

## **“Beginning Again In Love”**

January 24, 2021

### **Welcome and Lighting of Chalice** - Rev. Betsy Tabor & UUFES Youth

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 week, a new president and vice president were sworn into office. Many people are still lit up by the event, still in that rare, happy place where dreams feel possible. Others have struggled – we know what that feels like. Our service is called “Beginning Again in Love.” It’s about making the most of the feeling of possibility as we respond to the call for unity. We are grateful for your many images of the dawn – may we begin each day with love.

### **Centering Music** - “Amazing Grace”

### **Shared Affirmation**

### **Hymn** - “Come, Sing a Song with Me”

### **A Time for All Ages** - Marion Posner

I want to begin with reading some lines from Shakespeare, from a sonnet, and from Robbie Burns, the Scottish poet. I want to read them because they both, for me, have some of an answer that I need to hear when I ask the question Reverend Betsy has posed in today’s theme: “Every day gives us a chance to begin again – to look after each other; to bring our best selves to the world; to take good care of body and soul. This week our country also calls us to begin again, to come together for the common good. What role does love play?”

Each poem speaks to me of love ~ as strong, powerful, unbending, incorruptible. If we are to work together, and move creatively forward from times of disruption, despair, and uncertainty, we need something sure, to depend on, to inspire us, hold us together, bond us. weave us into one. LOVE.

Both men who penned these lines had lived in times of chaos, governmental unrest. Both experienced grief and fear. Shakespeare lived through a Plague. Burns grew up in extreme poverty. But, love had emerged, triumphant, glittering, for each of them. Before I start, one word of Shakespeare’s might need translating for those of you who are not familiar with this sonnet. A bark is a ship.

Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
 If this be error and upon me prov'd,  
 I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

My luve is like a red red rose  
 That's newly sprung in june;  
 O my Luve's like the melodie  
 That's sweetly play'd in tune;  
 As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
 So deep in luve am I;  
 And I will luve thee still, my dear,  
 Till a' the seas gang dry;  
 Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun;  
 I will luve thee still, my dear,  
 While the sands o' life shall run.  
 And fare thee weel, my only Luve  
 And fare thee weel, a while!  
 And I will come again, my Luve,  
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

'My luve', 'my dear' are surely also those things we all hold dear and wish to protect, and fight for: democracy, our environment, and much more.

Now, I hope that Sandy will be able to display some photos so I can tell you a story. Photo One please Sandy.

One morning amid the tumultuous events of the last few days, my son arrived outside our house with a shovel. The snow was coated in ice. He dug and created a large slab. He dug another, and placed it on the first. Slab, after heavy slab, step by step, until the creation towered high above him.

It stood in all its glittering beauty. And yet I sensed a loneliness about it, an isolation, a coldness of solitude. It stood, day into night.

The sun shone the following day and slowly, imperceptibly, it began to tilt, its high, dignified top seemed to lose strength.

The day after that, my son arrived again, spade over his shoulder, and began to dig. He had to dig from further away this time, to find the ice covered snow that he needed. Each slab was heavy. I watched through the window as he carried them over one by one and hoisted them up and onto a

new creation.

Sandy ~ could we have photo Two?

And then it was there, another being. Another stood in solidarity, companionship. The taller one did not tilt, but it bowed in respect and gratitude. And, when, a few days later its top melted, it stood equal, the same height as the other. I do not understand snow speak but, if I did, I think I would hear the word love.

SANDY photo three?

And in this photo, we just took a pic of the first one. Gone is its sense of isolation. Solidarity has gilded its spirit.

Finally, Photo number four please Sandy.

A few late afternoons ago, I came to a halt. I was on a high hill in Tamworth. As I turned a corner, the view opened. The curtains were drawn wide. They opened to a startling light, a breathtaking precision of detail.

It was cold, Chilling to the bone. I saw darkness holding its own beyond the snow's white. An old stone wall, once so sturdy and sure, defining, had crumbled.

Storm clouds hovered, their grey thunder so recently had held us in its angry grasp. I looked, I stared, I stood in a kind of prayer. For there, before me, lay a story. A story of shadows and light, of hatred and forgiveness, despair and hope. I listened to it. It was the landscape, sitting me on its lap, and telling me a story.

"Come sit", it invited me, "on this stone wall. It may look as though it has succumbed to neglect and change but, trust me, watch it with care and see how it stands steadfast. It holds much. It holds stories of hardship, of struggle to find a living on the land, of stones placed in harmony, together. The trees too have much to tell, the birds to recount in song. Let the nuances of light, as they glance and mingle on the snow's skin, be part of the story.

But to hear the stories, you must take time to stand still and stare."

And this was just the beginning of the story.....I hope some of you may find time to hear more of it.

**Reflection, Part 1** - "Silence" by Betsy Loughran, August 2020

Few words build the cage around me.  
I am a happy child; I live with my parents and sister.  
We have what we need.

I play with my pals, Judy, Peggy and Nancy

I go to piano lessons with Pat;  
she's a lot better than I am.

I see that "colored" people live two blocks away.  
They go to my school;  
we play on the playground.

When I ask to go to Pat's birthday party,  
Mom says, "They don't really want you to come."  
Pat can't play at my house either.

When the tulips in front of our house are gone,  
it was the colored children who picked them.,  
not my friends who live on this block.

In catechism class I ask why colored people don't come to our church.  
The answer, "They like their own church."  
No thought of reaching out to see why.

Seventy years later I read letters Mom wrote to her mother.  
I find that Nita, the student maid who lived upstairs,  
was fired because she had a colored boy friend.

"She's wonderful with the children," wrote my mom,  
"but she believes in intermarriage, and we don't want the children  
to think that social doings with colored people are ok."

She wrote about my three friends calling them by name,  
but when she got to Pat, it was "the little colored girl,  
who is undoubtedly the most talented of the group."

Later, my family moved to a much grander house,  
a mile away from the "colored" section of town.  
From the letters, I found that a house on our block had sold to blacks.

My father went to the Westside Improvement meetings,  
In letters, my mother shared her fears,  
"But we haven't said anything to the children yet."

Today I read about white supremacy,  
not the kind with the "N" word,  
not the ugliness that you see on TV,  
only blocks of silence  
of keeping things from the children,  
only a nice life in the suburbs,  
only racism wrapped in cotton.

**“This Is Who We Are”** by Shana Aisenberg

**Joys & Concerns** - “Fields” by Shana Aisenberg

**Hymn** - “Spirit of Life”

**Meditation/Prayer**

We give thanks  
for a peaceful week  
for celebration  
for ceremony  
for hope

We are grateful  
To be sleeping better  
To breathe more easily  
To again imagine the possible

We remember all people whose lives have been upended by Covid  
Those whose loved ones have died and those battling this very day  
Especially our families--parents and children--and friends

In our beloved circle, we hold two members in our hearts.  
Missy Myers’ mother died in Missouri a week ago Friday, her family around her.  
Love to Bobbi Hoyt whose mother Mary died in Florida on Thursday.  
Peace of mind and love to Missy and Bobbi and their families. Amen.

**“We Begin Again in Love”** (by Rob Eller-Isaacs, adapted), a litany of forgiveness with a sung response:

**For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference ...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For times when our fear has cut us off from each other...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For times we have spoken in hurtful ways...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For when our need to be right has overshadowed the needs of others...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For selfishness which sets us apart and alone...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For when we’ve missed the mark...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

**For losing sight of our unity...**

*We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.*

[Response to Joys & Concerns.]

**Reading** - “If Prayer Would Do It” by Stephen Levine

If prayer would do it  
I'd pray.

If reading esteemed thinkers would do it  
I'd be halfway through the Patriarchs.

If discourse would do it  
I'd be sitting with His Holiness  
every moment he was free.

If contemplation would do it  
I'd have translated the Periodic Table  
to hermit poems, converting  
matter to spirit.

If even fighting would do it  
I'd already be a blackbelt.

If anything other than love could do it  
I've done it already  
and left the hardest for last.

**Reflection** - Rev. Betsy Tabor

Crazy things are happening. A town conservative announces her change of heart in the local paper. A brother-in-law asks, “What sauce do you think goes with the Crow I’m eating?” (We send a jar of maple cream.) These events feel seismic, like hope.

Who’s not been visited by thoughts of the disappointed ones, millions? Who can forget the dread and fear and bewilderment of four years ago? President Biden’s call for unity is a tall order, and we have work to do.

But first: Can we just stay in the moment of happiness? Before going on with life, can we taste it? Savor it? Not everyone *was* celebrating on Wednesday – people were dealing with life events and work, other priorities. But for we who were, can we stay with the glow a little longer? Can we stay with seeing the Obamas step out into the sunlight? Can we stay with Capitol Officer Goodman, honored for his bravery the week before? Can we stay with the grace of former presidents greeting each other warmly? Can we stay with the first woman? The first Black woman? The first Asian woman?

Can we stay with the purple – symbolizing unity (red and blue), the suffragette color during the fight for women’s rights? Can we stay with the purple, a nod to Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for President who used purple in her publicity?

Can we stay with the flashiness of celebrities? With Lady Gaga’s gold dove and her billowing red cloud of skirts? Her turning toward the flag that “was still there”? Can we stay with Amanda Gorman’s hands and light?

Let us linger in the warmth of that day, soak up the hope and the intention in every detail! Feel into that brimming-over-ness! The airiness that time became, life’s details elsewhere for the moment.

We recognize that expansiveness. It comes to us in an everyday way when we lose track of time in the garden or the woodshop, mowing, sorting clothes at UUsed. Meditating, handwork, and getting outside help us breathe a full breath.

Such expansiveness can also come to us when we’ve achieved a goal or taken action on something that’s weighed on us, when, for a moment, the future is a blank slate. The hinges of our mind swing open, and fresh thoughts try themselves out with a freedom, a lightness. “Yes,” we think, “That could happen!” or “I could do that!”

Some of us are breathing again! Did you hear that Europeans were so gladdened this week that, when they collectively looked in our direction and sighed a huge breath of relief, all the ships on the ocean tipped in its wake ☺

What does beginning feel like to you? Not only for the government and country but for us, too. How can we live into the call for unity? And how can we begin again *in love*?

I don’t mean months down the road, but now, while that day still feels alive. Before real life creeps back in, before we start saying “Yeah, but” again, before we return to the rabbit holes that keep us apart, and before we hook back up to the media feedbag...where is love here?

What made many of us weep the other day? Happiness. Relief. Tenderness. A friend whispered that afternoon that he felt his heart open during the ceremony – and was amazed when thoughts of compassion arose for the outgoing president. *Love, when you least expect to feel it.*

In Thursday’s “Seriously” conversation, we wrestled with love and how hard it is to love this country: its income inequality, racism, violence, its anti-Semitism, anti-LGBTQ folk. It’s hard to love our history and the hatred that thrives here.

And yet, we feel our hearts open. What if we stay with that washed-clean feeling and entertain the idea of turning toward “the other” with love?

Beginning again with open hearts takes intention. As adults, we understand ourselves well enough to know what opens our heart. For you, a chance encounter in line at Hannafords will

make your day, while for you, helping your neighbor shovel out will do it – or thanking the neighbor for shoveling yours.

Change between people happens best with simple contact. If we Americans could drop down more often from the opinions in our heads to the chambers of our hearts, what a world this would be! We might start by staying with the exhilaration and the tears of this week. We might even make today a great turning. I'm thinking of the song our choir sings : "In this great turning, we shall learn to lead in love; in this great turning, we shall learn to lead in love."

We can begin any new day – *every* new day – in love. It's a brave new world. Can we commit to trying?

**The Morning Offering** - Largo from Symphony 9 "For the New World" by Anton Dvorak

### **Community Response**

#### WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF YOUR LOVING THIS COUNTRY?

- 10:57:51 From Peaco T: the prevalent ignorance of some — willful ignorance
- 10:58:01 From Karen P: Racism and hate
- 10:58:03 From Betsy L: Violence, lies, greediness
- 10:58:07 From Ellen W: quiet racism everywhere
- 10:58:15 From Cindy E: Violence
- 10:58:16 From Shana A: Our violence, past and present
- 10:58:21 From Tammy&John F: hypocrisy
- 10:58:23 From Beth F: dismay
- 10:58:23 From Kathy B and Bruce L: Man's poor treatment of it.
- 10:58:25 From Peggy P: the faces of those people at the Capitol on January 6
- 10:58:31 From Ann & David W: Misundersstanding of history. Lack of education
- 10:58:40 From Shana A: inequality
- 10:58:41 From Ellen W: inequality that isn't being addressed - how do we address it?
- 10:58:48 From Margaret R: Our colonist origins. We need to deeply work this through.
- 10:58:56 From Barbara B: money
- 10:58:59 From Ed P: materialism gets in the way of the heart
- 10:59:00 From Laura C: injustice
- 10:59:03 From Kim H: narrow-mindedness of some
- 10:59:11 From Kevin C: imperialism denied
- 10:59:18 From Sam P: needing to listen and hear
- 10:59:27 From Cindy E: ignorance

#### WHAT CAN YOU LOVE ABOUT IT?

- 10:59:58 From Ann & David W: acceptance of immigrants across our history
- 11:00:03 From Tammy&John F : hope
- 11:00:03 From Peaco T: decency
- 11:00:04 From Ellen W: hope and possibilities
- 11:00:05 From Cindy E: Hope
- 11:00:06 From Karen P: The natural beauty
- 11:00:09 From Barbara B: Small kindnesses of people

11:00:16 From Shana A: aspirations  
 11:00:17 From Kim H: our diversity  
 11:00:19 From Sam P: apple pie and maple-imbued preserves that go with Crow...  
 11:00:20 From Sandra C : the values that we are trying to live into  
 11:00:52 From Sam P: that Unity does not mean agreement, but respect  
 11:01:02 From Barbara B: Communities like ours  
 11:01:04 From Ann & David W: The ideals of our founding documents  
 11:01:09 From Peggy P: hope  
 11:01:22 From Bruce L : The promises of democracy. B  
 11:01:53 From Laura C: adaptability  
 11:01:54 From Sam P: it all starts with rights of all individuals...  
 11:02:56 From Shana A: diversity  
 11:03:12 From Kevin C : Founding documents based on Native principles

**THINK ABOUT SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHOSE A WORLDVIEW YOU CANNOT GRASP. WHAT CAN YOU LOVE ABOUT THIS PERSON?**

11:03:43 From Betsy L: His talents  
 11:03:52 From Cindy E: Wonderful cook  
 11:03:59 From Sandra C : her beauty and thoughtfulness  
 11:04:00 From Peaco T: He built the most exquisite model of The Essex (ship)  
 11:04:02 From Karen P: His sense of adventure  
 11:04:05 From Tammy&John F : her big heart  
 11:04:06 From Shana A: acceptance  
 11:04:07 From Lynn H: He cares for my sister and niece in his own special way  
 11:04:15 From Ann & David W: Still skiing in his 90s  
 11:04:16 From Kim H: she is very caring to her friends....and her love of the same music as mine  
 11:04:20 From Ellen W: My trumpeter cousin who loves her brother in hospice and would do anything for him. And loves dogs!  
 11:04:21 From Kathy B and Bruce L : Her warm outreach to others  
 11:04:24 From Sam P: great pilot  
 11:04:34 From Sam P: a family man  
 11:04:46 From Sandra C : such a loving family member  
 11:05:17 From Barbara B: He cares deeply for human beings under his political views  
 11:05:17 From Ann & David W: has no idea that he's been a bully for 80 years

*If we can commit to beginning again in love, these may be some of our starting places.*

**Hymn** - "The Fire of Commitment" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPFjgJptaMk>

**Extinguishing of the Chalice**

**Benediction**

"If anything other than love could do it

we've done it already  
We've left the hardest for last.” (Levine, adapted)

Let us begin again in love.

**Postlude** - “Star Spangled Banner”

This service can be viewed until April 24, 2021 at:

<https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/UTrOBhzVwSeBccIcwQNzmbhkLtvLVQkAFssYexTClxaYgxkRveaCjT3PiYhxspsh.DQ0PnKE9jdo2ZaeV>

Passcode: B&BR49+6