

**Rev Dr Edgar Mihas**    **THEME OF SERVICE:** Acts of Kindness

**THEME OF MUSIC:** Celtic and Pagan Magic

All hymns are from 'Sing your Faith' aka 'The Purple Book'

**INTRODUCTORY MUSIC:** Celtic Harp Solo – A Trip to the Islands (Keltische Harfe) // Nadia Birkenstock (04:54) – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvyijUMqp\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvyijUMqp_U)

**INTERFAITH AND SECULAR CALENDAR:** 8<sup>th</sup> World Cat Day; 9<sup>th</sup> August International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples; 12<sup>th</sup> August International Youth Day; 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August Obon Festival; 15<sup>th</sup> August the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic) / the Dormition of the Theotokos (Orthodox).

**OPENING WORDS:** 'We enter into this time and this place' by Rev Dr Linda Hart

We enter into this time and this place to join our hearts and minds together

We come to this place: the doors open, the heat comes on, biscuits are laid, the water heats, and you all come.

What is it that we come here seeking? Many things, too many to mention them all.

Yet, it is likely that some common longings draw us to be with one another:

To remember what is most important in life.

To be challenged to live more truly, more deeply, to live with integrity and kindness and with hope and love,

To feel the company of those who seek a common path,

To be renewed in our faith in the promise of this life,

To be strengthened and to find the courage to continue to do what we must do, day after day, world without end.

Even if your longings are different than these, you are welcome here. Even if you do not have the strength and the courage to pass along, you are welcome here. You are welcome in your grief and your joy to be within this circle of companions.

We gather here. It is good to be together.

## **CHALICE LIGHTING**

This is our Chalice, a part of our tradition. We light this chalice, symbol of the Light within us and around us.

May our coming together for worship enlighten our hearts and our minds.

May the Inner Light of the Spirit be kindled by our time together and let us say Amen.

**OPENING PRAYER:** A Prayer, by Rev Ant Howe

Eternal One, Life-Giver, Father, Mother, Companion, Lover and Friend,

We come to you in these quiet moments, seeking that which is beyond ourselves.

We make a sacred space; a time when we can express our hopes and our dreams.....

For the world: We pray that we would wisely use the precious resources we have been given; that we will be diligent stewards of the earth.

For the religions of the world: May there be understanding between religions. May we learn to worship in our own way, but to live in peace with those who worship differently.

For the people of the world: We pray for those whose lives are marred by poverty, lack of food or water. When we hear about these things happening in countries far away, may we never forget that these are our brothers and sisters. May we work to end poverty in among the people of the world.

For our Unitarian & Free Christian Movement: may we be rightly proud of our past achievements but be aware that we cannot be complacent. At a time when less people feel the need to worship in traditional churches, may we be a beacon of liberal religion.

For ourselves: We pray that we our faith will bring us strength; that our faith will give us a love for our fellow men and women. We pray that our faith will be real to us and that it will help us when we are faced with difficult times and tough decisions.

And finally, we pray for those who are ill: those loved ones of ours who need our thoughts and prayers. We name them silently in our hearts ...

We dedicate our prayers to you God, Divine Unity and we ask these things in your many names. Amen.

**1<sup>st</sup> HYMN no.35:** 'Find a Stillness'

**PASSAGE for CONTEMPLATION, MEDITATION, REFLECTION:** 'Go Boldly', by Jean Olson

May you be brave enough to expose  
your aching woundedness  
and reveal your vulnerability.

May you speak your deepest truths,  
knowing that they will change as you do.

May you sing the music within you,  
composing your own melody,  
playing your song with all your heart.

May you draw, paint, sculpt, and sew,  
showing the world your vision.

May you write letters, poetry, biography,  
slogans, graffiti, the great novel,  
laying bare your words to love and hate.

May you love even though your heart  
breaks again and again.

And until the end of your days,  
may your life be filled  
with possibilities and courage.

## **SHORT STORY:** 'Mirror with a Malfunction', by Pedro Pablo Sacristan

There was once a boy who was very rich and clever. He had practically everything a boy could ever want, so he was only interested in the most rare and curious of objects. This happened to him in relation to a very old mirror, and he convinced his parents to buy it from a mysterious old man. When the mirror arrived home, the boy went to see his reflection in it. His face looked very sad indeed. He tried smiling and making funny faces, but his reflection continued with its sad expression.

Surprised, the boy went off to buy sweets. He came home as happy as can be, to look in the mirror, but his image was still sad looking. He bought all kinds of toys and old junk, but forever looked sad in that mirror. Fed up, the boy stuck the mirror off in a corner.

"Crikey, what a terrible mirror! It's the first time I've seen a mirror that didn't work properly!"

That same afternoon he went into the street to play and to buy a few toys, but on his way to the park he saw a little boy who was crying his heart out. The boy was crying so much, and looked so lonely, that the rich boy went over to help him and to see what had happened. The little one told him that he had lost his parents.

Together the two boys set off in search of them. As the little boy wouldn't stop crying, our boy spent his money on buying him sweets to cheer him up. Finally, after much walking, they found his parents who were out looking for him, very worried.

The rich boy said goodbye and walked off towards the park. But, seeing the time, he decided to turn round and head for home, without having been able to play, without toys, and without money. At home, he went to his room, and noticed a shining light in the corner; the same corner he had left the mirror in. Seeing this, he went over to the mirror, and realised that the light was coming from his own body, so radiant with happiness he had become.

And so, he understood the mystery of that mirror, the only mirror which could faithfully reflect the true joy of its owner. He realised it was true; he felt genuinely happy at having helped that little boy.

And since then, each morning when he looked in that mirror and failed to see a special shine, he already knew what he had to do to bring it back.

## **FIRST READING:** by Sean Bevis (The Role of Charity in Jainism)

There are certain requirements, or steps, that must be observed in order to ensure the act of charity is performed in the right manner. Once these qualities of a proper donor have been determined and observed, they must also have the ability to determine the criteria by which a "worthy recipient" of the gift is characterised. The last requirement of a donor, is to be very careful with the offering itself by not committing indiscriminate acts of charity but rather to offer donations/gifts that are suitable for that particular recipient, and to do this in strict accordance with the methods prescribed by ritual. This is highlighted by Umāsvāti in the Tattvārtha Sūtra: "The worth of a charitable act is determined by the manner of giving, the nature of the alms offered, the disposition of the giver and the qualification of the recipient." (vidhi-dravya-dātṛ-pātraviśeṣāt tadviśeṣaḥ)" 7.34 (SS[33][7] 7.39)

## **SECOND READING:** Eight Levels of Charity, by Maimonides

Level 8 — The donor is pained by the act of giving

Level 7 — The donor gives less than he should but does so cheerfully

Level 6 — The donor gives after being solicited

Level 5 — The donor gives without being solicited

Level 4 — The recipient knows the donor but the donor does not know the recipient

Level 3 — The donor knows the recipient but the recipient does not know the donor

Level 2 — Neither the donor nor the recipient knows the other

Level 1 — The donor gives the recipient the wherewithal to become self-supporting

### **THIRD READING:** Deuteronomy 15:7-11

"If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. "Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.

"You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore, I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

2<sup>nd</sup> **HYMN no. 84:** 'Justice for Persons'

### **REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:** Maimonides' Eight Levels of Charity

Here is a series of rhetorical questions for you: Did you know anything about the eight levels of charity before hearing them being mentioned earlier on? Now that, at least you have heard them being outlined, do you identify with any of them? Have you ever thought that the eight levels of charity could actually relate to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory often presented in the form of a pyramid? Well, enough with questions you might say, and you will be right. So, let's move to the theory itself first.

Maslow's theory on human motivation, is represented as a pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom and self-actualisation at the top. The five basic levels, from bottom to top, are: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation — defined as morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts. But I am tempted to ask one more question: has it ever crossed your mind that, perhaps, as we climb up the pyramid, we can simultaneously strive to climb up the ladder, not only taking care of ourselves but also of others?

Level 8: (The donor is pained by the act of giving) — At work, this would translate in hating networking, hating professional events, turning our brain off to our career outside our mandatory working hours. Do only what is expressly required of us and frown the whole way

through it. There is NO way we could even contemplate going the extra mile ... perish the thought!

Level 7: (The donor gives less than they should but do so cheerfully) — Again, at work, we would go to one major event each year out of guilt, just to tick the box. We would put on a smile, but talk to no one, only eat the free food, and dash out as soon as possible. Job done!

Level 6: (The donor gives after being solicited) — in this case, we would go to local events only if expressly invited to by colleagues or friends, and stick to them like glue, meeting only those people to whom we are introduced. Give a business card only when asked. Sign up for Twitter, now X, after someone begs us to do it. Once again, perish the thought about going the extra mile ...

Level 5: (The donor gives without being solicited) — We would seek out events to attend both locally and conferences in other locations, asking colleagues to introduce us to people we should know. When engaged in conversation with someone, we would offer our card and follow up afterwards. We would start a blog, become active on X (Twitter), put our opinions out there on social media.

Level 4: (The recipient knows the donor, but the donor does not know the recipient) — We would be recognised by name and approached by a stranger who has either seen us on X (Twitter), has read our blog, or even has heard of us through a mutual colleague.

Level 3: (The donor knows the recipient, but the recipient does not know the donor) — We would walk right up to someone we do not know and introduce ourselves, telling them that we admire their work/their writing/their keynote. We would mention a mutual colleague or friend in common and would talk about our work/our writing/our latest challenge and ask for their opinion. See! We have started doing a bit of the extra mile ... but only a bit!

Level 2: (Neither the donor nor the recipient knows the other) — We would start writing for publications other than our own, contribute to the greater body of work and make a name for ourselves outside of our immediate community. We would submit proposals to speak at conferences, synthesise our thoughts for consumption by a wide audience and seek to refine those ideas based on feedback from a whole bunch of strangers who care more about the idea than they do about us. It is the equivalent of supporting a charity which supports those in need, as opposed to providing cash in hand.

Level 1: (The donor gives the recipient the wherewithal to become self-supporting) — We would become a mentor, reach out to more junior or reserved people in our environment and help to give them the self-confidence we have now obtained. We would create opportunities for others to learn and grow by being a community organiser, even a kind of 'evangelist'. We would work harder to promote others and the overall practice than we do promoting our own self. In Buddhist terms, we may even claim our ego has begun to disappear. Not only are we going the extra mile, but this is not known by the beneficiary; in fact, we give truly selflessly, and loving-kindness appears to be our prime motivator. Maimonides would say this is the most advanced level of charitable giving, an act of genuine kindness which expects nothing in return.

So, which level are you on? What are the principles upon which your charitable giving is based? Have you applied any of these eight levels of charity to building your personal loving-kindness brand, your character, your attitude?

**MUSIC FOR CONTEMPLATION, MEDITATION, PRIVATE PRAYER and/or REFLECTION:**  
Ar Eirinn Ni Neosfainn Ce Hi (02:52) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsiZ87UKZLY>

**LOUD/QUIET REFLECTION ON GIVING/RECEIVING ACTS OF KINDNESS:** Come up, if you wish, to light a candle and in a few words to tell us about an act of kindness which has affected your life either through giving or receiving or both.

**PRE-OFFERTORY STORY:** Put More In, Get More Out (retold by Andrew Usher)

There is a story of a preacher who goes to an out of the way church to conduct the service. He is able to look around the church on his own beforehand and puts a five-pound note in a donations box at the back. Then a handful of elderly people arrive, and he takes the service. Afterwards, one of them comes up to him and says, 'As you might realise, I'm afraid we can't pay a preaching fee; but we usually give our preacher the contents of our donations box. You're lucky this week: there's a whole five pounds in it.' That night, the preacher tells his family this story. They have a chuckle about it. But then the son says, 'Well, you know, Dad. If you had put more in, you would have got more out.'

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

At the end of this service, you will have made your generous contributions for the church that has meant so much to you, for the church that meant so much to those who came before you, and for the church that will mean so much to people you will never know; we give thanks for your generosity, loving-kindness and support. We pray that all gifts of money, together with all other gifts, will go towards supporting Plymouth Unitarians and the services they offer to the wider community. So be it.

**3<sup>rd</sup> HYMN 13:** Bring flowers to our Altar

**POETRY:** 'Give All To Love', by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Give all to love;  
Obey thy heart;  
Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good-fame,  
Plans, credit and the Muse,—  
Nothing refuse.

'T is a brave master;  
Let it have scope:  
Follow it utterly,  
Hope beyond hope.  
It was never for the mean;  
It requireth courage stout.  
Souls above doubt,  
Valor unbending,  
It will reward,—  
They shall return  
More than they were,  
And ever ascending.

**PRAYER: MAGNIFICAT** (in honour of the Virgin Mary)

My soul magnifies the Lord  
And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;  
Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;  
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;  
Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is His name;  
And His mercy is from generation to generation  
on those who fear Him.  
He has shown might with His arm,  
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.  
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has exalted the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich He has sent away empty.  
He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy  
Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

**CLOSING WORDS:** Now, by Andrew Usher  
Now, through the rain and the sun,  
Go your ways with gladness:  
With Love in your hearts,  
Peace in your minds And Beauty touching your soul.

**RECESSIONAL MUSIC:** Éamonn an Chnoic (Ned of the Hill) - Irish Air – 3 min 46sec  
whistle and low whistle– [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbwtkJZG\\_Zo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbwtkJZG_Zo)