

**Sunday, December 20, 2020**  
***“The Winter Solstice”***

**Welcome** – Rev. Betsy Tabor & UUFES youth

Tomorrow will be the shortest day of the year as the sun reaches its farthest point south of the Equator at 5:02 a.m. Welcome to our annual winter solstice service in which we honor the darkness and turn toward the coming light (that’s when we usually fling open the shades).

Welcome. Here we seek justice and truth and understanding.

Here we celebrate life and contemplate mystery.

Here we seek healing and wholeness. Welcome, all.

This morning we remember a beloved member of our community, Eli Szklanka, who died yesterday morning. Eli brought vitality to everything he did. An entrepreneur, intellectual, music aficionado, an avid biker and swimmer and skier, Eli also had a gift for friendship. He was a man who loved well, serving on the UUFES Governing Board and the very soul of the Men’s Group. He gave of himself generously, especially in matters of the heart, and will be sorely missed. We will observe a silence in honor of Eli and then hear the prayer from Friday night Shabbat liturgy called “Shalom Aleichem” or “Peace be with you.” First, some moments of silence as we remember Eli.

**Music** - “Shalom Aleichem”

**Lighting of Chalice and Candles** We light our chalices and candles this morning in the spirit of people whose lives have inspired us.

**Shared Affirmation**

**Hymn** - “In the Bleak Midwinter”

**A Time for All Ages** - Alice Posner

**Lights in the Darkness.**

Diane Shank: We light our first candle FOR THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE.

Our reading is “Autumn Sonnets, No. 2” by May Sarton:

If I can let you go as trees let go  
Their leaves, so casually, one by one;  
If I can come to know what they do know,  
That fall is the release, the consummation,  
Then fear of time and the uncertain fruit  
Would not distemper the great lucid skies  
This strangest autumn, mellow and acute.  
If I can take the dark with open eyes  
And call it seasonal, not harsh or strange

(For love itself may need a time of sleep),  
 And, treelike, stand unmoved before the change,  
 Lose what I lose to keep what I can keep,  
 The strong root still alive under the snow,  
 Love will endure – if I can let you go.

Turning toward the light, we sound a first bell for courage and acceptance.

Sandra Carr: We light our second candle FOR ILLNESS AND DIMINISHMENT.  
 Our reading is “When Death Comes” by Mary Oliver:

When death comes  
 like the hungry bear in autumn;  
 when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;  
 when death comes  
 like the measles-pox

when death comes  
 like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:  
 what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
 as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
 and I look upon time as no more than an idea,  
 and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
 as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,  
 tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something  
 precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life  
 I was a bride married to amazement.  
 I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
 if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Turning toward the light, we sound a second bell for wonder and a sense of  
adventure.

**Music** - "The Lone, Wild Bird"

Rod Forsman: We light our third candle FOR THE BROKENNESS WE KNOW WITH  
OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

Our reading is "Lines for Winter" by Mark Strand:

*for Ros Krauss*

Tell yourself  
as it gets cold and gray falls from the air  
that you will go on  
walking, hearing  
the same tune no matter where  
you find yourself—  
inside the dome of dark  
or under the cracking white  
of the moon's gaze in a valley of snow.  
Tonight as it gets cold

what you know which is nothing  
but the tune your bones play  
as you keep going. And you will be able  
for once to lie down under the small fire  
of winter stars.  
And if it happens that you cannot  
go on or turn back  
and you find yourself  
where you will be at the end,  
tell yourself  
in that final flowing of cold through your limbs  
that you love what you are.

Turning toward the light, we sound a third bell for perseverance and the faith that all will  
be well.

Barbara Bald: We light our fourth candle FOR THE UNCERTAINTY AND DAMAGE OF OUR TIMES. Our reading is “The Peace of Wild Things” by Wendell Berry:

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Turning toward the light, we sound a fourth bell for a softer step on the earth and for the arc of history, which bends toward wholeness and justice.

**Music** - “Dark of Winter” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01sjMTy9Qnw&feature=youtu.be>

**Joys and Sorrows** “Snowbound” by Shana Aisenberg

**Meditation and Prayer** - Rev. Betsy Tabor

We give thanks for life - for breath - for the gift of this day  
Aware that this season can accentuate suffering and sadness and pain  
We are grateful the gifts of the season:  
beauty - quiet - and darkness  
voices laughter and tears of each other

At times perplexed and unsettled  
We are grateful for  
what wakes us up  
what shakes us up  
what helps us re-think what we thought we knew

Love and comfort and rest to Eli’s wife, Terri  
Prayers for strength to Josephine Alcott so she can get back home  
And love to Ingrid as she and Mark create their path forward these days.

May we and all people we let love in  
and may we have the courage to give it away wildly...with abandon. Amen

**Special Collection** – The Peggy Erskine Memorial Fund - Kim Hamel and Rod Forsman

**Anthem** - “Ode to Joy” by Beethoven

**Reading** “The Shortest Day” by Susan Cooper

And so the Shortest Day came and the year died  
 And everywhere down the centuries of the snow-white world  
 Came people singing, dancing,  
 To drive the dark away.  
 They lighted candles in the winter trees;  
 They hung their homes with evergreen;  
 They burned beseeching fires all night long  
 To keep the year alive.  
 And when the new year's sunshine blazed awake  
 They shouted, revelling.  
 Through all the frosty ages you can hear them  
 Echoing behind us - listen!  
 All the long echoes, sing the same delight,  
 This Shortest Day,  
 As promise wakens in the sleeping land:  
 They carol, feast, give thanks,  
 And dearly love their friends,  
 And hope for peace.  
 And now so do we, here, now,  
 This year and every year.  
 Welcome, Yule!

**Hymn** - “All Beautiful the March of Days”**Extinguishing of Chalice****Benediction**

Come we now out of the embrace of darkness and all it holds.  
 Come we now into the twilight of hope, our dreams bright.  
 Come we now; enter the dawning.  
 Here, now, this year and every year.

**Postlude** - “Here Comes the Sun” George Harrison

This service can be viewed until March 20, 2021 at:

<https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/xTENHuz-7j3zak5HLtoKA-kTg1u3pbr34ehUNYDww1I0pQ0zimuwW3DRfqGt6bkF.vD-NaFrUboo7M6K>  
 Passcode: 8PpKP^O@

(For copyright reasons, the Postlude was not recorded.)