

Sunday Service - 30th October 2022

All Souls – Led by Jennifer Sanders

Prelude

Opening words

Death ends a life, not a relationship. - Robert Benchley

Chalice

All Souls Chalice Lighting By Florence Caplow

As we kindle this flame, we honour and remember

Those who have passed into the mystery.

Their brightness lives on in our vision;

their courage lives on in our commitments;

and their love continues to bless the world through us.

Good morning everyone here in the church and those online. It's so wonderful to be back with you and to hopefully have a cuppa with you to mark the end of my placement with you and I'm sorry that this wasn't possible at the end of August

Today's service is about remembering those significant in our lives lives who are no longer with us.

Some of you may have been asked at last week's service to bring a photo of a loved one that you would like to remember. If this is news to you then I would like you to think about someone, and that may be a family member or a teacher someone that had an impact on your life that you would like to honour today. Hold them in your heart and mind and we will be doing a small ritual to acknowledge them later. For those of you on zoom, the names of your loved ones will be incorporated too

But first, let us sing together

Hymn - 298 green

Reading

Our first reading today is a poem called **they are still with us** and it is by Kathleen Mc Tigue

And is read by

In the struggles we choose for ourselves,
in the ways, we move forward in our lives
and bring our world forward with us,

It is right to remember the names of those
who gave us strength in this choice of living.

It is right to name the power of hard lives well-lived.

We share a history with those lives.

We belong to the same motion.

They too were strengthened by what had gone before.

They too were drawn on by the vision of what might come to be.

Those who lived before us,
who struggled for justice and suffered injustice before us,
have not melted into the dust,
and have not disappeared.

They are with us still.

The lives they lived hold us steady.

Their words remind us and call us back to ourselves.

Their courage and love evoke our own.

We, the living, carry them with us:
we are their voices, their hands and their hearts.

We take them with us,
and with them choose the deeper path of living.

Hymn Our second hymn is 152 or 186 purple

Our second reading is the story from the film COCO

Reading

Once upon a time In Santa Cecilia, Mexico, Miguel dreams of becoming a musician, even though his family strictly forbids it. His great-great-grandmother Imelda was married to a man who left her and their daughter Coco to pursue a career in music, and when he never returned, Imelda banished music from her family's life before starting a shoemaking business.

Miguel now lives with the elderly Coco and their family, He secretly idolizes Ernesto de la Cruz, a famous musician who died decades earlier and teaches himself to play the guitar from Ernesto's old films. On the Day of the Dead, Miguel accidentally damages the picture frame that holds a photo of Coco with her mother on the family *ofrenda*, discovering that a hidden section of the photograph shows his great-great-grandfather holding Ernesto's famous guitar. Concluding that Ernesto is his great-great-grandfather, an inspired Miguel leaves to enter a talent show for Day of the Dead despite his family's objections.

Breaking into Ernesto's mausoleum, Miguel takes his guitar to use in the show. Once he strums it, he becomes invisible to everyone in the village plaza. However, he can interact with his skeletal dead relatives, who are visiting from the Land of the Dead for the holiday. Taking him back with them, they learn that Imelda cannot visit since Miguel accidentally removed her photo from the *ofrenda*. Miguel discovers that he is cursed for stealing from the dead and must return to the Land of the Living before sunrise, or he will become one of the dead; to do so, he must receive a blessing from a member of his family. Imelda offers Miguel a blessing on the condition he ends his dream of becoming a musician, but Miguel refuses and resolves to seek Ernesto's blessing instead. He meets Héctor, who declares that he knows Ernesto, offering to help him reach him in return for Miguel taking his photo back with him, so that he might visit his daughter before she forgets him, causing him to disappear completely. Héctor helps Miguel enter a talent competition to win entry to Ernesto's mansion, but Miguel's family tracks him down, forcing him to flee.

Miguel sneaks into the mansion, where Ernesto welcomes him as his descendant, but Héctor confronts them, again imploring Miguel to take his photo to the Land of

the Living. Ernesto and Héctor renew an argument about their partnership in life, and Miguel realizes that when Héctor decided to leave the duo to return to his family, Ernesto poisoned him, then stole his guitar along with his songs, passing them off as his own to become famous. To protect his legacy, Ernesto seizes the photo and has his security guards throw Miguel and Héctor into a cenote pit. There, Miguel realizes that Héctor is his real great-great-grandfather and that Coco is Héctor's daughter.

After Imelda and the family rescue the duo, Miguel reveals the truth about Héctor's death. Imelda and Héctor reconcile, and the family infiltrates Ernesto's concert to retrieve Héctor's photo. Ernesto's crimes are exposed to the audience, who jeer at him as Imelda's alebrije Pepito throws him out of the stadium where he is crushed by a giant bell in the same manner that he originally died. In the chaos, Héctor's photograph is lost. As the sun rises, Coco's life and memory are fading; Imelda and Héctor bless Miguel so that he can return to the Land of the Living. After Miguel plays "Remember Me", Coco brightens and sings along with Miguel. She reveals that she had saved the torn-off piece of the family photo with Héctor's face on it, then tells her family stories about her father, thus saving his memory as well as his existence in the Land of the Dead. Miguel's family reconciles with him, ending the ban on music.

One year later, Miguel shows the family *ofrenda*, which now includes Héctor and a recently deceased Coco to his new baby sister Socorro.^[13] Coco's collected letters from Héctor prove that Ernesto stole his songs, destroying Ernesto's ill-gotten legacy and allowing Héctor to be rightfully honoured in his place. In the Land of the Dead, Héctor and Imelda rekindle their romance, joining Coco and the rest of their family for a visit to the living, where Miguel in a mariachi costume sings and plays for his relatives, both living and dead.

Meditation and Honoring of our Beloved Deceased

At this darkening time of the year, our thoughts turn to things past, to life retreating, to those who are no longer with us. Images come to our minds; of dear companions, who once graced our lives, loved ones whom we miss, persons whose lives made an

impact on our lives; of all those who were here, contributing, caring, and are now gone.

Christians will be marking All Saints and All Souls days, both holidays commemorating the dead, and our Hispanic neighbours will be celebrating the Day of the Dead.

If we were members of traditional Mexican families, we would go to have a picnic on the graves of our family members, celebrating, remembering, and honouring.

Today these ancient observances are overshadowed by Halloween, originally observed as the eve of All Saints Day but now more known as a time of costumes, candy, and trick or treating, or by national days of remembrance such as the anniversary of 9/11. Yet the ritual of consciously remembering loved ones who have passed is an important spiritual practice in all our lives. It brings death into the context of our daily experience and reminds us that death is not the end.

Our memories bring both joy and sadness; let us not push these feelings away. For our recollections attest to the enduring importance of these friends, this love, and our memories.

Most of us are far from the grave sites of our ancestors, but we can also honour those who have gone before us, and we will do that together.

So in preparation for the following ritual together let us take a few moments. you may wish to close your eyes

Let us remind ourselves whether in the church or online that we sit without a sacred space. A space that holds all of our memories and love

We bring to mind either the person we have through a photo of or for others bring a picture in your mind and take the next few moments to think about all the love that they have brought us, the learning the love the contribution to our family our lives and this of others. Bring to mind the things that you would most like to celebrate about them their quirky ways – the way they dressed or told bad jokes their patience their joy their talents

Just allow yourself to sit in in the joy that this person brought to your life

Spirit of Life, whom we know best in our own loving and being loved, hold us as we remember those we have loved, and those who have loved us. May our gratitude sparkle in our lives, and may our tears lubricate our souls. Help us to know that we are not alone in our grieving, and help us also to come to that peaceful place in which we can take what we learned from those who have gone before us into our own lives. Remind us that we, too, are mortal; and that the only enduring legacy we leave is the love that shines through our lives.

In the time that follows I invite you to come forward and place their image on the altar and then light your candle for those whom you would honour and remember. You may wish to say their name as you light your candle

Once all the candles have been lit and the images placed will go into a period of reflection followed by prayers

Candles of reflection

Silence

Prayers

For those who came before us, we offer gratitude and thanks.

May their memories be a blessing.

May we feel surrounded by their love.

As we go forth from this time and place,

let us be inspired by their courage, their wisdom, and their dreams.

Let us honour them by doing the work

of living boldly, loving mightily,

and creating heaven on earth.

May these brave and lovely spirits live again in our tender thoughts, and prove that death and distance are powerless to sever the bonds that connect truly loving hearts.

Music – you will need to choose something

By calling their names remember them. It is a way to acknowledge that they at one time walked the earth in human form and that they are connected to us. Recently I learned that the most important thing we can do for our ancestors is to remember them. Everything else is a bonus—for both of us. Their legacy is strengthened by our naming them. We need to be able to separate our relationship or feelings about them from this simple remembering.

Think of this in terms of your own life. Although some of us don't give it much conscious thought, we want to be remembered when we die. Why else would we care what people think of us? Why else would someone's good name be so important and so much shame attached to a tarnished reputation?

Perhaps the most painful thought we can have is that we will be forgotten when we cross over, that no one will remember us and what we have done. This notion of a legacy is behind the creation of art, children, and monuments, the establishment of chairs in a person's name at universities, funding of the building of hospital wings, and, darkly and disturbingly, committing violent crimes.

As I research my family history and create a family tree, I appreciate more and more the importance of being remembered and having others carry on the family legacy. I also appreciate the need to do something worthwhile during my lifetime so that I can leave behind the memory of the work I did while I was alive. I'd like to be remembered as someone who had good character, or Iwa Pele, as the Yoruba describe it. I'd like to think that as I fulfil my role in this world—the Yoruba believe it is the role I chose at birth—I will be remembered by those who have crossed my path, whether it be a family member, friend, significant other, patient, godbrother or godsister, or neighbour, as someone who contributed something positive to their lives.

That in part is why a spiritual path is important in the healing process. As one heals and moves forward in life, part of that journey is the development of Iwa Pele (good character). It is not often explicitly defined as a goal of living a spiritually-guided life but in my opinion, is an inherent part of it.

Since I would like someone to call out my name when they remember their ancestors, I honour my ancestors. I would like to be remembered, so I remember. Maferefun begun. We praise those who came before us and created the way.

Amen and blessed be

Closing prayer - For All Our Losses By Patricia Shelden

For those we miss.

For things long gone.

For those who or what we last held in our arms,
in our hands and our hearts —
we pray.

We pray for memories to stay strong
Memories of words and warmth,
of actions and stillness.

We pray for Love shared and lived,
Love to remain with us and with them,
for that to become enough.

We pray for the courage to put our feet
on the floor when we wake.
To move through the day as if we cared.

Oh, Love, that holds us all:
hold on to me while I hold on to what I have lost.
Amen.

Hymn 188 Green

Blessing

May our ritual today help to shine the light a little brighter on those who have died and as we extinguish the flame may we remember that the light of their memory continues to burn. May we all go in love and peace and memory of our loved ones.

Blessed be

Postlude