

Worship transcript for May 16, 2021

Prelude (Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout)

“Where You Go, I Will Go”

Your divine, my divine...

Where you go I will go, beloved, where you go I will go
For your people are my people, your people are mine
Your people are my people, your divine my divine

Where you go I will go, children, where you go I will go
For your people are my people, your people are mine
Your people are my people, your divine my divine

Call to Worship (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)

Welcome to this day made glorious by our rising
Welcome to this hour we make sacred by our gathering
Welcome to this moment we make holy by our very breath
Welcome to the place where we call each other beloved
And where we may feel ourselves beloved on the earth.
Come, let us worship together.
Kindling our chalice flame this morning are:

Chalice Lighting (the Johnson-Farmer family)

Intro to Hymn (Jen Hayman)

Hymn

“We Shall Be Known” (MaMuse)

We shall be known by the company we keep,
By the ones who circle round to tend these fires
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap
The seeds of change alive from deep within the earth
It is time now, it is time now that we thrive
It is time we lead ourselves into the well
It is time now, and what a time to be alive
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love

Welcome (Rev. Maybelle Taylor Bennett)

Welcome to All Souls Church! My name is Rev. Maybelle Taylor Bennett and my pronouns are she/her/hers. We welcome all who have joined us this morning, especially if you are joining us for the very first time. We are now a global church community where our name, All Souls says it all. Here we seek to create a community where ALL people are welcome at the table of God's love and human fellowship.

Our mission at All Souls is to build what Dr. King called the "Beloved Community." We invite you to join us on this journey of faith and hope. Again, if you are visiting us for the first time, we welcome you. Please send a Direct Message to Gary Penn, Membership Coordinator, if you'd like to be included on our mailing list.

In an effort to acknowledge and support Indigenous communities, it is important to recognize the land on which our church stands. The closest tribe was Nacotchtank, from which the name Anacostia is derived. They were part of the Piscataway group of tribes. We acknowledge that indigeneous peoples were here before us, are here with us now, and will continue to be with us, as we look forward to the future. Let's take a moment of silence to reflect on whose land we each reside, in our individual and collective locations around the U.S. and our planet Earth. [Silence]

If we were together in the building, we would turn and greet one another. While we are still on-line, we do something called "beholding." Take a moment to scroll through the gallery view, say hello in the chat to one another, and behold one another's faces as we together, create community.

Child Dedication

Lionel Joseph McGlashan, child of A. Tianna Scozzaro and Andre McGlashan

Announcements and Prayer (Rev. Rolenz)

The theme for the month of May is Blessing, and I can't imagine a better way to illustrate this theme than to welcome and bless children into this community. So welcome Lionel and the entire family into the embrace of All Souls.

I'm Rev. Kathleen Rolenz serving as your interim Senior Minister and it's my pleasure to introduce the final guest preacher of the Visiting Minister series which began in January 2021. Our Guest Minister is the Rev. John Crestwell, who is now serving as the Co-Executive Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, Maryland. I know that Rev. John has preached here before and that some of you are familiar with him as a minister of renown in the area.

The threads running between churches and colleagues are intertwined. He started his ministerial career at Davies UU Congregation, where former Minister of Adult Spiritual Development, the Rev. Norm Allen is now the called and settled minister. Rev. John was the Associate Minister of Annapolis with Rev. Fred Muir and then became the co-equal minister of Annapolis with REv. Anastasia Zinke – formerly of All Souls. Rev. John and I ministered together when I served as the Interim Senior Minister in Annapolis. So it is a delight to welcome him to our pulpit.

I do want to know that Rev. John suffered a devastating loss last Sunday, when his mother Kathleen Crestwell, died unexpectedly on Mother's Day. So he asked if he could offer a recorded sermon instead and I said "of course." Whether Rev. John is preaching in person or recorded I know you'll enjoy and appreciate his dynamism, his charisma and his powerful message.

After today's service we're hosting an After Hour Conversation on Governance: Putting the Me in We – Congregational governance and YOU. at 11:45 – 12:45 PM. Today's discussion explores what is the congregation's role in creating and sustaining healthy systems of governance? Link can be found in the chat on the church website

Next Sunday – please take note of an important After Hour Gathering – the Board invites you to engage with them on the question of updating our Congregation's Goals in 2021-2022. Held at the same time is a Gathering for Multiracial families.

Now we turn our hearts and minds to the concerns and celebrations both near and far. This morning we celebrate the work of Judith Bauer who choreographed an intergenerational dance for the Dance On Festival offered online by Dance Exchange on Friday! And a very happy birthday to Judith on Monday, May 17th! Judith – smiles, hugs and best wishes from All Souls!

We are glad to hear that Carol Chamberlain is at Stoddard Baptist Nursing Home in Mt. Pleasant. Carol was released from her second hospitalization after hip surgery and is rehab.

A Celebration of Life for Bob Bloomfield will be held on Friday, June 11, at 4 pm. Please join spouse Barbara McCann and Bob's family, friends and All Souls community in this Zoom event. The link for the memorial is on the All Souls website calendar on the home page.

Join with me now – in a centering moment – a time to stop multitasking – perhaps even a time to stop texting or direct messaging – and be present to, with and for one another. A time to pause – to meditate – to pray....

Spirit of Life, known to us by many names and beyond all naming – be with us now.
In the silence of this moment, we bring both our sorrows and celebrations,
We grieve the loss of life and the violence that has erupted in Israel and Palestine;
We pray for a swift end to the cycle of aggression and defense
Which will end only in more blood shed; more loss of property and life
We pray for the peace of Palestine; we pray for the heart of Israel.

With these sorrows, we also can feel joy as we begin to remove our masks
And begin to see one another as whole persons
Embodied people living into the fullness of these days.
For the nurses, physician and medical professionals who saved our lives,
For the scientists who gave us hope;
For the federal employees who gave us guidelines
For the patient ones who endured isolation to keep themselves and their beloved safe,
We must express our joy.

Our trials are not over, but we can take this moment to breathe fully
Appreciatively, grateful, for this day – this hour – this moment – this very breath.
May it ever be so. Amen.

Hymn 123

“Spirit of Life”

Fuente de amor, ven hacia mi
Y al corazon cantale tu compasion
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.

Sermon (Rev. John T. Crestwell)

“What Is Beloved Community”

Greetings All Souls. I am so honored to be given this opportunity to share with you again. To my friend and colleague, Rev. Kathleen Rolenz who served with me for 2 ½ years in Annapolis thanks for inviting me. Rev. Kathleen is a gem. You are fortunate to have her. The name Kathleen has a special place in my heart. That was my mother’s name. She recently transitioned. I dedicate this sermon to her.

I have preached for you many times in the past—but nothing like this moment in time. We are living in a strange period in human history, indeed. But we persevere don’t we. We keep going. We have too. We turn tragedy into triumph. That’s what spiritual people do. We are alchemists. We transform adversity into opportunity. That’s what being human is all about and that’s what being in Beloved Community is all about. But what is beloved community? We use that word all the time. That’s what I’m going to talk about today.

I believe I have integrated many ideas and come up with a definition and some key concepts to help you in your evolving understanding of beloved community. The activist Adrienne Maree Brown in her book Emergent Strategy (SLIDE UP EMERGENT STRATEGY) has been a big help in helping me articulate my ideas. First, let me name five things that are key to understanding beloved community. (SLIDE UP)

1. YOU are Beloved Community
2. What you pay attention to grows for better or worse
3. And you grow at the speed of trust
4. Resiliency is required as a spiritual being

5. Collaboration is better than competition so decentralize your trust. Trust people to do the work.

I can hear somebody say, “I’d better pay attention to this sermon!”

1. You are the beloved community. Where ever you are and whatever you are doing you carry your faith, our principles and your humanity with you. Every social justice project you work on and in every interaction with all beings you are beloved community. For me, the beloved community is an inspirational, direct experience and aspirational hoped for reality we share with all sentient beings. We experience beloved community as moments of aha or YES or thank you or hallelujah, and we aspire to create a world with peace, liberty and justice for all. Beloved Community is not just linear but it is a cyclical experience. It is a BOTH/AND possibility. It is not just the future we hope for, but it is also right now in any moment when you experience bliss, joy, communion, support, love and so much more. The “minister of equal standing” in Annapolis who serves with me, Rev. Anastassia Zinke, who, btw, found her call to ministry here at All Souls; she calls beloved community the “Be Loved Community”. I love that... It is where we wish to be our authentic selves. It is a place inside us and outside us where we feel loved and it is a community of spiritual people sharing common values, working together to make the inside as the outside. “As above so below. As within so without.” Therefore, we are striving for beloved community individually and collectively.

2. Point two, in any beloved community what you pay attention to grows, for better or for worse. And 3. You will grow, spiritually, at the speed of trust. In Adrienne Maree Brown’s work with Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter, and other grassroots efforts, she has experienced many highs and lows building community. She’s seen the power of groups when they are unified in mission—and in understanding their differences and how to effectively collaborate to do justice-making. She has also seen groups devolve into distrust, bitterness, and despair where blaming becomes the focus and unhealthy people and things get attention. How do you know when something is unhealthy? When a person or process is unhealthy reconciliation feels impossible. Blame takes center stage and no one takes any personal responsibility. We cancel and point the finger and we forget that we are all “homousious” –that’s Greek meaning “of the same substance.” We are all one people, one body, one organism trying to find homeostasis, individually and collectively. We all wish to survive and thrive and sometimes that causes conflict in how understand our own needs and the community’s needs. That is why emotional self-awareness is required in any beloved community—especially among leadership. When there ISN’T strong ministerial and lay leadership, grounded in love, you can get stuck in that outmoded idea of winners and losers; us versus them (polarization and blame) and we forget who WE are. It’s not just about you or me, rather it’s about ALL of us. (Slide up–US) We are spiritual beings meant to love and be loved. When we forget that being a human being means, above all, being a HUMANE BEING then we get lost in our own psychosis. (SLIDE UP “humane being”). We can become drunk with the wine of our own egotism. As the Buddhists say, contemplation is required on a spiritual path. BUT, I’m not naive. On the other side, we cannot trust or forgive because it has been broken with us too many times. We’ve been hurt. I get that. But I also hear a song: “Though you’ve broken the vow a thousand times, come, come whoever you are.” We have to find a way to turn those ouches in to Aha’s! To let our inner wisdom, loose to see the bigger story unfolding. Tragedy is triumph. Learning to trust is the big project we are here on earth to do. As we make mistakes with whom we trust we remember that mistakes are lessons and we become wiser—more discerning with our trust which allows us to keep trusting and instead of getting BITTER we get better. We become better trust-ees. If you are struggling with

trust I ask that you examine your fears, biases, motives. What you pay attention to grows for better or worse. Be careful what you are giving your attention to... And remember the great work we do moves at the speed of trust.

4. My 4th point: To trust, resiliency is required. To be resilient is “being able to recover from adversity.” (dictionary.com). We fall down but we get back up. Sometimes we must stay down awhile but getting back up means we come back to the table of beloved community. We get tired and despair sometimes, (we have to take a break) but we never fully lose hope for building and being in right-relationship. We step away from the table sometimes but when we are healthier and ready, we come back because we truly believe in what we are doing and the values we are holding together. Resiliency is necessary. We must keep making lemonade out of lemons. Why? So that we can have some semblance of hope and make a life out of this journey. Why? Because as AMB says we are co-creating our reality. (SLIDE UP of her book) So, we come back again and again because we know that thoughts are things. What we see as our present and future can eventually become. That’s what hope is all about. That’s what having faith is all about. And, don’t forget gratitude and joy are necessary to do this work. It’s what healthy cells do—they seek health. As biological organisms we naturally seek health—that’s what ADM believes. Seeking health is all about what we focus on. And as we seek health we must be mindful of our actions—that they are not causing harm and DIS-EASE. My motto is “Do less harm”. As first world people we will do harm—but being more mindful helps us to do less harm in our human interactions. So, to be in beloved community saying I’m sorry and holding yourself accountable is necessary for the community’s survival.

One of the most resilient people I know is Rev. Kathleen Rolenz. She is a strong leader but she can also hear difficult feedback and bounce back stronger, wiser and better. I love that about her... Resilience is a quality my African ancestors had. I don’t know if you’ve seen his show on PBS but I’ve been watching Dr. Henry Louis Gates’ program “Finding Your Roots” and I marvel at the stories he uncovers. Every African American celebrity on the show that learns about their past, ends up saying the same thing: “I come from some really resilient people.” And they are proud of that fact. They are moved by their ancestors’ sheer toughness and WILL to survive and thrive. And they know instantly—you can see it in their eyes (AHA!) (YES!) I am a rebirthed product of my ancestors’ inspirations and aspirations. Amen! I am the living embodiment of their hope for beloved community. Hallelujah! For any of us to be here today, so many struggled and starved and bled and died and sacrificed in hopes that one day somebody or some body of people might live “one wild and precious life,” quoting (Mary Oliver). And that is why we move from sickness to health again and again—from tragedy to triumph—despair to hope because “to whom much is given much is required.”

5. Finally, number 5. Collaboration is better than competition.

Competition needs control and must be the best and win at all costs. Collaboration says we are all the best in our own unique way—and that’s Universalism. That’s why I like to say that competition creates champions, but collaboration creates community. (SLIDE UP). With trust we can collaborate (work together) to build beloved community. With competition it’s about ego (ME/MINE) instead of US and ALL OF US. With collaboration we can trust that the work will get done. I don’t want to be one of those leaders whose nose has to be in every conversation or in everything that’s going on. That’s insecure leadership. I also don’t want to be the kind of leader that has to lead everything. I don’t mind leading some things; and I don’t mind following others. For me, shared leadership is the new paradigm. Which is why I encouraged my congregation to embrace having two ministers of equal standing. The old paradigm was too top/down. Male-

centric. It's a predatorial paradigm based on conquering people, places and things—organizing people as part of an assembly line. This aggressive paradigm, like lions, tigers and bears is going extinct. Study evolution. Things that are adaptable survive. Shared leadership is adaptable. The new paradigm is about collaboration; modeling shared leadership and building decentralized leaders. What is decentralized leadership? BLM is—decentralized leadership. You can't target one particular leader because there are leaders all across the world! In the old way, you could remove one person and stop a movement. This was a flaw in the Civil Rights Movement—too much power rested with one person. And that creates burnout, envy, egotism, and disorganization. That's why I said earlier that YOU ARE BC. Each one of you has your own ministry. You have Rev. Rob Keithan who is a wonderful social justice leader, but YOU are also the congregation's social justice. Whether you mention the words All Souls, DC or not or say that you're a UU, you are doing the work of this church wherever you are and wherever you go. That's the mentality I have.

And that's what decentralized leadership is—trusting the many parts will work as one. That our love will emanate; trusting that the work will get done. Stepping up and stepping back. Taking the lead and letting go. Collaboration is a dance. Some of us might need some dance lessons. Amen.

I've always seen the UU church as the place activists go to get recharged. We might come here with a half a tank, quarter of a tank or on empty one, but we all get recharged by the kinetic spirit and teamwork in our beloved community.

That's all I want to share with you today but let me summarize my message... (SLIDE UP of Bullets) YOU are beloved community. Beloved Community is inspirational and aspirational. Focus on what helps you and your congregation grow because you will grow at the speed of trust. With trust you TRUST that people are seeking to be healthy, responsible beings and if not, a healthy system will make the adjustments to minimize damage. Be resilient—that is, keep coming back to the communal table of possibility because this is how we change ourselves and our world. We are constructing reality together. And remember, you are the leader that you've been looking for so stop looking over there for the person to lead.

Friends, there is so much uncertainty right now in this world, but you can create your version of beloved community right where you stand. I implore you to say YES. Say yes to possibility; yes, to hope; yes, to those higher aspirations; yes, to perseverance and resilience; yes, to community; yes, to joy; yes, to love.

It is so good to be with you again, All Souls. Blessings on this community. Blessings for us all. Amen.

Anthem (All Souls Choir)

“I Need You to Survive” (David Frazier)

I need you, you need me
We're all a part of God's body
Stand with me, agree with me
We're all a part of God's body
It is God's will that every need be supplied
You are important to me
I need you to survive

You are important to me
I need you to survive

(repeat)

I pray for you, you pray for me
I love you, I need you to survive
I won't harm you with words from my mouth
I love you, I need you to survive

(repeat 4 times)

It is God's will that every need be supplied
You are important to me
I need you to survive
You are important to me
I need you to survive

Offertory (Rev. Bennett)

All Souls, this is that time in our service when we reflect on the gifts WE have been given. The gift of life, and those things which sustain life. The gifts of friendship and support. The gifts of resilience and endurance— and the gift of this church, which has continued to uplift and enfold us throughout these difficult times. If this service has given you something to think about; if the music has touched you – if the faces you see have brought you joy – then we invite you to return that joy with your personal energies and materials means. Make your pledge to the church; pay on your pledge or make a donation now as we pass the virtual plate. Freely we have received gifts that minister to our needs of body and spirit.

Generously we grace All Souls and its wide concerns with a portion of our bounty.
The morning's offering will now be received.

Hymn

“I'm On My Way”

I'm on my way to the freedom land (3x)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way
I asked my friend, come and go with me (3x)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way
If they say no, I'll go anyhow (3x)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way
I'm on my way and I won't turn back (3x)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way

Benediction (Rev. Rolenz)

As we leave this hour, remember that YOU are Beloved Community; and that we are resilient people. Go forth from this place knowing that there is a power at work in the universe

That power was not made by human hands, but requires our hands to do the work.
Our worship has ended, may our service begin.

Music (All Souls Festival Choir)

“Today” (Kirk Franklin)

Hey Hey Hey Hey...

Today, I'm hungry and I'm ready for change

I've run too far to still be the same

See who I was I give him away

Today

Today, no longer bound by what people say

I know that I will make mistakes

I fall but I refuse to stay

Today

I've been waiting all my life to get to the door

And now it's time to help someone see they're alive for so much more

[Chorus:]

Help somebody

Heal somebody

Free somebody

Forgive somebody

Touch somebody

Love somebody

Catch somebody

Let go of somebody

Today, I see the hurt upon your face

Thinking how much more of this can I take

In a minute I'm about to break

Today

See the pain, has purpose so don't throw it away

There's a harvest if you only wait

Don't walk out now I need you to stay

Today

Though you've never felt winds blow like this before

But if what you see is all you see you will miss there's so much more

[Chorus:]

Help somebody

Heal somebody

Free somebody

Forgive somebody

Touch somebody

Love somebody

Catch somebody

Let go of somebody

Today (We goin' live our lives)
Today (We can't waste no more time)
Today (We not looking back no more)
Today

Hey Hey Hey Hey...
Today, I think I feel the weather change
Think I felt my last drop of rain
I believe I'm gonna be ok
Today

See today, (Today) I'm still here because of my faith (my faith)
I believe that is the only way
I said it cuz I 'm not afraid
Today
[Chorus:]
Help somebody
Heal somebody
Free somebody
Forgive somebody
Touch somebody
Love somebody
Catch somebody
Let go of somebody
[x2]
Today, we will be the change
Today, we're gonna stop the way
Today, we will find a way
Today