

Worship transcript for November 15, 2020

Prelude (Gordon Kent, piano and vocals)

“Dancing in the Dark” (Bruce Springsteen)

I get up in the evening, and I ain't got nothin' to say
I come home in the morning, I go to bed feeling the same way
I ain't nothing but tired
Yeah I'm just tired and bored with myself
Hey there, baby, I could use just a little help

You can't start a fire
You can't start a fire without a spark
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark

Messages keep getting clearer, radio's on and I'm movin' around the place
I check my look in the mirror, wanna change my clothes, my hair, my face
And I'm getting nowhere, I'm just living in a dump like this
There's something happening somewhere,
Baby, i just know there is

You can't start a fire
You can't start a fire without a spark
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark

Sitting around getting older, there's a joke here somewhere and it's on me
I'll shake this world off my shoulders
C'mon, baby, the laugh's on me

Stay on the streets of this town, and they'll be carving you up alright
They say you gotta stay hungry
Hey, baby, I'm just about starving tonight
I'm dying for some action
I'm sick of sittin' round here tryin' to write this book
I need a love reaction
C'mon, baby, give me just one look

You can't start a fire
Sitting around crying over a broken heart
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark

You can't start a fire
Worryin' about your little world falling apart
This gun's for hire even if we're just dancing in the dark

Call to Worship and (Rev. Louise Green)

Good morning, All Souls, as we gather to light a fire in the dark! Hooray for modern prophets Seal and Rochelle Rice, Bruce Springsteen and Gordon Kent, for igniting sparks through music, today and always.

A deep welcome to each of you who has found your way to this service, seeking a path in the changing times. We come from many states and a few countries, dancing in Spirit and Love.

The early 20th Century Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote these words almost a century ago:

Caminante, son tus huellas el camino, y nada más;
Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

Traveler, Seeker, your footprints are the only road, nothing else.
Pilgrim, there is no road; you make the road by walking.

For this hour, let us make a road together—whether walking, or rolling, or dancing, or seated on couch and at table. Let us travel the road which will build the beloved community which is All Souls.

Chalice Lighting (The Fitzgerald Family)

As we light the chalice this morning, we invite you to also light a candle at home.
We light this chalice for the light of truth.
We light this chalice for the warmth of love.
We light this chalice for the energy of action.

Hymn

“Within Our Darkest Night”

Within our darkest night
You kindle the fire that never dies away
Never dies away
(Repeat)

Welcome (Justis Tuia)

Aloha awakea, and welcome to our live, long-distance worship at All Souls Church! My name is Justis Tuia, and I am joined by my extended family’s beloved backyard chickens from the lovely windward coast of O’ahu, We are happy to be serving as your Worship Associates today.

For almost 200 years, we have created an intentional community where we search for the spiritual together, put our passion for social justice to work, and remind ourselves of our responsibility to and for one another. Our mission here at All Souls is to build what Dr. King

called the “Beloved Community.” As Unitarian Universalists, we are diverse in so 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. We invite you to join us as we seek to create a diverse, justice-seeking, spirit growing community that is true to the dream of all souls.

If we were together in our beloved sanctuary on 16th and Harvard Streets NW, I’d now invite you to turn to someone near you in the pew for a handshake or a hug. Instead, I invite you to “behold” one another. Although you’ll remain on mute, please exchange smiles and waves and chat together in the chat box as you draw strength and joy from the relationships that continue to bind us together. Again, welcome to All Souls Church!

Congregational Concerns and Prayer (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)

I’m Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, serving as your Interim Senior Minister. All Souls is a vibrant and active congregation – and here are a few updates and invitations that I’d like to share with you.

Next Sunday, November 22nd, join the Reverend Galen Guengerich and me for a presentation and conversation about his book, “The Way of Gratitude” at 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM. This will be an extension of the themes explored in the service. The Zoom information can be found on the home page of the church’s website.

Thanksgiving Gratitude Circle — Wednesday, November 25, 4-5 pm. Join other All Souls members in an hour of social time, reflection, and naming of what we appreciate. Take coffee, tea or snack time and come for an hour of centering on the day before Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Day Connect — Thursday, November 26, anytime. Are you willing to connect with an All Souls member who is alone this holiday? Would you like someone from All Souls to call or Zoom with you on Thanksgiving Day? This holiday match is open to all ages! Ask for what would encourage you OR consider giving some of your time for this congregational care effort. Contact: lgreen@allsouls.ws to either receive or make contact.

We turn our hearts and minds to the pastoral celebrations and concerns of this congregation. First – we celebrate the news that Loyce Pace, ASC choir member, on being appointed to President-elect Biden’s COVID-19 Task Force. Wishing that team strength and focus in the coming challenges!

Hooray for Rev. Tony Coleman for his very poignant article in *The Christian Century* on his brother’s risk at work in a grocery store, and the ongoing need to value our essential service workers. We are thinking of Tony’s brother and so many low-wage workers who are most vulnerable in the pandemic.

Thinking of Cynthia Durham, in Crescent Cities Nursing Rehab in Riverside, MD. Cynthia is being treated for some infection after surgery, and will remain there longer than originally planned. Sending Cynthia healing prayers and patience for a strong recovery.

Staff member James Ploeser's father Stephen has been hospitalized for medical support after several bouts of pneumonia. He is responding well, and the hope is for continued improvement. Wishing him and family well in this worrisome time of treatment.

Sending our love and support to Bob Bloomfield, in home hospice. Spouse Barbara McCann said that he is resting more in a new phase of deeper comfort care. We offer ongoing prayers to both Bob and Barbara in this emotion-filled passage.

Our deep sorrow is with Eddie Canterbury, the partner of staff member Dolores Miller, on the death of his brother Jason. Jason died at age 42 this last week in Tulsa, due to complications from alcohol addiction and experiencing homelessness. His passing is very difficult for the extended family, including his former spouse and 4 young children. We send prayers for his funeral and burial in Oklahoma on Monday the 16th, and condolences to Eddie and Dolores for this great loss.

Please join me in a time of meditation, reflection or prayer – as is your practice.

We gather together this morning at the end of the five day festival of Diwali, a time of bringing light into the streets, the home and the heart. This beautiful and ancient practice reminds us that no matter how difficult the times, good will triumph over evil; knowledge over ignorance. May we bring that light into our own hearts now as the days grow ever shorter – and the darkness of night – even longer.

We hold the health and well being of this city, this nation and this world in our prayers this day, knowing that our prayers alone won't change the world, but they can change us – may we find the strength – the wisdom and the courage to do what we can to build the world we dream about – together.

As we hold the joys and sorrows of those named, may we add now the names of those who are sick, who are suffering in mind, body and spirit in the chat. Speak their names out loud, light a candle, in some way send your hopes for recovery and for a restful spirit.

For all those named – and those unnamed, we hold in our hearts this day. Amen.

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 (Justis Tuia)

As a poet, activist, and musician, Joy Harjo became the first Native American US Poet Laureate in history. A member of the Muscogee Creek Nation, Harjo's creations are often inspired by Native American stories, languages and myths. This poem describes a Creation story of movement from the Fourth World where we are now, into Fifth World, the final stage of evolution and transformation.

An excerpt from *Map to the Next World*, by Joy Harjo

In the last days of the fourth world,
I wished to make a map
for those who would climb through the hole in the sky.

My only tools were the desires of humans as they emerged
from the killing fields, from the bedrooms and the kitchens.

For the soul is a wanderer with many hands and feet.

The map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light.
It must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of spirit.

In the legend are instructions on the language of the land,
how it was we forgot to acknowledge the gift,
as if we were not in it, or of it...

...And when you take your next breath, as we enter the fifth world,
there will be no X, no guidebook with words you can carry.

You will have to navigate by your mother's voice,
renew the song she is singing.

Fresh courage glimmers from planets.
And lights the map printed with the blood of history,
a map you will have to know by your intention, by the language of suns...

...Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end.

You must make your own map.

Sermon (Rev. Green)

“Dancing in the Dark”

I have been looking for maps lately, some way to navigate in 2020, this wild year when so much is spinning, and falling apart. Markers we used not long ago have simply disappeared. The road forward often feels shrouded in dense fog, and direction can be uncertain. We are in a time of disorder, which is harrowing and mysterious and promising, all at once. For I do believe we are headed to a different and in many ways better future, yet so much is in process that it's impossible to take full measure of the way ahead.

Richard Rohr, founder of the interfaith Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico, names a universal wisdom pattern: Order, Disorder, Re-order. Always playing out in each of our lives, and in the many collective worlds we inhabit. Many religious traditions observe and teach this ancient paradigm with different vocabularies, symbols and metaphors, yet some aspects appear constant in nature and human endeavors. Rohr describes the spiral movement like this:

Order creates systems. By itself, order often wants to eliminate any disorder and diversity, which may also create a narrow rigidity in people and systems.

Disorder moves to new forms. By itself, disorder closes us off from any primal union, meaning, and even sanity, in both people and systems.

Reorder, the transformation of people and systems, happens when both work together.

Eventually, every reform emerges into its own new orthodoxy, and the painful and liberating experience of growth begins again.

Where are we now, as we dance in the darkness? We are in the great disorder of 2020, seeking the vision, looking for ways ahead for long haul work. This will go on for a very long time, as extremely large systems have reached tipping points into devolving. To name a few: World climate emergency and the loss of species diversity happening now, global pandemic rising and vaccine not yet arrived, authoritarian governments seizing the moment, systemic racism embedded in interlocking white supremacy systems, harsh political cultures offer jarring truths and alternative facts, and yes, liberation movements quickly expanding for women, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQ peoples. You knew all that. It's a lot of disorder, to state the painfully obvious—so how do we find a way to re-ordering?

As Richard Rohr describes, when order and disorder come into creative tension, prophetic imagination can appear, and reordering arises. We will need an excellent map, a strong inner compass, and way to determine our North Star, if we want to both survive and thrive. A map that is larger than our constantly thinking minds, our endlessly surging emotions, and our current ways of being. We must create a very wide, deep, and multi-generational pathway, making the road by walking, dancing in the dark. We will need to move from the spirit within, the heart of our experience, and clear inner wisdom.

there in understanding, we begin with the roots. In this country, the roots are found in the poetry of the In this time of disorder seeking reorder, we can use poetry and archetypal myths as maps, and ancestors to fuel our prophetic imagination forward. Joy Harjo, the current U.S. Poet Laureate, has some guidance for us, and deep lived experience as a woman from the Muscogee Creek Nation. Her people have been through generations of pain and resilience, including the Trail of Tears which ended in displacement to their Oklahoma reservation. Harjo, a word that means courage, is the name she chose in honor of her grandmother, to mark her survival through many challenges in Oklahoma and beyond. As a wise elder, Harjo tells us:

Poetry has the potential to expand the conversation into wordless depths, to help us move collectively into fresh cultural vision. To get there in understanding, we begin with the roots. In this country, the roots are found in the poetry of the more than 500 living indigenous nations.

The excerpt from Map to the Next World that we heard draws on a creation story present in several indigenous cultures in North and Central America. In this Hopi Nation version, we are now in the destabilized Fourth World, with destruction looming. The good news: Hopi elders assert we are on the threshold to the Fifth. Spider Grandmother, a powerful and wise guide, has grown a tall reed up to a hole in the sky, called sipapu. The sipapu is both cosmic and local, as in the Hopi kiva dwellings where the smoke from central fires may rise through. The sipapu is reciprocal: we may travel up into other realms, and ancestors can and do travel down. The most ancient ones came through Earth Sky into the First World, on the move ever since. Spider Grandmother is one of these Good Spirits, helping birth human transformation to each next level. Our Fourth World hole in the sky is the passage to the Fifth World, the last realm and last challenge. This is where we have a chance to remember all we have forgotten. To do so, we are required to use prophetic imagination, to rebuild and re-anchor in Earth's web, with all our relations.

Harjo describes a map for those who would cross the threshold, using her own prophetic vision. We can see or feel external maps—paper, books, globes, or screens. This one will be different from any of those, something we learn to find in the dark. As she puts it:

The map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light.
It must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of spirit.
In the legend are instructions on the language of the land,
how it was we forgot to acknowledge the gift,
as if we were not in it, or of it...
[this is] a map you will have to know by your intention, by the language of suns...
...Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end.
You must make your own map.

You must make your own map, and there is important work needed to find it. Prophetic imagination creates a vision of the future based on bold desire to right wrongs and name injustice. We find sources by courageously looking to the past, observing the present compassionately, and moving with clarity into the future. We cannot design the path ahead absent from history and truth-telling, for that will only keep us in the fog of partial lies. There are many roots that have been dug in and covered over, in the last five centuries among these

American continental and ocean nations. Waves of peoples who came as immigrants and settlers, or forced to arrive as slaves and servants—waves upon waves of disrupters, refugees, captives, and colonial powers.

We find our inner map by knowing where we actually came from, or as much as we can know, with the lament that this history holds. Without glossing, or whitewashing, over the suffering our own peoples caused, or endured, or survived. We will each need to tell the truth about our own ancestors, not just the standard stories of family pride, but the partial-lie histories that have been smoothed over in partial telling. This is both personal and collective work, and part of the threshold moment into a Fifth World. It will involve taking a lantern to fearlessly seek out what has been buried in darkness. There is no other way up through our reed passage of sipapu onto the Fifth World threshold. I name this especially for those of us in bodies currently identified by social and political culture as white. We have lineage that must be named and understood as part of the oppression of “order,” resulting in the imperative for disorder. Some of our ancestors were the enforcers of order’s tendency toward narrow rigidity, which came at great cost and much destruction. We are unraveling now because of this, a symptom of human amnesia about the gift of this land and our Earth Mother.

Disorder evokes a wide range of emotions, reactions tied directly to the amount of power we possess and hope to maintain. For marginalized peoples, disordering may be the only way to survive, to find a way to breathe. I’d like to bring in another wise elder here: Dr. Barbara Holmes. An African American ethicist, spiritual teacher and writer who explores African American spirituality, mysticism, cosmology, arts, and culture. She has worked as spiritual director, with homeless missions, HIV/AIDS support groups, and international ministries in Kenya and Japan. Dr. Holmes teaches at the Center for Action and Contemplation with Richard Rohr, and her perspective on the current cycle of disorder is grounded in her own lineage and experience.

In her beautiful article on emerging wisdom patterns in the Black Lives Matter Movement, Barbara Holmes names what she sees, and in so doing, creates another kind of map. In her view, the BLMM uses disruption for social transformation, often rejecting the political compromises in the negotiations of prior generations of social activists. She writes about disrupting an order that is killing black and brown bodies—ending the pretense that the systemic racism causing devastating harm is somehow random, and not strategically ordered. And so, Dr. Holmes names the blessed necessity of disorder, a dissolving which may reflect the movement of the Spirit, a rising up against violence and oppression. Her article describes what is happening now, and how we got here, and where we might be going. It is her prophetic interpretation of the signs of the times, exegesis on the living text of this threshold moment. Let us fully hear her voice calling us to a different future:

No person or community can be healthy in a constant state of resistance. There must be respite, celebration and relief. Without this respite, post-traumatic injuries contribute to intra-communal conflict. These symptoms are then used by the dominant culture as proof that oppression is necessary and justified.

In response, we heal ourselves in community through our contemplative practices, praying together, dancing together, and caring for one another. We have joy because no bullet aimed at Martin, or Malcolm or John or Bobby, or Jamar or Eric, or Sandra or Trayvon, can stop us. And while we celebrate, we will be our authentic selves. You can't kill us and then tell us to wear a tie. You can't kill us and tell us to follow your rules of etiquette.

This is a revolution of the people. Our elders got us this far by faith and now the revolution will be televised. It will be stomped to rap music and maybe our clothes won't match, and that's all right. Some of us are homeless, some of us have records, some of us are educated, some of us are not. But none of us can breathe.

We will not be discouraged by our journey "through the blood of the slaughtered." Instead, we exude life, we express our joy and affirmation, "we gonna be alright." We have disrupted the "order" that was killing us, while we embrace the disorder which is the fertile microcosm for our transformation.

All Souls, we are dancing in the dark, led by powerful Light into reordering all of life.

We must allow Earth to hold us again. This is how we will find the map within, orient to our North Star, and align the inner compass. Our deeper collective truth has always been that we are interconnected among living creatures who share inherent worth and dignity. We will not find a relevant map of any consequence without remembering.

May this be so, as we move towards a world of greater liberation for all beings. Amen.

Anthem (All Souls Jubilee Singers)

"Earth Song" (Frank Ticheli)

Sing, be, live, see...

This dark stormy hour, the wind, it stirs,
The scorched earth cries out in pain, in pain,
Oh, war and power, you blind and blur
The torn heart cries out in vain, in vain

But music and singing have been my refuge
And music and singing shall be my light
A light of song, shining strong
Alleluia, alleluia...

Through darkness and pain and strife
I'll sing, I'll be, I'll live, I'll see
Peace.

Offering (Justis Tuia)

The waters of life ebb and flow. Like the rotation of the seasons, the phases of the moon, and the position of the stars—this reality we can be confident in. The last 1,395 days, however, have made the normal ebbs and flows of life seem like a series of crashing waves, each one larger and more offensive than the last. While dawn appears on the horizon, COVID remains a very real threat, exemplified by the fact that we still maintain physical separation in so many ways. Many of us will not be gathering in person with our loved ones for the fall and winter holidays this year, amplifying the social isolation that many of us feel as the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer.

Over the course of the last decade, I have come to view this community as my spiritual home, and it has grown in importance to me as the COVID crisis rages unchecked in various areas of the country. In addition to worship, I now meet with a small group of All Souls members twice a week to discuss the developments, the challenges, and the small joys that now permeate our lives, and I'm working with other AAPI identified individuals here at All Souls to build community.

All Souls Church truly is a special “place.” It is a place where helping hands, loving hearts and open minds reside. It is a place where diversity is celebrated, where I find safe harbor, and where my hope for the future resides. It is a place where we engage with both timeless questions and pressing issues with truth, compassion, and love, and it is a place built by the generations which have come before.

We may be separated for some time to come, but All Souls will continue its work to build the beloved community both within our proverbial walls and without. Pledge statements were distributed a few weeks ago. Please contact Traci Hughes if you have any questions or concerns about your pledge. Now, as we enter the space of making offerings this morning, please consider the ways that this congregation has been generous to you, and how you might be generous in return.

Hymn

“Night Blooming Jasmine” (Elise Witt)

In the darkness, we walk with light
In the darkness, we walk with light
Like the night blooming jasmine, we light up the night
In the darkness, we walk with light
(Repeat)

Benediction (Rev. Green)

The poet Wendell Berry tells us: To go in the dark with a light is to know the light. To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

Shine forth in Love, All Souls, in the powerful transformative darkness which blooms in great beauty. Amen.

Music (All Souls Choir; Amelia Peele, soloist; Mark G. Meadows, piano; Corey Null, bass; Dante Pope, drums)

“Coming Out of the Dark” (Gloria Estefan)

Why be afraid if I’m not alone?
Though life is never easy, the rest is unknown
Up to now for me it’s been hands against stone
Spent each and every moment searching for what to believe

Coming out of the dark,
I finally see the light now, and it’s shining on me
Coming out of the dark,
I know the love that saved me, you’re sharing with me...

Starting again is part of the plan
And I’ll be so much stronger holding your hand
Step by step, I’ll make it through, I know I can
It may not make it easier but I have felt you near all the way

Coming out of the dark,
I finally see the light now, and it’s shining on me
Coming out of the dark,
I know the love that saved me, you’re sharing with me...

Forever and ever I’ll stand on the rock of your love
Love is all it takes, no matter what we face

Coming out of the dark