

LITURGY OF THE TWELFTH HOUR *Adrian Worsfold*

[Light the chalice]

Those who see or feel this flame shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. From the rising of the sun to its setting, we shall rise on wings like eagles; we shall run and not get weary; we shall walk and not grow weak.

The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the forest shall clap their hands. [See Isaiah 55:12]

HYMN

PRAYER

New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.
[John Keble, *New Every Morning is The Love*, 1822]

Let the Spirit come into our hearts, to direct and rule to comfort in all our afflictions, to defend from error, and to lead us into all truth;

We use our talents for the good of all. This Spirit guide us as we work, and this Spirit teach us the ways to live. Let it be present through this day, that small things may be filled with greatness, and great things may be crowned with humility, shielding us from all evil, strengthening us to offer justice and love.

New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray, -
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven
[John Keble, 1822]

And all day long working for good in the world, this twelfth hour moment of rest is a welcome gift. Bless the work we have begun, make good its defects,

and let us finish it in a way to live peacefully with our neighbours, and with ourselves.

If, on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.
[John Keble, 1822]

The smallest things are of the greatest treasure; the moment of now is within the eternally profound; the same sort of day is a different day; and some days represent challenge that we are prepared to meet.

The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask, -
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.
[John Keble, 1822]

Let us be content with what we have, and what comes to us. For what comes to us is plenty. And we cherish our freedom, freedom even to deny the ethical choice, but freedom that makes the choice all the more worthy: let us have the courage to take the right decision when the dilemma presents itself.

Let us, in this, and every day, live more nearly to that perfect goal, the God that we envisage, as we do indeed pray.

Amen.

READING

This short reading leads us into a silence. Mark Mosher DeWolfe wrote this:

A person is a puzzle. Sometimes from the inside, it feels like some pieces are missing.

Perhaps one we love is no longer with us. Perhaps one talent we desire eludes us. Perhaps a moment that required grace found us clumsy. Sometimes, from the inside, it feels like some pieces are missing.

A person is a puzzle. We are puzzles not only to ourselves but to each other.

A puzzle is a mystery we seek to solve-and the mystery is that we are whole even with our missing pieces. Our missing pieces are empty spaces we might long to fill, empty spaces that make us who we are. The mystery is that we are only what we are-and that what we are is enough.

In the grey stillness of this morning, into the accepting peace of a still sky, let us offer our failings, our inadequacies, into the silence. And let us know that we are accepted, by God and by this company, exactly as we are. Accepted - missing pieces, and all.

[Mark Mosher DeWolfe, 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection.]

SILENCE

HYMN

PRAISE AND INTERCESSION/ CANDLES

All praise and thanksgiving be for the shape of time and the circulation of the globe. We give thanks and praise, for the day and its energy of light, and the night allowing refreshment and regained strength. Let wisdom open the gates of morning and continue through the day; the day will pass, and the night will come: light separated from darkness, and both can be to our aid. Give courage in this day and banish the fears of the night. Use the light of day to see all wonders, and to be accountable in all we say and do; and draw on the gentle darkness of the night that we might rest from our burdens, to be refreshed in body and spirit. Deep and mysterious things are contained in the night, and much is hidden in darkness. Let the night shape the contrast and the light shine in our hearts.

Psalm 139:11-12 says: I could ask the darkness to hide me or the light around me to become night, but even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day; for darkness is as light with you.

Let us give thanks for the labours of those who have served us this week, friends with whom we have shared, those whom we love and have loved us, opportunities for our work to help others, and all beauty that delights us.

We lift our voices in prayers of praise, for blessings come in generous measure. We recognise the privilege of worship and service in this congregation, for conversation, for food and drink to share, for times of quiet and reception. Let us also reflect with concern, for not everything can be reaching the mountain top. And so we invite ourselves to the lighting of candles for our personal thoughts in this collective space: for our praises, but also for the healing of those who are sick, including the comfort of those in terminal illness; for the renewal of those who despair around the world, and for the renewal of faith.

[Candles Lighting]

We look for reconciliation in our relationships, for love, energy, and courage, to share the ministries of this church. Let us reach out in the spirit of love and justice to those strangers we have and have not met, to be bold disciples of hospitality to the other, whatever their need. Let us act out our solemn promises to each and everyone.

MUSIC

READING

This liturgy has been making use of contrast - the day and the night, the dark and the light. As a corrective, we have a reading. Jacqui James wrote about the contrast of dark and light, black and white, in 1991:

Blackmail, blacklist, black mark. Black Monday, black mood, black-hearted. Black plague, black mass, black market.

Good guys wear white, bad guys wear black. We fear black cats, and the Dark Continent. But it's okay to tell a white lie, lily-white hands are coveted, it's great to be pure as the driven snow. Angels and brides wear white. Devil's food cake is chocolate; angel's food cake is white!

We shape language and we are shaped by it. In our culture, white is esteemed. It is heavenly, sunlike, clean, pure, immaculate, innocent, and beautiful. At the same time, black is evil, wicked, gloomy, depressing, angry, sullen. Ascribing negative and positive values to black and white enhances the institutionalisation of this culture's racism.

Let us acknowledge the negative connotations of whiteness. White things can be soft, vulnerable, pallid, and ashen. Light can be blinding, bleaching, enervating. Conversely, we must acknowledge that darkness has a redemptive character, that in darkness there is power and beauty. The dark nurtured and protected us before our birth.

Welcome darkness. Don't be afraid of it or deny it. Darkness brings relief from the blinding sun, from scorching heat, from exhausting labour. Night signals permission to rest, to be with our loved ones, to conceive new life, to search our hearts, to remember our dreams. The dark of winter is a time of hibernation. Seeds grow in the dark, fertile earth.

The words black and dark don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. The words white and light don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. Imagine a world that had only light - or dark. We need both. Dark and light. Light and dark.

[Morrison-Reed, Mark, James, Jacqui (eds.) (1991), *Been in the Storm So Long: A Meditation Manual*, Boston: Skinner House Books.]

HYMN

ADDRESS

COLLECTION and NOTICES

HYMN

BENEDICTION

Bring together what is scattered and mend what is broken. Befriend the weak, and welcome the outcast. Let us be as one family. Time moves ever onward. The light of the day is here and the darkness is still far off. Give light. Let the dark be as comfort. Come upon us with quietness and still our souls; empower us to rise again. Lead us always in the way of peace: today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.