

The following document is a composite of the worship text offered at UUAA for December 20, 2015.

Call to Worship from Rev. Gail R. Geisenhainer

This time of year!
Here, in these weeks marked as the Christian Advent
there is such cacophony!

Against the horrendous background noise
of Presidential politics, hate speech,
and unthinkable violence..., we have holidays.

American Thanksgiving gets muscled out
by Festivals of Materialism, Consumerism,
for buying THINGS in a frenzied mode.

It all becomes like an orchestra..
Like a mad, conductor-less orchestra,
with instruments tuning up in competing keys.

We get hanukkah:
the blue, the candles, the ancient stories.

We get Santa Claus:
all the materialism and suppressed sexuality,
centuries of celebrations of fecundity
buried when Santa Claus got cleaned up
by Thomas Nast and Coco Cola advertising.
There is Yule: the greening, the burning log,
and ever-green trees that do not die.

We get the Loud Brass of the many different voices
heralding the christian story,
so many truths to weave together,
so many different traditions within the central tradition, all clamoring for air time.
and head space!

We have the steady bass rhythms of Solstice
the bassoon, the cello, the bass violins...,
thrumming the turning of the year
undeterred by any of the religious practices w
e humans may layer over it all.

And still we gather. We gather here, in this Sanctuary.

We light our Chalice Cup.
We remind each other to sing momentarily in one key.
We each bring the gifts of our own pain,
our confusion, our grief.,
to guide the way for others to find safe space.

We come to open our hearts
to the love and compassion offered freely here.
We gather to Celebrate Life Itself.
the Joy.,
all of it.
In Sacred Cacophony, in treasured harmonies...,

Sing we Joyous, All Together.,,

Join me, please, our hymn is 235, Let us Deck this Hall...,

All Are Welcomed Here
As We Are., Gathered for Worship.

Meditation and Silence offered by theresa rohlck

meditation and silence
20 december 2015© theresa rohlck

the advent calendars my mother gave me - you know the ones that have 25 numbered doors as part of the scene on the calendar, little paper doors you have to gently fold open to reveal what is hiding behind them - those advent calendars my mother gave me when i was a child each one led to the completion of a nativity scene, the scene of a birth, of a holy child. beginning on december 1st, i would open one tiny door each day, to find sheep and shepherds, a shining star, angels with trumpets, wise men bearing gifts . . .

the advent calendars i gave my children also had tiny doors to open, but those doors revealed snowflakes and snowmen, a crescent moon, boughs of holly, santa claus . . . images to contemplate until the celebration that arrived on the 25th day.

in the flurry of activity that marks this season,
the advent calendar i usually give myself
got lost in the blizzard of details, deadlines and obligations

an advent calendar, doors flying open, demanding of me
one more thing to do or place to go or person to meet

mail packages

get back to church - rehearsal 6 pm
buy groceries
call mom
decorate

an advent calendar, each day revealing something that demanded my attention

illness and death.
heated political debates.
a refugee crisis.
guns that cut lives short.
black lives. children's lives.

turns of phrase that strike deeply and diminish us all.

i will take time
right now
to open those doors more slowly

i will
breathe in what comes
see with the wisdom of a child
recognize that which restores in me
balance

breathe in with me
breathe in the joy of the season
our good fortune
our extraordinary privileges

breathe out with me
breathe out our anxieties
our fears,
our sorrows and anger

*be still and know that day and night
be still and know that dark and light
are one holy circle*

be still

breathe

in silence

selah - 2 min

returning from the silence

take the time you need

day and night, dark and light
are one holy circle

there are many doors
we can open every day

choose which doors to open

open them with intention
wonder
and
hope

amen.

Transition to the Reading, offered by Rev. Gail

“He drew a circle that shut me out.
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle that took him in.”

The insights of Edwin Markham.

These are offered on the front of today’s Order of Service
to further our immersion into the margins,
into the alternatives to violence, into the practice of peace.

“He drew a circle to shut me out.
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle that took him in.”

The Sermon, from Rev. Gail R. Geisenhainer “Marginal Wisdom: A Core of Hope”

We live in times when the prevailing social discourse is fueled by hysteria. Anti-Islamic hysteria kept 10,000 children out of school in Virginia on Friday. Anti-Black hysteria has poisoned police work and killed children..., all over our United States of America. Anti-Woman hysteria has rained bloody terror on women’s health care providers at Planned Parenthood clinics. Anti-poverty and pro-greed hysteria has poisoned the bodies of our children in Flint, Michigan. Our public conversations and practices are severely out of balance.

We are living in a time where the loudest elements of human enterprise are repeatedly yielding results of war, violence, intolerance, and chaos. The most prominent channels of our news media have become marketers of Fear Culture. Those corporations are profiting from gullibility, ignorance, and insecurity. Many are selling lies to generate market share. Thankfully, these loudest elements of human enterprise are not the only elements. Many are the artisans of a New Hope, crafters of a New Center. What activist Chris Crass called the “white supremacist Death Culture,” is not the only option.

Decades ago, African American poet, Audre Lorde, taught this: “the Master’s Tools will never dismantle the Master’s House.” The social, political, linguistic, legal, and religious patterns that continue to make racism possible and necessary will never work to take racism apart. In our time we need new tools. We need to contribute to the generation of a New Hope. Our daily practices of Love and Radical Embrace are needed in the choir for a New Morality. All of which this be grounded in and empowered by a New Theology.

And, please, dear ones, please..., do not let anyone tell you we are bereft of possibility or agency or vision. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Firm foundation stones for a New Theology are patiently waiting in our own theological history. Unitarianism has been claiming One God, at the most, since the first birth of Jesus centuries ago: One God, One Love, One Human Race, One Justice, One Planet. One: Covenantal and Mutually-Interdependent. Universalism is the iteration of Universal Salvation where Justice and Wellness is not possible for some until we find ways to make it possible for All. Universalism teaches that with the presence of a Loving God..., Universal Justice and Wellness is possible..., for All. Religious Humanism reminds us that we are God’s hands. No supernatural force will swoop into our lives to fix things. That loving presence, through which all Justice and Wellness becomes possible? That presence can be found in human communities of covenant and intention. That holy, loving presence is created in communities of covenant and intention.

One of our historic threads that may be less familiar here within midWestern Unitarian Universalism is called Liberation Theology. Within Christian Liberation Theology the framework includes four main points. First, follow Jesus. Follow what Jesus did more than following what later groups said about what Jesus did. Next, work toward a just society. Third, create real social and political change. Finally, align with the working class. This last point is often described as claiming a preferential option for

the poor. Liberation Theology has its roots in Latin American Roman Catholicism. It grew there in response to widespread poverty.

Christian Liberation Theology is bible based. In the prophecy of Malachi (3:5) in Hebrew Scripture, God promises to “be quick to testify against those who defraud laborers of their wages, {against those} who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice.” From Christian Scripture, in Good News attributed to Luke (4:18), Jesus reveals, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor....., to proclaim freedom for the prisoners..., {and} to set the oppressed free.”

In North America, Liberation Theology’s preferential option for an oppressed group has been adapted as both Black Liberation Theology and Feminist Liberation Theology. These 20th century iterations of Liberation Theology have been attempts to give voice to the particularities and the unique experiences of individual oppressed groups within the larger culture of the United States. But ours is a new century..., and for those of us insistent upon the possibilities within a Beloved Community of Justice and Compassion, it is time to build a New Theology.

If we are to be builders of the Beloved Community there are next steps that belong to our time in history. Voices and lives of human beings are pushed off into the margins of justice, into the shadows of abundance....., out beyond the pale..., which is a phrase that means beyond the fence of what is considered civilized by the folks who have the power. People who have choices..., people who have some elements of privilege..., need to learn to see clearly the people, the lives, the lived experience of the people who do not have choices, the people who do not have privilege or power in our society. Those of us with privilege need to wake up to the realities that lie out beyond the edges of what is familiar to our own lives. And once we awaken..., we need to learn how to “stay woke.”

The lives and experiences at the margins, the stories resident out beyond the pale..., those are the lives of traditionally marginalized groups. The Reverend Leslie Takahashi teaches this, “the margins hold the center.” It is not power that holds us in balance. It is not violence that will make us safe. Our vulnerability, our fragility, this is where our strength lies. In a New Theology, the margins will hold the New Center. Then we can live more closely in..., to visions of a Beloved Community for all.

On Tuesday, December 22, at 4:48 pm we will be in the moment of the Winter solstice. In western culture, Pagan people worship in this moment of Balance. The Pagan Yule celebrates the turning of the wheel of the year..., embracing this liminal moment of Hope.

On Friday, December 25, from the Christian story..., all that is God, all that is HOPE, all that is justice, compassion, liberation, possibility..., all of that shifts away from the realm of the supernatural..., and becomes a human baby. This is perhaps the most fundamentally Humanist story in the pantheon of Western European and American religious stories. Deus en Sarx, from the Greek: God in Flesh. In Latin, Incarnation, the embodiment of deity. Not only finite human flesh..., God becomes a baby. A human baby, vulnerable, in need of care, and brimming with possibility..., the core image of New Hope.

This tumultuous week ahead is a banquet of theological possibility. We can feast on Darkness and Light in creative interchange..., fostering the blessings of each. Now, Darkness and Light are revealed in a mutually interdependent Dance of Celestial Elegance., guiding the way toward Balance in living that is sustaining..., enriching..., even possible.

Here, in the heart of pain, the cold of winter, the scorched earth of our global anguish..., we can hold tiny candles, hear stories of the birth of a child., a human baby born not in wealth, born only in Love and in Trust. Born in Relationship with the Heavens and with the beasts in the manger. We can sing of an infant bringing a Love so powerful he is a threat to the politics of war, he brings a devastating challenge to the empires of Violence and Fear.

The old songs name this baby as King of Kings., We can let that language fade into history. In the New Theology, we can let the story of the baby inspire us. We can let it show us how to treat each and every baby..., There are babies in Syria, babies in Flint, in Ferguson, and in Sudan., babies crying out for us to see in them love, value, and hope.

Here, in the singing., let us be glad., let us learn to insist on hope for each child.

A BENEDICTION:

Glory to God
OK...,

and HOPE in the Bodies of the People!

Tenderness and Care in the Hands of the People
Justice in the Hearts of the Very Human People

Toward a World
Where very Community may become
The Beloved Community
by Prophet Bards Foretold!

Peace on the One, Fragile Earth...,
Goodwill: Justice with Love..., For All.

Amen

Shalom, Salaam, and Blessed., Blessed Be