

## Worship transcript for June 14, 2020

### *Opening music*

“Yonder Come Day”

Yonder come day! Day is a-breakin’  
Yonder come day, o my soul  
Yonder come day! Day is a-breakin’  
Sun is a-risin’ in my soul!

### *Welcome (Rev. Norman Allen)*

Hello and welcome to this time of the week that brings us together in a shared experience of worship and community. And it is a shared experience. Though you’re home alone or with family or, perhaps, with the close friends of your COVID circle, you might imagine the many others who are joining this service across the city, the region, and the country – either in this very moment or in their own time. Pause a second and imagine those faces – familiar and unfamiliar – who make up this community of All Souls.

And keep in mind the many ways that we can see each other. Check out the All Souls website for a wealth of opportunities that bring us together in conversation and fellowship and care, including an online coffee hour each Sunday morning at 11.

As I finish up this quick year as your Minister for Adult Spiritual Development, I want to highlight – especially – a new course that Rev. Tony Coleman is offering, beginning Saturday, June 20. Titled “Seeing Race, Racism, and Justice,” the course will use virtual museum visits to explore how artists have envisioned race, responded to racism, and imagined justice. Details are in the weekly bulletin and on the website.

With that, I invite you to prepare a home chalice, if you have one, as I turn things over to Rev. Tony Coleman, who will lead us in our chalice lighting.

### *Chalice Lighting (Rev. Tony Coleman)*

Please join me in lighting our chalice.

As we create this fire, let us recall the energy to heal with which we have been blessed – the energy to heal broken bones and sick bodies, the energy to heal broken systems and a sick society, the energy to heal ourselves and one another. May this fire be a reminder of the energy that lives and dwells within all things.

### *Congregational Concerns, and Pastoral Prayer (Rev. Coleman)*

As we turn to a time of prayer, friends, let us first lift up David Thurston as he continues to heal from a recent surgery.

Let us lift up the family of George Floyd and all those who gathered together to collectively mourn his death this past Tuesday.

Let us lift up this congregation as we said our final farewell to Rev. Rob Hardies this past Monday.

And let us also celebrate the unseen labor of so many who helped bring Rev. Kathleen Rolenz to our community to serve as our interim minister for the next two years.

Friends, in the brief silence that follows I invite you to lift up the names of those on your heart who need a special blessing in this moment.

Let us continue in prayer...

Great Fire that kindles our passion for Justice,

Gracious Spirit that warms our hearts to change,

God of Compassion that holds even those we consider to be our enemies,

Our world aches, and we ache along with it.

We ache for meaningful ways to connect with the people we love in this time of isolation.

We ache for real change as we reckon with the racism woven into the fabric of our society.

We ache for a new vision for our community as we continue to grieve the leaving of our senior minister.

But just as we ache, let us also find space to rejoice and space to be inspired.

Let us draw from the energy of the peaceful and profound vigils of witness that will continue to happen on our church's steps.

Let us draw from the energy of the vision of hope that all of our church's leaders continue to both articulate and manifest.

Let us draw from the energy of the blossoming flowers, the buzzing bees, the bold sunshine that blesses our Earth in this moment.

Let us draw from the energy of change, and find in it the momentum to keep moving, today and every day, together.

Ashe and Amen.

*Music (All Souls Virtual Choir)*

“Spirit of Life” (words and music by Carolyn McDade) (sung in English and Spanish)

Fuente de amor, ven hacia mi  
Y al corazon cantale tu compassion  
Sopla al volar, sube en la mar  
Hasta moldear la justicia de la vida  
Arraigame, liberame  
Fuente de amor, ven a mi, ven a mi

Spirit of life, come unto me  
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion  
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea  
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice  
Roots hold me close, wings set me free  
Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.

*Message: Beyond Stonewall (Rev. Allen)*

Fifty-one years ago, on June 28, 1969, there was a police raid on the Stonewall Inn – a gay bar – in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. It was one of hundreds of raids in which gay men and lesbians and transgender and queer people were beaten, arrested, put in paddy wagons, driven off to courtrooms and, often, to jail. Arrested for being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. Often, as a result, they lost their jobs, their families, their homes. But in the early morning hours of June 28, the police found themselves facing some LGBTQ+ people who’d had enough.

News of the raid on the Stonewall Inn that June night spread fast. No cell phones remember! People escaping from police violence ran to pay phones and called their friends. Soon a crowd had gathered to bear witness. They watched as the police dragged people from the bar, as the police beat their victims with billy clubs. They watched as officers dragged one woman outside, beat her over the head, and forced her into a patrol car. As she disappeared through the car door, she shouted to the crowd, “Why don’t you do something?!”

“Why don’t you do something?”

And they did. A riot broke out. The neighborhood, gay and otherwise, rose up, confronted the police, confronted the City, demanded justice. For six days riots and protests continued outside the Stonewall Inn and through the surrounding streets.

Flash forward – across decades of continuing struggle. 2013. It’s President Barack Obama’s second inauguration and I hear him say these words from the steps of the capitol: “We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths — that all of us are created equal — is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall.”

In 2016, President Obama declared the Stonewall Inn a national monument, acknowledging its place in the history of human rights. Last year, on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the New York City Police Commissioner apologized publicly. “The actions taken by the N.Y.P.D. were wrong — plain and simple,” he said. “What happened should not have happened.” Damn right.

Let me be clear, Stonewall didn’t launch the struggle for LGBTQ rights. There were activists and allies – and martyrs – long before 1969. But Stonewall was the catalyst for significant and lasting change. Because of the people who resisted tyranny at the Stonewall Inn, we have marriage equality. Because of the people who resisted tyranny at the Stonewall Inn, more of us have the right to serve our country – though not all. Because of the people who resisted tyranny at the Stonewall Inn, we have Pride Parades and Festivals. And that’s a big deal.

As a teenager, coming into the truth that I’m a gay man, the sight of these joyful, loving, riotous people marching – and dancing – together began to counteract the shame that society had taught me to feel. A shame that society, that family, that churches are still teaching LGBTQ+ people to feel. For many, that annual event, that celebration, that testimony, that parade of joy and pride and resilience is life-saving. This year, we look to other places for that inspiration, for that joy, for that life-saving... pride.

Role models give us pride. Joyous role models. Powerful and creative role models. Everyday role models. Literary role models! When I was growing up – already a lover of literature – I had to read between the lines to figure out who those role models might be.

My high school English teacher didn’t tell us that half of Shakespeare’s sonnets were written to a man. When a teacher – or a scholar – did admit to such a thing, they’d quickly add, “Oh, but male friendships were different back then.” Evidently they were REALLY different because Bill Shakespeare was writing to his buddy words like: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?/Thou art more lovely and more temperate.” Shakespeare, my friends, is the “B” in LGBTQ!

Mary Oliver has been called the patron saint – or the patron poet – of Unitarian Universalism. In the interest of lifting up our role models, it’s important to say that Mary Oliver is also our patron Lesbian poet. Listen to this:

I know someone who kisses the way  
a flower opens, but more rapidly.  
Flowers are sweet. They have  
short, beatific lives. They offer  
much pleasure. There is  
nothing in the world that can be said  
against them.  
Sad, isn’t it, that all they can kiss  
is the air.  
Yes, yes! We are the lucky ones.

A journalist interviewing James Baldwin said, “When you were starting out as a writer you were black, impoverished, homosexual. You must have said to yourself, “Gee, how disadvantaged can I get?” Baldwin replied, “No, I thought I’d hit the jackpot. It was so outrageous you couldn’t go any further so you had to find a way to use it.” And use it he did, writing this depiction of “Paradise.”

Let this be my summertime  
Of azure sky and rolling sea,  
And just myself enhanced with thee.

And children playing in the glory  
Of a carefree, youthful day,  
And sunshine shining from the heavens,  
And tears and sighing fled away.

Let this be my happiness  
‘Midst the earth’s swift-flowing woe.  
Let this be my only solace—  
Just to know you love me so...

The loves of Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca were kept hidden for decades. But shortly before his murder, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, he wrote a poem for his partner Juan Ramirez de Lucas that was titled – simply – “The Poet Talks by Telephone with His Love.” Here’s just the opening line:

“My chest was dune and drought, your voice was water...”

And, of course, there’s Walt Whitman, who writes:

And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast – and that night I was happy.

My friends, we fought for many things in the streets of Greenwich Village in 1969. Freedom from police brutality, freedom from public censure, freedom from disgrace and shame, freedom to serve, freedom to name our role models, the freedom to be role models for others. The freedom to safely lie “In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams [with] his face inclined toward me.”

What would Whitman have said if he had been present at All Souls on the day that Rev. Rob Hardies welcomed Mayor Adrian Fenty into our Sanctuary. What would he have said – what poem might he have written – if he had watched Mayor Fenty sign legislation that made marriage equality a reality in the District of Columbia, five years before the nation was able to catch up?

I was a kid who was denied his role models, and an adult who survived a pandemic whose marker of 100,000 deaths was reported – not on page 1 but – on page 8 of the New York Times. For me, that moment in the All Souls sanctuary was earth-shifting – a moment that represents the love and the strength and the ongoing potential of the All Souls community, a moment that represents the great and joyous gifts of Rev. Rob Hardies’ ministry.

It’s a moment that proves for us that Reverend Theodore Parker and later Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., were right when they said that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice. It’s a moment that reminds us that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice only if we put pressure on it, if we riot in the streets, if we do the pushing and the bending, if we are relentless in our pursuit for what is right. If we recognize that the Spirit of Life and of Love that moves through and within and among us also sweeps us forward into action. May it be so. Amen.

*Music (Julie James, Loyce Pace, Norah Quinn, A. Tianna Scozarro, Melinda St. Louis, Jennie Wasserman, Rochelle Rice, vocals; Jen Hayman, piano and vocals)*

“Crowded Table” (Brandi Carlile, Natalie Hemby, and Lori McKenna)

You can hold my hand when you need to let go  
I can be your mountain when you’re feeling valley-low  
I can be your streetlight showing you the way home  
You can hold my hand when you need to let go

I want a house with a crowded table  
And a place by the fire for everyone  
Let us take on the world ‘cause we all are able  
And bring us back together when the day is done

If we want a garden, we’re gonna have to sow the seed  
Plant a little happiness, let the roots run deep  
If it’s love that we give then it’s love that we reap  
If we want a garden we’re gonna have to sow the seed

Yeah I want a house with a crowded table...

The door is always open, your picture’s on my wall  
Everyone’s a little broken and everyone belongs  
Yeah, everyone belongs

I want a house with a crowded table...

*Offertory/Benediction (Rev. Coleman)*

Friends, thank you for joining us for this week’s long-distance worship service. We hope that you’ll continue to revisit our worship videos throughout the summer as we continue to craft content that speaks to the spiritual needs of our community, each and every week.

And just as we'll keep producing these videos, we'll keep hosting our weekly Zoom gatherings; we'll keep producing activities and other content for our children and families; we'll keep calling each other and bringing each other meals; we'll keep being church.

So, friends, we invite you to share whatever gifts you can in this time, if you're able, to support our church. There are lots of ways to do so: from texting, to using our website, to sending a check. Your gifts, your presence, your participation in our community, however, you are able to share, is a gift to us all.

With that I invite you to join me in our benediction:

Let us go forth, into the rest of our week, ready to sow and ready to reap. Let us sow justice and reap peace; let us sow compassion and reap connection; let us sow hope and reap a whole and beautiful community.

Amen.