or acknowledged. Thich Nhat Hanh calls this “interbeing’ as it’s a connection with all beings and nature, which I think we are all appreciating more.

A very beautiful connection I came across recently was thirteen indigenous grandmothers from different parts of the world have come together in New York. They say they have heard the agonised cry of the earth and have come together to help heal it by prayer, peace pipes and other traditional ones. One also talks about her observation

“There was a time in our life that the indigenous people, that we were walking on the earth. We didn’t have maps. We didn’t have road signs. Yet, we were able to journey. When we felt like we were lost, we would sit down, and we would say our prayers in front of the sacred fire. We would then be shown the direction to go.”

These are innate connections with the Divine and we are in the process of losing them.

Alexis Gumb’s book: ‘Undrowned: Black feminist lessons from marine animals’ quotes:

“some of us may be familiar with the concept of echolocation. It is a method of communication, of sending and receiving messages used by marine animals. The animal emits a call to the environment and listens for a sound to return. Could this be the sound of the genuine for which the whale listens? The returned sound or echo helps the animal figure out where it is and what is in its environment. It is critical for keeping itself alive through navigation and hunting for nutrition’.

She goes on to say:

“once upon a time there was a giant sea mammal, who weighed up to twenty three tons, swimming in the Bering sea - within twenty seven years, the entire species was extinct, killed on thousands of voyages for fur and sealskin.’

She talks about “is it dangerous to be discovered?’

And “what can I do to honour you, now that it is too late?’

Here she is talking about the mammal and her own race and the struggles of both, but also the communion between them.

It is not only animals we are connected to, think of how you feel when you hug a tree. You can feel the spirit of that tree giving you comfort. If you've never tried it, give it a go.

Backalong there was a soundscape called "Listen to the World". Unfortunately I can't remember how I found it but it was the sounds of an aspen grove in Utah. It included 47,000 trees and sounded like gentle rain. So many trees and out of the roots come new trees and they look different but they actually all are genetically identical to one root. So what is an individual or are we all innately connected to one being, some may call God.

Looking back at the Hebrew myth, when we are born and the cord is cut, we become a separate being but we don't really, as we rely on our mother for a long time and we always have things that link us to our Mother Earth.

The Jewish myth says that when we are born we forget our interconnection and become individuals, we become independent and unique, which has to happen for our growth. But dig deeper and you will see that everything is really one.

Jewish mysticism looks beneath the surface to the truth of oneness. Perhaps the soul in the womb knows that she floats in water made up of elements, the same as stars. She may know she can only eat and breathe because of the umbilical cord that connects her to mother. So we go across space and time.

I'm not sure where Rabbi Green is from but he writes:

"each flower, each blade of grass, each human soul, is a new manifestation of divinity, a new unfolding of the cosmic one that ever reveals itself through its multi-coloured garments, ever taking on new and changing forms of life. In the variety of life's riches we discover the unity that flows through them all."

When we realise most of our crises here and around the world are due to our thinking as individuals, we will continue to have racism, greed and corruption, treating

immigrants and migrants badly, cruelty to animals and on and on. What we really are is part of a whole system. We need to live with both realities, which is often a struggle.

Howard Thurman, author, theologian and civil rights leader writes about his companionship with our other than human kindred.

He writes:

“to be alive is to participate responsibly in the experiences of life. Men say grace at meals not only because they feel a sense of gratitude to God for a sustaining providence, but out of a deep sense of responsibility to the life that had been yielded in order that they may be sustained for one more day... the bacon a man ate for breakfast, at some moment in the past, was alive with vibrant, elemental health and vigorousBecause of what he yielded and because of the myriad yielding of many forms of life, we are able to live and carry on. This means our life is not our own. Every minute of life we are faced with the relentless urgency to make good in our own lives for the lives that are lost for us. Quite consciously then I see my responsibility to all that has gone into the making of me - not only in terms of food but also in terms of the total contribution that has been made to my life both by the past and the present. I must live my life responsibly or lose my right to self respect and to integrity”

I think he says it all really. Thank you for listening.

Benediction by First Unitarian Universalist Society of Exeter

Go in peace

Speak truth

Give thanks for each day

Respect the earth, and all creatures,

For they are alive like you

Care for your body. It is a wondrous gift.

Live simply

Be of service

Be guided by your faith and not your fear Go lightly on your way.
Walk in a sacred manner.

Closing music We are not alone, The Eagles

<https://youtu.be/ZdiX7te58vA>