

MUSIC: Edvard Grieg – [Edvard Grieg: "Peer Gynt - Morning Mood"](#) (6:10)

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.

Chalice Lighting

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.

HYMN: 194 – We light the flame (purple book)

A PRAYER ON THE SPRING EQUINOX, by Rev Laura Dobson

As light and dark are poised in equilibrium for a brief pause in the cosmic dance,

May you pause today to breathe deeply the air of inspiration,

feel the warmth of the fiery sun of passion on your skin,

drink deeply from the waters of the well of belonging,

and touch the sacred grounding earth beneath your feet.

May you find the balance you need, today and every day.

Blessed be.

QUOTES ON HOPE:

“Hope is a waking dream.” — Aristotle

“Only in the darkness can you see the stars.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

“It is often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars.” — Richard Evans

C.S. Lewis Quotes on Hoping For Something More

"Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise.

"At present we are on the outside... the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the pleasures we see. But all the pages of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get "in"... We will put on glory... that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch.

We do not want to merely "see" beauty—though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.

SHORT STORY: Identification is Misery (a Sufi story – read by Sheila?)

Junaid was going through the market-place of the town with his disciples. And it was his way to take any situation and use it. A man was dragging his cow by a rope, and Junaid said 'Wait' to the man, and told his disciples 'Surround this man and the cow. I am going to teach you something.'

The man stopped – Junaid was a famous mystic – and he was also interested in what he was going to teach these disciples and how he was going to use him and the cow. And Junaid asked his disciples 'I ask you one thing: who is bound to whom? Is the cow bound to this man or is this man bound to this cow?' Of course, the disciples said 'The cow is bound to the man. The man is the master, he is holding the rope, the cow has to follow him wherever he goes. He is the master and the cow is the slave.'

And Junaid said 'Now, see.' He took out his scissors and cut the rope – and the cow escaped.

The man ran after the cow, and Junaid said 'Now look what is happening! Now you see who the master is; the cow is not interested at all in this man – in fact, she is escaping.' And the man was very angry, he said

'What kind of experiment is this?' But Junaid said to his disciples 'And this is the case with your mind.

All the nonsense that you are carrying inside is not interested in you. You are interested in it, you are keeping it together somehow – you are becoming mad in keeping it together somehow. But you are interested IN it. The moment you lose interest, the moment you understand the futility of it, it will start disappearing; like the cow, it will escape.'

MUSIC: Antonio Vivaldi – [Spring. Antonio Vivaldi](#) (3:42)

READING 1 (from the Buddhist tradition):

The Buddha said: "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment." The essence of living in the present moment, the Now, is focusing the mind here and take attention away from thinking about past or future. The present moment is all there ever is to experience life directly. Past and future are only concepts of our mind and therefore are good for learning from the past or conceptual planning when it is useful, but after this there is no need for them. Especially not to dwell in them and get stuck there in the mind by constant thinking loops, lest we destroy our hope and shatter our dreams.

READING 2 (from the Pagan tradition):

Ostara is a time of balance... a pause of breath... but we know the energy is growing, waxing, the sap is rising, the light and warmth from the sun is stronger. This is a fertile time, and fertility features heavily. Our ancient Ancestors would be emerging from the Winter filled with hope... it is a busy time, and this is reflected in Nature and Mother Earth all around us – the birds, animals and insects are courting, nest building, preparing... if we want to see the rewards later in the year we need to put the work in now. Nature can still be harsh – the winds and weather bleak and destructive. We cannot expect a rich harvest... no matter what that is, whether it is in our gardens, our crops, or more figuratively, in the world we inhabit, our relationships, our goals, careers, lifestyles etc. unless we put the work in, taking responsibility for our lives.

READING 3 (from the First Church of Christ Scientist): a poem by Mary Baker Eddy (to be read by Jean or Ann Kader?)

Come to thy bowers, sweet spring,
And paint the gray, stark trees,
The bud, the leaf and wing—
Bring with thee brush and breeze.

And soft thy shading lay
On vale and woodland deep;
With sunshine's lovely ray
Light o'er the rugged steep.

More softly warm and weave
The patient, timid grass,
Till heard at silvery eve
Poor robin's lonely mass.

Bid faithful swallows come
And build their cozy nests,
Where wind nor storm can numb
Their downy little breasts.

Come at the sad heart's call,
To empty summer bowers,
Where still and dead are all
The vernal songs and flowers.

It may be months or years
Since joyous spring was there.
O come to clouds and tears
With light and song and prayer!

HYMN 43: Gather the Spirit (purple book)

REFLECTIVE ADDRESS:

We gather near the time of the **Spring Equinox**, which has just passed, that delicate moment when day and night stand in near-perfect balance. Across the Northern Hemisphere, light and darkness briefly meet as equals before the light begins its steady return. The equinox has been observed by cultures for thousands of years, not merely as an astronomical marker, but as a symbol of renewal, awakening, and spiritual rebalancing. For a Unitarian community, which often draws wisdom from many traditions, the equinox offers a beautiful opportunity to listen to several spiritual voices at once.

Today, let us reflect on renewal through three lenses: **Hindu wisdom**, the **First Church of Christ, Scientist branch of Christianity**, and from an **Earth-centred spirituality** perspective. Each approaches truth in its own language, yet all invite us into a deeper awareness of life's constant unfolding.

First, let us consider the perspective of **Hindu thought**. In many Hindu traditions, the universe is understood as a rhythm of cycles: creation, preservation, dissolution, and renewal. The changing seasons mirror this cosmic pattern. Spring represents a reawakening of *prana*, the vital energy that animates all life.

One Hindu idea particularly suited to this moment is **dharma**, the principle of living in harmony with the order of the universe. Just as the Earth tilts and turns in perfect rhythm with the sun, so too are human beings invited to align their lives with balance and right action. The equinox becomes a reminder that balance is not static. It is dynamic and living.

In the sacred text known as the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find the image of the divine present in all cycles of nature. The returning warmth of the sun, the blossoming of plants, the migration of birds, all are expressions of the same underlying consciousness that flows through us. From this perspective, renewal is not something imposed from outside ourselves. It is already present within us, waiting to be expressed.

Spring therefore invites us to ask: What within us wishes to grow again? What seeds of compassion, courage, or creativity have been lying quietly in winter soil?

In Hindu practice, renewal often involves small acts of purification — cleaning the home, lighting a lamp, offering gratitude for the returning

light. These gestures remind us that spiritual transformation often begins with very simple attention.

Now let us turn to the perspective of the **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, founded by **Mary Baker Eddy**. In Christian Science theology, renewal arises through a clearer recognition of divine reality. God is understood not as a distant ruler but as infinite Mind, Life, and Love — the spiritual source of all true being.

From this viewpoint, the material world we see around us is not the ultimate authority. What is ultimately real is the spiritual idea behind it: harmony, goodness, wholeness. When human thought awakens to this spiritual truth, healing and transformation become possible.

The return of spring can be understood metaphorically in this tradition: just as the earth appears barren in winter and then suddenly reveals hidden life, so human consciousness can awaken to the ever-present vitality of divine Life. The change is not that Life suddenly begins again — it was never absent; rather, our perception changes.

Christian Science encourages what it calls *spiritual awakening*: a turning away from fear, limitation, and material assumptions towards a deeper recognition of divine goodness. The equinox, with its balance of light and darkness, offers a striking symbol of that shift. When light increases, darkness does not struggle against it; it simply disappears.

This perspective invites us to consider renewal not as something we must manufacture, but as something we discover. The vitality we long for may already be present in the deeper spiritual reality of our lives.

Finally, we consider **Earth-centred spirituality**, a broad family of traditions that honour the sacredness of the natural world. Many Earth traditions celebrate the Spring Equinox as a festival of balance, fertility, and emergence. It is often associated with themes of planting, new beginnings, and the restoration of life.

In these traditions, the Earth itself is seen not merely as a resource but as a living community of which we are a part. The turning of the seasons is, therefore, not just scenery for human life — it is our shared story.

The equinox reminds us that balance is essential to ecological health. When systems lose balance, when forests disappear, oceans warm, or species vanish, the whole web of life feels the strain. Earth spirituality therefore often links personal renewal with ecological responsibility.

To celebrate Spring is not only to enjoy blooming flowers or longer days. It is also to renew our relationship with the living planet. The soil that

nourishes new plants is the same soil that feeds us. The sunlight that opens buds is the same sunlight warming our faces today.

Many Earth-centred rituals involve simply paying attention: stepping outdoors, touching the ground, noticing birdsong, watching the first green shoots push through the earth. These practices cultivate what might be called ecological reverence — a sense that the sacred is not separate from the natural world but woven through it.

When we place these three perspectives side by side: Hindu, Christian Science, and Earth-centred spirituality, several shared themes emerge.

First, **renewal is cyclical**. Life moves through phases of rest, emergence, growth, and transformation. Winter is not failure; it is preparation.

Second, **balance matters**. The equinox itself is a symbol of equilibrium: light and dark in harmony. Whether we call it dharma, spiritual alignment, or ecological balance, each tradition reminds us that flourishing arises when relationships are rightly ordered.

Third, **awakening begins within awareness**. Renewal does not always arrive with dramatic announcements. Often it begins quietly, with a shift in perception, a moment of gratitude, a willingness to see life freshly again.

And perhaps this is where the Unitarian spirit feels especially at home. Unitarian communities have long been places where multiple traditions can speak together without needing to erase their differences. Instead, we listen for resonance, the shared wisdom that emerges when many voices are heard.

The Spring Equinox offers precisely that kind of conversation. Astronomy tells us about the Earth's tilt and orbit. Religion tells us stories of rebirth. Ecology reminds us of our place within the living planet. And our own lives remind us that change, though sometimes difficult, is also the source of possibility.

So, as the days lengthen and the light grows stronger, perhaps we might carry three small practices with us.

From Hindu wisdom: **seek alignment**. Ask what actions bring your life into harmony with compassion and truth.

From Christian Science: **practise spiritual clarity**. Look beyond appearances toward the deeper goodness that may already be present.

From Earth spirituality: **reconnect with the living world**. Step outside, notice the turning season, and remember that renewal is happening not only around us but through us.

The equinox lasts only a moment in astronomical terms. Yet its message can remain with us throughout the season ahead: that balance is possible, that life returns, and that renewal is written into the very structure of the universe.

So, this Spring, may we welcome the returning light — with curiosity, gratitude, and hope!

MUSIC: Johann Sebastian Bach – [Air - Johann Sebastian Bach](#) (5:38)

HOPE by Abdul Wahab (to be read by Viv or Caroline?)

I would not deny
That I could not
Dream or swim
But it was in my dream
Slipped in a deep of ditch
My hands were tied
Legs were not working
I was drowning and drowning
From deep to deeper I felt
Suffocated and strangulated,
As I would not be alive, I would
Be dead, this gave me a cry!
I had had a strong desire to be alive!
A gust of energy in the form of help
Entered in me as if it was dragging me
With a help of a rope of hope
To the shore of life, I jerked in joy
I found myself alive and awake
I gave a big thank and a tight hug
To the rope of hope.

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.

The collection will be gratefully received at the end of this service to support the work of this congregation.

A PRAYER FOR HOPE (anonymous)

Heavenly father, I am your humble servant, I come before
You today in need of hope. There are times when I feel
Helpless, There are times when I feel weak. I pray for hope.
I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life.
I need hope for love and kindness.

Some say that the sky is at it's darkest just before the light.
I pray that this is true, for all seems dark. I need your light,
Lord, in every way.

I pray to be filled with your light from head to toe. To bask
In your glory. To know that all is right in the world, as you
Have planned, and as you want it to be.

Help me to walk in your light, and live my life in faith and glory.

In your name I pray, Amen.

HYMN: 6 – As we sing of hope and joy today (purple book)

Closing Words

May Spring bless us with an abundance of things good and beautiful! May we be truly thankful and remember to share them with other! 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. May the spirit of this place and these friends go with us into the busy city!

MUSIC: [FAUN - Tanz mit mir \(Duett mit Santiano\)](#) (1:52 – video)

ORDER OF SERVICE

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PRAYER

HYMN: 6 – As we sing of hope and joy today (purple book)

Closing Words – Extinguish Chalice

MUSIC: [FAUN - Tanz mit mir \(Duett mit Santiano\)](#) (1:52 – video)

ANNOUNCEMENTS with Sheila