

Opening Music: Celtic Music – 'Moon Song'

3 mins 36 sec

<https://youtu.be/ifQ3JRS4ggc>

Opening Prayer: 'We enter into this time and this place' ... by Rev Dr Linda Hart

We enter into this time and this place to join our hearts and minds together

We come to this place: the doors open, the heat comes on, biscuits are laid, the water heats, and you all come.

What is it that we come here seeking? Many things, too many to mention them all.

Yet, it is likely that some common longings draw us to be with one another:

To remember what is most important in life.

To be challenged to live more truly, more deeply, to live with integrity and kindness and with hope and love,

To feel the company of those who seek a common path,

To be renewed in our faith in the promise of this life,

To be strengthened and to find the courage to continue to do what we must do, day after day, world without end.

Even if your longings are different than these, you are welcome here. Even if you do not have the strength and the courage to pass along, you are welcome here. You are welcome in your grief and your joy to be within this circle of companions.

We gather here. It is good to be together.

Chalice Lighting: by Yvonne Aburrow

The flame consumes the wick,

Constantly changing and dancing

Sharing its radiance with us.

So may our souls be aflame with divine love

Sharing our radiance with others.

1st Hymn 158 (P): 'The flame of truth 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

Of what great souls have gained.

The flame of thought is kindled.

we celebrate the mind,

its search for dee[est 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. Used by permission.
Music: 'Morning Light' George James Webb, 1803 - 1887

Prayer: 'Something there is that doesn't love a wall' by Rev Margaret Kirk

We see barriers erected between people of different lands,
We see sheets of steel and towers of concrete called Protection.
We see boundaries policed,
watch men, women and children running from hunger and persecution,
looking for a gap in the wall.....

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.....

We see walls of fear –

Fear of the young, fear of the stranger,
Fear of sexuality that is different, fear of the educated, fear of the poor,
Fear of the Muslim, fear of the Jew –
Fear upon fear, endless and perpetuating,
And we offer our silent prayer that solid walls of fear will crumble to dust.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.....

We hear the language of separation,
The jingoistic chant, the racial slur,
words of indifference and dismissal,
words arranged for the purpose of exclusion,
words that sting and taunt,
words that lie.
Let us find words that ring with love and truthfulness,
that reach out through the emptiness of separation.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.....

We see the deluded barriers of the mind protecting self,
We see relationships stripped of affection
as one person becomes closed to another.
We see people trapped in misunderstanding,
old hurts re-ignited,
bricks placed higher on the wall,
goodwill and trust suspended.
and we ask for boundaries that are not impenetrable,
through which light can shine and distance be dissolved.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.....
And when we need these boundaries for our own well being,
Let us know them for what they are,
Use them wisely and kindly,
Recognising our own vulnerability and that of others –
So each of us can find the space for retreat and succour,
find that peace that passes all understanding
and be renewed with strength and love
for the task of living life joyfully in communion with all others.
Amen.

'Meditation on Peace' by Kendyl Gibbons

Let us hold lovingly in our thoughts all the people of the earth:
those who are consumed by mutual hatred and bitterness;
those who oppose their brothers and sisters
with any form of tyranny;
and all who suffer in subjection, cruelty and injustice.

Let us recognise our solidarity with all the outcast,
with the down trodden, the abused, the deprived,
and our common humanity with all who bear the
responsibilities of leadership and power:

let us remember humanity's ancient and universal dream of peace:
that we live together in harmony,
no one exploiting the weak, no one hating the strong,
each of us working on our own destiny,
self respecting and unafraid.

May we seek to be worthy of freedom,
free from institutional wrong,
free from individual oppression and contempt,
pure of heart and hand,
despising none, defrauding none,
giving to all people in all encounters of life
the honour due to those who, like us,
are children of the earth's great love.

Short Story: 'The Power of Generosity (Buddhism)

Once there lived a rich man who was famous for his charitable acts. He always gave alms to the poor. A poor hermit happened to be his neighbour. The hermit was called the Silent Buddha, for he was an enlightened person and spent all his time in meditation.

Once he meditated for seven days and seven nights at a stretch without any food or water. When he awoke from his trance, he was very hungry. So he went to the rich man to beg for food.

Mara, the God of Death, was jealous of the rich man's reputation and decided to stop him from giving alms. He wanted the Silent Buddha to die to starvation. When the rich man came forward to offer alms to the Silent Buddha, Mara lit a huge fire between the two. But the rich man was determined and trusting the strength of his good deeds, walked through the fire and, emerging unharmed, offered the Silent Buddha food. Mara was defeated and departed saying, "Indeed the power of generosity is great!"

Unitarian Reading: What holds the Unitarian Movement together? by Rev Cliff Reed.

Unitarians believe that freedom from prescribed creeds, dogmas and confessions of faith is necessary if people are to seek and find truth for themselves. We rate spiritual honesty above religious conformity. But without a binding creed, how can a congregation - let alone a national movement - stay together?

The Unitarian answer is that shared values and a shared religious approach are a surer basis for unity than theological propositions.

Because no human being and no human institution can have a monopoly on truth, it is safer to admit that from the outset. We are seekers and sharers, fellow pilgrims on the path, and this is how we Unitarians see ourselves. The values underpinning the Unitarian movement have to do with mutual caring and mutual respect. They involve a readiness to extend to each other a positive, involved, and constructive tolerance. They are the values of a liberal religious community that honours individuality without idolising it; of a community that finds spiritual stimulation in the unique contribution of each person while feeling itself united by a bond too deep for words. They are the values of a community that is open to truth from many sources; a community of the spirit that cherishes reason and acknowledges honest doubt; a community where the only theological test is that required by one's own conscience.

Above all, perhaps, Unitarians are bound by a sense of common humanity. We believe that the world would be a better place if more people put this one factor before all the lesser and illusory things that divide us.

Islamic Reading: – Surah Ya-Sin (36:39-40): "And the moon – We have determined for it phases, until it returns like the old date stalk, dried up. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They float each in an orbit."

Cree Tradition Reading: – "The Moon and Her Brother":

Long ago, the Sun and the Moon were sister and brother. The Moon was quiet and calm, lighting the night with gentleness, while her brother, the Sun, blazed fiercely through the day. The Moon walked slowly across the sky, watching over the people as they slept, keeping their dreams safe. She reminded them of balance, that even in darkness, light remains.

Sumerian Civilisation Reading: – Hymn to Nanna (Sin), the Moon God (ca 2000 BCE):

"Father Nanna, shining one,
You rise in splendor, crossing the heavens.
You measure the days, the months, the years—
Your light brings order to the night.
Silver boat of the sky,
You sail the darkness with calm and wisdom."

2nd Hymn 198 (G): the healing of the nations

Music: John Hughes, words Fred Kaanst

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.

REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:

We learnt from the Cree Tradition that the Moon walked slowly across the sky, watching over the people as they slept, keeping their dreams safe. The Moon reminded them of balance, that even in darkness, light remains. As Einstein once said: "A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty." To achieve what Einstein says, we need the light, particularly in times of darkness, as the Moon goddess pointed out.

The moon has been a symbol, a deity, a calendar, and a guide for humanity throughout the ages. From ancient civilisations to modern times, its soft glow and rhythmic cycles have captured the imagination, inspired reverence, and provided spiritual insight. Across different cultures and religions, the moon's quiet presence in the night sky has been interpreted in various ways, each perspective offering a unique lens through which we understand our place in the universe.

In the cradle of civilisation, ancient Mesopotamia, the moon was not merely an astronomical object; it was a divine entity with profound significance. The Sumerians worshipped Nanna (Sin), the god of the moon, who was seen as the guardian of time and a judge of fate. In a land where the flow of rivers and the cycles of agriculture were intertwined with divine will, the moon played a central role in determining the rhythms of life. The moon's phases were essential for the development of the lunar calendar which governed everything from farming to festivals. Nanna was believed to traverse the heavens in a silver boat, lighting the darkness and providing guidance to those who followed his lunar path.

Nanna's light, though far from the sun's fiery brilliance, was revered for its subtlety and constancy. It was an image of order in the night, a reminder that even in darkness, there is a guiding force. The moon's phases reflected both the cyclical nature of existence and the divine wisdom that governs the cosmos. Just as the moon waxes and wanes, so too do the fortunes of humanity, but through it all, the divine presence remains.

The moon in Greek mythology was associated with the goddess Selene who was often depicted as a beautiful, ethereal figure, driving a chariot across the night sky, pulled by white horses. The moon, in this tradition, was a symbol of both feminine energy and mystery, a reflection of the deeper, often hidden forces of the cosmos. Selene's connection to the moon also embodied the themes of change, transformation, and the cyclical nature of life, much like the waxing and waning of the lunar phases.

The Greeks saw the moon as a force that ruled over dreams and the subconscious, a source of divine insight and introspection. Selene's journey through the sky was not just a physical movement but a metaphor for the human soul's journey through the stages of life. Her symbolism reflects the profound human experience of transition and the eternal pursuit of balance between light and shadow.

In Native American traditions, the moon is often viewed as a feminine force that complements the masculine energy of the sun. As we have already seen, one example comes from the Cree tradition where the moon was seen as the sister of the sun. She was considered a gentle protector, guiding the people through the night, watching over them while they slept. The Cree held that the moon's light was soft, nurturing, and rhythmic, much like the cycles of women in their fertility and life processes.

In many traditions, the moon governs time, especially in connection with hunting, planting, and harvesting. The Lakota and other Plains tribes, for example, used the lunar calendar to track the seasons, with each full moon associated with a specific activity or event. The Navajo, too, observed the moon as part of their connection to the earth and sky. The moon's cycles were not just symbolic but essential in marking the passage of time and ensuring harmony with nature's rhythms.

Furthermore, in Shamanic traditions across Native American cultures, the moon is often a guide for spiritual journeys. Shamans would use the moon's cycles as markers for meditation, divination, and the seeking of wisdom from the spirit world. The moon was a reminder that every night held the potential for inner illumination, just as the night sky itself is a canvas for the moon's luminous glow.

In Islam, the moon is not only a symbol of timekeeping but also a reminder of God's omnipotence and the divine order of the universe. The Qur'an mentions the moon multiple times, illustrating both its physical beauty and its spiritual significance. In addition to our previous reading, in Surah Al-Isra (17:12), it says: "And We made the night and the day two signs. Then We made the sign of the night dark, and We made the sign of the day bright, that you may seek bounty from your Lord ..."

In Islamic tradition, the moon marks the beginning of each new month, and it is especially significant during the month of Ramadan when Muslims fast from just before dawn until just after the sunset. The sighting of the new crescent moon signals the start of this sacred period, reinforcing the connection between the celestial cycles and the rhythms of religious devotion. The moon, in this context, is not just a celestial body but a manifestation of divine timing and order, marking moments of spiritual renewal. The moon in Islam also represents the beauty and harmony of God's creation. It reflects the perfection of divine design — its phases serving as reminders of the transient nature of life, the passing of time, and the

need for reflection and humility. Just as the moon completes its cycle, so too do human beings pass through stages of life, always in need of returning to God.

In Hinduism, the moon is considered to be both a deity and a symbol of the mind and the eternal self. The moon, or Chandra, is not just a celestial body but a significant figure in the Hindu pantheon, often depicted as a young, radiant god who rides a chariot across the night sky. Chandra's influence is linked to the emotional and mental aspects of human existence, as the moon's phases reflect the cyclical nature of moods, desires, and thoughts.

Hindu philosophy, particularly in its yoga traditions, sees the moon as a metaphor for the mind's journey through darkness to enlightenment. As the moon moves through different phases, it symbolises the human experience of growth, decay, and renewal. Just as the moon cycles through its waxing and waning, the mind must also undergo cycles of purification and transformation to reach spiritual clarity and ultimate union with the divine. In addition, the moon holds a special connection with certain deities, such as Shiva, whose adornment of a crescent moon on his head symbolises his mastery over the eternal, cyclical nature of life and death. The moon's constant motion through the sky serves as a reminder of the infinite cycles of the universe and the impermanence of all things.

In conclusion, from the ancient Sumerians to modern religious perspectives, the moon is universally regarded as a powerful symbol that transcends boundaries of culture and belief. Whether as a divine entity, a timekeeper, or a guide for spiritual introspection, the moon carries profound meanings that resonate with humanity's deepest questions and experiences. Its quiet yet constant presence in the sky calls us to reflect on the cycles of our own lives, to seek balance between light and shadow, and to recognize the divine order that governs both the universe and our hearts. In every culture, the moon speaks to our shared human experience: the need for guidance, the embrace of mystery, and the recognition of the transience of life. As we look up at the moon, we are reminded that no matter how distant or invisible it may seem, the light of wisdom, love, and divine order continues to shine in the darkest of times.

Music Video: Debussy: Clair de lune, Menahem Pressler, piano 5 min 26sec
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Bxpm0EmOMU&list=RD-Bxpm0EmOMU&start_radio=1

Pre-Offertory Prayer: The purpose of the church is to encourage all who gather here to grow more generous in spirit and in action. This is the great end of all the world's faith traditions: to bring the human being closer to the divine by acts of creation and compassion. Immediately after the end of this service, we will take an offering that allows us to exercise that all-important generosity of spirit, an offering that will support this self-supporting congregation. The gifts of the congregation will be received most gratefully. Please remember to give as generously as you can.

Poetry: 'The Moon' by Robert Louis Stevenson

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and harbour quays,
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on the steps, and the stones, and the streets,

On the turn of the tide, and the winds that meet,
On the moon that walks in the night.

This simple yet beautiful poem evokes a sense of wonder, as the moon becomes an ever-present, silent observer of the world, casting its light over nature, people, and places in its path. It is a perfect example of how the moon has been a source of reflection and inspiration across time.

3rd Hymn 87 (P): 'Leave behind your bags and baggage'

Tune: 'Corinth' from *Antiphons* (1792) of Samuel Webbe, 1740 – 1816

Words: © Peter Sampson b.1938. Used by permission.

Leave behind your bags and baggage.
Throw all caution to the air.
Let the wind blow through the cobwebs.
Cast aside all anxious care.
Let the God of all our mercies
breathe round you everywhere.

Journey onwards, never doubting
God will speak a kindly word,
looking forward, always trusting
what your heart feels will be heard.
Love your sister and your brother:
kindness will not be deterred.

In the face of war and hatred
Peace and justice we extol.
Share the warmth of fellow- feeling
urging us onto our goal.
With your confidence enthuse us,
God, the life in every soul.

Prayer: a Prayer to the Moon for the Liberation of Cyprus on today's 51st anniversary of its invasion and subsequent occupation by Turkey (20.07.1074)

Oh radiant Moon,
Shining above the hills and seas of Cyprus,
Your light whispers of hope in the darkest of nights,
A silver beacon in the sky, forever pure.

We call upon your gentle rays,
To illuminate the hearts of those who seek peace,
To guide the souls who long for unity,
And to bring the winds of freedom to the island.

Moon of the East, Moon of the West,
May your reflection upon the Mediterranean waters
Wash away the wounds of division,
And sow seeds of harmony where they have long been absent.

Under your watchful gaze,

May the people of Cyprus rise together,
Bound not by the walls and barbed wires of conflict,
But by the strength of their shared dreams.

You have witnessed centuries of change,
Cycles of pain, of hope, and of rebirth.
May your phases mirror the cycle of peace —
From the darkened past to the fullness of tomorrow.

Grant courage to the leaders who seek justice,
And wisdom to the hearts that desire reconciliation.
May the voices of the silenced be heard,
And the cries for freedom rise like your silver glow.

Moon of the earth, the sky, the sea—
Guide Cyprus to a dawn of freedom,
Where all people may live in dignity and peace,
And your light shines upon a truly united island. *Amen.*

Closing Words:

We extinguish the chalice here that it might glow gently in our hearts. May it light our path as we leave this place! May it guide our way until we are together again!

Extinguish Chalice

Closing Music: Beethoven "Moonlight" Sonata, III "Presto Agitato" Valentina Lisitsa 6min 47s

Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zucBfXpCA6s>