

## Service on A Simple Life - August 21st 2023

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Opening music

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Bliss - Sleep will come

Welcome and chalice lighting words

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Returning to Centre by Soul matters

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We come with the weight of life

Held quietly in the secret spaces of our heart.

The ballast of our spirits so easily shifts

And knocks us off Centre

Into this place, we walk

Hoping to find a voice, a song, a moment of sacred silence

That will bring us back to balance

That will anchor us again in beauty, trust and connection.

We light our chalice this morning

In gratitude for many ways we help each other return home.

1st hymn no . 9 green book

So simple is the human heart

A time for prayer

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Alternative Lord's Prayer

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Spirit of life and love, here and everywhere,

May we be aware of your presence in our lives.

May our world be blessed.

May our daily needs be met,

And May our shortcomings be forgiven,

As we forgive those of others.

Give us the strength to resist wrong doing

The inspiration and guidance to do right

And the wisdom to know the difference.

We are in your hands in the world; help us to grow.

May we have compassion for all living beings,

And receive whatever life brings,

With courage and trust.

Amen

Story “ The Happy Baker” from the book “The Little Buddha - Finding happiness”

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The Baker was sitting peacefully on the bench outside her bakery, reading a book. Inside one of her staff was selling the bread that she had baked early in the morning hours. The wonderful smell of fresh bread attracted many villagers;so many that a small queue formed in front of the bakery.

The Little Buddha watched the Baker for a while from the other side of the market square. She spent almost the whole time sitting comfortably on her bench. Either she was reading her book,or she was talking to one of her many friends who came by regularly. Unlike the way it was in a big town, the people in the village all knew each other well.

Whenever the queue in the front of the bakery became too long, the Baker got up and helped at the counter. She seemed happy and fully satisfied, as if she were consciously enjoying every single moment.

The Little Buddha waited quietly for a while before walking over to her.

“ May I sit down?” he asked , pointing to the free space next to

her. “ I have a question for you.”

The Baker looked up from her book and gave him an inviting smile.

“ Of Course, take a seat”.

She looked him over from head to toe.

“ You look like somebody that wants to ask me for the secret recipe of my happiness.”

He looked back at her in astonishment.

“ How do you know that?” He was puzzled.

“ Well , you’ve been standing for more than an hour on the other side of the market, staring at me.”

The Little Buddha blushed.

“ Don’t worry, it’s not a sin to be curious. And besides, everybody else who has come to me to learn about the secret has done the same.”

She drank some mint tea from her beautiful teacup and took a deep breath.

“ you know , it’s not really a secret. It’s just a story, a story about the temptation of postponing your happiness. Do you want to hear it?”

“ I’d love to” the Little Buddha said with excitement.

So the Baker put her book to one side and began to tell a true story from her life.

Some years ago there was a businessman who had moved to our village. When he came to my bakery for the first time, he fell in love with my bread straightaway. He adored the fantastic smell and the special taste.

One day I was sitting happily on my bench , just like today, talking to friends and reading a book, when the businessman arrived at the bakery to buy some bread. When he came out again, he sat down next to me.

“ You are the baker woman, aren’t you?” he asked, and I nodded.

“ I have been thinking about your wonderful bread and I had an idea that I would like to put to you.”

“ Oh, I always like to hear new ideas, “ I said. “Go ahead”

The businessman went ahead.

“ I have lived in many different towns and villages, and your bread is by far the best bread I have ever tasted.”

I smiled. Compliments like this always felt really good.

The businessman continued.

“ Why don’t you open another bakery in the next village? Your bread would sell really well in any place. You could teach your

art of bread making, and then they could bake the bread for you in the other village. If you then employed another person to sell the bread, you could then have another bakery.”

“ And then?” I wondered.

“Once the second bakery is also running successfully, you would have to teach various people the art of bread making. When you have done that, you could go to a bank, get a loan and open many more bakeries in different towns and villages.”

“ And then.”

“One day, when everything is running smoothly, you will earn enough money to employ other people to do all the work. To get to that point you will, of course, need a lot of patience and endurance, it might take a few years or even a decade.

“And then?”

“ Well, then you will have enough time to do all of the things that you really want to be doing.”

“Like what?” I wanted an example.

The businessman thought about it for a moment, and soon had an idea.

“ You could sit here peacefully on your bench and read a good book...”

The baker and the Little Buddha both had to smile.

How easy it was to make life complicated.

And how difficult it could be to be simply happy.

2nd hymn no. 146 green book

True Simplicity

## Reading

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From the book “Live more Sloth”

I was trekking through the Central American Rainforest recently when a strange animal crossed my path. It had long gangly limbs, a small round head and a huge green. It was, of course, a sloth.

Three hours later, the creature finished crossing my path, and I found myself pondering the reason for its broad smile.

I came to the conclusion that the sloth was smiling because it was happy because of the way it lives.

Compare for a moment the sloth and the human.

The human spends its time striving for faster cars, bigger televisions etc while the sloth desires nothing more than another clawful of leaves.

The human frantically uploads selfies, while the sloth wouldn't even bother even if it had opposable thumbs.

The human worries about where it will be in five years time. The sloth knows exactly where it will be - slightly further along the same branch.

That's when it struck me. If humans could behave more like sloths, they would be happier.



I decided to spend some time living among the sloths and learning their ways so I could share my findings.

Unfortunately they influenced me so much that I couldn't be bothered to take any notes. I found great wisdom from this strange mammal and realised living at the pace of a sloth can lead to greater contentment.

Today I have to acknowledge our longest standing member who is 100 today. Happy birthday Ralph.

Some years back there was a discussion service , the title being “ What is God”

Jean found Ralph’s interpretation of this so spiritually enlightening, that she kept a copy and says she will treasure it forever.

She has kindly let me read it today on Ralph’s special birthday.

“ I still beleive in God, but not in a God.

That is to say , that to me, God has no physical or material qualities whatsoever. God’s not a person.

God is spirit, and can be discerned only through spiritual values such as love, truth, beauty, goodness, kindness , compassion and such like.

To me, the truth that God exists is made manifest by the universal existence of these values.

Without them, life would be unthinkable.

They do not come from any physical or material source. They come from the mystery we call God. Indeed I would claim that they are God.

As in my younger days when I questioned the concept of how could God be both loving and all powerful, so now I question whether a spiritual, loving God such as I have postulated, could or would have created such a volatile universe as we are told exists, including the planet we exist upon and indeed ourselves.

I find it impossible to countenance. Consequently I do not believe in a creator God, but I do believe in a God of love, truth, beauty and goodness, who can be, and is, experienced in this world, whenever and wherever such qualities are manifested.

In all deeds of love and compassion, and in all acts of kindness, in joy and laughter, and sacrifice. In all things bright and beautiful. The best analogy I can offer, is that of the force of gravity. Scientists tell us that it permeates the whole of the universe, keeping the stars and galaxies in their orbits and keeping our feet on the ground.

So I believe , the mystery we call God permeates the whole cosmos with spiritual values, silently, ceaselessly, bringing divinity and love, into what otherwise would be an arid and mechanical universe.

For what it may be worth.

This is my conception of God.

Words by Ralph

There will now be a silent reflection to think about your own view of God followed by some reflective music titled “Walk in the Garden”

Address

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In the last couple of weeks , two of my friends who don't know each other and live in different cities, they have each bought me a book. One is called "Live more Sloth" and the other is titled " A Simple Life". Earlier in the service you heard a reading from Live More Sloth. I think my friends might be trying to tell me something. Although we are complex beings, we do not need to make our lives complex.

Have you thought how nice it would be to have a more simple life.

Simple living can be hard because we're conditioned that busyness and accumulation of things makes us successful.

Even children now go to a variety of activities , that's ok if there's a balance of children having time just to be and to play ,but some have no time inbetween activities to do this. Therefore both parent and child rushing here, there and everywhere will become stressed and impatient.

The messiness of non stop busyness and stress of this can make

our lives become difficult to live with true purpose, meaning and joy. We're also taught these days that the accumulation of things is a sign of success.

Bertrand Russell said “ it is preoccupation with possession, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly”

Leonardo da Vinci said “ simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”.

My daughter kept telling me to watch Marie Kondo on tv, she does shows about decluttering. I still have only watched a bit but she says to hold each thing up and think“ does this give me joy” if it does keep it, if it doesn't she says to let it go and get rid of it. Sometimes I watch tv ,crochet and read all at the same time and get nothing from any of them but when I crochet a flower mindfully thinking of who I am making it for, I get great joy.

How often do you scroll through your emails each day , it becomes addictive. Do you look at beautiful , nature pictures on Facebook but walk past a beautiful tree or stop to watch how a snail moves.

At one point in my life, I had to move from a three bedroom house to a studio flat. I had over 1000 books which I was

emotionally attached to. How could I let them go. Yet I had to.

I gave the education books to the university, novels I left on buses and trains and the rest I gave to Oxfam. I thought I would be devastated but I actually felt liberated and others got a chance to use or enjoy those books.

Even religion , we are overdosed with this and that and sometimes can't see the wood for the trees. How then do we then make our choice of which church to go to or not. We should think also about decluttering spiritually . This would include our thoughts which can be negative . To work on our spiritual simplicity is about letting go and uncomplicating our lives and to focus on what really matters.

I think about Jesus, an activist, a healer - and a minimalistic. Jesus lived a simple life and he encouraged his disciples to live simply too. He travelled all over with his disciples. He ate and stayed at people's homes. In a way he even simplified the commandments to two - love God and love your neighbour as yourself. Because Jesus led a simple life, he was able to focus on what mattered most - his ministry and his relationships with his disciples. Jesus spent time in silence and prayer and he also took time to rest. Maybe we need to look again at how Jesus lived.

In Matthew 6 , Jesus teaches “ Do not store up for yourselves

treasures on earth” He is telling us we don’t need all the things we think we do. Simplicity can let us be open , gives us space to enjoy the present moment and respect and honour our planet.

In the book “ A Simple Life” , the last paragraph of the chapter on purpose and simplicity states:

“ The crucial step towards leading a simpler life isn’t - as we might initially suppose - to get rid of things. It’s to ask ourselves what our true longings are and what are the ends at which we are aiming. Simplicity isn’t so much a life with few things and commitments in it, as a life with the right, necessary things, attuned to our flourishing. Our lives will feel - and be - simpler when we’ve probed our minds to yield up their most secret and precious insight: the knowledge of what we truly want.”

Living a simple life can help by focusing on the things that are most important to you, that will be meaningful and fulfilling.

From a simple life will come contentment and happiness. Feeling satisfied with what you have or who you are is vital . Devote your thoughts to important things.

I will continue to try to live a simpler life , I’m not doing great at the moment, but I will keep trying and just maybe I’ve given you something to ponder about.



Thank you for listening.

Last hymn purple book no 68

I dream of a church

Benediction

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Before we gather here again - May each of us bring happiness into another's life; May we each be surprised by the gifts that surround us; may each of us be enlivened by constant curiosity- and May we remain together in spirit 'til the hour we meet again.

Closing music " Love, peace and wisdom " by Bliss