

Plymouth Unitarian Church Service June 1st 2025 by Ann Kader
‘Why we shouldn’t keep things for best’

Opening music - David Garrett- ‘Despacito’ 3.20 mins

https://youtube.com/watch?v=-8m67QwPmFk&si=7-LeiqyASSnTV_9l

Welcome and chalice lighting

Opening words by Celia Cartwright:

This is our meeting house for worship,
Here we are a community connected by ties of faith and fellowship
May the diversity of our beliefs be a blessing to share;
That all may grow in harmony with the Divine

Hymn 11: Sing Your Faith (Purple Book) ‘Blessed Spirit of my life ‘

Blessed Spirit of my life,
give me strength through stress and strife;
help me live with dignity;
let me know serenity.
Fill me with a vision,
clear my mind of fear and confusion.
When my thoughts flow restlessly,
let peace find a home in me.

Spirit of great mystery,
hear the still, small voice in me.
Help me live my wordless creed
as I comfort those in need.
Fill me with compassion;
be the source of my intuition.
Then when life is done for me,
let love be my legacy.

Music Tune: ‘Prayer’ Shelley Jackson Denhan

Words: Shelley Jackson Denhan © Used by permission

Story about not keeping things for best: ‘The Lost Birthday’

Sarah, a woman who cherished the mundane, found Gessela caught in a web of expectations. Her grandmother, a fiercely frugal woman, had collected a series of antique figurines, each one labelled as “best” and destined for a special occasion.

Sarah, however, felt a different calling.

One of her grandmother's most treasured pieces, a porcelain doll with a chipped smile, was a family heirloom. It was always kept in a glass case, a museum piece. On Sarah's 30th birthday however, Sarah decided to break the rule.

With a nervous smile, she took the doll out of the case. She used it as a decoration on her cake, a symbol of the unexpected, the imperfect and the beauty in not adhering to the "best"

The doll didn't survive the night. A bit of porcelain chipped off, and the doll became Sarah's birthday treasure, a symbol of living, not just preserving.

2nd hymn 43 in 'Sing your Faith' (aka 'Purple Book') 'Gather the spirit'

Gather the spirit, harvest the power.
Our sep'rate fires will kindle one flame.
Witness the mystery of this hour.
Our trials in this light appear all the same.
Gather in peace, gather in thanks,
Gather in sympathy now and then.
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.
Gather to celebrate once again.

Gather the spirit of heart and mind.
Seeds for the sowing are laid in store.
Nurtured in love and conscience refined,
With body and spirit united once more.
Gather in peace, gather in thanks,
Gather in sympathy now and then.
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.
Gather to celebrate once again

Gather the spirit growing in all,
Drawn by the moon and fed by the sun.
Winter to spring, and summer to fall,
The chorus of life resounding as one.
Gather in peace, gather in thanks,
Gather in sympathy now and then.
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.
Gather to celebrate once again

Readings

1st Reading:

Marge Piercy “ Putting Things Away” (a few verses taken from the poem)

In the drawer were folded fine
Batiste slips embroidered with scrolls
And posies, edged with hand made
Lace too good for her to wear,

Daily she put in her scmattehs
Fit only to wash the car
Or the windows, rags
That had never been pretty

Even when new: somewhere
Such dresses are sold only
To women without money to waste
On themselves, on pleasure,

To women who hate their bodies,
To women whose lives close in them,
Such dresses come bleached by tears
Packed like salt herring.

Yet she put the good things away
For the good day that must surely
Come, when promises would open
Like tulips in their satin cups

In the coffin she was beautiful
Her face at eighteen peering
Over the long drab dress
Of poverty, clutching a book
Where did you read your dreams , mother?

Because her expression softened
From the pucker of disappointment
The grimace of swallowed rage
She looked a white haired girl

I gave her presents and she hid

Them away, wrapped in plastic
Too good, she said, too good
I'm saving them,

So after her death I sort them,
The ugly things
That were sufficient for everyday
And the pretty things
For which no day of hers was ever good enough.

This poem reminded me of my mum. She had a big box of nice things the family had bought her but never used them. It was hurtful to us as we had taken time to choose them and they were left in a box.

2nd Reading:

This is by an unknown writer , after having heard a widower who had just found an unopened gift he'd bought for his wife - he said

“ Never save something for a special occasion. Everyday is a special occasion”

The writer said these words changed her life and she wrote the following:

“Now I read more and clean less

I sit on the porch without worrying about anything

I spend more time with my family and less at work

I understood that life should be a source of experience to be lived up to, not survived through

I no longer keep anything. I use crystal glasses everyday.

I'll wear new clothes to the supermarket, if I feel like it.

I don't save my special perfume for special occasions. I use it whenever I want to.

The words “ someday” and “ one day” are fading away from my dictionary

If it's worth seeing, listening or doing, I want to see, listen or do it now.

Now I try not to delay or keep anything that could bring
laughter and joy into lives.

And in each morning, I say to myself that this could be a special day.

Each day, each hour, each minute is special.”

I think we could learn from that.

Prayers

First a Unitarian prayer for the healing of the world

Creator Spirit,
We pray for a world free from violence and suffering.
May we all find ways to heal and nurture each other
And May we work together to create a more just and equitable world
In our own lives, May we strive to be healers,
Offering comfort and support to those in need.
And May we embrace our responsibility to protect and care for our planet
Knowing that we are all part of the same web of life
May we be guided by love and compassion
And May we find strength and courage to face the challenges that lie ahead.
Amen

This comes from Crosswalk. It's a prayer for a beautiful day adapted slightly:

Divine Spirit

Thank you for getting us up this morning to greet another day
We pray that we may have a good day today despite any changing circumstances
Give us the wisdom and discernment to know how we can help someone or reach out
to someone who is hurting.
Help us to be a good part of someone else's day and encourage us to think of others
before ourselves
And at the end of today , let us thank you for your blessings.
May it be so

Meditation followed by reflective music

Sit comfortably, close your eyes if you wish to and take a few slow, deep breaths. Hear
your heartbeat. Now just breathe in and out normally.

As you sit quietly just listening to your breath time will slow down , gently let go of any
thoughts that may arise.

Enjoy the silence

In this quiet time you may like to think of something special and what it means to you or what memory it brings to you.

When you're ready, take a few deep breaths and open your eyes.

Sit quietly and enjoy the music.

Reflective music: Hauser – 'Song from a secret garden' 3 mins. 26 secs

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=n9tw4tIUeOM&si=gHOHfSOKSx6Nuf8W>

3rd hymn: Hymns for Living (Green Book) 184 'The Best Things'

I learned it in the meadow path,
I learned it on the mountain stairs –
The best thing any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
The light without us and within;
Life with its unlocked treasures,
God's riches, are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread
Because it rests unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild rose red
Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Wealth won by others' poverty –
Not such be mine! Let me be blest
Only in what they share with me,
And what I share with all the rest.

We learn it in the meadow path,
We learn it on the mountain stairs –
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

Music: Tune 'Cromer' John Ambrose Lloyd, 1815 - 74

Words: Lucy Larcom, 1826 - 93

Address

As some of you know or I may have mentioned it , I've been feeling nostalgic lately .

About a year ago Kim and her son Andrew came into the cafe and she had a beautiful green jumper with a diamanté choker necklace, I commented on how nice it looked and she said “ I've got lots of nice jewellery and I've decided not to keep them for best anymore” . You know I like a good ponder and ever since I've been pondering on this.

Many of us keep things for the special time or occasion,

It probably goes back to not having very much or having new clothes just for Easter or Christmas. I remember having a special dress for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, we were poor in material things but not in love and my auntie made it. It was beautiful, red spotted organza with a big red satin waist band with a huge bow. I was 9 and had never had a nice dress and wore it for the street party. I loved it.

But I have no idea what happened after to that special dress, I never saw my younger cousins wearing it or knew where it went, but the memory of that time is still in my head.

How I would have loved to wear it again .

But now I'm older, probably not much wiser, but I realise that special time may not exist or there may be many of them.

Life can be messy and unpredictable. You could have waited for years for the special time to use something only to find it has gone off or disintegrated. To be waiting for occasions to use your best China or wear your best outfit, you may be wishing time away. Maybe we've felt we don't deserve these things.

Special things may stir up memories, my mum didn't have much but left me a string of pearls he saved hard for after the war. I've never worn them because of their preciousness , also a dear friend Diane who many of you here knew, she left me her rings when she died. I've never worn those either but Kim's comment has kept coming back to me and I will wear my mum's pearls and today specially for this service I'm wearing one of Diane's rings. I'm sure wherever she is, maybe even here as I've felt her presence here before, anyway I'm sure she would be saying “ it's about time” , she may have another word, which I can't say in church.

Remember God has given a life to each of us , life isn't just for birthdays , Christmas etc, life is a gift for each of us and we should treat each day as special and therefore use or wear our best everyday.

Horace the Roman philosopher said Carpe diem and told people to make the most of what they had. He also wrote “ Even while we talk a span of time has flown by; best to

be savvy, strain the wine and don't trust too much to the future “

Not using your cherished possessions may mean you never get to enjoy them and as one of my friends says: you are depriving yourself and others of the beauty, the usefulness and it's good to share.

So get your best cups out, clothes that may not fit anymore alter them or give them away.

In the bible Jesus says do not hoard your treasures here on earth.

So take that really good hand cream and use it, wear that new shirt you've put away for best.

But always remember the best things are not material , they are the people around you, the special ones in your life.

4th hymn: 'Sing your Faith' (purple book) no 44 – '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
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Benediction by Richard Lovis

Let us be grateful for the love and support of friends; and for chance encounters that have proved helpful; and for strangers who have met our needs in times of crisis, not seeking anything in return. In all these we may glimpse, if we choose, the love of God working in our lives ...Let us be grateful for temptations we have overcome, difficulties we have surmounted, pain and hurt we have been able

To rise above. In all these we may glimpse, if we choose, the power of God at work in our lives.

Amen

Closing music:

Melbourne ska orchestra 'The Best things in Life are free' - 3 mins 11

https://youtube.com/watch?v=xUVvBF9BWdq&si=_q-xp_eHA11VYd-I