

Plymouth Unitarians, 21st February 2021 - 'What sort of light are you?'

Led by Ann Kader

Opening music 'Come into the Light' by Bliss

<https://youtu.be/hzCFIK0Pzh8>

Welcome and chalice lighting

Welcome to you all. Those on zoom or Facebook, those sitting quietly reading this or those watching on YouTube. Welcome to you all.

As is our custom, we light our chalice to celebrate our free religious faith. Maybe at this point, you might like to light a candle at home.

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 that have gone before us,
Those who gather with us
Those who are absent from us today
And those who will follow in our footsteps.

First hymn *Green book no 148 'The Miracle'*

O what a piece of work are we,
How marvellously wrought;
The quick contrivance of the hand,
The wonder of our thought.

Why need to look for miracles
Outside of nature's law?
Humanity we wonder at
With every breath we draw!

But give us room to move and grow,
But give our spirit play
And we can make a world of light
Out of the common clay.

Prayer *A prayer for our community from Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest.*

Loving God, you fill all things with fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, fear and despair. Help us to awaken to greater humility and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in love. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of the world. Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the different names of God.

Story *'How Raven Stole the Sun' - story adapted from the Haida and read by Myron*

Once upon a time, you may have heard, when the world was created but not yet finished, Raven flew over the earth on his brilliant white wings. He wanted to see the beauty of the earth and he wanted everyone to see his beauty, but it was dark; no lights at all except little fires and torches here and there. Then he heard there was a Chieftain, a powerful man, who was selfish and who held the sun, moon and the stars in three boxes in his family lodge. Sitting in the trees nearby he saw the Chieftain's daughter coming down to the river to get water and Raven hatched a plan. First, he turned himself into a little evergreen needle. He dropped into the water and when the daughter scooped up the water for a drink, Raven flowed into her belly. He moved over into her womb and nine months later he was born as a human baby. The baby's nose was very narrow and curved just like a bird's beak. He was a very

smart baby. They named him Khooyah and he was the grandchild of the Chief who loved him very much. Granddad loved to look on Khooyah.

One day he was crawling around and he went to the box with the stars. He wanted to play with the box. The Chief was very protective of this box and would let no one touch it. But the Chief relented, saying “ what harm could a little baby do. He cannot even stand on his own.” But this was Raven. So, he quickly figured out how to lift of the lid and suddenly a whole rush of little lights rose up out of the box and danced on the ceiling and followed the smoke out of the square hole at the top. They rose up and up into the dark sky. Everyone was very happy about all this beautiful light, except the Chief, who had lost a beautiful treasure.

At first he was very angry with the boy, but slowly he was charmed into forgiving Khooyah. Then one day the little toddler reached for the box of the moon. Oh, it was the same as before, with lots more crying, and eventually the Chief let little Khooyah play with the box. When raven lifted the lid everyone was so amazed at the round ball of the moon. They tossed it back and forth, then Raven hurled it through the smoke hole and it flew up and stuck in the sky. It was many weeks before the Chief forgave his grandson.

Finally, came the box with the Sun. The Chief was very afraid of the power of the Sun, he bound the box in rope. He said, “ it will burn you up, it will blind you, you cannot play with it ever.” But raven cried and cried. Finally his mother said, “ father, Khooyah is not eating he is so upset. I am afraid he will get sick and die. You must let him play with the box. Put guards around him so he will not cause harm.” So it was. But then Raven jumped up on the box and he turned into a big bird. Everyone was so surprised that they could do nothing as he lifted up the box, flew up in a circle and out of the smoke hole. The soot turned all his feathers black. Up and up he flew, pecking at the ropes, until he could go no higher. Then he turned and threw the box up while pulling the lid down with him. The sun roared out of the box. Raven closed his eyes so he wouldn't be blinded. The heat of the sun baked all the black soot into his plumage so all ravens are beautifully black up to this day. The sun rose up and filled the whole world with light. Raven soared about looking over the wonderful world, green leaves and sunlight sparkling on water. Even the Chief, sad as he was, had to

admit the world was better with light in it, to see his treasures blessing the entire world every day.

Second hymn No. 247 (Green) 'A world of wonder'

The sun at high noon,
The stars in dark space,
The light of the moon,
On our upturned face,
The high clouds, the rain clouds,
The lark song on high -
We gaze up in wonder
Above to the sky.

The green grassy blade,
The grasshopper's sound,
The creatures of shade,
That live in the ground,
The dark soil, the moist soil,
Where plants spring to birth-
We look down at wonder
Below in the earth.

The glad joys that heal,
The tears in our eyes,
The longings we feel,
The light of surprise,
Our night dreams, our day dreams,
Our thoughts ranging wide -
We live with a whole world
Of wonder inside.

Reading 'For Light' by John O'Donohue

Light cannot see inside things.

This is what the dark is for:

Minding the interior,
Nurturing the draw of growth
Through places where death in its own way turns into life.
In the glare of neon times,
Let our eyes not be worn
By surfaces that shine
With hunger made attractive.
That our thoughts may be true light,
Finding their way into words
Which have the weight of shadow
To hold the layers of truth
That we never place our trust
In minds claimed by empty light,
Where one- sided certainties
Are driven by false desire.
When we look into the heart,
May our eyes have the kindness
And reverence of candlelight

A short meditation *on the words of the Namaste song, followed by music for reflection.* “The Evening Star” by Felix Medelssohn performed by Ruben Piirainen, Music Director Unitarian Universalist Church West https://youtu.be/Dyz-wWtlr_8

Namaste, Namaste, the light divine within me beholds and honours the same light in you. Namaste. Shine from every face with loving grace; Holy flame within us burn and light our way. Namaste.

Third hymn *No. 64 (Purple) ‘How can we confine’*

How can we confine
God within our mind,
Held within a creed,
humanly designed?

How can we be sure
that the way we know
is the only path
that this God might show?

Surely such a joy
cannot be contained
by a single plan,
humanly explained?

People of all faiths,
let us all conspire;
source and ground of life,
answer our desire.

As we long to know
answers to our plight
take us, lead our quest,
dancing to the light.

Address

I have two mantras that I go back to time and time again. They are “there is always light through the darkness” and Julian of Norwich saying “all will be well and all manner of things will be well”.

The light through the darkness has stood me in good stead over my life and particularly this last year because even when it seems very dark, there is still a great deal of light and Kate has spoken of this in the past. Sometimes you just can't see it. So where is this light? We are the light, we were made to shine in all our glory. Have you really ever thought about the gift given to you of being the light? It is our responsibility to shine.

I did a Makaton course a couple of weeks ago. Makaton, if you don't know, is a communication system using signing, symbols and speech. We had used it in my school many years ago when it first became known about, because of the three ways it's used it suited many children and adults. A quarter of the children in my school had special needs so we taught all the children in school Makaton. What has this got to do with the title of this service? Well, doing this course brought back memories of the children singing and signing, I remembered thinking how wonderful; each child was different but each child had their own light, which brings me to today. What sort of light are you? Have you ever even thought what sort of light you are? Are you a big, bright, bold chandelier who is outgoing and confident? Or a tiny, quiet lamp who is a good listener? Are you a street lamp that keeps people safe? Are you like lightning, exciting and initiating change? Or are you a blend of different lights? No matter. All the different types of light are needed. Everyone of you has your own light and we need all those differences to come together to support, enhance and develop our church and look after each other in whatever way we can. Jesus said that we mustn't put our light under a barrel, he said we must let our light shine.

Marianne Williamson says anyone can change the world. You can change the world with your light and don't hide it under a bushel basket and when you don't play small or shrink away from what you can accomplish, she says that we are brilliant, talented, gorgeous, and we are and so much more. She says we were born to shine, to make manifest the glory of the divine within us.

Two short stories about people's different but equally empowering lights were told to me recently. One was by a witch who uses colour and thought that day she felt a blue light, so she bought a blue light bulb and put it in her porch. The blue light bulb represented her intent to accept people for who they are not what group they belong to. It also represented her belief in spiritual freedom, tolerance and respect for other belief systems as long as they don't try to indoctrinate her. She hopes when asked about her blue light, she will tell them and that the blue light symbol in porches will spread around the world to show we care about each other.

The other short story was told to me by a friend who worked in a huge office. The boss just passed worked down without a chat or being friendly but one day, she told

Tim that it was her birthday the next day. As this was the first time she had showed a bit of herself, he decided it would be good to do something nice for her. He talked to the rest of his team and they bought a card, wine and flowers ready for the next day. The next day they waited to surprise her outside of her office, all huddled behind Tim. Tim looked through the window and saw that she was crying. He went in and she told him that she hated her birthday because that was the day her divorce came through. Tim comforted her and then told her what they were going to surprise her with and that he would cancel it. In the end, she decided to have the birthday and after that she relaxed a bit with her staff but the moral of this story is don't assume other people's lights are like yours. Some like big surprise parties, for some it would be their worst nightmare.

How can we let our light shine. We must look into our hearts and feel that connection with others, knowing that everyone has worth and dignity. Look at what inspires you but don't expect everyone to be like you. Like in the story Myron read earlier, the moon, stars and sun are different lights but all equal in our need for them.

Whatever light you are, don't hide it. When we are born, there is a little flame in us and at the end of our life it goes back to the universe. This is a gift we have all been given and we should share it. If we all do this and not hide it, the light of the world will grow brighter. Remember to shine with the love and light within us. May each of us be a light to the world and each other.

Benediction by Dawn Buckle

As we leave this service

May the holy music linger in our ears

May the poetry of the spoken words stay in our minds

May our spirits remain uplifted

May our lives be blessed.

Closing music 'Be a Light' by Thomas Rett

<https://youtu.be/8YuWAZmD0aU>