

Worship transcript for November 1, 2020

Prelude (All Souls Choir)

“Meet Me in the Middle of the Air” (Paul Kelly)

I am your true shepherd
I will lead you there
Beside still waters
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
I will meet you in the middle of the air
I will lay you down
In pastures green and fair
Every soul shall be restored
I will meet them in the middle of the air
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
Through the lonesome valley
My rod and staff you'll bear
Fear not death's dark shadow
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
I will meet you in the middle of the air
With oil I shall anoint you
A table shall I prepare
Your cup will runneth over
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
I will meet you in the middle of the air
In my house you'll dwell forever
You shall not want for care
Surely goodness and mercy will follow you
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
I will meet you in the middle of the air

Call to Worship (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)

We meet one another in the middle of the air
In spaces between heaven and earth
We meet in between the twin poles of birth and death
And cherish all that happens in between.
We gather together this day to give thanks for life's holy times
Moments of grief – days of delight
Triumphs and failures intertwine
Shaping our vision of what is right, and beautiful and true
To celebrate and remember the arc of our days – do we gather this hour.

Chalice Lighting (Rosenblatt-Hoerst family)

Hymn

360 “Here We Have Gathered”

Here we have gathered, gathered side by side;
circle of kinship, come and step inside!
May all who seek here find a kindly word;
may all who speak here feel they have been heard.
Sing now together this, our hearts’ own song.

Here we have gathered, called to celebrate
days of our lifetime, matters small and great:
we of all ages, women, children, men,
infants and sages, sharing what we can.
Sing now together this, our hearts’ own song.

Life has its battles, sorrows, and regret:
but in the shadows, let us not forget:
we who now gather know each other’s pain;
kindness can heal us: as we give, we gain.
Sing now in friendship this, our hearts’ own song.

Welcome (Morgan Duncan)

My name is Morgan Duncan and I get to be your worship associate this morning on this chilly All Souls Sunday!

For nearly 200 years, our congregation has sought to live up to the vision inherent in our name, All Souls. It’s a vision of a human community where **all** people are welcome at the table. Where the divisions that separate us in our daily lives come tumbling down and we recognize ourselves as part of one human family.

We are a Unitarian Universalist congregation, diverse in many ways but united in our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and in the obligation to express our faith through acts of justice and compassion.

Please be sure to check your e-newsletter for updated information about events happening this week; there are a variety of opportunities for you to connect and engage in an outdoor vigil, in an election night watch gathering, drop in groups with all three of All Souls ministers this week and more. We are here for you and we know you are also here for one another.

Today is a special in the life of this congregation for many reasons – not the least of which is that it is All Souls Day – a service when we typically recognize the milestones in the lives of our members. We’ll dedicate children, we’ll welcome new members, and we will remember and

honor the lives of those members who have died between last year's All Soul's day and this one. By doing this, we remember we are part of the great family of All Souls.

If we were in the sanctuary, this is the time when we would turn and physically greet one another. We can still do that – only in a ritual which we are calling “Beholding” We invite you to remain on mute, but to scroll through the gallery of faces. Feel free to greet one another in the chat – and express your gratitude for being able to safely see each other while listening to music.

Child Dedication (Dolores Miller, Rev. Rolenz, Abigail Garrido-Fishbein, and the Henry-Meme family)

In the Unitarian Universalist tradition, the service of Child Dedication is a liturgical embodiment of our faith that each of us comes into the world not with original sin, but with an original blessing. A blessing that we can share with the world. It's a recognition that each of us contains within us a spark of the divine. This service is also a ritual expression of our congregation's commitment to care for these children, and for all children. To care for the future of the generations to come.

It is a special blessing to honor and recognize these children in our lives – and so, we begin by asking first, the parents of these children: By acknowledging that by participating in this ritual today, you seek the blessings of our church and commit yourselves to our faith. Do you also commit yourselves to helping these discover the source of love at the center of their lives? If so, please unmute and say: , “we do.” Thank you and please mute yourselves.

Question for grandparents/godparents: it is an honorable and loving tradition that you commit yourselves to this day. Will you, to the best of your abilities, promise to help with the love and care of this child and their parents? If so, please unmute and respond “we will.” Thank you and please mute yourselves again.

Ritual of blessing Families – have your chalice/flame ready and a flower.

We begin by asking : “What is the name of this child?

Rowan Foster Caylor

“I bless you with fire. May you come to know the spark of the divine that dwells within you.”

“I bless you with the rose. May your life unfold in wondrous beauty like this flower.”

We begin by asking : “What is the name of this child?

Noah Pernalete Fishbein

“I bless you with fire. May you come to know the spark of the divine that dwells within you.”

“I bless you with the rose. May your life unfold in wondrous beauty like this flower.”

We begin by asking : “What is the name of this child?

Elliot George Lewis Nekarda

“I bless you with fire. May you come to know the spark of the divine that dwells within you.”

“I bless you with the rose. May your life unfold in wondrous beauty like this flower.”

We begin by asking : “What is the name of this child?

Joachim Nalu Nekarda

“I bless you with fire. May you come to know the spark of the divine that dwells within you.”

“I bless you with the rose. May your life unfold in wondrous beauty like this flower.”

Kathleen: Blessings to each one of you. May you always feel the embrace of this community and this faith as your life unfolds.

It is our faith that each child born is one more redeemer.

By this Service of Dedication, we commit ourselves to the nurture of these children.

Are you ready to dedicate yourselves to Rowan, Noah, Elliot and Joachim?

We are prepared. We dedicate our minds and hearts to these children, and to their parents.

Will you strive to love and cherish them in times of struggle as well as gladness?

We will love and cherish them always.

We acknowledge the divine spark within each child.

May we be worthy guardians of these young lives. May we build a community in which they will grow old surrounded by beauty, embraced by love, and cradled in the arms of peace.

Ceremony of Welcome for New Members (Gary Penn)

Although the physical church building has been closed during the pandemic, our church is very much open. Today, we welcome 18 new members who have joined the church this fall. If you are here with us today, let us know by hitting the thumbs-up button. If we were in the building , everyone would have a chance to meet and mingle with these new members. But for now, please behold their faces as they are shown, and at the end, let’s welcome them together.

Congregational Concerns and Prayer (Rev. Louise Green)

We celebrate four children being dedicated Sunday:

Rowan Foster Caylor. (Marisa & Nick Caylor, sibling Milo)

Noah Pernalete Fishbein. (Jacob Fishbein & Berenice Pernalete, siblings Abigail, Noah)

Elliot George Lewis Nekarda & Joachim Nalu Nekarda (Chris Nekarda & Emily Hildreth)

More celebration for the 20 new ASC members we will welcome on Sunday as, list currently with Gary. We will name each one and show photos for many.

We are sending good wishes to Ben Kreider and his family right now. He is visiting his parents as a caregiver, while his father Jerry heals from recent surgery for hip replacement. In addition, his aunt is scheduled for a knee replacement, and his uncle awaits heart surgery for a pacemaker.

Cynthia Durham had successful surgery a week ago at Georgetown for colon cancer, although she remains in need of medical support. She will be released to a rehab facility for a few weeks, as she gains strength and the ability to eat more fully.

A Celebration of Life for Bonnie Manwell has been set for next Saturday, November 7, at 3 pm on Zoom. The service link will be provided by family, and the service led by Rev. Harry Quiett and Rev. John Manwell.

We mourn with Daniel Walth on the death of his brother Charles from COVID 19 in North Dakota on Wednesday. Charles died in the hospital where Daniel's brother Gordon works, so he was able to be present with him when he passed. (Husband Mark, children Eden and AJ).

Hymn 123

“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.

Reading (Morgan Duncan)

Excerpt from “Memory, in Consolations” (David Whyte)

We actually inhabit memory as a living threshold, as a place of choice and volition and imagination, a crossroads where our future diverges according to how we interpret, or perhaps more accurately, how we live the story we have inherited...

Memory in a sense is the very essence of the conversation we hold as individual human beings. A full inhabitation of memory makes human beings conscious, a living connection between what has been, what is, and what is about to be. Memory is the living link to personal freedom.

Through the gift of an inheritance truly inhabited, we come to understand that memory creates and influences what is about to happen, and has little to do with what we quaintly and often unimaginatively call the past.

Sermon (Rev. Rolenz)

This past Thursday morning something happened that had almost the entire staff in tears. It wasn't the news, although heaven knows I've wept more than once during these last couple of weeks. No. what happened on Thursday was that as Jen ran the slides of the choir's family members who had died, I found myself tearing up about people I didn't even know. What is that about, I puzzled – why the tears? Why the choking up? I didn't know these folks – or their stories. Yet – it's similar to the experience I have on Friday evenings, when PBS Newshour runs memorial of those lives lost to Covid-19, I find myself getting teary for those strangers I've never known. Last week, the Washington Post published a booklet of names and faces of those who have died, I found myself looking at each picture – and wondering who they were – what their story was – and who is mourning them. Sometimes on Sunday afternoons my mother would read excerpts from the obituaries out loud, a practice which, as a teenager, I thought was incredibly ghoulish. Now, I have a better sense of the impulse to look at these faces and hear these stories. I realize that whether these stories are shared on NPR, in the obituaries or in services like this one – the honoring of our dead reminds me – reminds us – of our mortality – of our shared fate and our shared humanity. Even more so than that, it serves to connect us to the human chain of memory and interdependence. So when I see a picture of your mother – I think of my mother; your grandfather becomes my grandfather; and although each person is utterly unlike another – there is also a sameness about this human experience that transcends the particulars.

So we set aside this day – a commemoration of the faithful departed – to remember exactly why we weep when we see the faces of those now gone. We weep for our personal, particular loss but

even beyond that, it's because our theological heritage requires us to attempt to honor, remember and love All Souls. So, this day is inextricably tied to the name of this congregation and how we try to live out and up to – our name.

All Souls was not originally named All Souls of course. Since its inception in 1821, it was known as the Washington Unitarian Church. But then, on June 4, 1877, the Washington Unitarians changed their name from the pragmatic to the theological. Why did this change occur? Some suggest that the adoption of All Souls in this and other congregations is tied to the quote our children know by heart: "I am a living member of the great Family of All Souls..." The Staples book "Washington Unitarians" doesn't give any more detail than this: "As additional evidence of the desire for a fresh start and to meet a claim on the part of some that the name Unitarian was an incubus, (meaning a cause of distress or anxiety) a new name "All Souls Church" was adopted."

What I think our ancestors were trying to suggest by this name change is that we to broaden our understanding of who can be a part of this church. The origins of All Souls day is typically partnered with All Saints Day. In a traditional and historical interpretation of Catholic theology, All Souls were those vast unwashed souls in purgatory; but the ultimate destination was heaven. In order to get heaven, you had to prove yourself to be more saint than sinner. Our Universalist heritage pushed back against that and said "we are a church for everyone, sinners and saints; all souls alike." That's the church I want to be a part of. That's the church we ARE a part of. Because at a Sunday like this one we look back at those who have died and we know that all of those Souls who have gone on before us have not only made us who we are – but have shaped who and what the church is becoming.

It's the human chain of being and becoming that is so often cast aside in the daily scum; an obituary here, an article there – but to bring the fullness of our human life into a service like this one – that's why we have church – and that's why we have All Souls' Day.

I feel somewhat impoverished preaching to a congregation who knew the members whose names we will evoke. I am getting to know you and your stories, but, like everything else in Covid-times, it's taking longer than usual. But, most likely, some of you know their history and their stories; and know their survivors who mourn them today. And yet, I could tell you the stories of the dozens of members I've known and loved and you could almost know them too; George the atheist; and Liane the violinist, Betty the witch and Phil the dentist; Betsy the philanthropist and Ruth the New Englander; and Bruce and Gary; Mary and Mark – on and on the list goes. You don't know these dear ones as I did – but in some wonderful mysterious way – you would find them siblings to All Souls, members who have found a sustaining faith – like you – all utterly unique in their stories – but

you would see their pictures and something would tear up behind your eyes too. There is a common feeling that is evoked when we name the names of our dead and remember them.

But this service is not just a nostalgic look at the past, or even a sentimentalizing of those who have died. I resonated with David Whyte when he wrote "we...inhabit memory as a living threshold...as a place of choice and volition and imagination, a crossroads where our future

diverges depending on how we interpret or perhaps more accurately, how we live the story we have inherited..." That's why I suggested that this Sunday be not only a remembrance to those who have died, but to those who are now born into this faith; and to those who have adopted this faith as an adult. This threshold time is about the past and the present and the future all converging into the hallowed ground of All Souls Day. The children we dedicated this morning are not our future; they are our present; And the twenty new members we took in during a pandemic, when the building is closed, is a testament to strength and vitality of our present and provides a vision for our future. I've been inspired by two of our newest members who live across the country and who will seldom be physically present at the church even when we do open our doors. They represent an even larger understanding of what it does mean to be a church in the 21st century – a church whose embrace and scope and programs can be cherished by members beyond the physical footprint of 15th and Harvard. I've been touched by the stories of All Souls members past; whose lives intersected with this place at some point in time and who are now folded into the stories of this present place. I've been deeply moved by those of you who continue to support the church by your presence and your pledge even though it's not the church experience you are used to having. Your souls –OUR Souls are intertwined with All Souls and it cannot be unbraided.

I said "ours" and let me tell you why. Months into the start of my last interim ministry, I would refer to the church as "you." One wise member of my Transitions Team suggested that I begin to think of the church in terms of "we," because he said, you are now part of the "we." You are now part of our story and our history" . So in some ways though I don't feel I've earned the right to call myself part of the "we" of All Souls, my story and your story and bound together – just as these children are the "we" and the brand new members are the "we" and together we are the ALL of All Souls. And just as we are now here, some day, I hope, when our time comes to join that Great Family of All Souls that lives in memory – our names will be read and our pictures displayed and those sitting in the pews, real or virtual, will look at our pictures and will say "oh yes, I remember her," and "they brought such joy to the church," or "he left us a legacy of love, service and generosity and we are all better for it." And maybe, somewhere down the road, someone will say "you remember that time we had to do virtual church for months, and yet we stuck together, all of us, All Souls, and the church grew stronger and more vibrant and bolder than ever before." That's the way we honor each other and this sacred time. That's the way we remember All Souls. May it be so.

Remembrances (Rev. Green)

Carla Finkel

Will Hayes

Karen King

Cathy Long

Herb Lowrey

Bonnie Manwell

Tom Taylor

Anthem (All Souls Choir)

“To My Old Brown Earth” (Pete Seeger)

To my old brown earth, and to my old blue sky
I now give these last few molecules of “I”

And you who sing, and you who stand nearby,
I do charge you not to cry

Guard well our human chain, watch well you keep it strong
As long as sun will shine

And this, our home, keep pure and sweet and green
For now I’m yours and you are also mine.

Offering (Traci Hughes-Trotter, Executive Director)

Good morning. I am Traci Hughes-Trotter, Executive Director of All Souls Church. The first time I walked into All Souls, I just knew I was where I belonged. There was a spirit and a presence in the place and amongst the people that moved through me like a warm wave.

The same is always true no matter how I join an All Souls service — no matter in person or virtually. Believe it or not, my presence at All Souls is evidence live and in living color of my prayers answered to give back to the world by doing work that is morally and spiritually aligned with who I am and in fulfilment of God’s purpose for my life. All Souls, you were the light I did not know I was looking for or needed. It is my great honor to serve this congregation, particularly at a time like this.

I am reminded every day in big and small ways of the wonderful place and space of All Souls. Each of you are a representation in the world of the values of All Souls in a time when it is so desperately needed. Just by gathering for service today you are embodying a diverse, spiritgrowing, justice seeking community that is transforming the world. Your presence today is a promise of hope as we navigate our way through the upheaval of our time.

All Souls is a living, breathing example of the world we wish to create. And it is not immune to the challenges of the world we are working so fervently change. That is why I am asking you to answer the call to the fierce urgency of now and fulfil your pledges to All Souls. The congregation approved a budget for this fiscal year based on the pledges made my members and friends, and the reality is this: without your help, church leadership will face some tough decisions before the end of the year to keep the church afloat. Your support is an investment in the health and vitality of All Souls. I believe we can continue to thrive, reach and expand the

community of All Souls if we work together. For those joining us for the first time, the 5-thousandth time, or any time in between, we have several ways for your give. You can text the number on the screen, donate on the All Souls website, or mail your contribution to the church.

Please remember Guard well our human chain, watch well you keep it strong. Be the light.

Hymn (Jen Hayman)

163 “For the Earth Forever Turning”

For the earth forever turning; for the skies, for ev’ry sea; for our lives, for all we cherish, sing we our joyful song of peace.

For the mountains, hills, and pastures in their silent majesty; for the stars, for all the heavens, sing we our joyful song of peace.

For the sun, for rain and thunder, for the seasons’ harmony, for our lives, for all creation, sing we our joyful praise to Thee.

For the world we raise our voices, for the home that gives us birth; in our joy we sing returning home to our bluegreen hills of earth.

Benediction (Rev. Rolenz)

Music (All Souls Bluegrass Band)

“No Hard Feelings” (The Avrett Brothers)

When my body won’t hold me anymore
And it finally lets me free
Will I be ready?
When my feet won’t walk another mile
And my lips give their last kiss goodbye
Will my hands be steady?

When I lay down my fears
My hopes and my doubts
The rings on my fingers
And the keys to my house
With no hard feelings

When the sun hangs low in the west
And the light in my chest
Won’t be kept held at bay any longer
When the jealousy fades away
And it’s ash and dust for cash and lust
And it’s just hallelujah

And love in thoughts and love in the words
Love in the songs they sing in the church
And no hard feelings
Lord knows they haven't done
Much good for anyone
Kept me afraid and cold
With so much to have and hold

When my body won't hold me anymore
And it finally lets me free
Where will I go?
Will the trade winds take me south
Through Georgia grain or tropical rain
Or snow from the heavens?

Will I join the ocean blue
Or run into the savior true
And shake hands laughing?
And walk through the night
Straight to the light
Holding the love I've known in my life
And no hard feelings

Lord knows they haven't done
Much good for anyone
Kept me afraid and cold
With so much to have and hold
Under a burning sky
I'm finally learning why
It matters for me and you
To say it any mean it, too

For all of its loveliness
And all of its ugliness
Good as it's been to me
I have no enemies
I have no enemies
I have no enemies
I have no enemies