

The Second Gaze 16th May 2021

Led by Ann Kader. Reader Karen Gazley, filmed and produced by Myron

Opening music The Swan, Carnival of the Animals, Saen-Saëns, performed by Yo-Yo Ma & Kathryn Stott

<https://youtu.be/3qrKjwjo7Q>

Welcome

Welcome everybody. Welcome if you're on Zoom, or Facebook, or reading this later. And next week you'll have a lovely 'blended' service, but more of that later.

Chalice lighting

All over the world

Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists

Light a flaming chalice

It is the flame that brings us together

And binds us together.

It is a symbol of our common values,

Our shared commitments

And our belief that in our diversity there is unity.

We light our chalice this day, in gratitude

For those who have gone before us,

Those who gather with us

Those who are absent in the circle

And those who will follow in our footsteps.

Hymn 181 (P) Wake now my senses

Wake now my senses, and hear the earth call;

Feel the deep power of being in all.

Keep with the web of creation your vow,

Giving, receiving and love shows us how.

Wake, now, my reason, reach out to the new;
Join with each pilgrim who quests for the true;
Honour the beauty and wisdom of time;
Suffer thy limit, and praise the sublime.

Wake, now, compassion, give heed to the cry;
Voices of suffering, fill the wide sky;
Take as your neighbour both stranger and friend,
Praying and striving their hardship to end.

Wake, now, my conscience, with justice thy guide;
Join with all people whose rights are denied;
Take not for granted a privileged place;
God's love embraces the whole human race.

Wake, now, my vision of ministry clear;
Brighten my pathway with radiance here;
Mingle my calling with all who would share;
Work toward a planet transformed by our care.

Prayer A Bouquet of People by Claire Feingold Thoryn. She has adapted it from a much-cherished prayer by the late Rev. Max Coots

Let us give thanks for a bouquet of people.

We give thanks for children. Like tulips and iris, they multiply around us, making the world ever more filled with colour, beauty and new life. May we bless them as they replant themselves ever further from us, knowing they need their own space to grow into.

We give thanks for generous friends, as constant in bloom as echinacea and whose gifts lift up our body and spirit.

We give thanks for feisty friends as indomitable geraniums, And for continuous friends, who, like bittersweet and ivy, Hold on and never let go.

For crotchety friends, who at first glance seem dour
And then blossom into joy as quickly as forsythia.

For funny friends, silly as snapdragons
And serious friends, complex as chrysanthemums.

For comfortable friends, their gentle presence as soothing as the sweet smell of lilacs.

For stormy weather friends, who stand by us in hard times, like lily of the valley that cannot be deterred by shade or shadow.

For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening time And young friends coming on as fast as phlox.

For friends as unpretentious as dogwood,
As persistent as pachysandra,
As steadfast as azalea,
And who, like snowdrops, can be counted on to see you through the winter and remind you that spring always comes.

For loving friends, who wind around us like wisteria and embrace us, despite our blights, wilts and withering.

And finally, for forget me not friends, gone but not forgotten. Their beauty lives on in our memories and hearts.

For this bouquet of people, who brighten our lives, each in their own way, we give thanks.

Amen

Hymn 21 (P) Come and Find the Quiet Centre

Come and find the quiet centre
In the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter,
Find the space where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter,
Clear our eyes, that we can see
All the things that really matter;
Be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us,
Cools the heat and slows the pace;
God it is who speaks and names us,
Knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking,
Lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking,
Finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel,
Open to each other's pain;
Let our lives and fears unravel,
Celebrate the space we gain;
There's a place for deepest dreaming,
There's a time for heart to care;
In the spirit's lively scheming
There is always room to spare.

Buddhist meditation: With Every Breath (anon)

With every breath I take today,
I vow to be awake;

And every step I take,
I vow to take with a grateful heart.

So I may see with eyes of love
Into the hearts of all I meet,
To ease their burden when I can
And touch them with a smile of peace.

Silence and music

Edvard Grieg. Performed by Ruben Piirainen, Music Director, Unitarian Universalist Church West (Brookfield, WI) <https://youtu.be/1WeUhoQDVGs>

Reading from John O'Donohue's book 'Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace'. This reading is from the chapter 'Towards a reverence of approach'.

Our culture has little respect for privacy; we no longer recognise the sacred zone around each person. We feel we have a right to blunder unannounced into any area we wish. Because we have lost that reverence of approach, we should not be too surprised at the lack of quality and beauty in our experience. At the heart of things is a secret law of balance and when our approach is respectful, sensitive and worthy, gifts of healing, challenge and creativity open up to us. A gracious approach is the key that unlocks the treasure of the encounter.

The way we are present to each other is frequently superficial. We become more interested in 'connection' rather than communion. In many areas of our lives the rich potential of friendship and love because we push towards 'connection'. When we deaden our own depths, we cannot strike a resonance in those we meet or in the work we do.

A reverence of approach awakens depth and enables us to be truly present where we are. When we approach with reverence great things decide to approach us. Our real life comes to the surface and it's light awakens the concealed beauty in things.

When we walk on the earth with reverence, beauty will decide to trust us. The rushed heart and the arrogant mind lack the gentleness and patience to enter that embrace. Beauty is mysterious, a slow presence who waits for the ready, expectant heart. When the heart becomes attuned to her restrained glimmerings, it learns to recognise her intimations more frequently in places it would never have lingered before.

Address

I have been thinking a lot about the second gaze as I have been doing a course with the center for action and contemplation which has kept this in my mind.

From my own observations, how many times have you met someone for the first time and thought , I'm not sure about him or her and then not really think about that person again. Have you ever thought maybe if you looked at that person again in perhaps a different way, you might find a common interest or realise that person needs help or support but they may come across as arrogant, brash or in other ways, this may just be a front. The first gaze is not often compassionate, we judge and analyse and often want to control the situation even if subconsciously. Sometimes this is called our smaller self. We often don't come to the second contemplative, compassionate true self until later. The first gaze is too self preoccupied and may not be able to enter into anything with the other because we first feel with our emotions but we should try to look with what is called " the gaze of compassion " looking with our inner divine DNA. This second gaze comes from our inner being and helps us to act in a compassionate way.

I've spoken before about talking to a young, homeless man, people just walked past him. He stood up and shook my hand and said "thank you for talking to me, my name is Mark, people just assume I'm a drug addict but I've never taken drugs". So if those people had looked and maybe looked again with a different mindset, they would have seen a young man on hard times.

Again a young girl of about 10 being pushed in her wheelchair kept shouting "Hi Ya". Most people just ignored her. I spoke to her saying 'hi ya' back. She was delighted and a big smile lit up her face. Mum said she had only just learned those words and

was trying it out. I could have looked and walked on but I looked again, that second gaze again. Mum, the girl and myself, we all got a huge dose of happiness.

I encourage you, if you look at a person and first see negative, look a second time to see them again and remind yourself that they are no different to you, they are just wearing a different coat. Also remember we are all at different levels of consciousness. Maybe look a second time through eyes of love and acceptance and remember we are all part of the divine.

A quote from Frederick Buechner:-

“If we are to love our neighbours,
Before doing anything else
We must see our neighbours
With our imagination as well as our eyes,
That is to say like artists,
We must see not just their faces
But the life behind and within their faces
Here it is love that is the frame we see them in”
Confucius said to his followers -

“Look into your own heart, discover what gives you pain, and then refuse, under any circumstances whatsoever, to inflict that pain on anybody else. Never treat others, as you would not like to be treated yourself “

Hymn 9 (G) So simple is the Human heart.

A little sun, a little rain,
A soft wind blowing from the West -
And woods and fields are sweet again,
And warmth within the mountain's breast.
So simple is the earth we tread,
So quick with love and life her frame,

Ten thousand years have dawned and fled,
And still her magic is the same.

A little love, a little trust,
A soft impulse, a sudden dream,
And life as dry as desert dust
Is fresher than a mountain stream
So simple is the human heart,
So ready for new hope and joy;
Ten thousand years have played their part,
But left it young as girl or boy.

Benediction: For Belonging by John O'Donohue

May you listen to your longing to be free.
May the frames of your belonging be large enough for the dreams of your soul.
May you arise each day with a voice of blessing whispering in your hear.... something good is going to happen to you.
May you find harmony between your soul and your life.
May the mansion of your soul never become a haunted place.
May you know the eternal longing that lies at the heart of time.
May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within.
May you never place walls between the light and yourself.
May you be set free from prisons of guilt, fear, disappointment and despair.
May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you, and embrace you in belonging.

Closing music

Sunshine on my shoulders, John Denver

https://youtu.be/diwuu_r6GJE