

Service for the end of deaf awareness week May 8th 2022

Opening music - signed version of Nina Simone's "Feeling Good" by Missy Pink Phoenix

Welcome to all (signed)

Chalice lighting and words

May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations, and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity. May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to this community and to each other.

The theme for deaf awareness week this year is inclusion

This is the last day of deaf awareness week. Following on from Rev Kate's service two weeks ago, when she talked about widening the circle or active hospitality, i thought this service would fit in nicely and make us all think.

This service is about inclusion for deaf and hearing impaired people and children.

Yes, we do have a hearing loop but is that enough?

We have to look at ourselves too and how we interact with the deaf and hearing impaired. I'll come back to this later.

During this service, there will be some signing , but do remember not all deaf people sign.

The service is a joint service by four of us who started learning to sign by Elizabeth who works tirelessly for the deaf community.

Two of us are Unitarians Suzanne and myself, Hazel is a community worker and does a lot for our church cafe, Jude wouldn't step inside a religious institution if you paid her. So this service is a little eclectic. I Hope something from this service will stay with you when the service finishes.

First hymn purple book no 147 “spirit of earth, stone and tree

Prayers and thought for the day written by Suzanne

When you go to Church this Sunday and you feel the temptation to point out what’s wrong with the place - the coffee’s Luke warm, the lights are too bright, the temperature is wrong. The music is too loud and you don’t know the songs.

Remember in that moment. There’s a Ukrainian church gathering in subway tunnels to worship while bombs blast overhead.

No coffee. No instrumentalists. No leader pushing them to worship. They’re down there in real time and in real life worshipping their God as their world is crumbling down.

They don’t deserve that. No one does. Our prayers be with them.

It is through prayer that every day we may open the door a little wider and come a little nearer to understanding who we are and what our lives are really for.

Let us pray

Help me today to realise that you will be speaking to me through the events of the day, through people, through things and through creation.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can
And wisdom to know the difference

Thanks be to God

Poem by Suzanne:-

The God I know

When an artist steps aside to share their creation
They leave some of their self within that creation
I sense God in the silence after a wave has smashed

Against the rocks, the sun that beats down touches

Warmly my face, the black birds song after a storm

The lambs dancing with delight on the moor.

In the music softly playing when I am sad

The God I know is there.

2nd hymn purple book no 142/Shining through the Universe

Story “Freddy and the Fairy” by Julia Donaldson and Karen

George - read by Myron

This is a Children’s book bought for me at Christmas .

Listen carefully and enjoy the illustrations.

This will be followed by a silent meditation followed by Hazel

signing “Make me a Channel of your peace” sung by Susan

Boyle.

Address

A few of us have been learning sign language , although we are having a break now and I have to admit I haven't been practising. I wanted to learn to sign for two reasons, one some of you know from my musings in The Open Road. I'll tell you again in case you've forgotten. I was on my bus one day and two deaf visitors got on before 9.30 . They obviously came from somewhere you could use your bus pass before 9.30. I had seen them on the bus the day before in the afternoon.

The bus driver was horrid to them and was going to throw them off . I got up to pay for them, as did another person and they sat down looking quite embarrassed. When we all got off, we smiled

at each other and they signed thank you, but I wished I could sign so as to tell them nearly all Plymouth people are friendly and helpful including most bus drivers.

The other reason is my dear friend is deaf, she started to go deaf while we were teaching. When my friend retired from teaching, she started working part time at the V and A in London. She worked as a gallery assistant and also on the main shop tills. This was difficult but she was very successful, it became even more so when masks had to be worn. The customers would take their masks off and lean very close to her so she could hear. Not a good thing to do with Covid being around. A few weeks later , all museums closed. This was safer but then my friend wasn't interacting with anyone and became very isolated in lockdown and it was hard for her coming out of that.

She now volunteers at a wonderful theatre in Wimbledon called The Polka theatre for children. This theatre has recently been refurbished with all areas accessible, clear signage throughout, gender specific and all gender toilets available as well as baby changing facilities. They are committed to providing relaxed, BSL , audio described and captioned shows for all shows where possible. I was just talking on to her on the phone a couple of days ago (she has a phone for the deaf at home) , she said for the

first time in 12 years , she does not feel anxious going into a place . She feels very comfortable being a volunteer at this theatre.

When meeting people she now says , hello I am deaf , don't be embarrassed .

I'd just like to say a little aside really. The theatre did an amazing dance show called Plastic Drastic Fantastic and my friend has got me the email of the director of the show . It would be fantastic if we could get it down here.

Most of us here are hearing , although some of us may be a bit hard of hearing. Hearing loss through age is very common.

I'm sure a lot of us are unable to hear well when there is a lot of peripheral noise. I was at a birthday party some time ago and sitting at the end of the long table. It was a noisy restaurant and I couldn't hear any of the conversations going on . In the end , I just switched off.

I'd like to tell you a story from America. They use a different sign language as do most countries have their own.

This is written by a young woman:

“ My best friend's parents were both deaf. They were great

people that would do anything to help others.

I loved spending time with my friend's family. Her mum had a gentleness about her and a real knack for making me feel welcome and special. That was a big part of why I loved being with them, because who doesn't want to feel special, right?

Plus, I loved watching my friend sign for her mom. It was awesome! And it's one of the reasons I fell in love with American Sign Language or ASL in the first place. Those childhood memories still hold a special place in my heart. They always will.

But there was a dark side to those times too. I remember how the other moms treated my friend's mom. They chose not to see the loving, sweet person she was. To them, she was an outsider, someone to shun and toss aside at football games and PTA meetings. All because she was deaf.

Thankfully my mom taught me better. Not by her words, but by her actions. She loved my friend's mom. So, she made a point of sitting with her at those football games, buddying up with her at PTA meetings, and writing notes back and forth with her for hours. Basically being the kind of friend we all want. Not because she had to, but because she wanted to.

That doesn't sound like such a big deal, does it?

But to someone who is ignored on a regular basis, being treated like a friend instead of an outcast can make all the difference in the world.”

The French Revolution had a major impact on the development of BSL. Thomas Braidwood created the first formal sign language teaching institute and he got his inspiration for a public school from Charles Michel de l’Epee, who is recognised as one of the pioneers of welfare educational services and is recognised as a Benefactor of Humanity. Due to the example set by him, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the core document forged out of The French Revolution, gave equal rights to deaf and dumb people, therefore enabling development of services and institutions serving their interests.

We have a very famous Unitarian who was a pioneer in the education of deaf people. His name was Charles Baker , he was born in 1803. He dedicated his life to raise the condition of those who, deprived of hearing, have never attained, or if once attained have lost, the power of speech.

He had found a lack of teaching materials and developed a set of graded books on reading and comprehension called The Circle of Life.

If you want to read more about him. I've left a few copies about his life at the back of the church.

I've also left a few sheets at the back on successful communication with a hearing impaired people. These are from an audiology clinic in San Francisco.

I close this address by saying : remember the fairy

Thank you for listening

Final hymn purple book no 128 - Our World is One World

Benediction

Written by Cynthia Landrum a minister in Michigan

We leave this gathered community

But we don't leave our connection

Our concerns, our cares for each other

Our service to each other and to the world

Until we are together again, friends

Be strong, be well, be true, be loving.

Closing music Pharrell Williams Happy by Deaf Camp

