

**“The Momentum of Hope”
Sunday, June 21, 2020**

Welcome & Lighting of Chalice Rev. Betsy Tabor

We gather these mornings to give thanks, to stretch our growing edges, and to commit to making the world a better place.

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

It’s the summer solstice weekend, yesterday the longest day of the year. It’s Father’s Day. And America brims with an energy and momentum these days as Black Lives Matter protests continue and the Supreme Court rules in support of LGBTQ rights and DACA. Freedom is in the air. Our service is called “The Momentum of Hope.”

***Centering** “Oh Freedom” Post-Civil War African-American freedom song
Played by Shana Aisenberg

Shared Affirmation

***Hymn** In a moment we’ll sing the song “Everything Possible,” written by UU Rev. Fred Small in 1983 “at the request of a lesbian mother trying to raise her 9-year-old son amidst the pressures of (toxic) masculinity....The Boston Gay Men’s Chorus still sings it to their newest members at their first rehearsal....” He has “thought about revising the gender-binary lyrics but says, “It’s not an easy fix.” When I wrote Fred to ask permission to use his hymn, he asked for no license fee but did invite us to send donations to the National Black Justice Coalition, which serves Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. (Contact info in the Chat space.)

“Everything Possible” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9lfi7gCuz0>

Time for All Ages Alice Posner

Reflections

Shana Aisenberg
Margaret Rieser

***“Everything Possible” Chorus:**

You can be anybody you want to be,
you can love whomever you will.
You can travel any country where your heart leads
and know I will love you still.
You can live by yourself, you can gather friends around,
you can choose one special one.
And the only measure of your words and your deeds
Will be the love you leave behind when you’re gone.

Joys & Concerns “Immortal Love”

***“Spirit of Life”**

Meditation Rev. Betsy Tabor

We give thanks for one bluebird day after the other
for summer’s soft breeze
For blues and greens that calm our minds and lift our spirits

This Father’s Day we are grateful for all who father and for fathers of all genders
Who nurture...who kindle the light of truth and kindness,
Who care for the neighbor, friend or stranger...
We give thanks to they who give time, resources and energy to the growth of others.

We face challenges in our own circumstances and well beyond.
May we trust life and see what we can give.
May we keep learning and have what it takes to grow into who we want to be.
In the name of all that is good and true and holy. Amen.

[Respond to Joys & Concerns.]

Reading Peter Barnard

“Bruh” by Dereau Farrar

My father (whose name is Drake, for those of you who prefer to pray with names) has taught me a lot in the way of things one needs to know in order to survive life as a Black man in America. It was from him that I learned what it means to be pulled over by the police. I witnessed it happen to him, and he was wise and insightful enough to explain to my brother and me what had just occurred. That was an important, life-saving lesson.

Another important lesson he taught me was to always acknowledge the other Black folks I see around town. I was to greet those I knew with the highest respect and give them as much time as it takes. For those I don’t know, a simple nod, smile, or “Aight, bruh” would do. You see, Black people are so accustomed to being ignored and invisible that a simple acknowledgement — a simple *I see you* — from a peer goes a long way. Also, Black people carry enough in their days that any lightening of the load is appreciated.

This lesson resonated with me, and I committed to “seeing” every Black person I come across in my daily life. I understood this practice in theory, but perhaps subconsciously believed it to be outdated. Since moving to Portland, Oregon (a city that’s more than three-quarters White), I have come to recognize each Black face as precious, and each opportunity to greet them a blessing.

I’m not sure if the best word to describe the experience is joy or relief, but I can say that it is a sense of remembering that I am not alone. There’s an immediate recognition that someone else knows, in a very real way, what my day has been like so far. And, from that recognition comes necessary peace and blessed assurance. Thanks, Dad.

Reflection Rev. Betsy Tabor

The momentum was loud this week. People still on the streets singing for Black Lives Matter. Crowds cheering Monday on the steps of the Supreme Court with rainbow flags. And Dreamers, relieved and radiant on Thursday – they could be our own kids or grandkids, our hope for them feels so fierce.

Did you feel freedom in the air this week? Freedom to Black, Indigenous and People of Color? Freedom to LGBTQ people, freedom to young people brought to this country, children *of* this country?

And something else. Did you notice the convergence this week of sometimes separate identities – as millions of hearts opened to stories of fighting for freedom, breaking through oppression, and sharing the pain of being left behind, left out, or turned against?

Shana used the word “intersectionality” earlier. Black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the phrase years ago, but it became popular at the time of the Women’s March three years ago, when women’s “intersecting identities” meant that they were affected by not just one but many social justice issues. Can you relate to this? It might be hard if you’ve had white American parents and grew up straight and CIS-gendered. Crenshaw writes: “Understanding *intersectionality* is essential to combating the interwoven prejudices people face in their daily lives.”¹

White people are finally beginning to understand prejudices Black people have encountered daily for generations. And, though the world has come a long way since the 1969 Stonewall riots, people everywhere have also begun to appreciate what a tough road it can be for children and adults to sort out sexual orientation and gender expression. And if you are someone who speaks English with an accent, you too will run into prejudice.

Imagine the impact of compounding prejudices. Being Black can count against you from across the street. Being Black and queer adds another layer – now you’re up against two painful histories, two vocabularies of insults, two well-honed narratives of hate. To be Black and queer and speak with an accent? You get the idea.

Today, a bright light shines on people combating multiple prejudices. How can we engage? Perhaps by focusing differently. DeReau Farrar commits to speaking to every Black person he passes. I SEE you. I KNOW things you know. What if we see a week like this one as an invitation to look at the power of possible and probable intersections – compounding limitations on some people’s freedom. What if we commit to seeing and responding with double or triple the love?

In grad school in NYC in the 70s, I lived on Riverside Drive in an edgy neighborhood of SRO’s: single room occupancy buildings for individuals living with special needs, such as homeless folks with mental health conditions, substance abuse history, young people aging out of foster care. Every day I walked up 98th Street past groups of Black trans women – “Black transvestites”

¹ <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>

as they were called then – tall and muscular, their voices deep. They dressed up in high heels and skirts, wore make-up and wigs.

At any hour of the day they'd be out on the steps, often laughing and telling stories. While walking by groups of Black people might otherwise have felt threatening to me, these neighbors seemed to live in a world of their own – our realities didn't connect. A curiosity to me at the time – today I see them more clearly: Black people living poor in the city, up against generations of discrimination. Trans women – a risky way to go at any time. Living into your truth can put you in harm's way. Sadly, this remains true today for trans people, especially those of color.

Old today, they must be telling amazing stories. This week's gains must feel sweet indeed. From a distance, I send them love.

Many of us know what it's like to dream of freedom. Freedom from what holds us back. From living fully or from loving the way we long to love. And many of us know the freedom in letting go of the fight now and then and just being. Just loving.

And so let us allow ourselves a glide in these extraordinary times. A glide of gladness and gratitude for everyone whose freedom is on the march and growing. May we stay in the quest.

Offering

Chopin Prelude No. 23

Played by Eve Goss

Community Reflections

What freedoms do you value? How have you experienced freedom? Freedom given to you or hard won. Freedom from judgment, freedom from oppression, freedom from pain or grief, freedom to be yourself....

Ann McG: The first time I really experienced what seemed to be total freedom was when I left home at age 18....I wanted to experience living on my own, making my own mistakes, and not having everything scrutinized by my parents, even though they were very good parents, very loving parents, I still wanted to make my own mistakes. I did make a lot of mistakes (really bad ones), but nevertheless they were my mistakes, and I didn't have someone telling me what they were – I found out for myself. I feel grateful that I was able to do this. The second time I felt freedom was fairly recently. I had relatives living with me...and when they left...I felt a lot of freedom, a different kind of freedom....

Sam P: Resistance and burden despite so many freedoms.

Hope H: Similar to Ann's second freedom, despite a youthful struggle to find my place in the world and become independent (I didn't fully move out of my parents' house till I was well into my 20s and then still went back a few more times) – I have the freedom to live as I want, to be free from worries about poverty or hunger. I've done this with a lot of love from my family and a little bit of luck and a little bit of skill. So I love the freedom of living where I do and being with you all.

Betsy L: The freedom I'm most aware of right now is, with this heat, I've been walking very early in the morning. I leave my house before 6 a.m. and enter the woods and listen to the woodpeckers. I just have an incredible sense of being able to have the freedom to go where I want to go, to be able to exercise like this, to be in the woods despite the pandemic. It's a wonderful feeling every morning.

Barbara B: There's a freedom that comes when someone helps you understand, finally, you're enough.

***Closing Hymn** "I Wish I Knew How"

Reminders

- This coming week – General Assembly
- Next Sunday: 10 a.m. worship at GA
- A reminder to members to vote for next year's budget and officers
- How to become a member of UUFES

Benediction We close with the words of Dr. Daina Ramey Berry, African American professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin:

For me, when I think of Juneteenth as Emancipation Day
and I think about this moment,
I feel like we still need to be emancipated.
There's still more freedoms that need to be protected
There's still more laws that need to be revised
still more inclusion that needs to happen
there's still more achievement to be had
there's still more space for change and growth.

May it be so.

***Postlude** "All Shall Be Well" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kadbd3tCqc>

A recording of this service will be available until 9/21/20:

https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/2JNMLp_033NIZLeXtwaAf7EPOL_ueaa80XQd-adbyUqIqeKC8Yf7YGxWtQV4U0ID

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