

6th October – Practising repair

Led by Rev Kate Whyman

1. **GATHERING MUSIC** Sanctuary, Carrie Newcomer

<https://youtu.be/HjOioWTVAl4?feature=shared>

2. **WELCOME AND CHALICE LIGHTING**

Welcome to you all, those of you here in the church and all of you joining us online this morning.

Opening words by Maureen Killoran

Welcome, you who come in need of healing,
you who are confused, or have been betrayed.
Welcome, with your problems and your pain.

Welcome, too, your joys and your wonderings,
welcome your need to hope, your longing for assurance.
Instead of answers, here may you find safety for your questions.
Instead of promises, may you find community for your struggles,
people with hands and hearts to join you
in engaging the challenges and changes of our day.

But let us begin, as is our custom, by lighting our chalice candle as a symbol of our free religious faith. *If you're at home I invite you to light a candle with me now.*

We light this flame for ourselves and for our world. For their beauty, their sadness, their joy and their complexity. We light this flame for our fragility and vulnerability, for all that is broken in us, and for all that is ready and waiting to heal.

The theme of this morning's service is 'Practising repair'.

3. 1st HYMN 198 (G) The healing of the nations

For the healing of the nations,
God, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word,
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us ever into freedom,
from despair your world release;
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase,
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth depart;
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas keeping us apart.
May our common quest for justice
be our brief life's hallowed art,
be our brief life's hallowed art.

Music John Hughes, words Fred Kaan

4. BLESSING John O'Donohue

On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you.

And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets into you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green
and azure blue,
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the currach of thought
and a stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

5. STORY The Boy Who Put the World back Together

There was a man who had a little boy that he loved very much. Every day after work he loved to come home and play with his young son. One night, while the man was at work,

he realized that he had extra work to do for the evening, and that he wouldn't be able to play with his little boy. But he wanted to be able to give him something to keep him busy.

So, looking around his office, he found a magazine with a large map of the world on the cover. He got an idea. He removed the map, and then patiently tore it up into small pieces. Then he put all the pieces in his coat pocket.

When he got home, his little boy came running to him, ready to play. The man explained that he had extra work to do and couldn't play just now, but he led the little boy into the dining room, and taking out all the pieces of the map, he spread them on the table, together with some scotch-tape.

He explained that it was a map of the world, and that by the time he could put it back together, his extra work would be finished, and they could both play together. Surely this would keep the child busy for hours, he thought.

About half an hour later the boy came back to his father and said, *"Okay, it's finished. Can we play now?"*

The man was surprised, saying, *"That's impossible. Let's go see."*

And sure enough, there was the picture of the world, all put together, every piece in its place.

The man said, *"That's amazing! How did you do that?"* The boy said, *"It was simple. On the back of the page was a picture of a person. When I put the person together the whole world fell into place."*

6. READING The Healing Moment – Elizabeth Tarbox

Each day I am newly reminded of my unworthiness—a dozen thoughts misspoken; another day when the good I do falls short of the good that I could do; myriad small interchanges; moments of sharing that strain to the breaking point my desire to be generous, helpful, and kind; months of careful work lost by a moment's impatience, a careless word.

But when I am here at the edge of creation, breaking with the small tide over the sand, the need to do good rolls away; the question of what is right diminishes to insignificance and is easily borne away by the tiny waves. Here, where no words are spoken, none are misspoken.

I am with the broken stubble of the marsh grass that holds on through the wrecking wind and the burning flood. I am with the grains that mold themselves around everything, accepting even so unworthy a foot as mine, holding and shaping it until it feels that it belongs. I stand somewhere between truth and vision, and what I don't know ceases to embarrass me, because what I do know is that the water feels gentle like a lover's touch, and the sand welcomes it.

What I have done or failed to do has left no noticeable mark on creation. What I do or don't do is of no moment now. Now I am here and grateful to be touched, calmed, and healed by the immense pattern of the universe. And when I die, it will be an honor for my blood to return to the sea and my bones to become the sand. Reassured, I am called back to my life, to another day.

7. 2nd HYMN: 133 (G) How can I keep from singing?

My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation:
I hear the real though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing:
It sounds an echo in my soul –
How can I keep from singing!

What though the tempest round me roar,
I know the truth, it liveth.
What though the darkness round me close,
Songs in the night it giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm

While to that rock I'm clinging:
Since love prevails in heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing!

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear,
And hear their death-knells ringing;
When friends rejoice, both far and near,
How can I keep from singing!
To prison cell and dungeon vile
Our thoughts of love are winging:
When friends by shame are undefiled,
How can I keep from singing!

American Gospel Tune, Early Quaker Song

8. REFLECTION/SILENCE

9. INTERLUDE 'Burden', Foy Vance

<https://youtu.be/7AbyvdOV55s?feature=shared>

10. ADDRESS

My friend Ann is a huge fan of 'The Repair Shop' – have you ever watched it? It works a bit like the Scrapstore does, here in the church, but on a bigger and much more ambitious scale. There are experts on all sorts of things: painting, ceramics, mending teddy bears, fixing electrical goods and so on, and each week a few (no doubt very carefully selected) members of the public bring in a much-loved possession, maybe a family heirloom or something else with significant sentimental value, something that's become broken or damaged or simply faded and worn with time and use. And the experts set about restoring this much-loved item back to its former glory. It's a lovely premise, with sometimes a very emotional, but always a happy, ending. There's a satisfying 'reveal' when the owner and their beloved object are reunited. If only life could be so simple!

I think the program is so popular partly because it's an antidote to a throw-away society. It's good to see people looking after things, treasuring them, and amazing to admire the skills of the menders. But partly the appeal is because it is extremely comforting in troubled times. Things that have gone wrong are fixed, everything broken is made right again, order is restored. But also, I suspect, the program works because the items are unintentional metaphors for ourselves. For we also harbour a deep yearning to be made well, to be healed, to be whole, don't we.?

And we too have access to an array of experts – doctors, therapists, life coaches, even ministers (maybe!) – who offer the possibility of some kind of redemption or healing. Though they may well not be as successful because however challenging it may be to repair a Ming vase, it's nothing compared to the complexity of a human being. Even if you're lucky enough to have lived a charmed life (and very few of us have completely charmed lives) I don't doubt you too have moments of insecurity, self-doubt, lack of self-esteem and worry and more. Scratch the surface of any one of us, however confident we may appear, and we'd soon reveal broken relationships, grief, loss, confusion and heartache of all kinds.

So what does it mean to 'practise repair'?

What I like about the concept of 'repair' is that it can be small, as small as replacing a lost button on a favourite shirt. Even I can do that. Or calling in a handyman (or woman) to repaint the front door, [or fix a leak], as happened this week. A quick look my own house, or around this church, generates a list of small improvements that could be made as well as a few more weighty ones. We do what we can, and budget to do the rest later.

There is a tradition in mystical Judaism called Tikkun Olam which means 'restoring the world'. Jewish writer Rachel Naomi Remen explains that *'It teaches that we are each born with the capacity [the potential] to find the hidden light in all events and all people; to lift it up and make it visible once again and, thereby, to restore the innate wholeness of the world. This is a very important story for our times — that we heal the world one heart at a time.*

She continues: 'Of course this is a collective task. It involves all people who have ever been born, all people presently alive, all people yet to be born. We are all healers of the world. And that story opens a sense of possibility. It's not about healing the world by

making a huge difference. It's about healing the world that touches you, that's around you.'

Personally, I don't believe I can fix the world, nor can I – or you – 'fix' other people, and nor should we try to. The only people we might possibly be able to heal – eventually, and to some extent – is ourselves. But that doesn't mean there's nothing for us to do – quite the reverse. Like sewing on buttons and painting doors, there's endless potential to be a bit kinder, and make life a little easier for other people. There's infinite opportunity to simply listen, and attempt to understand, another's story, and their point of view. There's ample room for helping to ease another's burden; or for lending our time, enthusiasm or even our money to others who are the trying to make life better or fairer in some way. There's always the chance to work on relationships that matter to us, whether that's with family, friends, colleagues or neighbours – or here. We don't need to look far – the needs of the world are right under our noses. As Rachel Naomi Remen says, *It's about healing the world that touches you, that's around you.'*

And what about repairing ourselves, we the wounded would-be healers?

How do we fix ourselves?

The American theologian Howard Thurman cautioned: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

And so I'm thinking of Elizabeth Tarbox standing at the edge of the sand and feeling called back to her life, to another day. Or of the young woman Rona, in the film 'The Outrun' which I saw on Friday, submerging herself in the stinging cold of the North Sea and finding the strength to remain sober. I'm thinking of myself walking home later that night, past the Box, and placing my outstretched hands on its cool facing stones and remembering – sensing again – that they are 400 million years old. Wow.

Don't ask what the world needs. Find whatever it is that makes you truly come alive and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

Blessed be.

11. 3rd HYMN: 88 (P) Let it be a dance we do

Let it be a dance we do.

May I have this dance with you?

Through the good times and bad times, too,

let it be a dance.

Let a dancing song be heard.

Play the music, say the words,
and fill the sky with sailing birds.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Learn to follow, learn to lead,

feel the rhythm, fill the need

to reap the harvest,

plant the seed.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance we do.

May I have this dance with you?

Through the good times and bad times, too,

let it be a dance.

Everybody turn and spin,

Let your body learn to bend,

and like a willow in the wind,

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

A child is born, the old must die,

a time for joy, a time to cry,

take it as it passes by.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance we do.

May I have this dance with you?

*Through the good times and bad times, too,
let it be a dance.*

Morning star comes out at night,
without the dark there is no light,
if nothing's wrong then nothing's right,
Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let it be a dance.

Let the sun shine, let it rain,
share the laughter, bear the pain,
and round and round we go again.
Let it be a dance.

Words and music © Ric Masten

12. CLOSING WORDS

When the winds on your path begin to swirl,
may you find your breath.

May you remember and return to that still point inside that is always waiting to welcome
you back home.

And from that place of empowering peace,
may you be an anchor of calm
for those who need it as much as you.

Go in peace. Go in love

Amen

13. CLOSING MUSIC 'Find the light, David Ramirez, performed by Vince Colbert

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=ezpP1waOwaA&feature=shared>