

Service on The Power of Colour July 2025

Opening music

Chalice lighting /opening words

By Rev. Laura Dobson

We kindle our chalice flame

Seeking to understand ourselves, each other and all beings

As unique reflections of the one light

**May we act justly, love kindness and travel together
respectfully**

1st hymn purple book 142 Shining through the universe

Story

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The Moon and the Cherry Blossom

By Bill Darlison

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Regretsu, a Buddhist nun, was making a long journey alone and on foot through very dangerous and difficult territory. There were bandits and wild animals to avoid, rivers to cross, steep hills to climb. At the end of the first day she had walked many miles and was feeling hungry and weary when she came across a hamlet at the foot of a mountain.

“ I need to rest” she said to herself, “ perhaps some kind person will give me some bread and water and let me stay the night in her cottage.” She knocked hopefully on the doors, but

she was met by indifference and even hostility.

"We've no room", said one man, curtly, as he slammed the door in her face.

"we've barely enough to feed our own family," said another.

"how do you know you won't rob me if I let you stay here" asked a woman, before she too refused.

By now the sun was setting and so Regetsu disappointedly and wearily trudged up the hillside and made her bed under a cherry tree. She was so tired that she fell asleep immediately, but she awoke just before dawn to find that the cherry tree had blossomed during the night, and the big golden moon was shining through the branches. It was an incredible sight, more beautiful than anything Rengetsu had ever seen before, so she stood up and faced the direction of the houses which had refused to give her food and shelter and said, "I want to thank you for your kindness. By refusing me lodging I found myself beneath these beautiful blossoms on the night of the misty moon."

2nd hymn purple book no 199 - Weaver God creator

Prayers followed by a few minutes silence then reflective music

Sometimes it is hard to pray so this responsive prayer is titled

Help us to pray:

Prayer is the opportunity

To honestly reflect on our lives

Help us to pray

To contemplate our deepest values and concerns

Help us to pray

To be still and listen to the person we really are and the divine spirit within us

Help us to pray

To access the pool of renewal, healing and forgiveness, which is always available to us

Help us to pray

To gain the courage to step beyond the security boundaries that surround us and love unconditionally

Help us to pray

To give thanks for the wondrous gifts we have been given

Help us to pray

To share our hopes and concerns with other seekers of truth

Help us to pray

To be silent and empty our minds of all thoughts and concerns

and allow ourselves to be filled with love and joy.

Help us to pray

To let the spirit of God flow through us

Help us to pray

AMEN

By Ant Howe - slightly adapted

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**Eternal one, life giver, father, mother, companion, lover and
friend**

**We come to you in these quiet moments, seeking that which is
beyond ourselves,**

**We make a sacred space, a time when we can express our
hopes and our dreams**

**For the world, we pray that we would use wisely the precious
resources we have been given**

For the religions of the world, may there be understanding between religions. Maybwe learn to worship in our own way, but to live in peace with those that worship differently.

For the people of the world, we pray for those whose lives are marred by poverty , lack of food or water.

And those suffering from wars, displacement and persecution.

For our Unitarian and free Christian church movement : may we be rightly proud of our achievements, but be aware that we cannot be complacent. At a time when less people feel the need to worship in traditional churches, may we be a beacon of liberal religion.

For ourselves: we pray our faith will bring us strength; give us love for our fellow men and women. We pray that our faith will be real to us and help us when we are faced with difficult times and decisions.

And finally we pray for those who are ill or bereaved, those loved ones of ours who need our thoughts and prayers.

We name them silently in our hearts.

Silence and reflective music

Readings from “ Divine Beauty” by John O’Donahue

The Beauty of Colour

Colour is the language of light; it adorns the earth with beauty. Through colour light brings its passion, kindness and imagination to all things; pink to granite, green to leaves, blue to ocean, yellow to dawn. Light is not simply a functional brightness that clears space for visibility. Perhaps of all the elements, light has the most refined imagination; it is never merely a medium.

Light is the greatest unnoticed force of transfiguration in the world, it literally alters everything it touches and through colour dresses nature to delight, befriend, inspire and shelter us. The miracle of colour is a testament to the diverse, precise and ever surprising beauty of the imagination. The intense passion of the first artist glows forth in the rich colours of creation. In this sense, colour is the visual Eucharist of things. In a world without colour, it would be impossible to imagine beauty; for colour and beauty are sisters.

As Goethe said: the eye needs colour as much as it needs light.

The Apparition of colour

Once while travelling in China I was on my way to Shanghai airport. It was a dull morning. The road, suburbs and landscape were grey and colourless. Even the track and trek of commuters seemed like an underworld parade. It began to rain in slanted layers. Then I noticed a cyclist coming towards me. Attached to the back of his bicycle was a large basket piled high with balls of wool in every colour you could imagine. The determined cyclist was like a traveller from another world who transfigured the whole grey suburban landscape with his gentle cargo of blues, yellows, greens, indigos, oranges, purples and ochres.

The presence and experience of colour is at the very heart of human life. In a sense, we are created for a life full of colour. It is no accident that we abandon the world when the colours vanish and the reign of darkness commences. Night is the land where all the outer colours sleep. We awaken and return to the world when the colours return at dawn. There is a beautiful word in Irish for this: luisine- the first blush of light

before dawn breaks. Gradually, the coloured horizon of dawn gives way to daybreak.

3rd hymn purple book no. 88- let it be a dance

Address

Do we underestimate the power of colour, I think we do, we definitely take colour for granted.

Colour has been used since the earliest days of history for healing. We all feel better when a day is sunny, it uplifts us and gives us vitamin d. I'm not talking about the excessive heat of recent days .

The different wavelengths of light, which we see as colours, affect every aspect of our physiology.

Some colours arouse our energy, while others make us sleepy.

Colour helps us to interpret our world.

On a geographical level, the natural colours of the landscape and its people distinguish one country and culture for another.

Although this is changing because we travel , emigrate, immigrate across the globe for varying reasons not all good.

For me, because if this , I have met and become friends with people I would never have had a chance to meet and get to know about their lives and cultures.

On a seasonal level, the colours of summer make us happy and energise us, the colours of winter make us tired and want to stay indoors. Although eventually there may be no seasons with rapid climate changes.

Not only our eyes, but all the cells of our body are sensitive to colour, we are constantly influenced by the effects of the colours we wear, eat, drink and see all around us.

How beautiful it is to hug that tree with it's beautiful brown trunk and green leaves.

I absolutely love the colour of gorse , when I first saw it as a child , I really did look in awe at these wonderful bushes.

Colours influence the way we think and feel, even more significantly, the colours that attract us reveal much about our inner selves.

How often have you heard of someone showing their true colours, feeling green with envy, tickled pink or feeling off colour.

Political affiliations may be red, green or blue.

A person who had a vibrant personality is often described as colourful.

I can't talk about colours without mentioning rainbows.

We all love a rainbow don't we. We are all excited when we see one.

In Judeo-Christian traditions, the appearance of a rainbow is considered a sign that God is not planning to destroy the earth with another flood.

This is probably why rainbows are considered lucky and why traditional Irish stories often refer to a " pot of gold" at the end of a rainbow.

Spiritually they also symbolise peace and rebirth.

In Revelations it is stated there is a rainbow around the throne

of Christ. So the bible starts with a rainbow in the book of Genesis and ends with a rainbow in the book of Revelations.

Most of you now know I have little adventures on trains or buses and you may recall this story, but stories are always good to retell I think.

A couple of years ago, I had just got on a train at Plymouth station. We had only moved on a bit from the station when the train stopped. We were told that there wasn't enough pressure to work the brakes and we would have to wait for a travelling mechanic. I didn't know at that time that the brakes worked by pressure or even that there were such people as travelling mechanics.

Everybody was fed up and moaning. Nobody was speaking to each other. And then suddenly some of us sitting in my side looked out and saw the biggest rainbow we had ever seen. My family think I'm prone to exaggeration but honestly it was nearly as big as a bridge. We were all amazed. We started talking to each other about it and the people from the other side of the train came over to look at it.

The difference that rainbow made to everybody's mood was amazing. Everyone was smiling and talking about how

beautiful it was, people started sharing their sandwiches and sweets.

The wonderful mechanic arrived eventually to sort the brakes out and we had a great journey when the train finally moved off. The power of the rainbow and its colours immediately changed people's moods. A little miracle I think.

Colour is the language through which the Divine speaks, you just have to look at nature to see this. The trees, the sky, flowers etc. I walk across the Hoe everyday or by the sea. Everyday the sea is a different colour, the trees changing month by month and when you see the avenues of pink blossom in the spring, it is spectacular. I love to look at the tree through the church window during services and seeing the changes and look at all the things growing in our beautiful garden.

I would love to try to embroider some of these scenes but I could never do justice to God's creation.

They do say that in the next part of our eternal life, the colours are even brighter, a brightness such as we have never seen or could even imagine.

Erin Benzakein, the artist, says “ There’s something magical about experiencing the entire year through flowers.

She says you will find a transformation in your awareness, as you tune into the subtle changes of nature.”

I was reading about a woman who was about to be made redundant.

She was feeling very stressed and needed to balance this by doing something pleasurable. She chose to take a photo every day. Then one day, she took a photo walk to calm her. It was winter time and she really noticed the colours of the trees which she found really grounding. She had a tendency to focus in her life on what wasn’t working, so noticing beautiful things and their colours , like a sunset, leaves in a park, even moss on a twig, for her capturing these things on film lifted her mood and made her feel more positive.

I believe the fashion this year is to take a yoga walk or a colour walk. I’ve noticed articles in many places about these walks. The yoga ones you walk in nature and stop every now and then and do a yoga pose.

For the colour walks, before you go on your walk you choose a

colour and notice everything of that colour on your walk which leads me on to my first real thinking about colour.

My first interest in colour apart from trees which I've always loved , but my first interest was learning to count from the button tin with wonderful shapes and colours. But going back to my thinking about colour and how it affects our moods; when I was in my 40's I came across a therapy called aura soma. I knew someone who was studying it, I'm a bit of a cynic and thought it a bit bizarre but she needed someone to practice on and I was suffering very badly from seasonal affective disorder at the time. Each week, I had to look at a lot of different colour bottles and choose one depending on how I was feeling, I then had to just sit and look at it for about ten minutes. This obviously was a meditation but at that time I knew nothing about meditation. I then had to get a small thing, like a flower, cushion, cup - anything of the colour I had chosen, put it in my house and look at it everyday for that week. It was quite strange but over six weeks of this, I felt so much better. I suppose this is when I really realised the power of colour and how different colours can affect your mood.

This eventually led me to study reiki and the chakras and how colour is related to different parts of the body and their

emotional, mental and spiritual states.

Colour is a means by which connections can be made and brings emotions to the fore.

There is restaurant somewhere, I can't remember where it is, but they change the colour of the lighting regularly and they have found that different lighting makes people eat more or less and customers have told them that even the food tastes different on different colour evenings and people are happier or not so according to the colour of the lighting.

We are always being told to eat a rainbow of fruit and veg because it is so good for us. I don't think many of us do but I do believe Sheila is very good and I might have the number wrong , but I think at the last count was 23 in a week and that is obviously why she's looking great and so healthy. I am trying to emulate her and will keep trying.

Colour evokes memories and images, for instance red May remind us of blood. Some of these may not always be pleasant but we may need that image to remember.

But Red can also be fun.

A very happy image that stays in my mind was near the Mayflower steps, a little boy about three was jumping up and

down shouting bus, bus, red bus over and over again with a big smile on his face and great excitement. Let's hope he never loses that sense of excitement.

I'd like to end with a short story that I found in a book about colour:

“ I received a letter from a nun, whose religious order had recently relaxed a ruling about the clothes they should wear. After years of being confined to a black habit, she was exploring the colours she had long craved, and she noticed that along with this process came a new discovery of herself and the package of talents and gifts that made her authentic and unique. She was continuing her work as a nun in service to others but she was deriving more joy and satisfaction from the work than she had ever done during the time when she had remained anonymous, surrounded by the darkness of a single hue.”

The experience of this woman could apply to us all, in winter I often wear dark clothes but really that's probably when I should wear bright colours.

I believe that the Divine has given us all these wonderful colours to enjoy but also to help us through different stages of

our lives.

**So take that colour walk or take a many coloured walk, walk
around our spiral , notice the different colours in our garden
and enjoy.**

4th hymn purple book no 62- here we have gathered

Benediction by Dawn Buckle

As we leave this sanctuary

May the holy music linger in our ears

May the poetry of the spoken words stay in our minds

May our spirits remain uplifted

May our lives be blest

May it be so.

Closing music - colours by black mambo