

# **Worship transcript for January 10, 2021**

## **Prelude (All Souls Choirs and Bokamoso Youth)**

“Shosholoza” (traditional Zulu)

Shosholoza! The freedom of the people is a train that no one can stop!  
Shosholoza kulezo ntaba sitimela siphume South Afrika  
Wena uya baleka kulezo ntaba sitimela siphume South Afrika

## **Call to Worship (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)**

Come! Put down your distractions, put down your multi-tasking mind, and come! Let go of your weariness, your cynicism, your despair, and come – feel the rhythm of this place and this people. And we gather, All Souls in a journey of the spirit. This journey brings water to the weary; and a balm for broken-hearted. This journey brings rhyme and rhythm and an unbreakable spirit. Come, let us worship together.

Just as our ancestors kindled fire around which to warm their hands – so do Unitarian Universalists all across the nation – to warm our hearts and prepare our minds for worship. This morning, we welcome the Deirdre and Julia Pender to light the chalice flame of hope, light and warmth.

## **Chalice Lighting (Deirdre and Julia Pender)**

### **Hymn**

“Siyahamba”

Siyahamba kukhanyen kwenkhos, siyahamba kukhanyen kwenkhos.

We are marching in the light of God, we are marching in the light of God.

We are praying in the light of God, we are praying in the light of God.

We are singing in the light of God, we are singing in the light of God.

Siyahamba kukhanyen kwenkhos, siyahamba kukhanyen kwenkhos.

## **Welcome (Patricia Lambert)**

Good Morning! Welcome to All Souls Church!

My name is Patricia Lambert and I am serving as your Worship Associate this morning.

Welcome to our longtime members. It is so good to see you again, albeit in this ‘little electronic box’ format. And I’d like to extend a special welcome to first time visitors and to guests. We are so glad that you’ve joined us for this service.

Whether you’re a familiar face, a new face or a visiting face, do feel free to let everyone know in the chat box where you’re participating from today. You can also use the chat box if you’d like to receive our weekly e-newsletter or find out about joining this church. Contact Gary Penn, our Director of Membership Services.

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 – people of all races, creeds, sexual orientations and gender identities – are welcome. Here we examine and do our best to take down the divisions that separate us in our daily lives and consciously see ourselves as part of one human family.

We are a Unitarian Universalist congregation 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. So join us as today as we seek to create a diverse, justice-seeking, spirit growing community.

Now let us move to our moment of “Beholding”. As the music plays, scroll through the Zoom gallery and share a wave or a greeting in the chat box with some of the other folks who are part of our community.

[Beholding until the music ends]

Many people on this call know that I was born in South Africa. I lived and worked there until just 14 years ago when I was invited to take up a job in Washington, DC. I am now a citizen of both countries and my heart lives in two places. I now call both countries ‘home’. Sometimes that is challenging – this past week has been especially so – but it is also deeply rewarding. And one of the loveliest rewards is the annual visit to All Souls Church of a group of young people from the Bokamoso Life Centre in the Winterveld, north of Pretoria. They usually sing and dance with their whole beings in our lovely sanctuary and the space lights up with our smiles and our all-too-apparent joy. This year, they are with us again, but unfortunately not in person. It is my great honour to be introducing some of the young people from Bokamoso to you virtually this morning. Let’s watch a short video that will show you a little bit about where they live, how their centre operates and how their lives are touched by what they do there.

## **Testimonial**

“Who Is Bokamoso?”

## **Congregational Concerns and Prayer (Rev. Louise Green)**

Good morning, I’m Rev. Louise, your Minister of Congregational Care.

Well, it has been a week. Difficult to absorb and digest, and full of intensity. I hope that you are taking space to process emotions, check in with trusted beloveds, restore in nature, and hold communities of care close. Events of the next days and months will hold great promise and peril. As you do know well, living in transformative times is a marathon, not a sprint. Please assess resources for tending your heart, and consider what level of action you can sustain in such tender times.

A few announcements first:

Major celebration for every person involved in the James Reeb Voting Rights Project. Thank you, local organizer Kelsey Cowger, All Souls minister Rev. Rob Keithan, and each participant in this major organizing effort. Your hard work in Georgia mattered, and your stamina from August to January was truly inspiring!

On Wednesday, January 27 at 7:30 pm join us for Songs of Resistance. Our Director of Music and Arts, Jen Hayman will put this together; and I'm assistant chef. This opportunity to hear mostly recorded music, and sing or dance, will be cathartic and rejuvenating.

We move to people and situations we lift up today in gathered community:

Healing wishes to staff member James Ploeser, on a week of rest with no screen time. He has been experiencing disabling aural migraines, and so we hope that new medication will kick in soon.

We are mourning with Peter Hanes, who lost two dear relatives in December, both long-time DC educators: his uncle Eugene Hanes, 84 and his cousin Wenfra Evans, Jr.,

Love to Erin Albright, whose beloved mother Marshall McVadon died on January 3rd after several recent health challenges. We grieve with Erin, her spouse Jim, their son Eduardo. There will be a Celebration of Life via Zoom for family and friends in coming weeks.

Finally, I am sad to announce that long-time All Souls member and Silver Soul, Emily Dyer, died last Wednesday morning after cardiac arrest. A retired museum professional, Emily was instrumental in many projects curated by the Silver Souls. She led the way on the restoration of our Hiroshima Children's Drawings with passion and precision. Sincere condolences to her sons Emile and Phillip, and her close cousin Christy Rouse. We mourn with Rick Yamada, Emily's chosen family, who assisted daily in recent weeks at Riderwood. A Celebration of Life honoring Emily's legacy at All Souls and beyond will take place in coming months on Zoom.

Please bring to mind your names and situations, as we enter a time of prayer.

Ground of All Being, Holy Oneness, we arrive this day in a turbulent time of change. We have witnessed events that shake us to the core— in D.C. and around the country and the world.

There is much loss as COVID numbers soar again, each number representing particular lives impacted greatly. We feel anger and grief as we see again the inequities of white supremacy

systems embedded in the very fabric of the nation. We mourn the loss of life, the many injuries, the physical destruction and the emotional assault of January 6 at the U.S. Capitol.

Many of us may be activated in the dizzying aftermath, in layers of trauma with uncomfortable pain. The fear and anxiety may feel unbearably high, particularly for those most at risk in our culture: in black and brown bodies, or incarcerated, immigrant and indigenous, transgender or poor.

In the midst of so much chaos, we also celebrate political change once unimaginable, natural beauty that comforts and consoles, human connection that deeply sustains. We name a powerful Love holding us fiercely as embodied souls. May that Love be in our breath, our living, and our letting go. May we be a community of care to one another. 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.

### **Music (Bokamoso Youth)**

“Never Give Up”

### **Sermon (Rev. Rolenz)**

“Resistance and Reparations”

It’s said that a picture is worth a thousand words – so it’s the images from this past week that are still speaking to me – and haunting me. And here I must post a trigger warning, because these images were hard to see – and still painful to even hear about. So if you need to take a break for a moment -take care of yourself. But here’s a few images that the nation – and the world – saw.

We saw a man wearing a sweatshirt that read Camp Auschwitz: Work Brings Freedom. We saw a noose hanging on a makeshift gallows. We witnessed the Capitol Police opening the barricades

and allowing the Domestic Terrorists to pour up the Capital Steps. We saw a white man white man carrying the Confederate Flag through the rotunda of the Nation's Capital.

Fueled by false claims of a rigged election, stoked by a President's inflammatory rhetoric, we witnessed not the worst of America on Wednesday. What the nation and the world saw was the reality behind which every black, brown, indigeneous and person of color has already known for a long time. We saw the manifestation of White Supremacy in concentrated form – but it was not the exception.

We saw and heard from people who believe themselves to be part of the resistance – but I asked myself – Resistance to what? Resistance to the Constitution? Resistance to the Rule of Law? Resistance to Elected Leaders? Yes, it's all of that. But it's more, of course. It's resistance to the vision of American which is a threat to some white people – that their place in the American caste system – of having power solely by virtue of having white skin – is waning. And so all this talk about make American Great Again is a cover for the real message, that was embodied in the image of the Confederate Flag being waved in the Capital – Make America White Again.

And what's so patently false about that sentiment is that it completely misses the fact that America never was white. It wasn't white until European colonizers attempted genocide on the Native American population. It wasn't white when millions of slaves were forcibly brought to these lands. It wasn't even considered white when my Hungarian and Slavic ancestors immigrated to the United States. They were dirty Hunkies – seen as one rung up from the African Americans in the neighborhood – and over time, those dirty Hunkies became “white.”

So there's a false narrative – a set of alternative facts about the reality of this country. But let's face it – as my dad used to joke “don't bother me with the facts, my minds made up!” No amount of fact-finding and fact-checking and evidence to dispute false claims of a rigged election was going to make a whit of difference. That's where liberal intellectuals like me get mired down. We think that if we just can demonstrate rationally and factually the evidence to counter these claims that there will be a reckoning – an epiphany – and that one of those who terrorized the capital would say “Ah yes, of course! I see it now! This culture is steeped in white supremacy and I'm a part of that! I'm afraid of losing status and power as a white person and that's why I've followed the President ! But now I can see that the vision of a multi-cultural, multi-religious, ethnically diverse, gender inclusive society is a strength and not something to be feared! I see it! Hallelujah! “ It ain't gonna happen! You know it and I know it!

But something can and does happen when a government takes responsibility for its own apartheid, right? For its own systems of oppression, baked in, from the ground up, and looks at it squarely and takes steps on an institutional level to root it out. Dechoke – as they say in Haiti – rip up by the sick roots and replant healthy forests. We have some examples to help us do this as a nation.

We are blessed today by having the virtual presence of Bokomoso, a partnership that All Souls has had with this organization for almost twenty years. In a non-covid year, youth from the Bokamoso Youth Center would be in our sanctuary singing and dancing and providing testimonials about how their lives have been changed by our partnership with this organization.

But, on Wednesday as all this began to unfold, I wondered if we should postpone Bokamoso Sunday so as to focus on the events of this week more fully. But then, my colleague, Rev. Louise Green, pointed out that there is a direct relationship and link between the struggles of South Africa to break free of apartheid and the struggles the United States is having with our own unacknowledged apartheid. Her comments reminded me of the obvious – that other countries have dealt with their own white supremacy culture better than the United States has. This is not to say that there is any nation on earth that has perfectly eradicated white supremacy culture – not white culture – white supremacy culture. However, we do look to South Africa and a revolution that happened there without a civil war, a revolution followed by a Truth and Reconciliation Process, however imperfectly implemented, as a model for change and healing. Other countries, such as Canada, Australia, El Salvador, Chile, Argentina, Congo and Kenya have all put some form of Truth and Reconciliation council in place to address the harm done by the state to black, brown, indigeneous and people of color. Why has not the allegedly most powerful and advanced democracy in the world done the same? I suspect the answer is because of cowardice and failure of leadership. Black and white politicians, artists, protesters, preachers, poets, essayists, filmmakers can all write and sing and demonstrate to the facts of oppression, brutality, and white supremacy that is embedded in American culture but unless there is a reckoning from the highest offices in the land, it will be a sidelined conversation.

Why have our two major political parties, and I must call out the Republican Party particularly, so cowardly about denouncing racism and white supremacy? Reading the Republican Platform from 2016, there is no mention of systemic racism, no mention of the realities of black and brown bodies and state violence, in fact, no acknowledgement of people of color at all. The Republican leaders who objected to the electoral votes of swing states they lost, but who then turned around and denounced the violence should be ashamed of themselves. And the President of the United States should be removed immediately from office for his failure to uphold the Constitution which he swore to serve, defend and protect. His complete abdication of leadership during this crisis is enough evidence to demonstrate his unsuitability for this job. And there is nothing he can say or do at this point which will heal the nation. Only a new administration and the hard work from the American people can do that. And, I would add, a serious engagement from the highest offices of our nation, not in any Commission on Electoral Fraud, but instead in a Commission on Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations.

For nearly 30 years, Former US Representative John Conyers of Detroit kept introducing a bill to form a Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. Note – this is not even a bill to create reparations – it’s a request to develop a commission to study and develop proposals! Most recently, the last Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell signaled that this bill won’t be taken up in his Republican controlled chamber, saying “I don’t think reparations for something that happened 150 years ago for whom none of us currently living are responsible is a good idea. We’ve tried to deal with our original sin of slavery by fighting a civil war, by passing landmark civil rights legislation. We’ve elected an African-American president...but no one currently alive was responsible for slavery.” McConnell misses an essential point; that this trauma lives in the body politic of the republic and it can only be treated by a full body scan. Will this make white nationalist domestic terrorists go away? Change their mind? Unlikely. But what a reparations commission can do is to change American culture to make racism white nationalism completely unacceptable.

Thirty years ago, people were smoking on airplanes. It was normal. Many scientists had warned for a long time that it was bad for everyone's health to be breathing in someone else's smoke! You don't have to have been alive thirty years ago and breathing 2nd hand smoke on a plane to know that today the change in our attitudes and in our laws and practice about indoor smoking has benefitted everybody! Well, racism and white supremacy culture is far worse for everyone's health and for the body of our Republic! For the health of our democracy! For our striving to build this more perfect Union!

We have a lot of hopes pinned on this new administration, because the last four years have been simply awful. There is going to be a lot of pent-up energy and demand for the Biden-Harris administration to work quickly on issues that progressive people care about. They will not get it perfect. They will ignore or not act quickly enough for the likes of many of us. It's not unlike when you get a new minister. During Candidating week, everything seems possible- hopes and dreams expressed, some explicit and some tacit promises are made.

And then the new minister arrives, and they don't respond in a timely manner to the areas of church life which you care about. But over time, and by building relationship, things do change.

So, as the President-elect often says – here's the deal! We can and must all be part of the resistance to white supremacy culture over and over and over and over again and we can all be part of the reckoning and the reparations needed — to not fully heal – but to reveal – what's real – and only by continuing to reveal what's real can we work to heal. And that's the deal we're entering into in just nine days!

There's one last thing I want to say – and it has to do with Inauguration Day. Your Executive and Ministry team encouraged you all NOT to participate in any counter protests on January 6th and given the volatility of that crowd, I am glad we did not. We don't yet know what is planned for the Inauguration. I hope and pray for the much-desired peaceful transition of power and that the talk of another protest is just that – all talk. But, I will be here the day before, during and after inauguration and will be monitoring the liberal clergy, churches and our partner organization's response. If we are asked to be a presence, Rev. Keithan, Rev. Green, Executive Director Traci Hughes-Trotter and I will let you know.

Because as Bokamoso youth reminds us – we will never, never, never, never give up! We will resist – whether in body, mind, heart and/or spirit any attempts to undermine this ritual of reconciliation known as the Inauguration of a new President. We will persist in our own work, to uproot the unacknowledged biases and habits that maintain white supremacy culture. And we will insist that the values and the vision that includes not just we, the people, but ALL the people will be first on the list of this administration's priorities – so that all of may co-exist in peace. May it be so.

### **Anthem (Bokamoso Youth)**

“Sagiya”

### **Offering (Patricia Lambert)**

Growing up under Apartheid in South Africa became increasingly traumatic for me as I became increasingly aware of the full measure of oppression and structural inequality. I eventually found my spiritual and political home in the African National Congress, the political party lead by moral giants like Albert Luthuli, OR Tambo and Nelson Mandela. My comrades were my friends and my support system. We participated together in our struggle for democracy, celebrated the fall of Apartheid and the transition to a constitutional democracy together, and then worked together to build a new society. When I came to work in Washington in November 2006, I did not anticipate how much I would miss my friends and the support structures we had built and nurtured. I felt bereft and terribly, terribly homesick. I'm what my mother used to call a 'big girl', so I dealt with the emotions as best I could and got on with my work. But that changed dramatically in 2009 when I came to All Souls for the first time on Easter Sunday morning with my beloved spouse, Kathy. All Souls became a new spiritual home for me. Kathy and I became members within a few weeks and we have both worked in the church as volunteers. We've been members for almost 12 years. We know the value of what we get here and what it takes, financially, to run All Souls. That is why we give as generously as we can to the church, and to organizations that work in partnership with All Souls.

Nelson Mandela is appreciated around the globe for his patience, his generosity of spirit, his sense of humour and his profound wisdom. Shortly before he died, he said, "Our children are our future and one of our basic responsibilities is to care for them in the best and most compassionate manner possible." The word 'bokamoso' means 'future' and since 1999, the Bokamoso Life Centre has provided at-risk youth with essential training in life skills, scholarships for college-level education and, equally important, the emotional support that is desperately needed for the young people of the Winterveld. We at All Souls are, quite literally, a life-line for them.

A portion of today's offering will be given directly to Bokamoso to further their work. You may give by clicking on the link in the chat or by following the instructions on the website slide. Today, not just for All Souls but also for the young people of Bokamoso, please reach into your pockets and give as generously as you possibly can. Thank you.

## **Hymn**

"Up Above My Head"

Up above my head there is the music of the Lord.  
Do you believe? Do you really believe there is the music somewhere?  
Up above my head there is the music of the Lord

Deep down in my heart there is the music of the Lord.  
Do you believe? Do you really believe there is the music somewhere?  
Deep down in heart there is the music of the Lord

Down down down my feet there is the music of the Lord.  
Do you believe? Do you really believe there is the music somewhere?  
Down down down my feet there is the music of the Lord

## **Benediction (Rev. Rolenz)**



As we go forth from this time together, take these words adapted & attributed to Nelson Mandela with you:

We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right. [Whatever we strive to do] ...always seems impossible until it's done...[for when] people are determined they can overcome anything. May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears. May you go forth into this day with determination, with hope and with joy. May it be so.

**Music (Bokamoso Youth)**

“Dance for Mandela”