INTRODUCTORY MUSIC: In Memoriam - YouTube (03:32 – AUDIO)

OPENING PRAYER:

We gather, as we always do for all the same reasons that we gather week after week:
To lift up the gift of life that is ours,
To remember that life is holy,
To pray for healing and hope in the midst of trouble,
To give thanks for the blessings that surround us.
Today especially we lift these up:
The gift of life, the holiness that surrounds us, the troubles and blessings
As we remember and honour those who have given themselves to the cause of war in its intensity and terror, including those who have lost their lives in various acts of terrorism.
We remember those who have given their lives in ways both ordinary and extraordinary, in hope of a new day of peace, in the hope of scientific discovery, in the service of humanity.
In the quiet of our gathering, may we lift up our hearts in grateful thanksgiving for their lives, and for the promise of peace that they mean.

CHALICE LIGHTING:

I look around this chapel today and I'm glad to see you.
I can only guess how each of you is feeling today.
Some of you are happy to be here.
Some of you have had a rough week and almost didn't come.
Some of you have sorrow in your hearts.
Others are celebrating a significant event.
Whatever the reason, know that you are welcome.
May something in our worship today meet your needs and connect you with the Divine,
However you may perceive the Divine.
As I kindle this symbol of light – our Flaming Chalice – think for a moment about why you've come here today, and what it is you hope this hour of worship might bring.

PRAYER:

Lord,

With your spirit, guide the efforts of humankind to bring peace and justice to the nations of the earth, and give strength to rulers and all who work to establish peace and justice in the world.

Prosper the activities of those who work to preserve human rights.

Promote the endeavours of all who work for reconciliation and justice.

Deliver us from the forces of malice, jealousy and fear.

Direct us into the ways of understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.

Bless all peacemakers.

Sustain all peacekeepers.

Break down all barriers of ignorance, suspicion and fear.

Build up those things that make for peace, justice and freedom.

Enable us to live with dignity as brothers and sisters united in our diversity and our desire for a world where war itself is but an event only dimly remembered.

And help us cope with bereavement, grief and loss on this All Souls Day and beyond.

Amen.

HYMN: 26 Dancing sweetheart (purple book)

MEDITATION READING:

This space is sacred because of the faith, hopes, and dreams of those who went before us…

This time is sacred because we have set it apart for worship…

And we are sacred because we all bear the imprint of the divine.

Divine Spirit, who turns the ordinary into the sacred, be with us in the daily routine and in the mundane. Remind us again that you ask nothing of us except to “do justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with you our God” – a way of living that makes our very lives holy.

In the silence now we call to mind the times that we have failed to honour ourselves and others as sacred beings; the times when we have failed to treat the world as a sacred space; the times when we have neglected to look for the spirituality that can be found in the everyday … and we listen for the still small voice that encourages us to forgive ourselves and begin again.

Let us keep silence together…

(Silence)

Life is precious and is a gift. The world is beautiful and we are privileged to live here.

May we know this as truth. And what we know as truth, may we exhibit in our lives.

Amen

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

There was once a town where the thing everyone feared the most was getting lost at night in the "Cave of Fear". No one had ever returned from there, and whenever anyone got lost and ended up there, the last that was heard was a great cry of terror, followed by a few enormous guffaws. The townsfolk lived in terror that one day the monster would leave the cave. So, they regularly left gifts and food at the mouth of the cave, and these always soon disappeared.

One day, a young man came to town, and, as he heard about the situation with the cave, he thought that it was unfair. So, he decided to enter the cave and confront the monster. The young man asked for some help, but everyone was so afraid that not a single person approached the mouth of the cave with him. He went inside, finding his way with a torch, and calling out to the monster, wanting to talk with it and discuss the situation. At first, the monster had a good long laugh, and the young man followed the sound of the monster's voice. But then the monster went quiet, and the young man had to carry on, not knowing in which direction to go.

Finally, he arrived at a huge cavern. At the bottom of the cavern he thought he could make out the figure of the monster, and as he approached it, he felt that something hit him hard on his back. This pushed him forward towards a hole in the rock. He couldn't avoid it and fell through. Believing that he was about to die, he let out one last cry. Then he heard the great guffaws.

"Darn it, I think the monster has swallowed me," he said, whilst falling.

However, as he fell, he heard music, and voices. They got clearer, and when he made a soft landing at the bottom, he heard a group of people shout:

“Surprise!!"

Hardly believing it, he found himself right in the middle of a big party. The partygoers were all those people who had never returned to the town. They explained to him that this place had been the idea of an old mayor of the town. That mayor had tried to accomplish great things but was always held back by the fears of the people around him. So, the mayor invented the story of the monster to demonstrate to people how such an attitude was so limiting. So, the young man stayed there, enjoying the party and the company of all those who had dared to approach the cave.

And what about the town? In the town they still believe that to enter the Cave of Fear is the worst of all punishments ...

FIRST READING: Do Unitarians believe in life after death? P.20 (by Rev Cliff Reed – Unitarian? What's That") – copy of this book definitely available in Church bookcase

SECOND READING: **Wisdom 3:1-9 (from the Catholic Daily Missal Book – to be read by Ann?)**

1 The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.

2 They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction

3 and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.

4 For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality;

5 chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself.

6 As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself.

7 In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;

8 they shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the LORD shall be their King forever.

9 Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with his elect.

THIRD READING: **Lakota: One Year of Keeping the Soul (Native American Traditions)**

The Lakota practice one of the longest formal mourning periods in North America. After the burial, a lock of the deceased's hair is cut, purified over sweetgrass smoke, and wrapped in a buckskin soul bundle. This bundle is placed in a sacred location within the home and tended by a designated Soul Keeper for approximately one year.

The Soul Keeper commits to living in complete harmony during this period — no arguments, no conflict, no behaviour that would dishonour the deceased's spirit. The soul bundle is treated as if the person is still present. Food may be offered to it. The household maintains a heightened spiritual awareness.

The mourning family is considered *wakan* — holy. Traditional expressions of grief include cutting hair, wailing, and participating in the Seven Sacred Ceremonies of the Pipe. The community supports the family through regular visits, shared meals, and spiritual counsel.

At the one-year anniversary, the community gathers for the formal soul release. The soul bundle is unwrapped, and the spirit is freed to travel the Spirit Path — the Milky Way — to *Wakan Tanka*. A large giveaway ceremony follows, distributing the deceased's possessions and specially prepared gifts to the community. The "Wiping of Tears" marks the family's reintegration into full communal life.

HYMN: 298 Living and dying (green book)

REFLECTIVE ADDRESS: **All Souls Day is Tomorrow 2nd November: A Reflection on the Deceased and Afterlife**

A reflective address such as this invites people of many backgrounds to stand together in reverence before one of life's greatest mysteries. From a Unitarian perspective, it is appropriate to draw wisdom from diverse traditions while claiming no final certainty about what lies beyond death. On this All Souls Day, we gather in the company of memory.

We gather with gratitude for those whose lives touched our own. Some departed recently, and their absence still echoes in our days. Others crossed beyond the horizon many years ago, yet remain present in stories, habits, values, and love. Today we honour them all.

All Souls Day invites us into a sacred paradox. We know that every life ends. We know that loss is real. Yet we also know that love seems strangely resistant to death. Even when a body is gone, something endures. The question that has inspired theologians, poets, shamans, mystics, philosophers, and ordinary people throughout history is this: What is it that remains?

As Unitarians, we approach such questions with humility. We do not claim absolute certainty about the afterlife. We recognise that human beings have envisioned the mystery in many ways, as Rev Cliff Reed implied in our First Reading. Rather than insisting upon one answer, we seek wisdom wherever it may be found. And when we listen deeply to the world's spiritual traditions, we discover surprising harmonies.

Many Native American spiritual traditions teach that life unfolds within a great web of relationships. The living, the ancestors, the animals, the earth, the waters, and the spirit world are not isolated realities but interconnected dimensions of one sacred whole. Death is not necessarily understood as a disappearance but as a transition. Ancestors remain present, offering guidance, wisdom, and blessing. The departed continue their journey while remaining part of the community of life. This perspective offers comfort in a culture that often treats death as an ending. It reminds us that our loved ones are woven into the ongoing story of existence. Their influence does not cease. Their songs continue in us. Their kindness continues through our actions. Their courage becomes part of our own.

The Sufi mystics of Islam speak of another dimension of the mystery. For them, the deepest truth about human existence is that we come from the Divine and return to the Divine. The great poet Rumi compared death to moving from one room into another, from one form of awareness into an even greater reality. Sufi spirituality teaches that beneath our separate identities lies a deeper unity with the Beloved, the source of all being. From this perspective, death is not a punishment and not a catastrophe in the cosmic sense. It is a homecoming. The individual drop returns to the ocean from which it came. The soul, having journeyed through the experiences of earthly life, is gathered again into the infinite mystery of God.

Hindu traditions offer yet another profound vision. They speak of the eternal nature of the soul and the great cycles of life, death, and rebirth. While interpretations vary widely, many Hindus understand the soul as continuing its journey through different forms, learning and growing through successive lives. The deepest spiritual goal is not merely survival after death but awakening to our essential unity with the divine reality that underlies all existence. Whether or not we embrace reincarnation literally, this vision challenges us to think beyond the narrow boundaries of one lifetime. It suggests that life is part of a larger process of spiritual unfolding. Every act of compassion, every lesson learned, every movement toward wisdom and love contributes to a journey whose significance exceeds what we can presently see.

Pagan traditions, particularly those rooted in the cycles of nature, offer yet another source of insight. In the changing seasons they perceive a sacred pattern of death and renewal. Autumn yields to winter. Winter yields to spring. What appears to perish often becomes the source of new life. The seed falls into darkness before it flowers. The leaf returns to the earth and nourishes the forest. For many pagans, the veil between worlds grows thin at this time of year. The ancestors are remembered not as ghosts to be feared but as members of an extended community that transcends physical death. Nature itself becomes a teacher, revealing that endings and beginnings are often part of the same process.

As Unitarians, we need not choose between these perspectives. Instead, we may receive them as different windows opening onto the same mystery. One tradition speaks of ancestors. Another speaks of union with the Divine. Another speaks of rebirth. Another speaks of the eternal cycles of nature. Each offers language for realities that may ultimately transcend language itself. What unites these diverse traditions is a conviction that death is not meaningless. They affirm that human life participates in something larger than the isolated self. They encourage reverence, humility, and hope.

Yet perhaps the most important question is not what happens after death. Perhaps the most important question is how the reality of death shapes the way we live now. The awareness of mortality can deepen our appreciation for each moment. It reminds us that time is precious. It calls us to forgiveness while there is still time to reconcile. It encourages

us to speak words of love while those we cherish can still hear them. It invites us to become ancestors worthy of remembrance ourselves. Those whom we honour today have entrusted us with unfinished work. They have passed into our hands the responsibility to continue building a more compassionate world. Every act of justice, mercy, generosity, and courage becomes a living memorial.

On All Souls Day, we may therefore hold two truths together. We acknowledge that we do not know exactly what lies beyond death, and we affirm that love transcends the grave in ways both visible and invisible. Whether the soul journeys to new life, returns to the Divine, walks among the ancestors, or enters mysteries beyond human comprehension, we trust that the universe is larger than our fears.
So let us remember with gratitude.
Let us grieve with honesty.
Let us live with courage.
And let us entrust our beloved dead to the great mystery that gave them life, sustained them through their days, and now holds them beyond the limits of our sight.
May we find peace in memory, strength in community, wisdom in the traditions of humanity, and hope in the enduring reality that love is never lost.
Amen, and blessed be.

MUSIC: Le onde (05:22 – AUDIO)

WORDS BEFORE THE OFFERTORY:
The purpose of the church is to encourage all who gather there 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 church. The gifts of the congregation will be received most gratefully.

JEWISH PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED: (Mourner's Kaddish)

yeet-gah-dahl vi-yeet-kah-dahsh shmayh rah-bah.

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא. [אָמֵן]

bahl-mah dee vi-rah khee-roo-tayh. vi-yahm-leekh mahl-khoo-tayh vi-yah-tzmakh poor-kah-nayh vee-kah-rayv mi-shee-khayh.

בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא, כִרְעוּתֵהּ. וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ, וְיַצְמַח פּוּרְקָנֵהּ, וִיקָרֵב מְשִׁיחֵהּ. [אָמֵן]

bi-khah-yay-khohn oov-yoh-may-khohn oov-khah-yay di-khohl bayt yee-sֹrah-ayl bah-ah-gah-lah oo-veez-mahn kah-reev veem-roo ah-mayn.

בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

(Cong: "yhay shmayh rah-bah mi-vah-rakh lah-lahm oo-lahl-may ahl-mah-yah. yeet-bah-rah-kh.")

[אָמֵן יְהֵא שְׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ, לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא. יִתְבָּרַךְ]

yi-hay shmayh rah-bah mi-vah-rakh lah-lahm oo-lahl-may ahl-mah-yah. yeet-bah-raykh vi-yee-shtah-bakh vi-yeet-fah-ayr vi-yeet-roh-mahm vi-yeet-nah-sayֹ vi-yeet-hah-dahr vi-yee-tah-leh vi-yeet-hah-lahl shmayh di-kood-shahֹ bi-reekh hoo.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵיהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ, לְעָלַם לְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל, שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא. [אָמֵן]

lay-lah meen kohl beer-khah-tah vi-shee-rah-tah too-shbkhah-tah vi-neh-kheh-mah-tah dah-ah-mee-rahn bahl-mah veem-roo ah-mayn.

לְעֵלָּא מִן-כָּל-בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן. [אָמֵן]

yi-hay shlah-mah rah-bah meen shmah-yah vi-khah-yeem toh-veem ah-lay-noo vi-ahl kohl yee-sֹrah-ayl veem-roo ah-mayn.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים טוֹבִים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן : [אָמֵן]

oh-seh shah-ֹlohm beem-roh-mahv hoo yah-ah-seh shah-ֹlohm ah-lay-noo vi-ahl kohl yee-sֹrah-ayl veem-roo ah-mayn.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם (בעשרת ימי תשובה: הַשָּׁלוֹם) בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן. [אָמֵן]

English Translation:

Exalted and hallowed be His great Name. *(Congregation responds: "Amen.")*

Throughout the world which He has created according to His Will. May He establish His kingship, bring forth His redemption and hasten the coming of His Moshiach. *(Cong: "Amen.")*

In your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon, and say, Amen.

(Cong: "Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and to all eternity, blessed.")

May His great Name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed and praised, glorified, exalted and extolled, honoured, adored and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He. *(Cong: "Amen.")*

Beyond all the blessings, hymns, praises and consolations that are uttered in the world; and say, Amen. *(Cong: "Amen.")*

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and a good life for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. *(Cong: "Amen.")*

He Who makes peace (*Between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur substitute:* "the peace") in His heavens, may He make peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. *(Cong: "Amen.")*

PRAYER:

We pray for a better world - more peaceful and more caring, and
we ask for the strength and the courage to do what is needed to
fulfil our dreams. We confess that so often we fall short of
our own ideals, and we remember Jesus' saying that the one who is
without sin should cast the first stone. For all our mistakes,
we pray for forgiveness, and we pray too that we may find it in
our hearts to forgive the mistakes of others, even of those departed.

HYMN: 11 Blessed spirit of my life (purple book)

POEM: **Invocation to Hela (Pagan song/chant – to be read by Gill?)**

Hail to Hela
Queen of Helheim
Wisest of Wights
Keeper of Secrets
Keeper of the hopes for tomorrow
Guardian of Souls
Implacable one of the frozen realm
Half the face of beauty
Half the face of Death
You who feed the dead
At your meager table
Where everyone gets their fair share,
Lady who takes away
Yet holds always promise,
Teach us to praise loss and death
And the passing of all things,
For from this flux
We know your blessings flow.

FINAL BLESSING:

Now,
Through the rain and the sun,
Go your ways with gladness:
With Love in your hearts,
Peace in your minds
And Beauty touching your soul.

CLOSING MUSIC: Henry Purcell: Dido's Lament (Dido and Aeneas); Anna Dennis, soprano, with Voices of Music 4K UHD (04:27 – VIDEO)

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