

Rev. Betsy Mead Tabor
UU Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes
December 1, 2019

Sing for Hope: A Service of Song and Readings

“Awakening Hope”

Hope rises.

It rises from the heart of life, here and now, beating with joy and sorrow.

Hope longs.

It longs for good to be affirmed, for justice and love to prevail, for suffering to be alleviated, and for life to flourish in peace.

Hope remembers.

It remembers the dreams of those who have gone before and reaches for connection with them across the boundary of death.

Hope acts.

It acts to bless, to protest, and to repair. - UU Rev. John Buehrens and Rev. Rebecca Parker

Reading: “The Fountain” by Denise Levertov

Don't say, don't say there is no water
to solace the dryness at our hearts.
I have seen

the fountain springing out of the rock wall
and you drinking there. And I too
before your eyes

found footholds and climbed
to drink the cool water.
The woman of that place, shading her eyes,
frowned as she watched-but not because
she grudged the water,

only because she was waiting
to see we drank our fill and were
refreshed.

Don't say, don't say there is no water.
That fountain is there among its scalloped
green and gray stones,

it is still there and always there
with its quiet song and strange power
to spring in us,
up and out through the rock.

“Embodying Hope”

We don't know exactly what enslaved people meant when they sang, “There is More Hope Somewhere.” Was “somewhere” freedom up north? Was it Heaven? We know with certainty that it was touch to find love, hope, peace or joy in daily life as an enslaved person. And these are indeed elusive things especially in difficult times.

I find hope in actions: Meditating. Voting. Talking with people. Praying. Gardening. Singing with others. Celebrating. Making things. Taking in the natural world. Standing up for what's right. Participating in a faith community.

America has a long way to go until we embrace the inherent worth and dignity of every person. I believe the way to find the hope to keep going is through action. - Margaret Rieser

Reading: “Piglet’s Song” by Benjamin Hoff

Let's find a Way today,
that can take us to tomorrow.
We'll follow that Way,
A Way like flowing water.
 Let's leave behind,
 the things that do not matter.
 And we'll turn our lives,
 to a more important chapter.
Let's take the time and try to find,
what real life has to offer.
And maybe then we'll find again,
what we had long forgotten.
Like a friend, true 'til the end,
it will help us onward.
 The sun is high, the road is wide,
 and it starts where we are standing.
 No one knows how far it goes,
 for the road is never-ending.
It goes away,
beyond what we have thought of.
It flows away,
Away like flowing water.

Reflection - Rev. Betsy Mead Tabor

Votives flicker in the back of the old stone church. A figure shuffles in. Coins clink in the dish, another flame kindled. We set a course for the journey onward: to change our ways, to be mindful about food and exercise, how much time we spend on line, to love more fully. We show up: for Book Group, for each other. Even after the unthinkable, we keep on keeping on. We gather. We share. We dive deep. We sing. Sometimes we march, carrying signs. We head for the woods to ruffle out our edges.

Are these acts of hope or of discipline? When we light a candle, set a goal, gather, even go for a walk, we indicate our willingness to show up for life, whatever our burdens. To me that feels more like resilience than hope. Something you decide to do. From such acts, hope can rise.

Hope can also grace us, coming from another place beyond our will. You can't bank on hope when you need it, but now and again it flies in and sits on our shoulder....

The thing with feathers - [wrote the loner, Emily Dickinson]
 That perches in the soul -
 And sings the tune without the words -
 And never stops - at all....

Hope comes along in the antics of the cat. In the dog's humor. In the movie, a turn of phrase, a kindness still vibrating in your heart. Hope comes in the surprise of a golden sunset after a week of clouds. Poet Muriel Rukeyser writes of her son who says:

God
 Is anything, even a little stone in the middle of the road, in Florida.
 Yesterday
 Nancy, my friend, after long illness:
 You know what can lift me up, take me right out of despair?
 No, what?
 Anything.

Hope can be anything. It blindsides us. It found me in the dentist's chair last week for a routine cleaning, the hygienist fully nine months pregnant. So ready! She had been using that whining device that renders me rigid with fear, lest it again find a tender spot. And then everything changed. Stopping to rinse, she said, "He just kicked you in the shoulder."

What? "The baby. The baby just kicked you in the shoulder!" I looked, and sure enough, my shoulder pressed right into her belly. So near to the baby. So intimate was this connection with a *miracle*, a new human. His mother thought he'd been reacting to the sounds of her tools, but then she said that he kicked *every time* a new person sat in the chair – every time he sensed something new, I thought, a new, unique expression of energy....

Really? What *was* happening? What did he sense? The whole thing transported me. Entranced, thrilled, riveted, the fear gone, I leaned in toward the babe – focusing, sensing, reaching to connect! The next thirty minutes flew by.

High as a kite, I heard myself say, "I feel hopeful."