

Worship Transcript for February 6, 2022

The Unsettling Truth of An Open Heart

Minister: Rev. Louise Green

Liturgist: Rev. Maybelle Bennett

Worship Associate: Justis Tuia

Music: Pre-recorded, Rochelle and small ensemble

Prelude

Hello Morning by Jaime Woods

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

Standing on the cusp of a rising sun
Should I run to the horizon
Or should I flee while I still have a chance
Before the light exposes
What I'm not ready to let go of

When I see yellow burgandies
I hear nature's melodies singing a new song
Yesterday is passed away
As the clouds swallow the stars
Wave goodbye to all the scars
Of yesterday's rain
And now I say,

Hello, Morning
Good morning

The world looks different when the sun is gone
Fighting monsters in the darkness
To find that they're just shadows all along
Nothing's the same when the light's gone
As I wait for the sunrise
Open my eyes and say goodbye

When I see yellow burgandies
I hear nature's melodies greeting a new dawn
Morning wash the black away
As the clouds swallow the stars
Wave goodbye to all the scars
Of yesterday's rain
And now I say,

Hello, Morning
Hello. Good morning

The morning comes every day
But every day is hard to face
If I hold on to yesterday

Hello, Morning
Hello. Good morning

Call To Worship Rev. Louise Green

Hello everyone, I am Rev. Louise Green, your Minister of Congregational Care, pronouns she/her.
Welcome to Zoom world worship once again, from many places near and far!
Our February theme examines stories of opening our hearts, and today we honor Black History Month.
As our service description noted: Committing to open your heart, collectively or one-on-one, is likely to disrupt you - your small stories, your well-reasoned opinions, your explicit and implicit bias; it's all up for change.

We have the tendency to get on our personal soapbox, multiple times a day, with our own fierce truths.
The complicated realities of people, congregations, and countries are unsettling.
It is challenging to allow nuance, consider contradiction, investigate complexity, get curious about paradox. I invite us all to open our hearts today, and to be moved. Let us enter into the spirit of worship.
Our Chalice Lighters are Caroline, Ben, Susannah, Jesse & Evan Holt. Please join with your own candle if you would like.

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

Welcome Justis Tuia

Welcome to All Souls Church! My name is Justis, I use he/they pronouns, and I'm honored to be your
Worship Associate this week.

For two centuries, our congregation has actively sought to bring into being the vision inherent in our
chosen name, All Souls. It's a vision of a human family where all people are welcome at the table. Where
we welcome diversity, and we actively commit to address racism and all other oppressions in ourselves,
our church community, and in the various spaces we inhabit, thereby transforming ourselves, our
community, and our world. We are a Unitarian Universalist congregation, diverse in countless 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.

Due to COVID, we again gather remotely from across the DMV and various locations around the world. Regardless of whether you're a lifelong member or someone who happened to stumble across us by chance, and today is your first time with us, you are welcome here. Today, I will be partnering with the Rev. Maybelle Bennett, Rochelle Rice, and her colleagues in carrying out the service, and our very own Rev. Louise Green will offer the sermon.

If you're interested in examining today's order of service, you can click on the link in the chat. To stay up to date on our transition back to hybrid worship and other upcoming offerings of the church community, please read the weekly church bulletin. It's typically released on Fridays via email. If you are not currently subscribed to receive the weekly bulletin, you can sign up via the church website, or you can click on the link in the chat.

Now let's turn our collective attention to greeting each other in a time of "beholding." If it's not already on, please consider turning on your camera for just a few minutes, put Zoom on gallery view, and scroll through the beautiful faces of so many dear ones. You can wave and say hello in the chat as we continue to create online community together. Thank you, and again, welcome to All Souls.

Beholding

Story for All Ages: "The Egnapper" by Liem Yip and Gabriel Morin Adapted by Dolores Miller

Narrator: One morning the chickens woke to find their eggs missing. They each had a theory about what happened. (Each chicken clucks or crows before speaking)

Chicken Delilah: It had to be the dog who took them. She's so mindless the way she follows the farmer around.

Narrator: But the littlest chick spoke up.

Chick Annika: Don't say that. She's just a loyal friend.

Chicken Billie: It's probably the pig they lie in the mud. Yuck! I'm sure they stole our eggs.

Annika: It's not yucky to them! They use the mud to stay cool.

Chicken Edison: Then it's probably the cow. You can't trust such a big animal.

Annika: You don't even know them. They're very gentle.

Chicken Ruth: I'm sure it's the goat. He's weird looking and he eats everything. I've even seen him eat a boot!

Annika: Don't talk about him like that. He's just very open-minded about his food.

Narrator: Finally, the chickens decided to stay up at night to catch the "Egnapper". It was past midnight when they heard a sound.

Ruth: What? It's the raccoon!

Delilah: We were wrong about the other farm animals.

Edison: It was the raccoon all along!

Billie: Why were you taking our eggs?

Raccoon Simon: I'm sorry. I just need help feeding my family.

Dog Eliza: Woof. You should have told us. We can help.

Raccoon: (smiling) Gee! Thank you!

Pig Arielle: Oink. Here are some of my potatoes. (holds out potato)

Cow Kieran: There's an apple tree in our pasture. (holds out apple)

Goat Henry: Maaa. Try this boot! (has boot hanging from mouth)

Ruth: And we have plenty of corn.

Narrator: And so the raccoon family lived happily with the farm animals, and the chickens never judged anyone again.

Announcements and Prayer

Rev. Maybelle Bennett

Good morning. My name is Rev. Maybelle Taylor Bennett, and it is good to be with All Souls this morning.

We begin with All Souls announcements, and an invitation to subscribe to the Weekly Bulletin for more detailed info, delivered each Friday morning. You may sign up on the All Souls website, at top of the homepage.

After the service today, join Rose Eaton in Coffee Hour for social time until 12:30. There will be a breakout room with Gary Penn for newcomers, and those who want to learn more about All Souls and Unitarian Universalism.

In addition, there will be an All Souls Social Justice Ministry Campaign Overview from 11:45-12:45. Join Rev. Rob Keithan, an organizer from Washington Interfaith Network, and key social justice leaders. The registration form link will be in the chat.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeUjC0mUIWcLvswRu7oLZ2KFFUTEIs1tUJDxsZkWRcB2VtYfw/viewform>

The next round of a four-part course, Introduction to Anti-Racism for White People, starts tomorrow night, Monday from 7-9 pm. Three more online sessions will follow, all co-led by Jennifer Langer Smith and Rev. Rob. We urge White people at All Souls to cultivate self-awareness, learn critical skills for engaging in racial justice transformation, and develop relationships for mutual accountability and support. See the Weekly Bulletin or the website under Adult Spiritual Development. The registration link will be in the chat as well.

<https://onrealm.org/ASCU/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=ZGlxNjhkMWQtN2YwYS00YTlhLTg3ZjctYWUxNjAxMTVhMWE4>

There are two more online spaces to connect this week, with links on the homepage calendar:

Monthly Vespers take place on Wednesday, February 9, from 7:30-8:15 pm.

A Spiritual Care Session on Reproductive Experiences will occur on Thursday, from 7-9 pm.

Now we turn to our Congregational Care list. This week brought many challenging situations in need of our loving prayers. Our hearts and healing wishes are with:

Mark Hicks, who sustained a stroke last Sunday in Oklahoma, and is already in rehab and recovery. He has been progressing well this week, and it well supported by family and friends.

Jose-Luis Sanchez, who has been in chemo treatment for a recurrence of cancer since January. He is staying at his friend's home and does not have energy for much contact presently.

Claudia Liebler's sister Ingrid had a serious third stroke this week in New Hampshire. Claudia is there with family as they discern next steps.

Teal Penrod and family are experiencing a challenging COVID outbreak now, and are currently in home quarantine.

Juanita and Mel Hardy are visiting elder parents this week in North Carolina, with concerns for mother's health. They will also see their nephew Tito, who is in the last months of a multi-year cancer treatment.

Gordon Kent, is stable and communicative at Washington Hospital Center ICU. Gordon was rescued from an apartment fire on Wednesday night. We rejoice that he was evacuated safely and we send healing energy for recovery of leg burns. Jen Hayman and Rev. Louise visited him, and will let you know when more contact is possible.

We hold so much in these times, and are also resilient in loving community. And now, we invite you to add your names or situations into this space, aloud while muted, or in the chat.

Prayer

Holy One, we lift up and surround with loving energy, all those whose names were mentioned here, placed in the chat or held in our hearts. With confidence in the restorative healing power and grace of the Divine, we commend them to your care.

Today, we assemble again in thanksgiving for our sacred gathering whose diverse presence is anchored in an underlying unity. Here, we allow our individual and collective radiance to enrich, support, challenge, question, provoke, strengthen, unsettle and comfort those spirits who dare add their frequencies to the creation of a Beloved Community. And so it is that we continue our journey together, one with another. Amen.

Spirit of Life

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.

Offering Justis Tuia

All Souls Church embraces a grand vision of a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy. This vision is embodied in the diverse work we do both inside and outside of our walls. It's also, just as importantly, embodied in the individual work we do within ourselves to consistently root our actions in both love and justice, and balance engagement with self-care.

Most importantly, we recognize that “salvation” in this life is a communal endeavor—my salvation is inextricably tied to yours and yours to mine. Our mutual offerings (i.e., a commitment of time, energy, resources, and self-care), makes a difference to countless people, regardless of whether they walk through our doors or share our worldview. Individually and together, we are Unitarian Universalists, building a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy.

Today, your financial offering can be made via the All Souls website (simply navigate to all-souls.org and click on “Donate”) or via text message. Instructions on how to donate via text message can be found in the chat box. Today’s offering will now be received.

Wholly Earth by Abbey Lincoln

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

Oh the Holy Earth’s a mural
Seen from way up high
Abstracted natural bas relief
Witnessed from the sky
Clouds that cast a single shadow
Drifting, moving on the ground
Creating an illusion as the world goes around

Places where the folks inhabit
Have a geometric grace
Circles, squares, sometimes triangles
Rules with lines and space
Waterways and craggy mountains
Seemingly reveal a plan
Just as if somebody drew it with a great big ole giant hand

Life’s a repetition
It’s an action of repeat
Act of saying, act of doing
Something bitter, something sweet
Act of life that keeps occurring
Ghosts appearing through the sound
Waving at us from a distance
‘Cause the whole wide world is round
Yes, the whole wide world is round

Generations, generating
Bring people here enmasse
Living in a world
Of everybody’s second class
Forward, moving through the circle
Ghosts appearing through the sound
Waving at us from a distance

'Cause the whole wide world is round
Yes, the whole wide world is round.

People's lives before us
Leave a memory behind
Actions done and actions written
Acts impressed upon our mind
Forward moving through the circle
Ghosts appearing through the sound
Waving at us from a distance
'Cause the whole wide world is round
Yes, the whole world is round
Round and round
Yes, the whole wide world is round

Reading 1: From Justice, in *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Origin stories function, to a degree, as myths designed to create a shared sense of history and purpose. Nations simplify these narratives in order to unify and glorify, and these origin stories serve to illuminate how a society wants to see itself—and how it doesn't.

The origin story of the United States that we tell ourselves... has positioned almost exclusively White Americans as the architects and champions of democracy. And because of this, some have believed that White people should disproportionately reap the benefits of this democracy.

...A truer origin story requires us to place Black Americans prominently in the role of democracy's defenders and perfecters. It is Black Americans who have struggled and fought, when many white Americans were willing to abandon the charge that "all men are created equal," to make those words real.

It is Black Americans who have consistently made the case, even when they were utterly disenfranchised and forced out of the political process, that all citizens deserve equal access to the benefits of a country founded on a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Reading 2: From Progress Report by Sonia Sanchez (from *The 1619 Project*)

In this country
where history and herstory stretches
in aristocratic silence,
our Black, white, brown activists
have come at the beginning
Of the twenty-first century carrying
The quiet urgency of a star.
And the country is not the same.

i say, who are these people singing down
the lids of cities with color?

i say, i say, who are these people always
punctual with their eyes, their hearts, their hands?

i say, i say, i say, who are these
singers who resurrect summer
language on our winter landscape?
They remind each other
of what [Frantz] Fanon said: what is needed is to hold
one's self like a sliver to the heart of the world, to
interrupt if necessary the rhythm of the world, to
upset if necessary the chain of command but...
to stand up to the world: I do battle for the
creation of a human world that is a world of reciprocal recognition.

Reflection: The Unsettling Truth of An Open Heart Rev. Green

The closing lines just heard are by psychiatrist and political philosopher Dr. Frantz Fanon, who was born in Martinique and died nearby in Bethesda. Dr. Fanon was known globally for his 1961 classic, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which expounded on the dehumanizing effects of colonization and its many psychopathologies. He championed building social movements that de-colonize our minds and open our hearts.

Fanon said: I do battle for the creation of a human world that is a world of reciprocal recognition. Why is it so challenging to find true reciprocal recognition? We are regularly blinded by the limits of what we are sure we know. Limited by our social conditioning, by intersectional systems that marginalize so many. Shaped by our personalities and our cherished assumptions. We are boxed in by our stories, our fierce truths, and sometimes, our outright refusal to open our hearts.

I recently saw a striking cartoon by Wiley, called *The Ideology Process*. In the first frame, two people are standing face to face, with red arrows behind each of them, pointing in opposite directions. It reads:

Step 1: Self-Reflection. Evaluate your own value system and why it's a good direction in life.

Step 2: Emphasize your direction as being the best way for everyone.
The two people are farther away from each other on their red lines.

Step 3: Exaggerate your position to clarify the superiority of your choice.
The two are even farther away and have turned to shake fists at each other.

Step 4: Immerse yourself in the dogma of your one-way worldview to quash the burden of critical thinking.

The two have walked farther and farther and find themselves circled back to the same starting point, face to face again.

Step 5: See Step 1. Repeat.

Our national and global cultures in 2022 deeply reinforce our presumed superior worldviews. Of course, there are core values we hold dear: The inherent worth and dignity of each person. Shared desires for diverse inclusion and true equity. Honoring interconnected Life, on our one shared home, planet Earth.

Yet within the large justice lens exist the million everyday choices to open or close our hearts. We regularly reinforce the dogmas of our worldviews, perhaps even rejoicing in the opportunity to quash the burden of critical thinking. It is easier to stay with our own kind, whomever and whatever we perceive this to be.

How do we create an intention to listen, grow, and be changed? One powerful method is to allow ourselves to be touched in unexpected ways by other people and situations. This has been the great impact of community organizing in my life since 1994, as clergy leader in three congregations, and as staff in four organizations. When we are in authentic relationships with people and communities that are not familiar—that may differ sharply in race, class, religious perspective or social perspectives—we are invited to change. This will not always be comfortable, but I have experienced the unsettling as deeply beneficial.

My strong recommendation for UUs, and for most of a liberal and progressive bent, is that we all need to get out more. It is critical to open our hearts to key differences, to make a concerted effort to listen, hear, and be moved. Every UU congregation could benefit greatly from broad-based organizing on multiple issues where common ground is established. We must keep racial justice at the center of all social change now, and White UUs in particular need to step back and let others lead. This requires humility, so we might cease trying to run the room, and get out of our own way, towards transformation.

I want to share a story that was not very high stakes yet has stayed with me for years. This is a tale when my assumptions were so completely wrong that I still remain amazed, and more conscious of the tendency to jump to conclusions.

Once upon a time, I went for a hair cut on U Street with a new stylist. This is always unnerving when you have short hair which can be easily mangled! The stylist approached to greet me. He was tall and lanky, in head-to-toe black leather punk clothing, with a tall electric blue mohawk hairdo, multiple piercings, and very extensive tattoos including his face.

I did imagine disaster, yet this man I will call Cam seemed very friendly, so I went forth. In the chair, I carefully described what I wanted, saying strongly that I was not seeking a radical departure from my current cut or color. I gulped and hoped for the best, as he started to snip.

As often happens in D.C., he asked what kind of work I did. Ok, here we go, I thought. I said I worked up the road at All Souls and was a minister. I paused. This statement is usually like putting a blinking sign on your head: Tell me about your life! Talk to me about your problems!

Cam then said: Oh, may I ask your advice about spiritual practices for Lent? My wife and I are Roman Catholic, and we want to commit to something daily, in terms of prayer or readings. We are expecting twins and wanted some Biblical grounding this Lenten season.

So many thoughts went through my head. Not what I expected from this person, at all. And asking me about Lent, a UCC minister turned Unitarian, more of a Buddhist and yoga practitioner, is a slippery slope. I started by asking Cam more questions, getting curious, and just listening.

I was immediately struck by his inquiry and devotion, his steady prayer life which well exceeded mine, and his genuinely lovely Christian faith. This was jaw-dropping, with a very high surprise factor. I was drawn in to listen and open my heart, and be changed.

We carried on the dialogue the entire haircut, and that initial deep conversation resulted in a relationship of many years. When Cam and his wife lost that precious pregnancy to miscarriage, we grieved together, and even shed some tears. Over the years, we talked about all kinds of things, while I got haircuts and eventually color, yet never that electric blue.

When was the last time someone really surprised you? Are you currently having any experiences beyond your fixed opinions and world view, live or in books, movies, theater, TV shows? Are you ready for the destabilizing stories that will open your heart?

There is a pressing call to tell new origin stories, as Nikole Hannah-Jones puts it. To decolonize our minds and perceptions, to truly learn about complex layers of people, cultures, and nations. We might begin right here at All Souls, where our people, our 200 years of history, and our many lived experiences could be way more complicated than you believe or know.

Sonia Sanchez' poem Progress Report reminds us:
our Black, white, brown activists
have come at the beginning
Of the twenty-first century carrying
The quiet urgency of a star.
And the country is not the same.

We remember with Frantz Fanon:
what is needed is to hold
one's self like a sliver to the heart of the world,
to interrupt if necessary the rhythm of the world,
to upset if necessary the chain of command but...
to stand up to the world:
[For we all] do battle for the
creation of a human world that is a world of reciprocal recognition.

Amen.

Closing Hymn Love Will Guide Us

Love will guide us, peace has tried us
Hope inside us will lead the way
On the road from greed to giving
Love will guide us through the hard night

If you cannot sing like angels
If you cannot speak before thousands
You can give from deep within you
You can change the world with your love

Love will guide us, peace has tried us
Hope inside us will lead the way
On the road from greed to giving
Love will guide us through the hard night

Benediction

May we go from this sacred circle with the courage to change, and the intention to open our hearts.
Let us imagine new possibilities and tell new origin stories, designing a future large enough to live into.
Go in peace and return in love. Blessed Be.

Benediction in Music In the Real Early Morning, by Jacob Collier
Performed by: Rochelle Rice- vocals; Janelle Gill- piano

In the real early morning
With the sun slowly rising
I was walking out slowly
Wandering free

When out in the distance
Over the valley
I saw an old friend
Waiting for me

She was young girl
She was an old soul
As fair as the ocean
Timeless and free

She was my mother
She was my daughter
She was my lover
She's my everything an old friend could be

I said, "it's been such a long time
Since we have spoken
I've so much to say to you
I want you to know

I wish you could tell me
All that you've seen here
We haven't got long now
For soon you'll be fading
And soon I must go"

She said "hmm, I know the way home"

She said, "you are a soldier
You are father

You are a wise man
You are friend

You are my first love
I won't forget you
I'm walking beside you
I was here when you started
I'll be here til the end

And now it's the evening
There's moon slowly rising
There isn't much more that I
Wanted to know

And I am alone
She isn't beside me no more
But I feel no sorrow
I'll come tomorrow
I'll be on my way home
I'll be on my way home