

Worship Transcript for July 11, 2021

Food & Justice: A Celebration of Urban Farm Community

Rev. Louise Green

Erika Symmonds

Liturgist & Worship Associate: Kirk Freeman

Music by Rochelle Rice/ BAM

Coffee Hour: Gary Penn

ASL Interpreter: Mia Engle

Prelude: "Hallelujah" by MaMuse

Performed by: Jen Hayman & Rochelle Rice- vocals

Every time I feel this way

This old familiar sinking

I will lay my trouble down by water

Where the river will never run dry

Hallelujah (I'm gonna let myself be lifted)

By and by

I will lay my troubles down by the water

Where the river will never run dry

It's been said and I do believe

As you ask so shall you receive

So, take me from these troubles. Bring me sweet release.

Where the river will never run dry.

Hallelujah (I'm gonna let myself be lifted)

By and by

I will lay my troubles down by the water
Where the river will never run dry

There is a river in this heart of hearts
With a knowingness of my highest good
I am willing. I will do my part.
Where the river will never run dry

Hallelujah (I'm gonna let myself be lifted)
By and by
I will lay my troubles down by the water
Where the river will never run dry
This river will never run dry.

Call To Worship: Rev. Louise Green

Hello, I'm Rev. Louise Green, and I welcome you to All Souls worship, and invite you to let yourself be lifted.

Our theme this morning revolves around the wisdom of land, gardening and farming. The intersection of food and justice, and the revolution taking place in those realms.

We begin with this excerpt from Seven of Pentacles, by Marge Piercy:

Under a sky the color of pea soup
she is looking at her work growing away there
actively, thickly like grapevines or pole beans
as things grow in the real world, slowly enough.
If you tend them properly, if you mulch, if you water,
if you provide birds that eat insects a home and winter food,
if the sun shines and you pick off caterpillars,
if the praying mantis comes and the ladybugs and the bees,
then the plants flourish, but at their own internal clock.

In worship we remember that not all flourishing happens because of our efforts. We call upon a Source and Spirit deeply in tune with land and growing and the pace of plants. Welcome to this space of renewal and restoration.

Our joint chalice will be lit by Peter Hanes this morning, and you are invited to also light your own candle if you wish at this time.

Peter Hanes: Chalice Lighting, by Elizabeth McMaster

We light our flaming chalice

to illuminate the world we seek.

In the search for truth, may we be just;

in the search for justice, may we be loving;

and, in loving, may we find peace.

Rochelle Rice: Good morning and welcome. My name is Rochelle Rice and I am the associate director of music and arts. Today is a Black American Music worship service featuring multiple music program ensembles and some of DC's most sought after musicians who have become friends of this community. I invite you now to remain on mute and join in singing our opening hymn, Guide my Feet.

Opening Hymn #348 Guide My Feet

Guide my feet while I run this race

For I don't want to run this race in vain

Hold my hand while I run this race

For I don't want to run this race in vain

Stand by me while I run this race

For I don't want to run this race in vain

Search my heart while I run this race

For I don't want to run this race in vain

Performed by The All Souls BAM Ensemble: Rochelle Rice- vocals; Janelle Gill- piano; Romeir Mendez- bass; Dante Pope- drums

Louise: Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Once again, hello and welcome. Welcome to a community where our search for spirituality and our passion for social action are both central. Where reverence for the Earth and belief in the dignity of every person informs our ethics. Where music is an expression of our joy and acts of justice are a symbol of our hope.

Welcome to this place where ALL people — people of all races, national origins, creeds, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, ages and disabilities—where ALL people are welcome at this table of love and fellowship.

We extend a special greeting to our visitors, and those joining us for the first time. If you would like to receive our weekly email bulletins, please send a direct message to Gary Penn in the chat.

To acknowledge and support Indigenous communities, it is important to recognize the people who lived on the land where our church now stands. The closest village was Nacotchtank, from which the name Anacostia is derived. They were part of the Piscataway group of tribes.

We acknowledge that indigenous peoples were here before us, are here with us now, and will continue to be with us as we look to the future. Let's take a moment of silence to reflect on whose land we each reside, in our many locations around the U.S. and our planet Earth. [Silence]

Now we will greet each other in a time of "beholding." If you feel so moved, please turn on your camera, put your Zoom on gallery view, and scroll through the pages of beautiful souls. You can wave, say hello in the chat, and behold one another as we continue to create online community together.

Kirk Freeman: ANNOUNCE & CONG. CONCERNS, PRAYER

Good morning All Souls!

My name is Kirk Freeman and my pronouns are he / him.

I have been attending All Souls for just about 20 years, and have been a member for 14.

I haven't been around much lately because I have been serving as a ministerial intern at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville this past year and I will be there through the end of this coming church year.

It is SO GOOD to be worshipping with you this morning.

Even in these hot summer months, there is so much going on in the life of this church. You can always find more information about our offerings on the church website or in the Weekly Bulletin.

This morning, I have one announcement to share, and I am very excited about it!

All Souls is participating in a congregational worship exchange, and the series Preaching up the Potomac continues over the next two Sundays.

So: Instead of meeting together in this space we are invited to join our UU siblings at the Cedar Lane and River Road UU congregations.

Please note these services will begin at 11 am. Let me repeat that... these services will begin at 11am.

You can access these services directly from our kin congregations' websites. I'm sure additional information will also be shared in church communications over the coming weeks.

Sunday, July 18, 2021

Being Spiritual AND Religious

Rev. Abhi Janamanchi

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church @ 11:00 AM | cedarlane.org

Sunday, July 25, 2021

For Good

Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd

River Road Unitarian Universalist Church @ 11:00 AM | rruuc.org

As we turn now to a time of Congregational Care, I invite you to bring the names and situations on your mind into this space in silence. You may also put these in the Chat if you would like others to see them.

Today we are thinking of Marean Duarte, who was in the hospital and is being evaluated for a heart condition. Marean is awaiting further testing and a treatment plan. We send love to her in this time of medical uncertainty, as well as to spouse Pablo DeJesus, and their young son Javier.

Our deep condolences to Lauran Howard, whose great aunt Edna died in home hospice in Maryland in June. Lauran was able to spend time with her daily for some months. We send blessings to Lauran and extended family as they mourn the last family member of this generation.

Long-time All Souls member Kip Thoresen died on June 21, passing peacefully in his sleep in Coral Gables, Fl. Kip was a big supporter of the All Souls music program and loved the arts. He was able to take a last trip to Key West with his nephews and see a beloved beach before his death. His nephew Michael Thoresen had been coordinating care. The family has asked that we name Kip's death and offer prayers in this Sunday service. They do not plan to have a memorial service beyond extended family.

Finally, our thoughts are with Peter Sailer, who had a heart attack on Thursday night and is in ICU at Suburban Hospital. We send our prayers to Peter, spouse Laura, and children Fred and Lisa now traveling in to see their father. We send love to all as they evaluate next steps.

Please join me in prayer or meditation, as is your practice....

Spirit of life and love. Spirit of compassion and connection:

We are grateful for this time to be together, for this sacred time to share our joys and sorrows with one another, and to know that we are held in the warm embrace of this community even as we hold our joys and sorrows in the silent sanctuaries of our hearts.

As we behold one another -- As we hold one another -- across the distance of time, and space:

Remind us, as the song does, there is a river that will never run dry.

May it be so, this day and everyday. Amen.

Spirit of Life (pre-recorded, virtual choir)

Fuente de amor, ven hacia mi Y al corazón cántale tu compasión
Sopla al volar, sube en la mar Hasta moldear la justicia de la vida
Arraígame, libérame 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.

Moment of Silence + Chalice Viewing

Kirk Freeman: OFFERING

It is so good to be here and to sing that hymn with you.

All Souls is such a special place to me.

Rev. Green's call to worship this morning resonated with me so deeply.

You see, I was fortunate to land in this community, this congregation, this fertile soil, when the tiny seed of my spirit had fallen to the dirt, unsure if there was life ahead. It was in this church where I found solid ground, and where my spirit was invited to flourish again, at the speed of my own internal clock.

This congregation is a garden where we can tend to our own spirits... and more importantly... where we can tend to one another.

Over the past year, it has been my privilege to be a part of the team that initiated A Pantry for All Souls, the Little Free Pantry, located on 15th Street outside behind Pierce Hall. I have loved watching the pantry take on a life of its own as an offshoot, a trimming, of this Congregation.

The pantry, like this church, is a place where people bring and give from their own abundance and can be nourished by the generosity of another.

All Souls is a special place. And I want it to continue to tend to the seeds of hope, and justice, and mutuality, and love that this world so desperately needs.

That is why my family and I give to All Souls. And that is why I invite you to do so as well.

This morning's offering will now be gratefully given and gratefully received.

Information on how to give will be shared on the screen and in the chat.

Thank you. And blessed be.

ANTHEM: "Bones" by Maren Morris

Performed by Jen Hayman & Rochelle Rice- vocals; John Lee- guitar

We're in the homestretch of the hard times
We took a hard left, but we're alright
Yeah, life sure can try to put love through it, but
We built this right, so nothing's ever gonna move it

When the bones are good, the rest don't matter
Yeah, the paint could peel, the glass could shatter
Let it rain 'cause you and I remain the same
When there ain't a crack in the foundation
Baby, I know any storm we're facing
Will blow right over while we stay put
The house don't fall when the bones are good

Could be dumb luck, but baby, you and I
Couldn't mess it up though we both try
No, it don't always go the way we planned it
But the wolves came and went and we're still standing

When the bones are good, the rest don't matter
Yeah, the paint could peel, the glass could shatter
Let it rain 'cause you and I remain the same
When there ain't a crack in the foundation
Baby, I know any storm we're facing
Will blow right over while we stay put
The house don't fall when the bones are good
When the bones are good

Bones are good, the rest, the rest don't matter

Paint could peel, the glass could shatter
Bones are good, the rest, the rest don't matter
Paint could peel, the glass, the glass could shatter

When the bones are good, the rest don't matter
the paint could peel, the glass could shatter
Let it rain cause you and I remain the same
When there ain't a crack in the foundation
Baby, I know any storm we're facing
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Food & Justice: A Celebration of Urban Farm Community

Erika Symmonds Reflection One

I was asked to share with you my connection to food justice.

I grew up in Brooklyn, NY in a community filled with many immigrants from the Caribbean. I am the daughter of immigrants born in Barbados and St. Lucia. I ended up growing up with my mom, my older sister, and my grandmother who immigrated from Barbados. If you're a regular on this broadcast, you might know her from our chalice lighting episodes including just last week. We lived in a row home in the heart of East Flatbush and had the luxury of both a backyard and a little front yard. I can remember the experience of my grandmother allowing me to pick and eat cherry tomatoes from her plant that grew in the soil that bordered the grassy backyard on three sides. Although my wife will confirm that I usually do not like plain tomatoes, those tomatoes were the first food I can remember eating straight from a garden. Something about that was magical! My grandmother also frequently shares how she grew up in a home where plenty of healthy food was grown in the yard and that neighbors shared their extra produce with each other. The community had healthy soil, skills to grow, and a cooperative desire to share. I've been to St. Lucia once. My mother, a year before she passed away, took my sister and me to see the island she loved and the place she was born before moving as a child to Barbados. She was proud and fond of St. Lucia- its hilly terrain full of green. She said no one here goes hungry. There is food growing all around. (Wow! Can you imagine?)

Years before that, when I graduated from college, I hadn't yet thought about the connection between food and justice. (even after all that fancy Wellesley education! hmmmph!) I hadn't yet taken in the significance of the Panther Party's breakfast program. I hadn't yet considered the significance of how liquor, salty chips, and sugary drinks highly out-numbered the few pieces of often not good looking

vegetables or fruits in the corner stores and bodegas of so many of my communities. I hadn't yet considered where the food in the supermarket came from-the distance it traveled- how it was grown- and who profited the most from its production, transport and sale; the history of the land it was produced on, etc. etc. Shout out to Michelle Obama and her new kids' show with Waffles and Mochi where they talk about these very things. I hadn't considered the lack of knowledge so many kids had about where food came from, how it was grown, and how it tasted when grown in healthy soil and freshly harvested. I knew about those tomatoes in my yard, but I couldn't tell you a thing about the food in the supermarket or how it did or did not support the health of those living in our community.

Following college, I led a group of youth on an urban expedition, through an experiential learning program I worked for in Boston. As part of our expedition, we visited one farm of the Food Project in Roxbury, MA. I was amazed to see this beautiful farm right in the city. The Food Project brought youth together from the urban neighborhoods of Boston and the surrounding suburbs to learn about food systems and do service to help run the farms. This program was getting youth educated, and also providing food for the community. By the time we ended that visit to the Food Project farm, I slowly began to recognize truths that were right in front of me for so long.

Following my time in Boston I found myself living in West Oakland in California for two years. I learned that West Oakland used to be dotted with jazz and blues clubs and there was a great and thriving middle class African American community, many of whom worked as Pullman porters on the trains. I also learned about the many harmful changes that came from government programs that led to a substantial loss of employment and much poverty. The West Oakland I walked into was one of those poor, historically person of color, low-income neighborhoods on the brink of gentrification- the kind we are all too familiar with, and often taking part in. In that context, Brahm Amadi co-founded the People's Grocery, an organization that worked to address the lack of access to quality, affordable, and healthy food in the community including through a purple and orange truck that would station itself at different locations in West Oakland. Picture an ice cream truck that sells vegetables. This truck brought locally grown fresh produce into a community that lacked access to a grocery store with healthy, culturally appropriate food. I became both a customer and organized groups of volunteers for this program. And during that time, I became more educated on issues surrounding food justice. In a nutshell, I learned that people's choices around what they were putting into their bodies was highly determined by location, income, and this country's choices that have devalued Black, Latinx, and other people of color including immigrants. The seeds that were planted in my consciousness at the Food Project in Boston were well-watered by my experiences in Oakland.

Fast forward to 2009 when I was back in Brooklyn, New York, and had the honor of co-founding an environmental organization, Green City Force. Our objective was to combine environmental service and job training to introduce public housing residents between the ages of 18-24 to career opportunities in the green economy. One of our key areas of focus was urban agriculture. With our partners, we broke ground on a .5 acre farm at Red Hook Houses, a public housing complex in Brooklyn. That pilot project, coupled with the vision and hard work of many, made way for 5 additional farms on public housing property across NYC. Why does it matter? Let me give you a better picture of what happens with these farms. I'll use some information from Green City Force's website.

“HOW ARE THE FARMS DESIGNED?”

GCF Corps Members and NYCHA staff attend community meetings and gatherings at each development to get residents' input on the farm's plan and design. Residents are surveyed about location, size, and the crops they would like to grow." Did someone say community organizing and resident input?

"HOW CAN NYCHA RESIDENTS GET INVOLVED?"

There are many ways to help out, and enjoy the benefits of NYCHA Farms:

Volunteer to help plant, water, and weed in exchange for fresh produce.

Bring compostable food scraps (fruit/vegetable peels, coffee grounds, egg shells) to exchange for fresh produce.

Attend a cooking demonstration, or community event at your local NYCHA farm." Does that sound like your typical grocery store?

From 2016 through today:

23,000+ farm stand visits.

121,000lbs of organic produce distributed

28,000 + lbs of compost collected

3797 K-12 students educated through farm-based learning

This is all well and good in addressing some of the harms caused by unjust policies and actions, the impact of redlining, the mistreatment and devaluing of immigrants and descendants of those enslaved. But these efforts must be combined with so many more.

Soo... My history is in NYC, and I've been living in DC for 6 years. I have been privileged to be a part of Green Souls a few years ago when we decided to intentionally focus on Food Justice in the District. Shout out to Kate, Emily, Jeanine, and Tiffany and all the volunteers for the Feast for Food Justice that we hosted. Through Green Souls I got to know of the great work of Dreaming Out Loud, and two components of Building Bridges Across the River--- The ARC Farm, and 11th Street Bridge Park... and once again, in yet another city, see the importance of food, land, and community organizing in strengthening historically excluded communities.

And as a member of the Beckner Fund Committee, I've been able to help distribute these endowed funds to contribute to, among other efforts, organizations pushing for food justice in DC.

Just added, Mia: And I've been lucky enough to watch many of my peers become leaders in the Food Justice movements in the US- Leaders in reclaiming our connection to the land, community by community restructuring the food economy for the good of the people. I've seen fights for the rights of farmworkers across the world, and efforts to undue the practices that strip Black Farmers from their access to economic opportunity and land. I've seen young people expand their minds to be able to see tilling the land as a source of power, not just a reminder of ancestor enslavement. ...

What I've learned is that Food justice is

Racial Justice

Gender Justice

Health justice

Environmental justice

Youth Justice

Economic Justice

Housing/Land Justice

And as with all these justice areas, I must learn history in order to understand how things got to the way they are (thank you West Oakland), and (what they used to be - Thank you Granny and Mom, and I must be able to reimagine what they could be (Thank you Green City Force), work in community, (thank you All Souls), and recognize the value of all 8 principles in seeking Food Justice.

Kirk Freeman READING

The Man Born to Farming, by Wendell Berry

The grower of trees, the gardener, the man born to farming,
whose hands reach into the ground and sprout,
to him the soil is a divine drug. He enters into death
yearly, and comes back rejoicing. He has seen the light lie down
in the dung heap, and rise again in the corn.
His thought passes along the row ends like a mole.
What miraculous seed has he swallowed
that the unending sentence of his love flows out of his mouth
like a vine clinging in the sunlight, and like water
descending in the dark?

Louise Green: Reflection Two

I so appreciate Erika agreeing to speak this morning, with her voice of experience on these intersectional justice issues. I'm speaking as I still learn, sharing how we might view our own relationship to land, food, and racial justice, and inviting you to take action.

Wendell Berry's poem reminded me that I am not at all a woman born to farming! Let me be clear about that. Yet I'm fascinated by planting and growing in my yard, and what it continues to teach me. Berry's words get at the mystery I also sense, the divine drug of soil, the way light lies down and then rises again. I love his images: swallowing miraculous seeds that create the unending sentence of love flowing

like vines clinging. Bringing the water that goes down into the dark to nourish. This feels like deep wisdom to me, how Nature teaches us how to live.

I've heard several people speak recently about their work in farming, food sustainability, and justice. They are lit up in prophetic voice and passionate about the Earth. I don't physically do the same work, yet I hear the urgent message. I hear the strong call to a different way of being in relationship with land, one that is based on reciprocity and interdependent care. One that can benefit more people.

There is an explosion of groups engaged in what I see as ongoing spiritual revolution around food, land, and justice. I talked with Sam Wetzel, Executive Director of Common Good City Farm in LeDroit Park, Ward 2, D.C., one of our Beckner Fund grantees. I'll use her words to describe their work, an example of what is flourishing in D.C. and across the country.

Common Good City Farm is digging into being a place where people are welcome to engage with land, in proactive engagement. LeDroit Park has transformed from a primarily Black community to one with high-priced row houses drawing an influx of gentrifying white residents. Public housing remains, with residences right next to the farm site. Building racial equity and access is an ongoing work in progress in the neighborhood and organization.

They are listening to neighbors about what they want to grow and asking who the space is for now. Long-time residents built the gardens---do they feel welcome these days? Kids are growing up with the farm site and Common Good teaches about indigenous agriculture, relationship with land, and this particular farm space. They teach about honoring our connection to the environment and being conscious of what kind of food we put in our bodies.

The urban farm is a place for knowing nature in the city, a strong part of what it means to be human, as Sam put it. To lose our relationship with land is to lose so much knowledge, culture, history and power. Common Good is working for more fair and equitable food systems, sustainable agriculture, and greater collaboration with Earth. They see themselves as stewards of the land, not owners, and honor a symbiotic relationship.

At the farm there is a pay-what-you-can weekly Wednesday market, with diverse vendors and Black Farm CSAs, Community Supported Agriculture in the city. One of those vendors is Dreaming Out Loud, also a Beckner Fund grantee, based in Anacostia in Ward 7. Their mission statement describes the sense of action which animates their work:

Dreaming Out Loud is rebuilding urban, community-based food systems through cooperative social enterprise: increasing access to healthy food, improving community health, supporting entrepreneurs and cooperatives from low-income communities; and creating opportunities for at-risk residents to earn sustainable, family-supporting wages and build wealth. We believe that all communities deserve equal access to fresh, healthy food choices, but that achieving this requires moving beyond the "access" paradigm to a focus on community self-determination and food sovereignty. We are working to create an integrated pipeline to jobs, economic opportunity, and community wealth-building for our most marginalized communities, utilizing the food system as the catalyst.

As Erika described so well, food access is related to power and authority, not just proximity to grocery stores, or cost of food. One national leader, Karen Washington in Brooklyn, uses the term “food apartheid” to best describe the situation of injustice in our disparate systems. Food justice is to be able to afford to buy fresh healthy food, have a place to get it, and to be involved at all levels of the food systems. To break down the systems of separation. Black Farm CSAs and food hubs for Black producers have been at the foundation of this work.

Soul Fire Farm in New York is another driver of this widespread social justice movement. One of the founders, Leah Penniman, raises spiritual and political issues about food and land, and wrote a well-known book, *Farming While Black*. The description of Soul Fire Farm work describes the need and opportunity for deep change:

Soul Fire Farm is an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system. We raise and distribute life-giving food as a means to end food apartheid. With deep reverence for the land and wisdom of our ancestors, we work to reclaim our collective right to belong to the earth and to have agency in the food system. We bring diverse communities together on this healing land to share skills on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, and environmental justice. We are training the next generation of activist-farmers and strengthening the movements for food sovereignty and community self-determination.

Groups like Soul Fire Farm, Common Good City Farm, and Dreaming Out Loud are the future of food justice in our country. The invitation to you is simple: find out more about this inspirational world in your own neighborhood. Examine your individual and collective choices about what you eat, what you buy, and what kind of businesses you support. Find ways to amplify this revolution in food production, consumption, and ownership.

As social and spiritual justice-seekers we need to know this work and find ways to support it. These are practices rooted in justice, and in harmony with the lands on which we reside. Many indigenous communities have never lost this connection to Earth itself. Other communities are actively rebuilding it. Together, they call us to return to a state of grateful acknowledgement and conscious use.

Land itself, what we grow, what we eat, is all part of the Love holding us. May we rest in that Love by upholding the integrity of creation. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

There Is A Love

There is a love holding us

There is a love holding all we love

There is a love holding all

We rest in this love

LOUISE: BENEDICTION

Our benediction is by Percival Chubb, from *A Harvest of Gratitude*:

From the harvest of the soil, we are given occasion
to garner a harvest of the heart and mind:
A harvest of resolve to be careful stewards of all life's gifts and opportunities.
A harvest of reverence for the wondrous power and life at work
in things that grow, and in the soil.
A harvest of gratitude for every good which we enjoy,
And of fellowship for all who are sustained by earth's beauty.
Go in peace and return in Love. Amen.

BENEDICTION IN MUSIC: "Mountains" by Rochelle Rice

Performed by the BAM Ensemble: Rochelle Rice- vocals; Janelle Gill- piano; Romeir Mendez- bass; Dante Pope- drums

We went up to the mountains way up in the hills
The wind was still and sweet
and shook away my will
Blowing all your mercy down
Wipe away my face clear
Still and moving, devastating and life giving

Don't know why we came here
What lesson to learn
I'm certain I'll accept my fate
Crushed and lifeless under all my heart
"No, that's not your path, my child
Not the way it should be,
But the journey will kill you so rest yourself a little while here with me."

We went down in the valley
Where the trees knew my name
I laid my face in soil
Used my hands to til up all my shame
You bent down kissed my filthy hands
Laid your clean face to mine
And said, "breathe. Pray. I love you. You're still mine."

Hold me close (hold me close and never let me go"
And shape my arms to fly
On my own (on my own in this old world)
Nothing's alright
Meet me up on the mountain

I go back to that mountain
I know you're not there
Tho I cannot see your face
The scent of you is still real clear
We both know that I'll falter
Misstep most the time,
But I'll never forget the way you healed me and fixed my mind.