

Opening Music: 'Autumn Thanks giving' from 'Harvest Home Suite' by Jay Ungar and Molly Mason

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Welcome: Good morning & welcome, whether you are here in person, joining us on Zoom or watching the online recording. You are welcome, whether a regular attender, or have been here a few times and especially so if you are a newcomer. Whatever you bring in your heart: whether you come in sadness, joy or out of curiosity, whatever your faith or none, you are welcome! Our service today is offered by the Poetry Group, and our theme is 'Letting go'.

Chalice lighting:

We begin by lighting our Chalice flame as a symbol of our free religious faith:
Words adapted from those of Vernon Barnett:

"As in the ancient torch race, we press forward, torch in hand, along the course.
All our skill lies in giving into the next hand the living torch bright and unflickering.
We celebrate this light in amazement, determination and praise."

Introduction of Service theme and opening words

Today's Service is offered by our Poetry Group: church members and friends, who have met most months for over 20 years. Our theme today is 'Letting go' with the intimation of enabling us to move forward to something different, and maybe, better. Our contributions are grouped into 3 sections, and range from a work by Rumi, a Persian Sufi poet who lived in the 13th century, to a modern day poem written by one of our own members, Caroline. Our hymns and music reflect the theme of this season, the passing of time, of living and letting go, as an enriching experience. We offer these with love and hope you each find something which speaks to you.

1st Hymn: 44 in 'Sing your Faith' (aka 'Purple Book') 'Give thanks for life'

Give thanks for life, the measure of our days,
mortal, we pass through beauty that decays,
yet sing to God our hope, our love, our praise:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for those whose lives shone with a light
caught from the Christ-flame, gleaming through the night,
who touched the truth, who burned for what is right:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for all, our living and our dead,
thanks for the love by which our life is fed,
a love not changed by time or death or dread:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for hope that like a seed of grain
lying in darkness, does its life retain
to rise in glory, growing green again:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Prayers: Three prayers from the Celtic spiritual tradition,

offered by Kathy

The first prayer by John Newall:

We wake to the forgiveness of a new day,
We wake to the freedom to begin again.
We wake to the mercy of the sun's redeeming light,
always new, always a gift, always a blessing.

We wake to the forgiveness of this new day,
And, in this day's beginning,
We seek your countenance among us, O God, in countless forms of Creation all
around us,
In the sun's rising glory, in the face of friend and stranger,
Your presence in every presence,
Your light within all light,
Your heart at the heart of this moment.
May the fresh light of morning wash our sight, that we see your life in every life this day.
May it be so.

Second prayer by Hildegarde of Bingen, from 10th Century:

Holy Spirit, giving life to all life,
Moving all creatures, root of all things
Washing them clean, wiping out all their mistakes, healing their wounds,
You are our true life, luminous and wonderful,
Awakening the heart from its ancient sleep.

Third prayer by a Presbyterian Minister living in the USA.

May the God who listens to our hearts and enters into our pain,
Bless us, and all who are in need of the comfort and quiet of her gentle presence,
now and always.
May it be so. .

1st Set of Contributions These reflect on the passing of time and upon this season of transition, from summer to autumn and on towards winter.

'Time present and time past' from Four Quartets by TS Eliot

offered by Christine

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo

Thus, in your mind.
But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.
Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

September Song'

written by Caroline

Crystalline, mercurial summer slips through
Sunburnt hands as we are pulled into Autumn.

Tender golden days
Tinged with sadness
No other season so poignant.

Why do we cling so?
When each day has 4 seasons.
As the swallow gather for their long journey south
We too have a long day's journey
This day.
To be honoured and treasured
As if it were our last.

Final verse of 'Ode to the West Wind' by Shelley.

offered by Delphine

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

'In Blackwater Woods' by Mary Oliver
from 'American Primitive'.© Back Bay Books, 1983.

offered by Delphine

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime

leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

2nd Hymn: in 'Sing your Faith' (aka 'Purple Book') 193 'We laugh, we cry'

We laugh, we cry, we live, we die – we dance, we sing our song,
We need to feel there's something here to which we can belong.
We need to feel the freedom just to have some time alone,
But most of all we need close friends we can call our very own.
And we believe in life, and in the strength of love,
And we have found a need to be together
We have our hearts to give, we have our thoughts to receive,
and we believe that sharing is an answer.

A child is born amongst us and we feel a special glow.
We see time's endless journey as we watch the baby grow.
We thrill to hear imagination freely running wild
We dedicate our minds and hearts to the spirit of the child
And we believe in life, and in the strength of love,
And we have found a time to be together
And with the grace of age, we share the wonder of youth,
and we believe that growing is an answer.

Our lives are full of wonder and our time is very brief.
The death of one amongst us fills us all with pain and grief,
But as we live, so shall we die, and when our lives are done
The memories we shared with friends, they will linger on and on.
And we believe in life, and in the strength of love;
And we have found a place to be together.
We have the right to grow, we have the gift to believe that
Peace within our living is an answer.

We seek elusive answers to the questions of this life.
We seek to put an end to all the waste of human life.
We search for truth, equality, and blessed peace of mind
And then we come together here, to make sense of what we find.

And we believe in life, and in the strength of love;
And we have found a joy to be together
And in our search for peace, maybe we'll finally see:
Even to question truly is an answer.

Words and Music (Tune 'Credo') ©Shelley Jackson Denham, b 1950. Used by permission.

2nd set of contributions: reflecting on looking back on our own lives, letting go of how things were, with the intimation of possibly better things to come.

'Looking back along Life's trodden way' by Christina Rossetti offered by Viv

Looking back along life's trodden way
Gleams and greenness linger on the track;
Distance melts and mellows all today,
Looking back.

Rose and purple and a silvery grey,
Is that cloud the cloud we called so black?
Evening harmonizes all today,
Looking back.

Foolish feet so prone to halt or stray,
Foolish heart so restive on the rack!
Yesterday we sighed, but not today
Looking back.

'Walking away' by Cecil Day Lewis offered by Kathy

'Walking Away' by Cecil Day-Lewis is a poignant poem that reflects on the experience of a parent watching their child grow up and become increasingly independent. The poem uses the metaphor of a father watching his son walk away from him on his first day of school as a symbol of the inevitable separation that occurs as children mature and forge their own paths in life. Day-Lewis captures the bittersweet emotions of pride, love, and a sense of loss that accompany this moment of transition.

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

'Letting go' by Nelson Mandela Copyright © by the owner.

Chosen by Caroline

To let go doesn't mean to stop caring: it means I can't do it for someone else.
To let go is not to cut myself off; it is the realization that I can't control another.
To let go is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.
To let go is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To let go is not to try to change or blame another; I can only change myself.
To let go is not to care for, but to care about.
To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.
To let go is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
To let go is not to be in the middle arranging outcomes, but to allow others to effect their own outcomes.

To let go is not to be protective; it is to permit another to face reality.
To let go is not to deny, but to accept.

To let go is not to nag, scold, or argue, but to search out my own shortcomings and to correct them

To let go is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes and to cherish the moment.

To let go is not to criticize and regulate anyone, but to try to become what I dream I can be
To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.
To let go is to fear less and love more.

Silent reflection followed by **Music:** 'Autumn Equinox' on piano Michael Richardson
<https://youtu.be/lKK8e8Gu7yY>

3rd set of contributions: Letting go to move forward

'Wolves' by Louis Mc Neice

offered by Janice

Janice says, "In his youth, McNeice, one of the greatest poets of the 20th Century, joined other poets in condemning fascism. In this poem, as an older man, his metaphorical wolves are still to be feared, but he will cope with them."

I do not want to be reflective any more
Envy and despising unreflective things
Finding pathos in dogs and undeveloped handwriting
And young girls doing their hair and all the castles of sand
Flushed by the children's bedtime, level with the shore.

The tide comes in and goes out again, I do not want
To be always stressing either its flux or its permanence,
I do not want to be a tragic or philosophic chorus
But to keep my eye only on the nearer future

And after that let the sea flow over us.

Come then all of you, come closer, form a circle,
Join hands and make believe that joined
Hands will keep away the wolves of water
Who howl along our coast. And be it assumed
That no one hears them among the talk and laughter.

'The Peace of Wild Things' by Wendell Berry

offered by Delphine

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

*from The Peace of Wild Things And Other Poems (Penguin, 2018) Copyright (c) 2012
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'The Guest House' by Rumi (Mawlana Jalaluddin)
translated by Coleman Barks

offered by Kathy

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond

'Everyone Sang' By Siegfried Sassoon

offered by Viv

This poem, written after the 1st World War, speaks of people's reaction to the Armistice

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

3rd Hymn: P. 125 'One more step'

Words and Music (Tune 'Southcote') Sydney Carter 1915 – 2002 ©1971 Stainer & Bell Ltd. Used by permission

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.
*and its from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

Round the corners of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn;
All the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me;
*and its from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
You'll be telling me the way, I know;
*and its from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you;
*and its from the old I travel to the new,
keep me travelling along with you.*

You are older than the world can be,
You are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you;
and its from the old I travel to the new,

keep me travelling along with you.

Closing words

'Look to this day' from the Sanskrit (number 240 in the purple hymn book)

Look to this day –

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course lie all the verities

And realities of your existence:

The bliss of growth,

The glory of action, the splendour of beauty.

For yesterday is but a dream,

And tomorrow is only a vision,

But today lived well makes every yesterday a dream of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day.

Extinguish the Chalice

Closing video

'The power of letting go' words by Chris Spheeris sung by Shaina Noll

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https://youtu.be/ECskaOQzXUk?si=vqv_rMS3VxB59qqh

Music and hymns chosen by Sheila