

**MUSIC:** Edvard Grieg – Peer Gynt Suite No.1, Prelude, 'Morning' (6:10)  
[Edvard Grieg: "Peer Gynt - Morning Mood"](#) (AUDIO)

**HYMN: 126** – Open the door, step right inside (purple book)

**Chalice Lighting** (preferably 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.

**SHORT STORY 1: Change the World (a Sufi story)**

Bayazid, a Sufi mystic, has written in his autobiography, "When I was young I thought and I said to God, and in all my prayers this was the base: 'Give me energy so that I can change the whole world.' Everybody looked wrong to me. I was a revolutionary and I wanted to change the face of the earth.

"When I became a little more mature I started praying: 'This seems to be too much. Life is going out of my hands—almost half of my life is gone and I have not changed a single person, and the whole world is too much.' So I said to God, 'My family will be enough. Let me change my family.'

"And when I became old," says Bayazid, "I realised that even the family is too much, and who am I to change them? Then I realised that if I can change myself that will be enough, more than enough. I prayed to God, 'Now I have come to the right point. At least allow me to do this: I would like to change myself.'

"God replied, 'Now there is no time left. This you should have asked in the beginning. Then there was a possibility.'"

**CANDLES OF JOY, POSITIVITY, WELLBEING AND WELLNESS (people to be invited to share a positive idea for a new beginning)**

**SHORT STORY 2: the Creator Created People, Gave them Words**

The Creator created people, gave them words for communication and thinking, settled them in the fertile valley at the foot of the mountains, gave them longevity and started to observe, how they will aspire to the development.

The time has passed, but people did not develop.

They did not go beyond their village and did not climb up the mountains. Their eyes did not look at the sky and did not look in the Heart.

So they became old.

The Creator decided to find out, what the matter was.

He became a man and came to them as a traveller. Before sunset, people gathered at the square to talk with the traveller.

He described them a life beyond the horizon and suggested:

– Do you want me to lead you there, and you will see how people live in these places?

— Oh, — they answered sadly, – it is late, we became old ...

– Then come with me to the mountains to look at the world from the top!

— Oh, — they suspires, — it is too late, we have no energy ...

— Look at the sky, — the traveller said them, — and I will tell you about the life in the Kingdom of Heaven!

They answered again:

— It is late; our mind will not understand your story ...

The traveller became sad. He decided to cheer people up.

— Let's sing a song! — he said and was going to sing first, but people noticed that the sun went down.

— It is late, — they said, — it is time to sleep... — and went to their huts. The traveller shouted them:

— People, when life is continuous and infinite, it is not late for any achievements!

But they did not turn back. Then the Creator told himself:

— I will take away all words of limitation from people: „late“, „not“, „impossible“, „far“, „high“, „hard“, „will not understand“, and will place in their hearts the joy of infinity. Maybe they will perceive my Law: nothing is late, because there is no end, there is only the beginning! He did so and waited for the morning: will people change and will they go with him to the mountains?

**HYMN: 1** – A core of silence (purple book)

### **Reading 1: the Nature of Change in Shinto Philosophy**

In Shinto philosophy, change is a fundamental aspect of existence. It is closely tied to the understanding of impermanence and the cyclical nature of life:

*Impermanence:* Everything in life is transient. Shinto teaches that nothing remains the same, and this recognition encourages individuals to appreciate moments as they come.

*Cyclical Nature:* Life is seen as a series of cycles, such as the changing of seasons, life stages, and natural phenomena, reflecting the continuous renewal and transformation inherent in the universe.

The role of Kami in Shinto is paramount in facilitating and representing change. Kami embody various aspects of nature and life, acting as agents of transformation. Through their presence, believers are reminded of the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of adapting to change. Shinto teachings encourage acceptance of transformation. By acknowledging that change is a natural part of life, practitioners are better equipped to

navigate their own personal journeys and the transitions that come with them.

### **Reading 2: Theosophy teachings on new beginnings**

Theosophy teaches that new beginnings are a natural part of the human experience, often seen as opportunities for growth and transformation. Theosophy emphasises the importance of reincarnation and the law of karma, which guide individuals through life's changes and provide a sense of continuity and purpose. Theosophy also promotes the idea of universal brotherhood, advocating for a sense of interconnectedness among all people, which can be seen as a new beginning in the context of human evolution and the interconnectedness of all life.

### **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 \(Für Elise\)](#) (AUDIO)

**REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:** New Beginnings – A Shared Human Hope Across Three Spiritual Traditions

New beginnings are among the most universal longings of the human heart. Whether we stand at the threshold of a new year, a new stage of life, or a moment of inner change, we sense that renewal is possible — that the past does not have the final word. Across cultures and religions, this hope is nurtured by spiritual teachings that remind us we are not fixed, finished beings, but travellers capable of growth. From the Mormon, Bahá'í, and Buddhist perspectives, new beginnings are not merely events in time; they are sacred opportunities to realign ourselves with truth, compassion, and purpose.

From a Mormon perspective, new beginnings are deeply tied to the doctrine of eternal progression. Human life is understood as part of a larger journey that began before birth and continues beyond death. Change is not only possible; it is central to God's plan. The Book of Mormon speaks powerfully of spiritual rebirth, teaching that individuals can experience a "mighty change" in their hearts, losing the desire to do evil and instead yearning to do good (Mosiah 5:2). This change is not superficial — it is transformative, marking a true beginning of a new way of being.

Central to this idea is repentance, which in Mormon theology is not about shame or final judgment, but about turning again towards God, almost like the Jewish concept of Teshuva which has a very similar meaning. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that God “rejoiceth in the song of the heart” of those who come unto Him with humility and faith. Each act of repentance becomes a fresh start, a quiet miracle of renewal. Through Jesus Christ’s atonement, believers are invited to let go of the weight of past mistakes and step forward with hope. In this sense, new beginnings are not rare or reserved for dramatic moments; they are available daily, even moment by moment.

The Bahá’í Faith also places new beginnings at the very heart of its spiritual vision, though on both a personal and a global scale. Bahá’ís understand human history as unfolding through a series of divine revelations, each inaugurating a new era in humanity’s collective development. Bahá’u’lláh, the founder of the Bahá’í Faith, proclaimed that humanity has entered a new age — one calling for unity, justice, and the recognition of the oneness of humankind.

On an individual level, Bahá’í writings emphasise the constant possibility of inner renewal. Bahá’u’lláh counsels believers to see each day as a new life, urging them not to let yesterday’s failures define today’s actions. In essence, the soul is always capable of turning towards the light. Prayer, reflection, and service are seen as means of spiritual rebirth, ways of polishing the heart so it may reflect divine qualities more clearly.

What distinguishes the Bahá’í perspective is its insistence that personal new beginnings are inseparable from collective ones. To begin anew spiritually is also to recommit oneself to building a more unified world. Change is not solely about private salvation but about contributing to the healing of society. Thus, a new beginning becomes an act of hope not only for oneself, but for humanity as a whole.

In Buddhism, the concept of new beginnings takes a different but equally profound form. Rather than focusing on a creator God or a divine plan, Buddhism centres on the nature of the mind and the reality of

impermanence. Everything is in a constant state of change. Because nothing is fixed, nothing is beyond transformation. This insight itself is liberating and is intertwined with hope, as we saw in the third reading.

The Buddha taught that suffering arises from ignorance, craving, and attachment — but he also taught that suffering can end. The Noble Eightfold Path offers a practical framework for beginning again: cultivating right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Each mindful breath, each compassionate choice, is a new beginning.

The Dhammapada captures this beautifully when it teaches that the mind precedes all things, and that by disciplining the mind, one reshapes one's experience of life. In Buddhism, you do not need to wait for external circumstances to change in order to begin anew. The present moment is always sufficient. Letting go of resentment, illusion, or habits/attachments is itself a rebirth — quiet, immediate, and deeply transformative.

Despite their doctrinal differences, these three traditions converge on several powerful truths about new beginnings. First, change is always possible. Whether understood as repentance, spiritual awakening, or mental cultivation, none of these paths sees the human being as trapped by the past. Second, new beginnings require intention and effort. Grace, guidance, or insight may be offered freely, but individuals must choose to walk forward. Finally, renewal is both inward and outward. A changed heart leads to changed actions, and changed actions ripple outwards into families, communities, and the world.

In a time when many feel overwhelmed by uncertainty, these teachings offer a steady reassurance. New beginnings do not require perfection, only sincerity. They do not demand that we erase the past, but that we learn from it. From the Mormon belief in daily repentance, to the Bahá'í vision of a renewing world civilisation, to the Buddhist practice of mindful awakening, we are reminded that each day, each moment, carries the seed of transformation.

To embrace a new beginning is, ultimately, an act of faith: faith that we are more than our mistakes, faith that growth is possible, and faith that light can emerge even after long darkness. In this shared hope, these three traditions speak with one voice, inviting us all to begin again.

Amen. So be it.

**MUSIC:** Jules Massenet – Thais, 'Meditation' (5:22) [Jules Massenet - Meditation from Thais for Violin and Piano](#) (VIDEO)

**POETRY:** the Road not Taken, by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

## **PRE-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.

**HYMN: 192** – A New Community (green book)

### **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) [Christoph Gluck: ‘Dance of the Blessed Spirits’ from Orpheus and Eurydice](#) (Preferably VIDEO)

### **ORDER OF SERVICE**

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**Chalice Lighting** (preferably by a member of the congregation)

**Introductory Prayer**

**SHORT STORY 1**

**CANDLES OF JOY, POSITIVITY, WELLBEING AND WELLNESS**

**SHORT STORY 2 (to be read by Sheila?)**

**HYMN: 1** – A core of silence (purple book)

**Reading 1**

**Reading 2**

**Reading 3**

**MUSIC:** Ludwig van Beethoven – Bagatelle in A minor, 'Für Elise' (3:35)

[Ludwig van BEETHOVEN: Bagatelle in A minor \(Für Elise\)](#) (AUDIO)

**REFLECTIVE ADDRESS**

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**POETRY**

**Pre-Offertory Prayer**

**A PRAYER FOR HOPE**

**HYMN: 192** – A New Community (green book)

**Closing Words**

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS** (with Sheila?)