

**What Does It Mean To Be A People of HEALING?
Unitarian Universalist Church of Yakima
Sunday, November 8, 2020**

Description for Newsletter and Update:

Healing from Brokenness in Ourselves and in Our World.

To be alive is to be vulnerable, but how can one move forward when experiencing anxiety, fear, frustration, loss, and pain? This service will explore healing responses that reframe woundedness and lead to strength, courage, and love. Presented by Susan Kaphammer with resources from the Soul Matters series.

Spiritual Snack from "Slower and Slower" by Rev. Mark Belletini

Let the difficulties of the week
take their sabbath now
their brief and simple rest...

Let the coming silence be like hands pulling back a curtain,
revealing the table set with the feast of life which is present here and now
and has been the whole while...

Zoom Service

Tech Host: Debra Kroon

Celebrant and Message: Susan Kaphammer

Tech Intro and Reminders- Debra

Call to Worship: - Susan

"In Need of Healing" By Maureen Killoran

Welcome, you who come in need of healing,
you who are confused, or have been betrayed.

Welcome, with your problems and your pain.

Welcome, too, your joys and your wonderings,

welcome your need to hope, your longing for assurance.

Instead of answers, here may you find safety for your questions.
Instead of promises, may you find community for your struggles,
people with hands and hearts to join you
in engaging the challenges and changes of our day.

Chalice Lighting - Susan

We light this chalice in deep respect for the mystery and holiness of life;
with honor and gratitude for all who have gone before,
with love and compassion for all who dwell among us,
and with hope and faith for the generations to come.

Opening Song: Come, Come, Whoever You Are Sung by Lea (2:06)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhDCXX5OUUc&feature=youtu.be>

Welcome and Comments - Susan

Good Morning. I am Susan Kaphammer, and I welcome you to our Zoom experience of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Yakima. Whether you come with a heavy heart or a joy-filled spirit today, we are glad you are here. Today we ask, "What does it mean to be a people of HEALING?"

Sharing Joys & Sorrows - Susan

As we journey through life, each of us reaches high and low points. By sharing the peaks and valleys of our journeys and other significant events in our lives, our sorrows are lightened and our joys enhanced.

Let us know if you have a joy or sorrow you wish to share so you can be unmuted and speak briefly.

.... And let us acknowledge and honor the joys and sorrows that are unspoken, but kept in the confines of our hearts and minds.

Sharing our Generosity and Commitment

Imagine now, that baskets are passed to collect our contributions of time, energy intentions, represented by our financial giving. Remember to continue, as you are able, giving to the church in the spirit of love and sharing.

Message – Susan

Today's service is exploring "Healing from Brokenness in Ourselves and in Our World." Hurt is a universal experience. Henri Nouwen, author of the book, *The Wounded Warrior*, notes, (quote) "Nobody escapes being wounded. We all are wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed." (end quote) Our question is, how does our faith guide us and challenge us in living with our wounds?

Wounds, especially invisible emotional and psychological wounds such as trauma and grief, are often held in the body and linked to our breathing. In her sermon titled, *Embodied Grief*, Rev. Sandra Fees observed that, "When we are open, we are breathing deeply. . . . When we are afraid or angry or stressed, our breathing is truncated. At times of grief, it can literally be hard to catch one's breath."

One of our familiar UU hymns encourages us: "Just as long as I have breath, I must answer 'yes' to life; though with pain I made my way, still with hope I meet each day." Rev. Sandra Fees continues, "As I think about those words ... I recognize the wisdom that 'I must answer "yes" to life as long as I have breath. I recognize the wisdom that as long as I am alive, despite any pain, I must remain hopeful in order to heal. I must embody my grief as well as my joy."

Her sermon expanded the importance of breath for "yes" for our own lives as individuals to life in our society. "(quote) And there is another wisdom: I can only answer "yes" to life if I am breathing, if I am able to breathe. Eric Garner [and more recently, George Floyd] had that stolen... A question we are faced with as a society is: How can we ensure that everyone's breathing is valued, not just some people's?"

Rev. Sandra Fees concludes: “Our breath is a gift we did nothing to earn. It is the gift and sacredness of our very being. Let us use it to embody the all of our lives. Let us use it to answer “yes” with our breath so long as there is breath, to embody our grief, and to answer “yes” to ensure another’s breathing.”

I invite you to listen and participate in “A Survival Meditation” by Nathan C. Walker. At the end of the reading and a moment of silence, we will play the song, *The Whole of Me*, music and lyrics by Emily Melcher, Performed by Emily Melcher, with Leslie Stephany (soprano), Deborah Phelps (alto), and Jane Peckham (piano)

Sit comfortably, close your eyes if you wish. And slow your breath to an easy, deliberate rate.

breathing in
i am aware of my pain.
breathing out
i am aware that i am not my pain.

breathing in
i am aware of my past.
breathing out
i am aware that i am not my past.

breathing in
i am aware of my anger.
breathing out
i am aware that i am not my anger.

breathing in
i am aware of my despair.
breathing out
i am aware that i am not my despair.

breathing in
i am aware of peace.
breathing out
i am aware that i am worthy of peace.

breathing in
i am aware of love.
breathing out
i am aware that i am worthy of love.

breathing in
i am aware of joy.
breathing out
i am aware that i am an agent of joy.

breathing in
i am aware of hope.
breathing out
i am aware that i am an agent of hope.

breathing in
i am aware.

(moment of silence)

Song –Play through three times, stopping at 1:47.

The Whole of Me

<https://emilymelcher.com/cds/all-here/the-whole-of-me/>

Message continues

It is an obvious observation that we are living through difficult times: personally with disruption of “normal” life with coronavirus contributing to frustration, worry and loneliness; nationally with extreme partisanship and social and racial reckoning surrounding us with conflict, anger and resentment; and globally with extreme weather events signaling the increasing climate crisis prompting feelings of regret, impotence and fear. These realities of our world manifest as chronic brokenness that flares up at times to acute experiences of despair. How can ours not be “a caravan of despair?”

The automatic response to the pain of brokenness may be to deny, stuff, or medicate the feelings. Our culture encourages avoidance and quick treatment of

pain in a multitude of ways. Just look at ads – there’s the right medicine for every variation of pain, there’s the right beverage to be in the midst of cheerful people, there’s the right fitness machine to remedy body shortcomings, there’s the right cosmetic to stave off aging, the right candidate to assure a good future, and on and on. What bothers you can be fixed externally so that you can be successful and happy. Pain? What pain?

But people who wish to live more fully, more deeply, with a spiritual dimension, recognize the truth Parker Palmer expressed:

Heartbreak comes with the territory called being human. When love and trust fail us, when what once brought meaning goes dry, when a dream drifts out of reach, a devastating disease strikes, or someone precious to us dies, our hearts break and we suffer — but there are two quite different ways for the heart to break. There’s the brittle heart that breaks apart into a thousand shards, a heart that takes us down as it explodes . . . Then there’s the supple heart, the one that breaks open, not apart, growing into greater capacity for the many forms of love. Only the supple heart can hold suffering in a way that opens to new life.

According to Rev. Mark Belletini, “Refusing to embrace grief in all of its richness is like deciding to hold our breath to live more fully, or pretending we are not thirsty when we are. It really makes little sense to avoid this gift [of grief], which I might even call a spiritual gift or path.”

The first step to finding our way through pain to “the supple heart,” to the gifts that pain may hold is to do... nothing... but to be... you. Breathe, as we did in our meditation.

In the words of Rev. Sarah Stewart:

Your sacredness does not rely on your doing.
Your holiness comes from your being.
You have been holy for your whole life, from when you were a helpless infant,
And you will still be holy when you are elderly and infirm.
Your being, not your doing, is sacred.

Elizabeth Tarbox speaks of a rich pausing that can, as the brief song expressed, “Reconnect the soul of me [to] the whole of me.”:

But when I am here at the edge of creation, breaking with the small tide over the sand, the need to do good rolls away; the question of what is right diminishes to insignificance and is easily borne away by the tiny waves. Here, where no words are spoken, none are misspoken. . . . I stand somewhere between truth and vision, and what I don't know ceases to embarrass me, because what I do know is that the water feels gentle like a lover's touch, and the sand welcomes it.

What I have done or failed to do has left no noticeable mark on creation. What I do or don't do is of no moment now. Now I am here and grateful to be touched, calmed, and healed by the immense pattern of the universe.

It is okay to pause when feeling wounded... in fact it is more than okay; it may even be necessary. Rev. Yolanda Pierce advises, “Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.” And in the pausing, know that we are enough. Listen to the words of Vanessa Southern:

So much undone.
So much to do.
So much to heal
in us and the world. . . .

And up against it the reality of all that falls short and the limits of today.

We honor the limits:

If your body won't do what it used to, for right now let it be enough.

If your mind won't stop racing or can't think of the word, let it be enough.

If you are here utterly alone and in despair, be all that here with us.

If today you cannot sing because your throat hurts or you don't have the heart for music, be silent.

When the offering plate goes around if you don't have money to give or the heart to give, let it pass.

The world won't stop spinning on her axis if you don't rise to all occasions today.

Love won't cease to flow in your direction,
your heart won't stop beating,
all hope won't be lost.

You are part of the plan for this world's salvation,
of that I have no doubt.

The world needs its oceans of people striving to be good
to carry us to the shores of hope and wash fear from the beach
heads,
and cleanse all wounds so they can heal.

But oceans are big and I am sure there are parts that don't feel up to the task of the whole some days.

Rest, if you must, then, like the swimmer lying on her back who floats,
or the hawk carried on cushions of air.

Rest in pews made to hold weary lives in space carved out for the
doing of nothing much
but being.

Perhaps then you will feel in your bones,
in your weary heart,
the aching, healing sense that
this is enough—
even this.

That we are enough.

You are enough.

Enough.

Knowing deep in our minds, our hearts and our bones that we are enough makes room for hope. . . the kind of hope that may dim but not die; the kind of hope that exists outside of proof, except, perhaps for the proof found in nature.

Listen now, to “I Know This Rose Will Open”

Song: I Know This Rose Will Open (1:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIARjflCygU>

Message continues

“I know my fear will burn away. I know my soul will unfurl its wings.”

When the weight of our wounds bow us over, curling us up into our pain, how do we let loose of the fear, allow our souls’ wings to unfurl?

Tracy Cochran got to know William Segal, a wise man who had suffered a severe accident. In his article, “Lucky Man: Life Lessons from William Segal” Cochran asked, “How can we find balance and peace in the midst of pain and turmoil?” An answer is that, “maybe what is needed to heal is not will but willingness. The accident taught Segal the power of letting go. Letting the body relax and rest was more valuable than trying. He learned to listen and obey nature. He learned that healing is necessarily related to patience and to acceptance of what is happening, making space for another force to enter.”

Knowing we are enough can help us let go, relax, allow patience and acceptance to open us to what is next. Although each person’s path through healing is distinctly his or hers, the path does not need to be traversed alone. Starhawk assures us that “Community Means Strength”:

. . .

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats.

Somewhere a circle of hands

will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter,

voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power.

Community means strength

that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done.

Arms to hold us when we falter.
A circle of healing.

. . .

As I sat completing this message, I heard the announcement of confirmed results of our national election. For a majority of our nation's people – President Elect Joe Biden carried over 50% of the popular vote – this news engenders relief and hope. A partisan pundit proclaims, "Today is a day of national jubilation," echoing my own feeling. Deep concern that had weighed more heavily on me than I had realized was lifted.

Yet... yet, even as the pundit pointed out the happy crowds gathering and dancing in the streets of many cities, he started ticking off other realities of today – the raging virus; the deep divides between people along lines of race, politics, economic opportunities, ideology and privilege; the continuing damage of children taken from parents at the border, people of color unsafe on their own streets, uncertain access to health care. In our country, in our own neighborhoods, we live with many kinds of brokenness.

In studying for this talk, I learned about the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, described in various sources:

When God said, "Let there be light," lightness was created filling vessels with this holy light. God sent those vessels to the world, and if they had each arrived whole, the world would have been perfect. But the holy light was too powerful to be contained, and the vessels split open sending sparks flying everywhere. Sparks of the divine light mixed together with shards from the broken vessels. Ever since, the world has remained in a state of holiness and disrepair. *Tikkun olam*, repairing the world, is seen as mending the defect in creation.

It is our human task to find and gather the sparks. When enough sparks have been gathered, repair of the world will be complete.

Rev. Matt Alspaugh reflects on this myth in acknowledging, "There is tremendous brokenness in our world, and it is not our fault." Not our fault,

but as a people striving to live by the values expressed in our Unitarian Universalist principles, the brokenness is our concern, our “human task.”

In his book, *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen assures us that:

. . .we all have this power to be healers. Not in spite of our wounds, but because we have worked with them and have learned from them; have developed a deeper capacity, a bigger heart, a wiser soul, more loving arms.

The good news is that as we walk through this wilderness, we will not be alone. We will sense that we have what Martin Luther King called “cosmic companionship,” we will know that we are part of a Love that will not let us go. . . .

More good news is that there’s joy in this; it’s not grim, this journey of embracing our brokenness. There’s liberation that comes from facing what you fear rather than avoiding it. In living more authentically the life that is yours.

Do not mistake any of this talk of power, hope, insight, growth, agency and even joy as minimization of the reality of hurt, the pain of wounds, the prevalence of brokenness. All of this is real and difficult for individuals, for communities, for nations.

But our faith helps us grasp the means to understand what is, to take care of ourselves and to move forward in healing. Perhaps we can see the wounds we encounter with the reflection Karen Johnston found in her work with glass mosaics: “Respect the fragments and shards, whether they’re multi-hued glass or your life’s own story. Yes, they offer the occasional sharp cut, but they can offer also beauty and new ways to perceive the world.”

Howard Zinn reminds us that our contributions to a better world matter:

To be hopeful in bad times is not...foolishly romantic; it is based on the fact that human history is a history of not only cruelty, but of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian

future — the future is an infinite succession of ‘presents,’ and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Our final song is “The Flower” by Michael Franti & Spearhead, featuring Victoria Canal. Part of the repeated refrain is:

We could be the healin'
When you're feeling all alone
We could be the reason
To find the strength to carry on
In a world that's so divided
We shall overcome
We could be the healin'
We can be the flower in the gun

The flower in the gun – the brokenness and the healing. The images may return us to the pain of not forgotten wounds. There is disappointment and frustration in the lyrics, but there is also a hint of our power:

It's like somebody dropping a pebble into a pond
And sending ripples out to the world
We could be the healin'

Song: The Flower (5:04)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0N5OEpxbFY&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP4TE2h-Wk2L9F5TI6TZSuZo&index=7>

Closing Words by Rev. Lisa Friedman

In a world of cruelty, there is still power in every act of kindness.

In a time of doubt, there is still power in every act of hope....

May we remember that sometimes the fragments of meaning we make are just the right size to hold in our hands.

Extinguishing the Flame

We extinguish this flame
but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community,
or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts
until we are together again.