

Plymouth Unitarian Church Circle Service - Our Ancestors Sunday 9th February 2025
Offered by Ann Kader

Opening music – ‘Waking with the ancestors’ by Adrian Avon Ziegler ‘

https://youtu.be/7907Po_sccl

Welcome

Opening words and chalice lighting

“welcoming our ancestors “ Welcoming our ancestors is found in many culture. So our opening words are a welcome.

”We welcome our parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles , siblings across time and place to be here with us.

We call on the early Unitarians , lay people and ministers who brought our faith tradition to Devon,

We call on ancestors of our congregation, who grew and dreamed this church and community into being.

We call on the above to join us today..”

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!

Music Ralph Vaughan Williams, words Shirley Erena Murray © 1987 Hope Publishing Company

Reading

I think the older I get the more I think of the past . This service came from reading a daily meditation

from Richard Rohr , a Franciscan priest.

He titles it “ Creating the future by honouring the past “

Cherokee descendant Rev. Dr. Randy Woolley and his wife Edith Woolley of the Eastern Shoshone tribe highlight how honouring the wisdom and traditions of our ancestors can inspire us to become healers and changemakers, creating a path to a better future.

When we pass our traditions down to the next generation, we are passing down the presence of all our ancestors who came before us. Those songs and stories and teachings are not just from us but from those who came before. Our ceremonies connect us to our ancestors because we know they once stood where we stand, using the same traditions.

Edith goes onto to talk about her mother’s beadwork and her beadwork and her thoughts drift to her mother, how she would do a stitch, how she looked for patterns.

When sharing stories, Native Americans often drift freely between current and past events.

We learn about how to live now by examining what happened in our history.

We depend on our stories, our ceremonies and other traditions to guide us to a good future. Often that future is best expressed through exploring things from the past. That is why our stories and other past concerns are so very important. Without our past,we cannot be a people of the future.

He goes on to say:

‘Think about what you have carried forward from your parents, grandparents or caregivers . What practices, ideas or life ways rooted in the past are you keeping alive.1

I’m pleased he included caregivers in his meditation as not everyone has parents etc., for instance my dad’s mum died young and my dad and his siblings were separated and lived with various different families. Luckily and I don’t know how, they all found each other again when they were adults.

Prayer

Divine spirit

We ask that you guide us in our journey to understand and connect with our ancestors, to honour their memories and to learn from their experiences.

We ask that you help us heal the wounds of our past, to release the pain and suffering of our ancestors and to forgive those who have harmed us.

We ask that you bless us with the courage and determination to make positive changes in our lives, to embrace our true selves, and to live our lives in alignment with our passions and purpose. We ask that you bless us with the wisdom to make decisions that are in alignment with our highest good and the greater good of all.

We ask that you bless us with the ability to connect with the spirit of our ancestors and to receive their guidance and support. We ask that you bless us with the ability to connect with the spirit of the land, the animals, the plants and all of creation.

We give thanks to you Great Spirit, for the blessings of life and for the opportunity to grow. We honour and acknowledge the wisdom and guidance of our ancestors and ask that you continue to

bless us in our journey. Amen

2nd hymn green book 188 - Let love continue long

Let love continue long,
And show to us the way,
And if that love be strong
No hurt can have a say;
And if that love remain but strong,
No hurt can ever have a say. .

If love cannot be found,
Though common faith prevail,
When love does not abound,
A common faith will fail.
When human love does not abound,
A common faith will always fail.

If we in love unite,
Debate can cause no strife:
For with this love in sight
Disputes enrich our life.
For with this bond of human love,
Disputes can mean a richer life.

May love continue long,
And lead us on our way:
For if that love be strong
No hurt can have a say.
For if that love remain but strong
No hurt can evr have a say. .

Music: Tune 'Love Unknown' John Ireland 1879 – 1962
Words: from Traditional American words

Reading by Linda – 'Back to Domesday'

The Domesday Book, compiled in 1086 was a massive attempt to list all lands held by and of the Crown, and the names of the Royal tenants. We therefore have lists of people county by county, (admirably reproduced in published form by Phillimore & Co and with a name index to the whole country priced £50 (1997)). Once again, therefore, we have available, for a period of almost a thousand years ago, the equivalent of a pre World War 11 phone book! By no means all householders, let alone all people, are listed, nevertheless it is an excellent source of data, without parallel at the time.

Most have only one name, and only a few with more, might seem familiar at first glance - a Bassett here, a Carpenter there, though only three Smiths in the whole country! Instead, we enter the world of Edric the Bald, Edric the blind. Aldred brother of Odo, Burnt Albert, Harold's Concubine, Walter

the Crossbowman, Hugh Donkey's daughter, Ralph the Fat, Alfyeat Ghost, Ketel Friday, Roger God-Save-Ladies, Humphrey Goldenbollocks, Ralph Haunted, Robert the Lascivious, Ralph Passwater, Ralph Piercehedge, Alwin the Rat, Akile Suffering, Edlufu Thief, Godwin Weakfeet, Aldric Wintermilk and the Half- Men of Suffolk.

Time of quiet reflection followed by music by Lubiana " Ancestors"

<https://youtu.be/7YTwRk2C2pE>

Reading by Viv

This reading is part of a meditation titled 'Snapshots' from the book 'Shine and Shadow' by Kathleen McTigue Slightly adapted. This will be followed by a short discussion.

Memory is a little like snaps from a camera.

We lift up to our mind's eye a sampling of moments from the millions through which we've lived. The sweetest memories are the ones we hold up most often, but sometimes a random memory of some long- ago and ordinary day becomes treasured with the passage of time, symbolic of a whole sweep of years long past.

We remember those we've loved this way too — as a composite, because a person is too vast and complex to hold in the memory in totality. Instead, we hold them as snapshots. You remember a particular angle of the head, a unique crinkle in the lines around the eyes, the wicked contagiousness of her laugh. You remember the way he held the baby, the movement of her hands as she shaped the pie crust.

This is what is left behind. They are just snapshots, so small when held up to the richness of life, and yet they fill us. The essence of who we lived is captured in these fragments. They show us a little bit of where we have been, but most importantly they show us who we have been and lead us toward who we're still becoming.

Discussion

I think it would be nice if you got into groups of maybe 3 and think about the last paragraph of the first meditation and think about what it said:

"What have you carried forward from your parents, grandparents or caregivers.

What practices, ideas , or life ways rooted in the past are you keeping alive."

Final hymn purple book no 218 – 'With Heart and Mind'

With heart and mind and voice and hand
may we this time and place transcend
to make our purpose understood:
a mortal search for mortal good

of justice, freedom, peace for all.

A mind that's free to seek the truth;
a mind that's free in age and youth
to choose a path no threat impedes,
wherever light of conscience leads.
Our martyrs died so we could be
a church where every mind is free.

A heart that's kind, a heart whose search
makes love the spirit of our church,
where we can grow, and each one's gift
is sanctified, and spirits lift,
where every door is open wide
for all who choose to step inside.

Music: 'Mach's Mit Mir, Gott'. J.H.Schein 1586 - 1630.

Harmony J.S.Bach 1685 - 1750

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Closing words are from this month's 'Oasis of Calm' leaflet, written by Jacob Trapp, Unitarian Universalist Minister.

" May we find the world to be so beautiful, and life so richly and meaningfully shared, that we shall want this to be true, more often, for more people, everywhere.

Closing music - Reflection