

**MUSIC:** Edvard Grieg – Peer Gynt Suite No.1, Prelude, ‘Morning’ (6:10)

<https://youtu.be/-rh8gMvzPw0>

**1<sup>st</sup> HYMN: Purple 126 – ‘Open the door, step right inside’**

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Open the door, step right inside,  
come into this place where love and hope will abide.  
Reach out your hand, I’ll welcome you in,  
its so good to be together again.

Start out the day wearing a grin,  
joyful faces make people want to come in.  
Open your arms to show that you care,  
and our little light will shine everywhere.

When you’re in pain, trouble or doubt,  
let the love come in to help the hurting get out.  
Open your heart to share how you feel,  
and we’ll build a church of love that is real.

Open the door, step right inside,  
come into this place where love and hope will abide.  
Reach out your hand, I’ll welcome you in,  
its so good to be together again.

**Chalice Lighting** by a member of the congregation:

We light this candle as a symbol of our faith.  
By its light may our vision be illumined;  
By its warmth may our fellowship be encouraged;  
And by its flame may our yearnings for peace, justice and the life of the spirit be enkindled.

**Introductory Prayer: we join together now...**

We join together now to worship as a beloved community.  
Each individual brings to our gathering faith and ideas, but each of us also yearns to share fellowship one with the other.  
May we look beyond any differences to the common bonds that unite us: faith, hope, and love. And may those divine qualities shine through our worship today.

**QUOTES ON HOPE:**

“Hope is a waking dream.” — Aristotle

“Only in the darkness can you see the stars.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

“It is often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars.” — Richard Evans

“It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.” — Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present.” — Bil Keane

**2<sup>nd</sup> HYMN: 1 ‘A core of silence’ (Purple Book)**

*Words and Music © Jim Reilly B. 1943 used by Permission*

A core of silence breathes beyond all words,  
or else the words have little worth;  
to ‘heart’ or ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ it comes forth  
(the words we name them matter not).

And half the music lies within the pause  
between the arches of the heart;  
the print upon the page means less than ink  
unless the white and black both speak.

The ‘true religion’ gathers up its text:  
‘In the beginning was the Word.’  
But I seek quietness behind that start  
And name it nothing, much less ‘God’.

**STORY: ‘Two frogs in the milk’ by Melissa D. Zartman, The Songbird (Reader 1)**

This is the story of two frogs. One frog was fat and the other skinny. One day, while searching for food, they inadvertently jumped into a vat of milk. They couldn't get out, as the sides were too slippery, so they were just swimming around.

The fat frog said to the skinny frog, "Brother frog, there's no use paddling any longer. We're just going to drown, so we might as well give up." The skinny frog replied, "Hold on brother, keep paddling. Somebody will get us out." And they continued paddling for hours.

After a while, the fat frog said, "Brother frog, there's no use. I'm becoming very tired now. I'm just going to stop paddling and drown. It's Sunday and nobody's working. We're doomed. There's no possible way out of here." But the skinny frog said, "Keep trying. Keep paddling. Something will happen, keep paddling." Another couple of hours passed.

The fat frog said, "I can't go on any longer. There's no sense in doing it because we're going to drown anyway. What's the use?" And the fat frog stopped. He gave up. And he drowned in the milk. But the skinny frog kept on paddling.

Ten minutes later, the skinny frog felt something solid beneath his feet. He had churned the milk into butter and he hopped out of the vat.

**Reading 1: C.S. Lewis Quotes on Hoping For Something More**

“Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise.

“At present we are on the outside... the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the pleasures we see. But all the pages of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get “in”... We will put on glory... that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch.

We do not want to merely “see” beauty—though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.

## Reading 2: Biblical and Quranic Readings on Hope

**Proverbs 24:14** – Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

**Jeremiah 29:11** – For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

**Psalms 27:4-5** – One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

**Mark 5:35-36** – While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”

**Surah Yusuf 12:87** – "And never give up hope of God's soothing mercy; truly no one despairs of God's soothing mercy except those who have no faith."

## Reading 3: A Buddhist Reading on Hope

"However innumerable the sentient beings are,  
I vow to save them all.  
However infinite the obstacles are,  
I vow to overcome them all.  
However immeasurable the Dharma is,  
I vow to understand it fully."

— The Four Bodhisattva Vows

This passage reflects the heart of hope in Buddhism, where the Bodhisattva expresses the commitment to continue striving for the liberation of all beings, no matter the obstacles or the challenges that arise. The vow is not just an expression of idealism, but of deep, determined hope—hope that each small action toward peace, understanding, and wisdom contributes to the greater good of all beings.

In Buddhism, hope is not just an external force; it is the inner resolve that fuels our compassion and our desire to alleviate suffering. It is a hope grounded in the possibility of transformation—both of ourselves and of the world around us. Through dedication, mindfulness, and compassion, hope becomes a guiding light, helping us to persist and grow even in the face of adversity.

**MUSIC:** Ludwig van Beethoven – Bagatelle in A minor, 'Für Elise' (3:35) [Ludwig van BEETHOVEN: Bagatelle in A minor \(Für Elise\)](#)

<https://youtu.be/CQIDLhBJ2y4>

### **REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:**

In times of uncertainty, struggle, and despair, we often turn to a simple, yet powerful word: hope. Hope is a concept that transcends belief systems, cultures, and philosophies. It is something universal, something deeply human, and something that sustains us when life seems rather overwhelming. As Unitarians, we find hope not in the certainty of dogmas, but in the possibility of transformation, connection, and human resilience. Exploring hope from a Unitarian perspective, we will delve into the nature of hope, how it manifests in our lives, and how we can nurture it in our communities; but most importantly, we will reflect on how hope can help us engage with the world in meaningful ways, even when the path ahead seems unclear.

**The Nature of Hope:** Hope, at its core, is not about blind optimism or wishful thinking. It is not the passive expectation that things will somehow get better without effort or action. Rather, hope is an active force — a choice that we make to continue forward, to persist despite obstacles, to believe in the possibility of change, and to engage in the work of justice and healing in the world. Hope is both an emotional response and a rational understanding. It acknowledges the challenges we face but insists that they are not the final word. Hope invites us to hold onto a vision of what could be—a world of peace, love, and justice — and to take concrete steps toward that vision, even when the journey feels daunting.

Unitarians, guided by principles that encourage critical thinking, justice, and compassion, understand hope as something grounded in the real world. We do not ignore the suffering, injustice, or pain in our lives or in the world around us. Instead, we embrace them, acknowledging their reality while also affirming our capacity for change, growth, and healing. Hope, in this sense, is a dynamic and evolving force. It is not something that remains static, but something we cultivate through our actions, our relationships, and our willingness to believe in possibilities beyond our immediate circumstances.

**Hope in the Face of Adversity:** The world is not without its troubles. Climate change, political divisions, systemic inequality, violence, and poverty persist as daily challenges. Many of us have faced personal hardships—loss, illness, heartbreak, and uncertainty. It is easy, in the face of such overwhelming realities, to feel hopeless, to question whether

things will ever improve. Yet, hope does not abandon us in times of darkness. It is precisely in these moments that hope becomes most essential. Hope does not require us to deny the harshness of reality, nor does it demand that we ignore the pain and suffering that we witness or experience. Instead, hope calls us to respond to adversity with courage and determination. It is in the struggle that hope finds its fullest expression, as it empowers us to keep moving forward, even when we do not know where the road leads.

Unitarians are not unfamiliar with the reality of suffering, but we are also deeply committed to the transformative power of human action. In our history, we have seen countless individuals and communities rise up in the face of injustice, bringing about change in ways that once seemed impossible. From the abolition of slavery movement to the fight for human and civil rights, from the ongoing efforts to protect the environment to the struggle (particularly in authoritarian societies) for LGBTQ+ rights, hope has been the driving force behind some of the most profound shifts in our society as well as in others.

These struggles remind us that while hope does not promise an easy journey, it does promise a meaningful one. The work of justice and transformation is never quick or easy, but it is always worth it. It is through this work that hope is nurtured and realised. As we seek to heal the wounds of the world, we discover that hope is not something we receive passively — it is something we create together, through our actions, our commitments, and our shared vision for a better future.

**The Power of Community in Nurturing Hope:** While hope is an individual experience, it is also deeply communal. As Unitarians, we recognise the importance of community in sustaining hope. We do not walk this path alone, nor are we meant to. In moments of difficulty, it is the support and care of others that lift us up, that remind us of the strength we have within ourselves, and that encourage us to keep going.

The Unitarian community, with its values of inclusivity, compassion, and respect for diversity, offers a unique space where hope can be shared and nurtured. Here, we come together not because we all believe the same thing, but because we recognise the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We acknowledge the deep connections that bind us to each other and to the world around us, and we commit ourselves to working together for the common good.

Hope thrives in communities where people can lean on one another, where they can share their struggles and triumphs, and where they can work towards shared goals. As we come together in worship, in service, and in advocacy, we weave a fabric of hope that strengthens each of us individually and collectively. It is in this community of shared commitment and mutual support that we find the courage to hope.

**Hope as a Call to Action:** As Unitarians, our hope is not merely a passive feeling or a vague ideal. It is a call to action. Hope invites us to engage with the world in meaningful

ways, to use our voices, our talents, and our resources to bring about positive change. Hope urges us to stand up against injustice, to speak out for the marginalised, and to work towards a world in which all people can experience dignity, freedom, opportunities, and equality of opportunity.

Hope is also a call to care for the Earth. The climate crisis reminds us that our hope for a better world must extend to the planet that sustains us. Our hope for future generations demands that we take action now to protect the environment, to reduce our carbon footprint, and to support sustainable practices that will ensure a liveable world for all.

Hope is not complacent; it is not a passive waiting for things to improve. Hope is a challenge, a demand that we engage with the world, that we act in ways that reflect our values, and that we do so with courage, compassion, and commitment. It calls us to be active participants in the ongoing creation of a just and loving world.

Hope is not just an abstract idea; it is a force that shapes our lives and our world. As Unitarians, we find hope in the power of human connection, in the possibility of transformation, and in the belief that together, we can make a difference. Hope sustains us in the face of adversity, reminds us of our shared humanity, and calls us to action.

At present we may hope for a meaningful breakthrough in the Middle East conflict but that seems very distant. Hope that the world's economies will soon strengthen is unlikely, as is hope that the developing world will receive the support and attention it needs. Nor is it easy to hope that the people we love who are gravely ill or deeply troubled will find comfort. But just when the temptation to despair seems overpowering, a glimmer of hope emerges: a hug, a word spoken in love, an object of beauty, an act of kindness. There is a thin line between hope and delusion, between hope and self-distraction.

The Buddha said: "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment." The essence of living in the present moment, the Now, is focusing the mind here and take attention away from thinking about past or future. The present moment is all there ever to experience life directly. Past and future are only concepts of our mind and therefore are good for learning from the past or conceptual planning when it is useful, but after this there is no need for them. Especially not to dwell in them and get stuck there in the mind by constant thinking loops, lest we destroy our hope and shatter our dreams.

Let us leave here today with renewed hope — not a hope that is blind to the challenges we face, but a hope that is grounded in the belief that change is possible, that justice is within reach, and that love will always prevail. And let us be agents of that hope, working together to create a world that reflects the values of compassion, justice, and peace. May we be ever hopeful, ever committed, and ever ready to bring our vision of a better world into being. Amen. So be it.

**MUSIC:** Jules Massenet [Jules Massenet - Meditation from Thais for Violin and Piano](https://youtu.be/7QtGOWemQhY) – (5:22) <https://youtu.be/7QtGOWemQhY>

**POETRY:** Hope is the Thing with Feathers by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

### **Offertory Prayer**

This church is sustained by what we are able to bring to it:  
Our time and our energy,  
Our love and our resources.

Today's collection will be gratefully received after the end of this service to support the work of this congregation. So, please give generously.

### **A PRAYER FOR HOPE**

Gracious and loving Spirit,  
In times of uncertainty, we turn to you, seeking hope.  
Fill our hearts with the light of possibility,  
that we may see the path ahead, even when it is unclear.

Grant us the courage to move forward,  
the strength to persevere through challenges,  
and the wisdom to know that change is always within our reach.

Help us to hold onto the vision of a better world,  
and inspire us to act with love and compassion.  
May hope guide our steps, unite our hearts,  
and empower us to bring healing and justice to all. Amen.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Hymn 201 'What shall we say to them' (Purple Book)**

*Words © Peter Sampson b. 1938 Used by Permission*  
*Music 'Diademata' George J.Elvey, (1816 – 1893)*

What shall we say to them  
when they all want to know  
that God is in the world and feels  
their inmost secrets glow?  
We all must say to them  
what we all now for sure  
that there's a goodness in the world  
whichever shall endure.

What shall we do for them  
when they are in distress  
and anguish burns within their hearts  
for which they seek redress?  
We all must help them live  
with confidence and trust  
that if we hold fast to the truth  
love lights up even dust.

What is our vision bright  
Which we must show the world:  
how perfect love can cast out fear  
and life's flag be unfurled?  
We may not give up hope;  
we will not give up love.  
Our lives are grounded in the faith  
in one God we all move.

#### **Closing Words**

We are blessed with an abundance of good things for we which we are truly thankful, as long as we remember them.

We are privileged with great freedom and power, for which in return we act with responsibility.

We are lucky to have shared this time and space together, because we are lucky to have each other.

May the spirit of this place and these friends go with us into the busy city.

**MUSIC:** Christoph Gluck – Orpheus and Eurydice 'Dance of the Blessed Spirits' (3:21)

<https://youtu.be/DPegnyLDBXI>