

Music 'Swan' – Patrick Hawes, on 'Blue in Blue' (3.54: start at 10.48)

Welcome Words

Welcome to this morning's gathering of Plymouth Unitarians, and friends, whether in person or via the camera – you are all welcome.

Thank-you for coming early so that we can join in respecting silence at 11 o'clock. In doing so we shall sense and show our solidarity with all those across the nation who are reflecting on conflict and loss, on courage and compassion, on anger and violence, on pain and fear and love . . . and on an abiding yearning for peace.

We begin by lighting our Chalice flame – may it inaugurate a space and time in which we may hold our shared humanity the world over in courageous compassion and deep, aching love.

Chalice Lighting & Opening Words *Kay Millard*

Kindling the flame holds kindly all here  
Kindling the flame holds kindly all life  
Kindling the flame holds kindly all memory  
Kindling the flame holds kindly all love

Friends: Thank-you.

I say thank-you, from us all to us all.

Thank-you for being here –

For your silence and your singing, your presence and your prayers.

For it is by your being, in this shared, sacred space and time,

That we can all know the depth of Being.

It is by your silence and your singing

That we can know a unity in togetherness.

And it is by your Presence that we can share one another's presence,

Realising and knowing that other Presence

Here.

Being together.

Thank-you.

*John Midgley*

Hymn 1:- P 62 – Here we have gathered

Poem *How to be happy again – Nikita Gill*

The wretchedness will come like a raven wishing to be fed.

Do not reject it.

The sorrow will coil up like a poem your fingers refuse to write.

Do not turn this anguish away.

The fears will talk over each other while caught in your throat.

Slowly untangle them and let them sit with you anyway . . .

Despite what they tell you, it's OK;  
It's OK to feel small and alone sometimes.  
It's OK to feel like a lonely cottage in the clouds,  
Like you are all alone in your great big feelings –  
All these painful things that break you.

Brave faces are just that – faces trying to look brave.  
Toxic positivity is just that – positivity trying so hard it's turning into poison.  
Healing is just a mess demanding to be felt.  
Especially the things we wish we didn't have to feel.

So feed the wretchedness;  
Feel the anguish and write the poem.  
Invite the fears to explain themselves till they are tired.

*Dare, in truth, to be present to it all . . .*

*Within this gathered circle of kinship, let us now share a silence of compassionate presence*

11 am – Silence *in reflection upon the occasion of Remembrance Sunday*

*Hinge words – from hymn P 54 (slightly expanded)*

God weeps . . . at anger's fist, at strength misused,  
at people dying without cause, in the name of a cause, as victims of a cause;  
Until we change the way we win, God weeps

Music – Last Post by Alexis Ffrench

[https://youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_hUFLYST8A&si=zapconi86d8jt\\_wr](https://youtube.com/watch?v=R_hUFLYST8A&si=zapconi86d8jt_wr)

*Before that music I read a few words from hymn no. 54, by Shirley Erena Murray. Here are all of those words now:-*

God weeps at love withheld, at strength misused,  
At children's innocence abused.  
And, till we change the way we love, God weeps.

God bleeds at anger's fist, at trust betrayed,  
At women battered and afraid.  
And, till we change the way we win, God bleeds.

God cries at hungry mouths, at running sores,  
At creatures dying without cause.  
And, till we change the way we care, God cries.

God waits for stones to melt, for peace to seed,  
For hearts to hold each other's need.  
And, till we understand the Christ, God waits.

*The Christ? Well . . .*

*No, I'm not going to delve into Christology, and no, I'm not going to take you through an exposition of the Gnostic Gospels. I am, though, going to offer you a perception of The Christ which comes from Gnostic thought – in case you find it worth thinking about.*

*We're not talking Jesus' surname, nor a claim as to what was achieved by his dying, nor yet an assertion of his divinity . . . but we are talking about a title, borrowed from Greek, which arose from observation of his way of being while he was alive.*

*And that way of being was that of someone in a vibrant and persistent personal relationship with God – someone who walked in constant contact and companionship with the divine.*

*The suggestion is that we can choose to do the same. Witnessing the demonstration by Jesus of a way of living which welcomes and celebrates the presence of God in it as a constant companion, we are invited not to walk with Jesus, but to walk with God, in an open and personal relationship with the divine. And it is that state of being in relationship with the divine which is what is meant by being 'in Christ.'*

*SO, we hear those hymn words telling us that God waits – weeping, bleeding, crying – till we understand the Christ, and we realise their meaning is not about us all becoming saved by Jesus' dying and rising, or about God stepping in and changing the realities of this world, but about us choosing to avail ourselves of the compassionate presence of the divine in our lives and living.*

*Quickly now I will say that of course this language and these suggestions do not hold meaning for all here, and maybe not many here, and yet there is something powerful in the suggestion of somehow not being alone in facing the realities of life, which sometimes – perhaps today is such a time – can feel insurmountable, insoluble, and paralysingly overwhelming . . .*

*There is surely something heartening in the possibility of there being constant spiritual presence and companionship to be had, in whatever way we understand or articulate it?*

*To change the language but still suggest a similar possibility, here are some words by Bjorn Natthiko Lindeblad – a Buddhist Forest Monk, whose gently wise but piercingly honest autobiography ('I May Be Wrong' – a great mantra for Unitarians!?) I would heartily recommend:-*

**I can now see that as I become better at listening inwardly . . . something has begun to shimmer. Something that always seems to be with me. Something that wishes me well. (p. 123)**

**For me, it's like something I've longed for all my life, without knowing what it was. As though someone, for as long as I can remember, has been sitting on my shoulder, whispering: 'Come home!'" (p. 121)**

**. . . a partner who will stand by me in every situation, who is always on my side. (p. 145)**

**So I remind myself to let go of my thoughts breath by breath, and instead slowly lean back into something that was inside me before I was born, and which will endure when the rest of me dies.**

### **Hymn – P 11 – Blessed Spirit of My Life**

*More hymn words now, this time P no. 15:-*

**Brother, Sister, let me serve you – let me be as Christ to you**

**We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;**

We are here to help each other – walk a mile and share the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you.  
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen the journey through.

*Those words by Richard Gillard encourage us to believe that we ourselves can offer powerful presence to one another – indeed are called to do so.*

*We each came here today knowing we would be asked to be present to the realities associated with Remembrance, and to do that we would maybe welcome the support of the spiritual presence we've just considered.*

*But by being here together today, we also engage with one another's feelings and challenges in facing those realities, and we would surely welcome the human support framed by the hymn words – the offer to help and share, to weep and laugh together, to share joy and sorrow along the way . . . the gift of human presence.*

**'Story time' Taming the Fox, from *The Little Prince* (edited) – by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**

Just then a fox appeared.

'Good morning', he said.

'Good morning', the little prince replied, quite politely; 'Who are you?'

'I am a fox,' said the fox.

'Ooh! Come and play with me,' said the little prince; 'I am so bored on my own.'

'Ah no; I cannot play with you,' the fox said; 'I am not tamed.'

'Oh! Sorry!' said the little prince . . . 'but what does that mean – Tame?'

'It is something that's too often neglected,' said the fox. 'It means to establish ties.'

'To establish ties?'

'Yes,' said the fox. 'To me, right now, you are nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, for your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes.

But if you tame me, then we shall know and need each other – to me, you shall be unique in all the world; and to you, I shall be unique in all the world.'

'My life is very dull,' the fox went on; 'I hunt chickens, and men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. So you can tell, I am little bored too.

But if you tame me, then it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying underground, but yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow.

And then look: see the grain-fields over there? Well I don't eat bread, wheat is of no use to me, so the wheat-fields mean nothing to me. They're just fields.

But you have hair that is the colour of gold, the same as the wheat. Think how wonderful it will be when you have tamed me! The golden grain will make me think of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . .

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time, and finally he said: 'Please – tame me!'

'Well I'd really like to,' said the little prince, 'but I'm terribly busy. So many friends to discover, so many things to understand.'

'Ah, now, you only understand the things that you tame – the people you establish ties with,' said the fox. 'People don't have time any more to understand anything. They buy things all ready made at the

shops – but there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so they have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me.'

'OK then. What do I have to do?'

'You must be very patient. First, you will sit down in the grass at a little distance from me – yes, like that. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But each day you will sit a little closer to me, and a little closer again . . . The next day the little prince came back, and the next, and the day after that . . . and bit by bit he tamed the fox . . .

But before long it came time for the little prince to go away.

'Ah,' said the fox; 'I shall cry.'

'Oh, no!' said the little prince; 'But you said you wanted me to tame you.'

'True,' agreed the fox.

'But now you are going to cry!' said the little prince.

'True,' said the fox.

'Then I have done you no good at all!'

'Oh, it has done me good,' said the fox, 'because of the colour of the wheat-fields, and the wind whispering through the wheat . . .'

*As we move towards the end of our service I want to focus on the power of the presence of people in our lives, and our presence in theirs – the people with whom we have ties and connections, and whose friendship makes a difference to how the world feels to us.*

*A few months ago we were able make a trip to go and spend time with a series of friends we hadn't seen for a number of years – and very significant years they were, in a variety of ways. One of those friends presented us with a gift by which to remember our time together – this lovely handmade pottery coffee scoop from the Colorado River valley. She gave it to us, saying she wanted it to be a momentum of our visit.*

*I don't mention that to mock her; of course she meant to say memento, or reminder, but I like the ambiguity the word momentum brings to this morning's thinking – the way it introduces a hint of energy and movement ahead alongside the mood of remembering what has been.*

*Remembering someone or something isn't only about looking at the past; as we call someone or something to mind, it's as if we bring them into the present with us. We often have a pot of coffee together to start our day, and as we use this scoop to make the coffee, it brings the thought, the feeling, the presence of our friend Jo into that moment, into that beginning of a day. She becomes present to us in our remembering of her.*

*I want to suggest that calling to mind and heart those people whose lives touch ours, and who matter to us – those people who are interested in us and care about us – reminds us of the colours and characters in our knowing, the shape and breadth of our living.*

*And at those time when we might feel that life might be too much for us, when things threaten to overwhelm and de-motivate us and we grind to a stunned standstill in the face of it all . . . the very times when we might be tempted to cut ourselves off and hide away . . . at those times I suggest that if we could manage to remember the people in our lives and their care for us, to allow the touch of their presence in our aloneness, then that touch would remind us that we are still here, still valid, still significant, still worth the effort, and it is still worth carrying on, moving forward and facing the world . . . in other words remembering and celebrating the presence of others in our lives can restore the momentum we need to keep on keeping on.*

*In a few moments we're going to conclude our service with a second 2-minute silence – this time to call to our hearts and minds the people who make our lives rich and full, who hold us in care and compassion. Let us bask in their presence in the quietness, in gratitude and celebration, who are so important in making our lives what they are, and making the journey worth the continuing . . . with faith and hope and momentum.*

*Before we move to that conclusion, are there any Announcements?*

**Hymn – P 35 – Find a Stillness**

*Our second silence now will be followed by closing words, which will echo the words I used at the opening of the service. Then our outgoing music will be accompanied by video images which demonstrate the power of individual contributions in adding up to the loveliness of the whole – as our lives are enriched by the contributions of the people we shall now remember. (And may I suggest, as an afterthought, that you might choose at some point to let those people know how fondly you have remembered them and how much they matter to you?)*

**Silence invoking the presence of the people we consider precious in our lives**

**Closing Words (after) John Midgley**

**Friends: Thank-you.  
I say thank-you, from us all to us all.  
Thank-you for being here –  
For your silence and your singing, your presence and your prayers.**

**For by our being, in this shared, sacred space and time,  
We have welcomed the depth of Being.  
By our silence and our singing  
We have shared a unity in togetherness.**

**And by our presence we have shared one another's presence,  
Realising and knowing that other Presence beyond words of comprehension.  
Here.  
Being together.**

**Postlude:- Quartel – I Remember**

[\(912\) I Remember - YouTube](#)