

Opening music - violin - reflection played twice 2 min 58

Service on safe spaces and kindness Sunday 24th Nov 2024

Welcome all, if you come every week, or now and then, if this is your first time or if you are watching on zoom. Welcome.

Chalice lighting and Words by Pat Uribe-Lichty

Different yet United

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We come from many places -

Along different paths, bringing different truths

We come with different histories and different realities

And yet we come together as one people-

With faith that we can use our differences

To heal ourselves, and each other

To bring wholeness to our world.

We come, seeking Community, to find acceptance of who we

are

In this place we may find others who are much like us,

And others who are much different.

May our lit chalice remind us that we are

A people taught by different stories

With many voices

But always,

One people

Working For a world where love creates justice,

And justice gives birth to peace.

Every year in November , all churches are encouraged to do a safeguarding service. When you think of safeguarding , you probably think of verbal, mental or physical abuse but that is not the whole picture. I would just like to say at this point, for those that don't know, I am the safeguarding officer and if you do have any issues pertaining to what I have just said , please do come and talk to me in trust and confidentiality.

This service is about safe spaces and kindness, I think they are interrelated. Because part of this service is about being, I'd like to tell you how our chalice symbol came into being. A lot of you may already know . It has its origins in a logo designed by an Austrian refugee for what was called the Unitarian service committee. It became an underground symbol in occupied Europe during World War 1 for those assisting Unitarians, Jews and other people to escape Nazi persecution. The design was made into a seal for papers and a badge for agents moving refugees to freedom and safety. Of course there is more to the history of the chalice and that is for another time.

1st hymn purple book no 158 The Flame of love is kindled

*The flame of truth is kindled,
our chalice burning bright;
amongst us moves the Spirit
in whom we take delight.
We worship here in freedom
with conscience unconstrained,
a pilgrim people thankful
for what great souls have gained.*

*The flame of thought is kindled,
we celebrate the mind;
its search for deepest meaning
that time-bound creeds can't bind.
We celebrate its oneness
with body and with soul,
with universal process,
with God who makes us whole.*

*The flame of love is kindled,
we open wide our hearts,
that it may burn within us,
fuel us to do our parts.
Community needs building,
a Commonwealth of Earth,
we ask for strength to build it –
a new world come to birth.*

Words © Clifford Martin Reed

I've left a piece of paper on your chairs. Please take 2 mins to write down what you think makes a safe space . Do this with the person sitting next to you.

Story - The Helpful Firefly

Once upon a time in a small village, there lived a firefly named Sparky. Sparky was a very helpful firefly who loved to brighten up the dark nights for all the animals in the village. But there was a problem - Sparky didn't know how to speak English very well.

One day, a lost bunny named Benny wandered into the village. Benny was scared and didn't know how to find his way home. All the animals tried to help, but they couldn't understand Benny's language.

Seeing Benny in distress, Sparky flew over and started glowing in different patterns to communicate with Benny. Benny was surprised and delighted to see Sparky trying so hard to help. With Sparks's guidance, Benny was able to understand the directions and find his way back home.

From that day on, the animals in the village realised that you don't need words to help someone in need. Kindness and effort can speak louder than any language.

Sparky became known as the helpful Firefly and taught everyone that a little

bit of effort and understanding can make a big difference in someone's life.

So the next time you see someone who doesn't speak your language, remember Sparky the helpful Firefly and try to help in any way you can.

Kindness knows no language barrier.

Prayers

Adapted from c of e prayers

Divine spirit

We pray that this community may be a place of welcome,

Security and compassion

Keep us watchful but caring

Trusting yet ready to question

**That all who worship here may do so in safety and knowledge
of your love**

May it be so.

May the doors of our church be wide enough

To all who are seeking a free religious faith

And community

May the doors of this church be narrow enough

To shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity

May the threshold of this church be no stumbling block to

All who wish to come

May the threshold of this church be too high

To admit complacency and self seeking

May our church and community be

For all who enter

**A safe place and the doorway to a welcoming, beloved
community.**

May it be so.

A prayer for kindness.

Divine Spirit,

Give me strength today to show

Kindness in all that I do.

**Help me to open my arms to those less fortunate and extend
my hand to those who may need it**

So that they may see you in my kind words and actions.

Amen

A short meditation followed by silence and a video

Settle yourselves comfortably

Take a couple of deep breaths

Now each time you take a deep breath in think of blue or purple which are calming and spiritual and as you breathe out , think you are breathing out bubbles of purple and blue to share with everyone here.

Do this 3 times and will then have a short silence followed by a video.

Reading - Kindness goes a long way - by Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou says, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. Kindness goes a long way. You will be amazed by how much effect a simple act of kindness has in someone’s life. Being kind should be a character trait everyone should have. When we are kind, we touch the hearts of those we are serving. A warm hug, a small gesture, or positive words can make a difference in someone’s life. How many times has your mood changed because if

someone's kindness? How many times have you been the blessing in someone else's life.

Nothing is more gratifying than hearing someone say ; " you are the answer to my prayer " or " you made my day". When we act with kindness, we change the atmosphere and motivate others to do the same. The " pay it forward" movement was born from a desire to thank kind acts. It is a great way of inspiring others to do an act of love. It does not have to be something big; a simple gesture can have a huge impact. For example, if you see someone sad or shy, sit by their side and ask how they are. If you see someone struggling with homework or work, ask how you can help. If you see someone overwhelmed, ask how you can ease their load. These are simple things that will make a difference and not cost anything.

Words by Maya Angelou

2nd hymn purple book no 24 - Come sing a song with me

*Come, sing a song with me,
come, sing a song with me,
come, sing a song with me,
that I might know your mind.*

*And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.*

*Come, dream a dream with me,
come, dream a dream with me,
come, dream a dream with me,
that I might know your mind.*

*And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and rose in the winter time.*

*Come, walk in rain with me,
come, walk in rain with me,
come, walk in rain with me,
that I might know your mind.*

*And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.*

*Come, share a rose with me,
come, share a rose with me,
come, share a rose with me,
that I might know your mind.*

*And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.*

Words by Carolyn McDade, © Surtsey Publishing Ltd

Address

I've asked you to write down what you think a safe space is and I'm sure they are all different but they will be read and we will do our best to put them into practice in the church.

I think a safe space connects to kindness.

The term safe space in Wikipedia refers to places intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism or potentially threatening actions, ideas or conversations. There are many more aspects of safe spaces or positive spaces but I won't go into them now.

What I think a safe space is, is something like our church space, a space with its own values , it should nurture our community , help them feel more confident, increase their self esteem, an environment where everyone is listened to and respected, where everyone feels safe to speak even if they have a different opinion to others. A community where everyone feels safe to be themselves. A way of connecting to each other. Communication is key to creating a safe space, this is difficult, we hear things that upset us, we interpret things in different ways, we also mishear, we perhaps read body language the

wrong way. We can be abrupt and snappy.

In Donna Cameron's book "A year of Living Kindly" she says she has learned so much, here are some of her thoughts on kindness:

Pay attention

Withhold judgement

Pause

Receive graciously

Take care of yourself

Be grateful

Every kindness matters, even the smallest one

Choose peace - life may not seem easy or fair but we can still choose peace

If kindness isn't evident, look harder

Always choose kindness, you will never regret it

I have been trying to be kinder over the last year but

if these were rules we had to abide by, I would have broken

everyone, but it doesn't stop me trying everyday to be kinder.

I get irritable, moody, annoyed, make assumptions (only the other day , a man got on the bus , (yes I realise I've not told many bus tales for a long time), he was dressed just like an old fashioned clown with bright, strange coloured jacket and bowler hat, he had a huge trolley basket. I thought unkindly, please don't talk to me and I pretended to look at my phone. We all say thank you to bus drivers when we get off, but when he got off, he said thank you so much for driving me, it's very kind of you as I wouldn't be able to take this trolley of goods to the charity shop. And he then gave the driver a bag of Maltesers. How kind was he and how unkind I was?

I think nice is an underrated word, often trying to be nice with a smile or a thank you leads on to kindness. When kindness disappears from our lives, we need to keep finding it again.

The world is in a mess but there is kindness, we need to keep trying to bring out the kindness that is within us, starting with ourselves. We heard a lot about this in Stephen's service last week.

My dear friend who lives in London and is very deaf. She can sign a little but captioned films or theatre productions are better for her.

She really wanted to see a particular film and was trying to find a captioned screening, it turned out to be a big problem, in the end she decided to email the Everyman cinema in Chelsea, they actually changed a screening for her and added captions. How kind was that?

As a little aside, I know there are bsl, captioned, relaxed, silver screen, mum and baby screenings even knitting ones but she told me that cinema even has showings where you can take your dog. I think these places like our own theatre Royal are trying hard to create spaces where people, including staff feel safe to be there and included, not excluded.

Amazing.

So that was a lovely thing for her, it enabled her to see the film.

But then last Tuesday, she wanted to do a small kindness. There was a local authority man where she lives, probably around 70, trying to clear the soggy leaf fall. He was wrapped

up but still open to the elements. She asked him if he would like a cup of tea or coffee to warm him up, he said he really appreciated her offer and it would be nice but they're not allowed to accept anything from 'customer' and if his inspector saw him he'd be in trouble. Bureaucracy gone mad.

She went on to say to me - how can we encourage kindness and compassion on the one hand and then put stupid obstacles in the way.

But we mustn't give up on trying to be and making people feel safe , even if it's only for a short time being in the sanctuary of our church and even if we get it wrong a lot of the time.

3rd hymn purple book no 88 - 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