

Service on Connections, 17th January 2021
Led by Ann Kader

Opening Music - Nicola Benedetti "Meditation from Thais"
<https://youtu.be/v4umvKRNjBc>

Welcome

Welcome to you all, if you're on zoom, Facebook, YouTube and those reading this service at home.

As is our custom I will now light our chalice to celebrate our free religious faith. If you wish to light a candle at home, please do.

May our flame of worship be to us
As the burning bush in which God speaks
May it remind us of the breath of God
That fills us and all the myriad creatures
May we see it's reflection in the water of life
That flows through paradise
May it bear witness to the beautiful diversity
To which this sacred earth gives rise
This reading was from the Carnival of Lamps by Cliff Reed

First hymn is no. 24 in the purple hymn book, 'Come sing a song with me'

Come, sing a song with me,
Come, sing a song with me,
Come, sing a song with me
That I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Come, dream a dream with me,
Come, dream a dream with me,
Come dream a dream with me,
That I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.
Come, walk in rain with me,
Come, walk in rain with me,
Come, walk in rain with me,
That I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Come, share a rose with me,
Come, share a rose with me,
Come share a rose with me,

That I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time

Story The Tired Bee', by Alana.

"I was 12 and I watched my father carefully as he rowed on the tranquil lake. It was late summer, August, the buzzing wings of dragonflies snapped past us. I pulled back and rocked the small canoe. Dad turned to me with a wink. I still wasn't too sure I wanted to be doing this.

Our family had been spending summers on Bear Mountain, a small park and recreational community close to the Pennsylvanian border for as long as I could remember. We all came together, about 40 of us, each summer to swim, play, bask in the sun and reconnect as a family.

I was one of the younger kids and usually excluded from my older cousins' activities. Consequently, I either hung out with my dad or babysat the younger ones.

On this particular summer afternoon, we'd gotten a canoe and decided to explore a little bit of the park itself. We let the gentle rhythm of the lake pull us into a narrow river that wound around camping grounds. Tall evergreens, pines of all sorts, dotted the banks on either side and the trip was cozy and peaceful. The cloudy skies overhead provided slight relief from the August heat. I stopped rowing, sat back and closed my eyes while I heard Dad rowing quietly.

Suddenly I heard a buzzing, close to me ear. A frantic, desperate humming coming from the right side of my head. I bolted up straight and stared at Dad. He pointed toward me with his chin. "Don't move and he'll not bother you." He kept rowing.

I thought to myself. "What is he talking about?" I looked around and then I saw it. A bee. A bee on my shoulder. Actually to be accurate, a yellow jacket. These are large and very aggressive bees, marked by bright yellow and black bands in their bodies. I lived in terror of bees, wasps and hornets. It was more than fear, it was a pathological terror I couldn't explain or could be cured of. I sat there like a living statue. My eyes must have looked like saucers. I hissed at Dad to do something.

He just rowed and shook his head. "He's tired, it's a hot day and all living creatures need rest. He's most probably been flying up the lake and needs to give himself a break. This is a pretty big park. Once he's rested enough, he'll keep on going."

Was I hearing correctly? Did my ears betray me, or was my father telling me to just let a large yellow jacket sit on my shoulder? I grimaced and he simply looked away and kept rowing. The terror gripped me but I swivelled my head to take a peek. There he sat, in all his yellow and black glory. Wings folded neatly against his body. As I watched him I was fascinated by how perfectly formed he seemed. Somehow, my curiosity overpowered my fear and I relaxed. No sooner had I done that than he began fluttering, tested his wings and flew off."

She says even after 30 years she remembers that day and 'that was when I realised for the first time in my life I felt connected to something greater than myself and that is what the bee had come to teach me. I realised that nature is an aspect of the creation and that we are all one, all the Creator's children - small, big, human or insect.'

Prayer

Our prayer for today is The Lord's prayer

Our Father which art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever
Amen

A short meditation from the Center for Action and Contemplation, which will be followed by some reflective music.

Close your eyes, breathe in deeply breathe out deeply. Continue this breathing. Turn inward and connect to your innermost you.

When breathing

On your in breaths say:-

My deepest me is love

My deepest me is whole

My deepest me is limitless

My deepest me is infinite

My deepest me is compassion

My deepest me is sacred

My deepest me is mystery

My deepest me is forgiveness

My deepest me is beauty

My deepest me is God

My deepest me is the knowledge to give I open my heart and listen

Music Di Sei Soprani by William Daman

<https://youtu.be/W77p6CGgaWE>

Second hymn Purple book no 199 Weaver God Creator

Weaver God, Creator, sets life on the loom,
draws out threads of colour from primordial gloom.
Wise in the designing, in the weaving deft;
Love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

Called to be co-weavers, yet we break the thread
And may smash the shuttle and the loom, instead.
Careless and greedy, we deny by theft
Love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.
Weaver God, Great Spirit, May we see your face
Tapestried in trees, in waves and winds of space;
Tenderness teach us, lest we be bereft
Of love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

Weavers we are called, yet woven too we're born,
For the web is seamless: if we tear, were torn.
Gently may we live - that fragile earth be left;
Love and justice joined - the fabric's warp and weft.

READING from 'Inner Wisdom, Meditations for the heart and soul' by Louise L. Hay
titled 'I am connected to all of life'

I am spirit, light, energy, vibration, colour and love. I am so much more than I give myself credit for. I am connected with every person on the planet and with all of life. I see myself healthy, whole and living in a society where it is safe for me to be who I am and to love others. I hold this vision for myself and for all of us, for this is a time for healing and making whole. I am part of that whole. I am one with all of life.

ADDRESS

I'm going to start this address with a poem by one of our church members Caroline. She said it came to her as a whole poem and is about connection to trees. It's quite beautiful. It's called:- The Wood

What do they think of me
These gentle sisters?
Is the joy I feel mutual?
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 Winter's day?

When I go will they think of me
As I will them?
To store and use the memory
As a precious balm
On a weary soul?

When I said I would do this service, I thought we would be in church and here we are back in lockdown again. So I had to rethink my address.

About four years ago, I did a service about dependence and interdependence. The Unitarian novelist Herman Melville wrote "we cannot live only for ourselves, a thousand fibres connect us."

I talked about the huge redwood trees, the tallest trees in the world. Some are 300 feet high and more than 2,500 years old and I mentioned that despite this they have a very shallow root system but that system is interlocked. They support and sustain each other. They need one another to survive and so do we.

It is so important to have human connection. We all depend on each other. How can we do that? How do we stay together while we are apart. The key workers from all walks of life just shows how much we depend on each other and are connected to each other. We must make sure our community stays connected and doesn't disintegrate. Sometimes this is hard but we are doing our best in a variety of ways. How lucky are we to be in an age of technology in this time of the pandemic. We can be taught online, listen to concerts online, family zoom catch-ups and of course our services on zoom.

But not every connection has been online - remember the singing on the balconies in Italy, the Chinese dancing in their quarantine units. Friends and neighbours looking after each other with shopping or medication.

These are different ways to socially connect so although we are unable to physically connect, we are still socially connecting. This is how we can ward off loneliness. We will all have had the shared experience of this pandemic, so however different we all are, this will be a common connection for the rest of our lives. Some people believe in soul connections. Have you ever just met someone and knew there was a connection. I will just give an example of two times this has happened to me. In my school we had an additional programme of working with the staff at St Mary's hospital to support special needs babies. I had a team of nursery officers to do this but initially I had to see the family. This little baby was born with very severe facial disfigurement. I was told to work with the educational psychologist to prepare me in case I was shocked. I went to visit and when I saw dear Tabitha. I looked at her and it was as though our bodies had disappeared and our souls reached out to each other. I have never forgotten that feeling and for me I know in my heart that there is more than this life. We worked hard on a programme for Tabitha and mummy and eventually a wonderful plastic surgeon mended her face, another connection. Just to let you know she is a happily married woman now.

Another time I met a lady who was many years older than me but we seemed to have a connection and became great friends. Some years after, she said to me - "I'm

going to tell you a secret that my family said I mustn't tell. I'm descended from Romany gypsies". I said "well funny enough my family said the same and I'm descended from them too". Was that why we had that initial connection. There was a lot of racism about gypsies and travellers at that time which is why we probably weren't allowed to say but a few years later I did a lot of work with travellers. Perhaps that was meant to be. Maybe yet another connection.

We can also be drawn to a connection with inanimate objects. The artist Tim Walker in his book Wonderful Things talks about connections with objects, he thinks about "who made this, the craftsmanship, how did that happen, the peculiarities of the object, your emotional reaction to it but he says there's always a connection that draws you in.

During this time a lot of us have reconnected to nature. In Ancient wisdom human beings have five layers of experience:

the environment, the physical body, the mind, the intuition and spirit.

The environment was always honoured and we need to start honouring it again. We need nature to support our psyche, which in turn lessens stress which again in turn makes us kinder beings. We also mustn't forget to connect to ourselves in whatever way that feeds us.

I leave you with the quote from Thich Nhat Hanh:

He says, "We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness."

Benediction

May we take with us some joy

May we go forward in hope

May we live rightly, in peace with one another

And may we know the blessing of the Divine

God bless

Closing music

Forever Young, Bob Dylan

<https://youtu.be/NA8Faok9cLo>