

**“Memorial Day - Another War”**  
**May 24, 2020**

**Gathering Music**      Composed/performed by Shana

**Welcome**

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes and to this Memorial Day service. We will pay respects to the men and women who have died in wars and military service. And we will do more than mourn military losses today – we will use this occasion to also acknowledge the thousands of Americans killed in the past few months in the ongoing war against Covid-19.

Note: All of today’s readings come from UU minister Barbara Pescan – poet, LGBTQ activist, and humanist who, until she retired about 10 years ago, served congregations in IL and CT.

Welcome. Here we seek justice and truth and understanding.  
Here we celebrate life and contemplate mystery.  
Here we seek healing and wholeness. Welcome, all.

In this familiar [circle], listen:  
to the sounds of breathing, creaking chairs,  
shuffling feet, clearing throats, and sighing all around  
Know that each breath, movement, the glance  
meant for you or intercepted  
holds a life within it.

These are signs  
that we choose to be in this company  
have things to say to each other  
things not yet said but in each other's presence still  
trembling behind our hearts' doors  
these doors closed but unlocked  
each silent thing waiting  
on the threshold between unknowing and knowing,  
between being hidden and being known.

Find the silence among these people  
and listen to it all—breathing, sighs,  
movement, holding back—  
hear the tears that have not yet reached their eyes  
perhaps they are your own  
hear also the laughter building deep where joy abides  
despite everything.  
Listen: rejoice. [Let us] say Amen.    - Barbara Pescan

**\*Hymn**    “Gather the Spirit”

### Memorial Day Remembrances

“They gave us tomorrow!” wrote UU Rev. A. Powell Davies, “the tomorrow they themselves would not return to share. They left us bright dreams! Dreams that for them could not come true. Paid for in blood: the blood of youth with pulse and passion; and in the grief of vainly waiting, who were told that those they loved would not come back. This was the cost: the cost unspeakable! O God, be with us! Make us worthy! Lift us up in high resolve.”

**Reading** Hope Hutchinson

“Memorial Day Prayer”

Spirit of Life  
 whom we have called by many names  
 in thanksgiving and in anguish—  
 Bless the poets and those who mourn  
 Send peace for the soldiers who did not make the wars  
 but whose lives were consumed by them  
 Let strong trees grow above graves far from home  
 Breathe through the arms of their branches  
 The earth will swallow your tears while the dead sing  
 "No more, never again, remember me."  
 For the wounded ones, and those who received them back,  
 let there be someone ready when the memories come  
 when the scars pull and the buried metal moves  
 and forgiveness for those of us who were not there  
 for our ignorance.  
 And in us, veterans in a forest of a thousand fallen promises,  
 let new leaves of protest grow on our stumps.  
 Give us courage to answer the cry of humanity's pain  
 And with our bare hands, out of full hearts,  
 with all our intelligence  
 let us create the peace. - Barbara Pescan

### \* “Lorena”

Published in 1857, “Lorena” is an **antebellum** song with Northern origins. Lyrics by Henry Webster and music by his friend Joseph Philbrick Webster. A favorite of soldiers of both sides during the Civil War, it has been chosen by the Western Writers of America as one of the Top 100 Western songs of all time.

**A Time for All Ages** (Movement!) Alice Posner

**Joys & Concerns** “May Night” by Selim Palmgren Played by Eve Goss

### “Spirit of Life”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LikvoLiN\\_bU&fbclid=IwAR1TXZw7DJamJeDh5XPN0qcs4179qbAbbyYt6lPmgjLwjvugYqqA9ApMmLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LikvoLiN_bU&fbclid=IwAR1TXZw7DJamJeDh5XPN0qcs4179qbAbbyYt6lPmgjLwjvugYqqA9ApMmLM)

**Meditation**

Let us join our hearts in a spirit of quieting and opening.

We give thanks for May in bloom. For beauty. For the seasons.  
We give thanks that again we are here together,  
for all that is our life, thankful and humbled.

We are grateful for our freedoms – hard won by others.  
We are grateful for those who have lived and died,  
those who lived long full lives and,  
especially today, those whose lives were cut short by war.

This morning, as the world fights another war, a common enemy,  
we honor the toll it has taken on people everywhere.  
We hold in the light those who are sick with Covid-19  
and families grieving recent deaths of loved ones and friends.

May courage strengthen us to face down our doubts,  
to find the goodness in each other and to believe in our own.

[Respond to Joy & Concerns.]

**Reading**      Dick Cary

“Love Abides”

Calmed by some kindness  
Brought alive again by beauty  
That catches us undefended.

Even when the sun is most thin and far  
Even at the hour the storm is at its height  
We can go through

Renewal rests within sorrow  
Love abides, even beyond anger, beyond death.

We are held in an embrace invisible but infinite  
Moving with all creation  
Between wholeness and fragmentation  
Moving always toward the one.      - Barbara Pescan

\* “Abide With Me”

## **Reflection** *Memorial Day - Another War*

A cruel war is raging. Again, a war. Not about land or money or hatred this time, but war nonetheless. Look at the language we use. We are fighting. Battling an enemy. Bent on defeating it. Winning. This war has front lines – technology takes us into the trenches where essential workers, the soldiers of this war, risk their lives every day, “putting their bodies in harm’s way,” as Obama used to say. Soldiers in hospitals, grocery stores, morgues, barber shops, on buses, at the post office.

Today, *we* put *our* body in harm’s way every time we leave the house. The prospect of our dying feels close – a distinct possibility for any one of us, though this virus cruelly spotlights some more than others.

Yet there’s a distance today between us and what’s happening. We cannot be with loved ones who are sick. We cannot comfort the dying nor bury them nor honor together who they were. Have you noticed the distance, too, between suffering and statistics? Real and sad and painful and scary as dying from this disease is, we hear a lot of numbers. Every day we count the number of cases. We count the number of fatalities. We break the numbers down by country, state, and county. By race, income, and age. We do the math and calculate mortality rates.

But death is not about counting and calculating. We must do more than count the dead. We must come closer to them. To their shock at finding out that they have it. To their struggle for breath. We must come closer to see their eyes looking up, frightened, at masked doctors and nurses. Closer to their goodbyes or lack thereof. Closer to their wishes, their longing for the gaze, the touch of a loved one.

To come to terms with today’s reality, we must come closer to heartache. To the people who died. *Who* they were. In a NY hospital, medical staff members write notes to family members. Looking at and knowing little about an intubated patient, they write about the peaceful look on her face, his beautiful thick salt & pepper hair.

We honor those who die fighting on the field, “giving their lives,” as we say. But in the Boston Globe’s 20 pages/day of obituaries you rarely see Covid-19. This was true during the 1918 pandemic, too – as if submitting to disease were a sign of weakness. Is it an American thing to look away from victims? An American couple stuck in Spain the past few months were shocked when they arrived home to hear so little sadness from public figures. In Spain, every speech begins with a lament, a litany of mourning.

This distancing *we* do denies the human tragedy, the sadness of families and neighborhoods grieving. To live again, to go on, and to heal, we need to grieve.

Some of us have yet to grieve the death of a loved one, some of us have grieved greatly. We’ve seen death come after a long life, and far too soon, too. Sometimes death is long dreaded, sometimes an inconceivable jolt. The hole left in our lives changes our very landscape, can rob us of the will to live. We deny (this can’t be happening), we rage, we bargain, we cry and withdraw.

How can it be that our life will go on? That one day we will smile again? How can it be that one day, something we haven't noticed for months now, breaks through? A friend's smile. Bird song out the window. A painting. A poem. Textures of green alive all around us. The beauty of the May night.

Yet we know it is so. One day, a memory undoes us, while another day it brings a smile, a knowing nod, a full heart, at the same time aching and grateful. The word "acceptance" feels like a strong word for this ever so subtle shift. As when we wake up one morning after having had the flu or maybe Covid-19, and something's changed: we feel pretty good, not like this in a long time. A shift. A blessing.

"Renewal rests within sorrow," writes Barbara Pescan. "[We are] brought alive again by beauty."

I stepped out early this morning to feel the sunshine and pick up the newspaper. It didn't look right, not like the usual Sunday layout. There on the front page were thousands of names, no images, just names continuing onto pages 12 and 13 and 14. "100,000" said the headline. And finally, names. One thousand names (1/100<sup>th</sup> of the current total). Grandparents. Daughters. Sons. Fathers. Mothers. Siblings. Aunts and uncles. Cousins. Friends. I snapped a photo – victims of this war.

But not until looking more closely after a while, thinking to read some names to you, did I see the gift. Gleaned from thousands of obits, after each and every name is a phrase that tells the world something essential about each person: "...**Bassey Offiong**, 25, Michigan, saw friends at their worst but brought out their best...**Freda Ocran**, 51, New York City, nurse with a zest for travel and knowledge...**Raymond Copeland**, 46, New York City, sanitation worker living his fullest days...**Patricia H. Thatcher**, 79, Clifton Park, N.Y., sang in her church choir for 42 years...**Stuart Cohen**, 73, New York City, Brooklyn cabbie who found a home in Buddhism...**Orlando Mencada**, 56, Bronxville, N.Y., left Peru and grabbed hold of the American dream...."

For our time of sharing, please tell us the name of someone you remember today and one simple phrase about him or her. Truly a handful of words, not even a sentence: "My mother Kitty, rhubarb pie on Memorial Day."

Sam P: Adams Carter, mountaineer, Quaker, made labels for parachutes.

Rod: My uncle Freeland, who came back on a troop ship from WWII sick, jaundiced. Lived with my family for about six months until he died. My father's youngest brother.

Jorge D: My grandmother, my mother's mother, Clara Estrella de la Paz, was born on the day that the Treaty of Paris in 1899 went into effect. It was the treaty that put an end to what we know as the Spanish American War and which she taught me was the Cuban War of Independence. Her name in English means the Bright Star of Peace.

Dick Cary: Debby Cary whose contributions to many faces of activities of her life, including UUFES, who perished in the fire which took the previous iteration of this house, which I have spoken of.

Cindy E: Russell Miller, my father, who was so proud to be member of the Greatest Generation.

Betsy L: My Uncle Johnny who was killed in 1945 by a kamikaze pilot.

Kim H: My husband Art, a patient, selfless, good man. Loved the lake, loved boating. A Vietnam vet. I miss him every day.

Barbara B: Joseph Bald, my father. He drove a PT boat in WWII but continued his love of the sea until he died.

Eleanor: I'd like to remember Bob Young. He died about a year ago, and I'd always called him my soldier. He told a wonderful story that he shared with the Fellowship, so I always think of Bob Young.

Thank you for all the names that have been lifted up We know that there are many more in our hearts. Let us remember to use this weekend to take time for gratitude, maybe to put a flower in a meaningful place. This holiday began a few years after the Civil War when people put flowers on the graves not only of their own soldiers but on the graves of those who had fallen there, unknown soldiers. It was a time of coming together. May we remember with gratitude and with love. Amen.

### **Shared Affirmation**

\*Hymn "This is My Song"

### **Extinguishing our Chalice**

### **Closing Reminders**

- Plant Sale is in two weeks, Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am to 1 pm. You can help Betty Fernandes by potting up perennials and telling friends and coming to the sale.
- Our second conversation about death is this week. Not Friday but, now that THURSDAY is our SERIOUS CONVERSATION day, it's Thursday at 6:
  - o 4 pm Tuesday: A POEM
  - o 5 pm Wednesday: A CASUAL HELLO
  - o 6 pm Thursday: SERIOUSLY...
- Coffee hour (break-out groups)

**Benediction**

Because of those who came before, we are;  
in spite of their failings, we believe;  
because of, and in spite of, the horizons of their vision,  
we, too, dream.

Let us go remembering to praise,  
to live in the moment,  
to love mightily,  
to bow to the mystery. - Barbara Pescan

Keep safe and strong. Know you are loved. Amen.

**\*Postlude** “Fields”

The service can be viewed for 90 days from 5/24/20 at:

5/24/20 “Memorial Day - Another War”

[https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/yP10dKjW02NIb6PouUr-XLQhQZ3YX6a8hHJN\\_6VYxEwuNQeGmFq0z8zQzNTU4jqG](https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/yP10dKjW02NIb6PouUr-XLQhQZ3YX6a8hHJN_6VYxEwuNQeGmFq0z8zQzNTU4jqG)

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