

## **Inviting Delight**

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First Parish in Hingham (Old Ship Church)

Unitarian Universalist

March 22, 2020

*(text of live-streamed worship)*

### **Call to Worship and Lighting of the Flaming Chalice**

We gather for worship.

Though at a distance from one another, we gather in spirit.

May we feel our care and concern, our love for one another no matter the distance that separates us...

For we are all, always, connected, our lives interwoven.

During this shared time of worship...

May those who need comfort, receive comfort.

May those who need inspiration, receive inspiration.

May those who need to feel the love... feel the love.

Now and always.

And may the flame of our chalice - flame of truth, of freedom, of community, of love – symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith, remind us of all that we share – whether we are side by side in a pew or in distant cities.

### **Meditation and Prayer**

Wherever you are, and whenever you are viewing this service, I invite you to pause, slow down, breathe into this moment, breathe into full presence, body, mind, spirit...

Noticing your breath... more fully present to your surroundings... the light just so... perhaps birdsong outside the window... blue sky... just noticing, present for it all...

And from this deeper presence yearnings of our hearts may arise: our prayers:

For each of us with whatever measure of sorrow or anxiety or fear we may be feeling... or illness or other life challenge...

And more widely for those whose livelihoods are at risk during these days, those living already from one paycheck to the next, those without adequate health insurance.

And again, as each week, each day, prayers for our leaders: may they grow into the wisdom and knowledge they need to help us all through these days of worry and anxiety and fear.

May we pause in silence... knowing we share this time, whatever distance may be between us...

## Reading

From *Book of Delights* by Ross Gay –  
who kept a daily journal of delights from one of his birthdays to the next:

Among the qualities of delight, I've found... is the feeling of discovery. The sense that one has found something, been shown something, perhaps materially, perhaps spiritually or psychically, that was previously unknown. Perhaps delight is like a great cosmic finger pointing at something. That's not it. Perhaps delight is like after the great cosmic finger has pointed at something, and that something (which in all likelihood was already there, which is why I've enlisted a cosmic finger rather than a human one) appears. A-ha! Or, Whoa! Yes!

For instance... when I see birds swooping through the Detroit airport, which I happen to fly through sort of regularly, because I don't see them every time and forget that I see them sometimes... My finger, also a kind of bird, flying from my side to point at the little tuft that just skidded onto a trash can: Whoa! Yes! I also notice myself looking around, searching among the commuters for fellow compatriots of glee.

I wonder if the impulse to share, the urge to elbow your neighbor, who maybe was not even your neighbor until the bird flew between you and up into the pipes and rafters you did not notice until you followed the bird there is also among the qualities of delight? And further, I wonder if this impulse suggests – and this is just a hypothesis, though I suspect there is enough evidence to make it a theorem – that our delight grows as we share it.

### Message – “Inviting Delight”

As many of you know, I run most days. One of my favorite runs is through the Whitney Thayer Woods here in Hingham, on a loop that eventually takes me up a steep hill, and then, with a sharp right turn and a few steps opens out into the large field at the top of Turkey Hill. Never fails to take my breath away. Whoa! Yes! Blue sky, bright sun, and with a few more steps uphill, views of harbor and ocean.

Pure delight.

We have so many opportunities to experience delight – we just have to be paying attention when the “great cosmic finger” points something out.

Ross Gay's book itself is delightful. Nothing sweet or saccharine about it. He notes all sorts of delights during his year-long exercise – everything from delightful blooming flowers, to his delightful coffee at his favorite coffee shop, to words or nicknames that evoke delight, to one or another delightful human encounter.

All around us the cosmic finger is pointing things out! If we're paying attention and noticing not only the thing... but the feeling of delight that the thing, whatever it is, evokes.

Here's something else that always gives me delight.

Yes, you're thinking, of course he's showing us a banjo! But this is not my usual banjo that you often see and hear (whether or not it gives you delight...), this is my fretless banjo. The look of it delights me, the simplicity, the grains of wood... the sound delights me...

And I'm delighted that it is "fretless" – reminds me to... well... maybe... sometimes... fret less.

Like now. These days.

Why, after all, am I talking about "delight" today, in the midst of the coronavirus health emergency, which is anything but delightful?

Simple actually... but I think very important for our spiritual, and maybe our physical, health. And we need delight all the more in the midst of challenge and suffering.

So remember this if you remember nothing else from this morning – it is all right to feel delight, happiness, joy... even at the same time that there is suffering in your life or in the lives of others. There is of course always suffering and challenge in this world. And to be able to rise to meet suffering and challenge we need to have healthy spiritual reserves... and one way to replenish and nourish spiritual reserves is by paying attention when the cosmic finger points out something delightful... whatever else might be going on.

Might help us to fret less, pay attention more, and just do what needs to be done – for ourselves, for our dear ones, for others in need.

You've probably seen the videos of people singing together from the balconies of Italian cities. Maybe you've seen on Facebook the videos Beverly and Julianna and I have made singing in various parts of our Parish House – the other day while wearing silly hats joined outside (at proper distance of course) by Janet Asnes and Fan Leonard.

It's not that we don't understand that we are in the midst of an unprecedented, global challenge imposing real hardship on millions. It's that we do understand... and also know that music, delight, even a little foolish silliness... helps us through and helps keep us strong so we can continue to support and help one another.

I expect most of you know this. Because I've been hearing about your walks, your gardening, your delightful online or phone chatting with neighbors or old friends or family at a distance, or simply being more present to the moment, whatever you are doing – cooking, cleaning, or just sitting. All good.

All more than okay to invite and notice delight in our lives.

So – let's sing..... whether you're in your pjs, sipping your coffee or tea, whether your alone or with a friend or dear one... singing is good for the spirit! Singing is delightful.

**Song** – Under One Sky, by Ruth Pelham (*additional lyrics by Ken R-B*)

We're all a family under one sky, we're a family under one sky.

We're all a family under one sky, we're a family under one sky.

We're people... we're animals... we're flowers... and we're birds in flight.

We're people... we're animals... we're flowers... and we're birds in flight.

Hindus... Buddhists... Jewish... and Christian too...

We're Muslims... atheists... humanists... and UUs too.

We're all sizes... all colors... all different... and we're all the same...

We're all sizes... all colors... all different... and we're all the same...

**Benediction**

May we, aware of whatever measure of blessings are ours,

Turn and make of our lives a blessing to all life.

Be well. Be safe. Take care of one another.

May it always be so. Blessed be. Amen.