

## “Carefully Taught”

June 6, 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.

Our service is about what we, young and old, need to thrive and how what children are taught shapes their understandings. Growing up, we look back and realize that some teachings were missing, others simply not true. And along the way, *we* become teachers, all of us. When we share what we know, we can make a difference in the world.

**Centering** - “Lorena” Lyrics by Henry Webster, music by Joseph Philbrick Webster (1857)

### Shared Affirmation

**Hymn** - “Just As Long As I Have Breath”

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

[Today, Alice shared stories and images about how children make meaning from what they see around them.]

**“More to Learn”** – UUFES educators<sup>1</sup>

*Rev. Betsy:* In last week’s “Seriously” conversation about our congregation’s call for more social action at UUFES, we reflected on how education drives social action. What we *know*, from being taught and from finding things out for ourselves, inspires us. Some of you also expressed gratitude last week for information in the Mail Pouch about the new memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Looking trouble in the eye isn’t easy, but it does expand our understandings, and that is a good thing. We will now hear from some of *our* educators and perhaps learn something new. We begin with Hope.

*Hope Hutchinson:* The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery honors victims of lynchings in this country. The year it opened, 2018, it educated over 100,000 visitors. I have been there, and the memorial is one of the most moving places I have ever witnessed.

For every county where a lynching took place between 1877 and 1950, a slab of steel hangs from above – 816 slabs for 816 counties. As you enter, the massive weights, reddish and rusted, start out close to the ground. You can clearly see the county’s name and state inscribed, followed by the names of the victims and the dates of their deaths.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics in this section come from the Equal Justice Initiative at [eji.org](http://eji.org) and Alabama State U Prof. Richard Emanuel, “Many whites were lynched for fighting racism,” *Alabama Voices*, 25 September 2018: <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/opinion/2017/09/25/many-whites-were-lynched-fighting-racism-opinion/700690001/>

*Rod Forsman:* As you move amongst the slabs, the walkway tilts downward, and you have to look up at them, the names and dates too far away to read.

Lynchings became a form of racial terrorism and control after the Civil War. Executions by white mobs, outside the constraints of the law, they would begin with accusations, often dubious. That would lead to an arrest and the forming of a “lynch mob.” Law enforcement often abetted the process – for instance, leaving jail cells unguarded. Characterized by unspeakable forms of torture, lynchings usually ended with the victim hung from a tree and burned to death. Dismembering and keeping body parts as souvenirs were not uncommon.

*Melanie Hodge:* Word would go out, and people would gather for a lynching – sometimes crowds of ten and fifteen thousand people. Families would come, children in hand. Afterwards, they’d send out picture postcards, showing people laughing and having a good time, a body hanging in the background.

On the Montgomery memorial’s grounds, 816 duplicate steel slabs are laid out like gravestones – an invitation to each county to collect its slab and display it at home.

*David Wilkins:* The museum has a collection of soil from the places where the lynchings are known to have taken place. The soil likely contains sweat, tears and blood of the person murdered above it. Some of the jars have a date but no name - only "Unknown.”

*Meredith Morten:* And now three questions for you. The first is: How many people were lynched between 1877 and 1950? [People guess on Chat.]

Answer: More than 4400 racial terror lynchings took place between those years: just over 4,000 of them in twelve southern states and another 300 in other states. These numbers are considered to be greatly underreported.

*Ann Wilkns:* African Americans were lynched for various reasons. For example:

- Seven black people were lynched near Screamer, Alabama, in 1888 for drinking from a white man's well.
- Henry Smith, 17, was lynched in Paris, Texas, in 1893, before a mob of 10,000 people.
- A quarter of the people lynched were men accused of sexual exploitation of white women, a trope still alive today. Caleb Gadley was lynched in Bowling Green, Kentucky, in 1894, for walking behind the wife of his white employer.
- David Walker, his wife, and their four children were lynched in Hickman, Kentucky, in 1908, after he was accused of using inappropriate language with a white woman.

*Jorge Dominguez:* The second question is: How many states had lynchings? [People guess on Chat.]

Answer: Lynchings occurred in 44 states. Those with the most lynchings were Mississippi (581), Georgia (531), and Texas (493). The only states with no lynchings reported were Alaska, and, in New England: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire.

*Rev. Betsy:* The last question is: What percentage of the lynching victims were Black? ?  
[People guess on Chat.]

Answer: By far the majority of victims were Black. This memorial honors 4,075 African American men, women and children. And this may surprise you...white people were lynched, too. A quarter of all lynchings were white, most of them in the 1880s and 90s. Why? White people were lynched for supporting Black citizens and for opposing lynching.

Our teachers and our parents may not have taught us such things. But perhaps we've learned something new just now that we can teach to people in our lives. – maybe something that surprised us. Some people will thank us – others may go home thinking just a little differently.

**Musical Segue** - “Songs My Mother Taught Me” by Antonin Dvorak  
Played by Betsy Ginsberg and quintet

**Joys & Concerns** - “Reverie” by Richard Strauss  
Played by Eve Goss

**“Spirit of Life”**

**Meditation/Prayer**

We give thanks

For soft air - warm soil - swims - bare feet on the grass

We are grateful for the gift of time

*This* time of intentional gathering

And also open, unscheduled, unplanned time.

May we remember to make time for the soul

even as life's momentum picks up

With every hug and every reunion,

may we remember the countries full of people still stalked by the virus,

frightened, sick, dying, worrying

in Brazil and Columbia, India and Thailand,

many countries in Africa, Japan to name some of them

And may we be gentle with each other

especially those who may have been at a distance the past year

May we remember love

Today we hold in the light the endlessly helpful and active Ted Hoyt, on the mend this week, and also Jacquie Lotz living in a new place.

May all who suffer now they are not alone  
and feel the embrace of Love. Amen.

**Reflection** - Rev. Betsy Tabor

The bluebirds out our kitchen window now bring their babies to the feeder. Fat and fluffy, they bump into each other, toppling off the perch in their eagerness to be fed. The parents fetch mouthfuls of mealy worms from the feeder and take turns feeding them. The little ones wait, trusting, beaks wide open. It's a joyous scene to witness, this feeding, this imparting to the young of what they need to thrive.

But a cloud hovers over the joy. Sparrows have also found the mealy worms. They outnumber the bluebirds. Aggressive and loud, they sit at the entrance to the feeder, guarding it. I've learned that sparrows can drive bluebirds away, so I advocate for the bluebirds by banging on the window with a wooden spoon. What happens if they are not able to feed their young?

The early years matter. You may know this song from South Pacific about soldiers, islanders, and prejudice, written in the late 50s:

You've got to be taught  
To hate and fear,  
You've got to be taught  
From year to year,  
It's got to be drummed  
In your dear little ear  
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late,  
Before you are six or seven or eight,  
To hate all the people your relatives hate,  
You've got to be carefully taught!

Today, the way New Hampshire schools teach our children is under attack. Along with an alarming number of legislatures all over the country, ours aims to make it illegal for schools to teach that racism is woven into the fabric of this country. Proponents of this law target recent anti-racism progress as divisive and hate-filled. We never taught "critical race theory" before, they say.

True, many people have grown up learning myths about settlers' friendships with the ignorant savages of this land. Teachers didn't teach – probably didn't know about – the systematic erasure of Native peoples by the first Americans.

Nor did they teach the horrors of slavery, in full swing for 250 years, well more than half this country's history. The Civil War and Reconstruction were widely presented to man of us matter-

of-fact items on a timeline. Textbooks hardly touched on Jim Crow and the generations of discriminatory customs and policies it set in motion. In the South, as late as 1919, the Daughters of the Confederacy shaped school curriculums that for multiple generations have since taught a false narrative of US history, minimizing the impact of slavery and upholding systemic racism.

For too long and for many of us here, textbooks were carefully curated to tell a story of equality liberty and happiness. Some people believe that America has thrived on this pabulum. What we are fed matters.

The goal of legislatures dominated by flocks of sparrows, insisting on their way, will prevent our young from getting what they need to thrive. Children need truth-telling so that they have a fair start and can grow up to be responsible citizens. Without the tools to look at and reckon with hard truths, they risk fledging from school with muddled understandings at best, which will set them back and set back the course of justice, too.

What happens when our young aren't given what they need to thrive? When sparrows outnumber bluebirds, the feeder becomes a daily battlefield.

We *can* advocate – contact elected officials and keep these issues front and center. We can use our own perches, too, to make a difference. To teach what we know.

This we have to do. Everyone, young and old, needs the truth to thrive. We know what it's like to be rocked by knowledge that upends our understandings – reckoning is not easy, but it does change us and helps ready us for our next steps. As the Book Group wrote in the Statement of Recognition of Indigenous Peoples, which hangs in our sanctuary, we may react to new understandings with shock, guilt, and dismay. But fed by the truth, we proceed differently.

Montgomery memorial founder, author and activist Bryan Stevenson tells the story of Opening Day there, when the skies let loose buckets of rain. “It sounded,” he later said, “like tears being shed by the thousands of Black people whose lives have never been honored, whose names have never been mentioned, and it sounded like they were shedding tears of joy that there was this moment of reckoning.”<sup>2</sup>

Remembering that, the rain here last weekend became those tears of joy. I found myself sharing and emailing the story and photos of the memorial all week – with UUFES, with high-school friends, with my husband's far-flung family now reckoning with their southern roots.

Responses varied. The high school alums talked of going together to Montgomery. The southern family, quieter, offered a handful of warm “thank-you's.” The facts introduced some people to these truths and to this memorial for the first time: 816 counties, 4,400 lynchings, murder as sport all over this country. “Thank you,” I've heard, “I've had my eyes opened up in a new way.”

Do we want to think about lynchings? To hear the unomaginable details? No. Is it easy? No. But once we learn the truth of them, we have no choice but to go toward it.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://onbeing.org/programs/bryan-stevenson-love-is-the-motive/>

As people of conscience, we live life not only with the opportunity but with the responsibility to live out loud what we learn and know. We have a responsibility to share, to teach, if you will. How can you use *your* venue as a friend or a family member, even as a stranger, to share something you've learned today or to tell a story that has moved you?

That just might open a heart. Sometimes we'll meet with a closed door. Sometimes it will open a crack. We might even hear a "thank you."

So may it be.

### **The Morning Offering**

**Anthem** - "Teach Your Children" by Graham Nash, played by Tammy and John Flanigan

### **Community Response**

*WE ALL TEACH. WHAT KIND OF TEACHING HAS FELT MEANINGFUL TO YOU?*

10:57:00 From Rod F : To see her/his face light up with recognition!

10:57:18 From Ed P : Bringing people to a new trail

10:57:20 From Meredith M : Learning years later that something I said made a difference in a student's life

10:57:23 From Kim H : Teaching my children read....knowing I was opening so many worlds to them

10:57:25 From Sam P : Delight

10:57:28 From Ricky B: To hear years later about something that I taught that had made a difference

10:57:36 From Bruce L : Opening the door to discovery

10:57:39 From Betsy L : Thinking of a question that opens up another person's understanding.

10:57:47 From Jorge D : How to help someone understand an argument other than the person's preferred view.

10:57:49 From Ann & David W: learning about and then teaching about the important roles women have played in history

10:57:50 From Ellen W: Wonderful, but very long article in Washington Post titled "Germany Faced Its Horrible Past." Can we do same? Teaching us all.

10:57:55 From Barbara B: It has been interactive where the student participates in their learning

10:58:02 From John and Tammy F : Such a tremendous and exciting profession being an educator - you never know how you affect a life.

10:58:02 From Linda H: Thanks for the song! Teaching someone to have faith in themself.

10:58:15 From Sandra C: Facilitating mediation, compromise, conflict resolution, finding a way forward

10:58:23 From Ricky B: Helping somebody learn from a serious mistake

10:58:23 From Annie P : connecting with someone through shared knowledge feels good

10:58:24 From Sam P : That teaching is learning

10:58:36 From Eleanor J : Sharing my knowledge about flowers, plants, nature, apples

10:58:53 From Melanie H : Finding out years later that the relationship I had with my students is something they still hold on to and remember. I recently wrote to a student I had years ago in

first grade, she did not come from a very happy home. I looked her up on Facebook and sent her a private message asking how she was doing and if she was happy. Turns out she is happily married and doing what she wants in life....she told me that it was in my class that she found her love for reading.

10:59:00 From Barbara B: Teaching through questioning that asks the student to think

10:59:16 From Grace F: Helping shyness and allowing them to express what they are thinking

10:59:23 From Meredith M: the moment that someone understands something and lights up a room

10:59:26 From Cindy E: Felt fulfilling as a volunteer reading to school children at my children's school.

10:59:53 From Shannon R: Building relationships

### *NAME A TEACHER YOU REMEMBER WITH GRATITUDE AND WHY*

11:00:53 From Rod F : Blanche Farrington, my Latin teacher. Her enthusiasm was boundless.

11:01:10 From Ricky B : Math teacher Barbara Bailey: I modeled my own teaching on hers.

11:01:11 From Kim H : Sister Ellen....high school biology....she had a way of making all of us feel successful.

11:01:16 From Melanie H: Mrs. Cynthia Vaschek....my Art Education teacher at Plymouth State College. She believed that we all were artists capable of producing beauty and meaning.

11:01:19 From Ann & David W: All of them, even the bad ones; we learn in different ways from so many different individuals and so many different approaches....

11:01:24 From Betsy L: Mrs. Karavites - who turned me on to history in high school and to Gabriel Jackson who started me on my love of Spanish history.

11:01:31 From Linda H: my grandmother, who taught me by example to say "yes" to life & love.

11:01:32 From Meredith M: my mother

11:01:47 From Ellen W: Mr, Tersolo in high school who made history come alive for me.

11:01:54 From Cindy E: My parents

11:01:59 From John Frenz : My PhD adviser, Csaba Horvath. No one had as much influence in my professional and personal life as he. My son was born on Csaba's birthday, a coincidence that was very satisfying to all of us.

11:02:09 From Shannon R: Mr. Steven Miller was my sixth-grade teacher the year my grandmother died. I remember him pulling me aside and inviting me to take moments to myself if I needed to because it was all right to be sad. This was decades upon decades ago. No memories of what I academically learned that year, but clear memories of dignity and grace.

11:02:26 From Kevin C: Music teacher's rendition of Johnny Cage's 4.33

11:02:43 From Barbara B: Mr Aldefer who helped me as I struggled with math. Mr. and Mrs. Martin who spent their summers collecting experiences that made English come alive in the fall

11:02:44 From Tammy F : Mrs. Giles, Mrs. Chcik, and Mr. Harriman - laying the foundation in elementary school. And my husband John, for teaching me the uke and opening up more music in that way.

11:02:44 From Annie P : Miss Lynn Abravanel . . . taught us to work together and have fun learning from each other.

11:02:48 From Hope H : Jeff, a summer camp maintenance man who let me make mistakes but taught me many hands-on skills like sharpening blades on a lawn mower and using power tools. Also to do a job well or not at all.

11:02:55 From Nancy B : my children who taught me so much

11:03:08 From Eleanor J : Mrs. Clark - 4th grade teacher.

**Hymn** - “We Laugh, We Cry”

**Extinguishing of Chalice**

**Reminders**

- People are asking, when will UUFES open? Along with fellow UU churches, most likely September or October. Singing guidelines continue to evolve, and technology needs to be worked out so that everyone on this journey continues on together. If you would like to help with this effort, please let a Board member or me know. We will keep you informed every inch of the way.
- Coffee hour.

**Benediction**

The parents fetch mouthfuls of mealy worms from the feeder and take turns feeding them. The little ones wait, trusting, beaks wide open. It’s a joyous scene to witness, this feeding, this imparting to the young of what they need to thrive.

**Postlude** - “All Things Bright and Beautiful”

This service can be viewed through September 2022 ( please note that the first hymn and the anthem are not recorded for copyright reasons):

[https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/Fyf0UTfkJ-kHDui1ETXZjbxvZxcju4owKx5yHvuTwgv3xnyPQmgImp8aJNU5\\_wSB.FxrdhbHlqfxRA7zX](https://uuma.zoom.us/rec/share/Fyf0UTfkJ-kHDui1ETXZjbxvZxcju4owKx5yHvuTwgv3xnyPQmgImp8aJNU5_wSB.FxrdhbHlqfxRA7zX)  
Passcode: Z#Ci+?A3