

7th July 2024 – ‘Pilgrimage’ Led by Rev Kate Whyman

1. GATHERING MUSIC

‘Pilgrim’s Progress’, Ralph Vaughan Williams

2. WELCOME and CHALICE

Welcome everyone to our service this morning however and wherever you are joining us.

OPENING WORDS: Tess Baumberger

From the busy-ness of everyday we gather once a week
to remember who we are, to dream of who we might become.

As companions on this journey, we share the milestones we meet along the way.
Individual moments of joy and sorrow become shared moments of comfort and
celebration.

We share this journey across differences of belief and opinion
Because we value diversity and because care for one another.

Today as we take the next steps, let us notice our fellow travellers:
The burdens that they carry, the songs that inspire their hearts.

As we gather in beloved community, let us open the holy havens of our hearts,
Let us share the sacred places of our souls
For we are pilgrims who share a common path.

And we travel this road together.

3. CHALICE LIGHTING

Let’s begin by lighting our chalice candle, as is our custom, as a symbol of our

free religious faith. And if you're joining at home you might like to light your own candle.

May this flame be a symbol of the light that guides us always, leading us along life's meandering pathways towards greater understanding, truer insight, and deeper compassion.

4. 1st HYMN 186 (P) We are travellers on a journey

We are travellers on a journey
which brought us from the sun,
when primal star exploded
and earth in orbit spun;
but now as human dwellers
upon earth-planet's crust,
we strive for living systems
whose ways are kind and just.

We are travellers on a journey
which grows from human seed,
and through our birth and childhood
goes where life's path may lead;
but now we are delving deeper
in quest of greater worth
and reaching unknown regions
and planets of new birth.

We are travellers on a journey
through realms of inner space
where joy and peace are planets
that circle stars of grace;
and when we find the stillness
which comes at journey's end,
there'll be complete refreshment,

a resting place my friend.

Music Henry Hugh Bancroft, words © Andrew M. Hill

5. PRAYER *Carla Grosch Miller's reworking of Psalm 119:33-50*

The ancient Way lies before me,
the Way of my mothers and fathers.
It is the Way of Life,
strong life, courageous life, kind life.
A Way that beholds beauty and welcomes wonder,
a Way that nurtures knowledge and wrestles wisdom,
a Way that fosters freedom and bespeaks blessing.

I seek to follow well-worn paths to new places,
moving by divine pulse and breath,
stopping to give thanks along the Way,
dancing joy and laughing pleasure,
wiping tears and lending strength,
sheltering the vulnerable and feeding the hungry.
This is my great desire,
day by day, and moment by moment,
for Your life, O God, to be
my light and my love for all time.

6. STORY Sufi journey of the stream

A stream, from its course in far-off mountains, passing through every kind and description of countryside, at last reached the sands of the desert. Just as it had crossed every other barrier, the stream tried to cross this one, but found that as fast as it ran into the sand, its waters disappeared.

It was convinced, however, that its destiny was to cross this desert, and yet there was no way. Now a hidden voice, coming from the desert itself, whispered: "The wind crosses the desert, and so can the stream."

The stream objected that it was dashing itself against the sand, and only getting absorbed: that the wind could fly, and this was why it could cross a desert.

"By hurtling in your own accustomed way you cannot get across," said the voice. "You will either disappear or become a marsh. You must allow the wind to carry you over, to your destination."

'But how could this happen?' asked the stream. "By allowing yourself to be absorbed in the wind," came the answer.

This idea was not acceptable to the stream. After all, it had never been absorbed before. It did not want to lose its individuality. And, once having lost it, how was one to know that it could ever be regained?

"The wind," said the sand, "performs this function. It takes up water, carries it over the desert, and then lets it fall again. Falling as rain, the water again becomes a river."

"How can I know that this is true?" "It is so, and if you do not believe it, you cannot become more than a quagmire, and even that could take many, many years. And it certainly is not the same as a stream."

"But can I not remain the same stream that I am today?"

"You cannot in either case remain so," the whisper said. "Your essential part is carried away and forms a stream again. You are called what you are even today because you do not know which part of you is the essential one."

When it heard this, certain echoes began to arise in the thoughts of the stream. Dimly it remembered a state in which it -- or some part of it? -- had been held in

the arms of a wind. It also remembered -- or did it? -- that this was the real thing, not necessarily the obvious thing to do.

And the stream raised its vapor into the welcoming arms of the wind, which gently and easily bore it upwards and along, letting it fall softly as soon as they reached the roof of a mountain, many, many miles away. And because it had its doubts, the stream was able to remember and record more strongly in its mind the details of the experience. It reflected, "Yes, now I have learned my true identity."

7. READING from Robert Macfarlane's 'The Old Ways: A journey on foot'

We are ... increasingly on pilgrimage. A revival is under way worldwide, with pilgrim numbers rising even as church-going figures fall.

Across faiths and denominations, down the green lanes of England, along the dusty roads of Spain, up the cobbled streets of Alpine towns, through the marl deserts of Israel and the West Bank, around the sacred peaks of the Himalayas, over the frozen lakes of Russia and along the holy rivers of India, millions of pilgrims are on the move: bearing crosses, palm branches, flaming torches, flower garlands, prayer flags and over-stuffed rucksacks, clutching scuffed wooden staffs or shiny trekking poles, and tramping, prostrating, hobbling, begging and believing their ways onwards, travelling by aeroplane, car, bus, horseback and bicycle, but most often on foot and over considerable distances – for physical hardship remains a definitive aspect of most pilgrimage: arduous passage through the outer landscape prompting subtle exploration of the inner.

8. 2nd HYMN 87 (P) Leave behind your bags and baggage

Leave behind your bags and baggage.
Throw all caution to the air.
Let the wind blow through the cobwebs.
Cast aside all anxious care.
Let the God of all our mercies
breath around you everywhere.

Journey onwards never doubting
God will speak a kindly word,
looking forward, always trusting
what your heart feels will be heard.
Love your sister and your brother:
kindness will not be deterred.

In the face of war and hatred
peace and justice we extol.
Share the warmth of fellow-feeling
urging us onto our goal.
With your confidence enthuse us,
God, the life in every soul.

Words © Peter Sampson

9. REFLECTION

10. INTERLUDE River flows in you, Yiruma
<https://youtu.be/7maJOI3QMu0?feature=shared>

11. ADDRESS

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermon/295398.shtml>

12. CLOSING WORDS

God bless the path on which you go.
the earth beneath your feet.
your destination.
God be a smooth way before you,
A guiding star above you,
A keen eye behind you
This day, this night, and forever.

May the spirit be with you whatever you pass,
whatever you climb.
wherever you stay;
with you at each stop and each sea,
at each lying down and each rising up,
in the trough of the waves,
on the crest of the billows
each step of the journey you take.

Extinguish chalice

13. CLOSING MUSIC 'Wayfaring stranger' Connla
<https://youtu.be/JdB7fkIGReA?feature=shared>