

# **Readying the Soil for the Seeds of Transformation**

July 7, 2024

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato

Meleah Houseknecht

**Pre-Service Music:** From “Third Street” CD of Peter Mayer

#8 *“It’s Not Far”*

**(Practice singing led by choir members of song #1025)**

**Welcome and Announcements (Diane Dobitz)**

Good morning! I am Diane Dobitz and am serving as Worship Associate this morning alongside our guest speaker. Our minister, Rev. Diana McLean will be back with us Sunday, July 14th. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato. All of you, whether joining us in person or on Zoom, are welcome in this time that we make sacred together. We extend an especially warm welcome to you if this is your first time attending one of our worship services. We appreciate that it can be difficult to cross the threshold of a new church for the first time, whether in person or online.

Our guest speaker is Meleah Houseknecht. Meleah is following her call to Unitarian Universalist ministry and will soon begin her fourth and final year at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. A lifelong UU, before seminary she spent more than two decades organizing and engaging stakeholders in environmental policy development and implementation. She holds a master’s degree in environmental management from the Yale School of the Environment and was a part of the 2019–20 cohort of the Humphrey Policy Fellows. Meleah serves as a trustee for [Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice](#) and as an active member of First

Universalist Church of Minneapolis. The title of her sermon is “**Readying the Soil for the Seeds of Transformation.**”

Sunday Morning is a team effort and we are grateful for all those who help make it happen.

If you are attending by Zoom today, you are welcome to stay after the service to visit together. For those attending in person, we have refreshments in the Fellowship Hall after worship.

### **Land Acknowledgment (Diane)**

We acknowledge that our fellowship meets on the traditional homelands of the Dakota peoples. In continuing to understand our shared history, accepting responsibility for reparations and building relationships in the here and now, we want to go beyond land acknowledgment as we seek to be good relatives.

### **Announcements (Diane)**

We have one additional announcement this morning.

Thank you to all of you who have generously offered to help write the over 2,000 postcards being sent to Minnesota renter-voters to turn out the vote, as only about 40% of renter-voters usually vote in our state. This is one of our UUFM commitments to Pro-Democracy work with other UU Minnesota congregations. Each postcard requires a 53

cent stamp to reach its destination. (As of July 14th postcard stamps will cost 73 cents) The UUFM Board has approved a July Second Collection for donations to buy the stamps to mail the postcards. Even 53 or 73 cents can make a difference.

(pause)

**Come, let us now worship together.**

**Singing Bowl (Meleah chimes)**

**Chalice Lighting (Diane reads, Meleah lights)**

Together, we kindle a flame symbolizing our co-creation of sacred space at home and in this place made sacred by years of love. If you are with us on Zoom, please write in the Chat that a chalice is lit on your street.

And please say the words with me, from the pew cards.

We are a welcoming people of diverse beliefs who commit to nourish the spirit of,

broaden the mind,

nurture the earth, and

build community.

May this flame we kindle remind us to strive,

today and every day,  
to love beyond belief.

### **Call to Worship (Meleah)**

We often talk about our chalice offering the light of “truth,” and I have wondered, is that the capital “T” kind of truth? Or the light of the lamp that tells us with relative certainty what is real and trustworthy in the ten feet surrounding us, but asks us to take a step forward with humble caution and curiosity if we are to know something of the ten feet beyond that?

Or is it the light of one bioluminescent beetle, pollinator, garden pest consumer, calling out in the night, hoping to be met with a familiar pulse? “I am here,” she says, “The view is different from this side of the meadow. There is companionship to be had if you are willing to brave the open expanse and experience another point of view.”

Let this chalice be, not the light of a singular sun, with burning winds and blinding rays that blot out all other light, but the soft glow that illuminates just enough to let us trust in our next steps and reminds us that the light of our own truth—with a little “t”—offers warmth just enough to be shared.

### **Opening Hymn (Meleah)**

Please rise in body or spirit and join in singing  
*#1025 “When Will the Fighting Cease?”*

When will the fighting cease?  
When will we live in peace?  
When our love breaks boundaries.

Da pacem Domine,  
Do pacem Domine,  
in diebus nostris.

(translation: "Give peace, Lord, in our time.")

### **Story (Diane introduces)**

And now our Director of Children's Faith Development Macey Forsyth will read a story for all of us on video.

*The Tree In Me*: Written and illustrated by Corinna Luyken:

[https://youtu.be/EMjmXC\\_AFKA?si=j3hGXliMWtbq3Emx](https://youtu.be/EMjmXC_AFKA?si=j3hGXliMWtbq3Emx)

### **Singing the Children Out (Diane)**

#### **Special Music:**

["Fighting Over What We Believe"](#)

By Elizabeth Alexander

(pianist plays)

## **Joys and Sorrows (Diane)**

We arrive today, as we do every week, with both joys and sorrows in our hearts, and part of the promise we make to each other is that we will help celebrate the joys and bear the sorrows.

**[Meleah lights a candle for each joy and sorrow)**

(Read from slips)

We arrive here not only with our own personal joys and sorrows, but those from the wider world.

This morning, we continue to pray for peace in all the places where there is war, and for healing for all those affected by violence of any kind.

For all the sorrows and joys, both those shared and those we hold in the silent sanctuaries of our hearts, we pause in stillness and then sing.

**Hymn:** Comfort Me, Share my Joys

## **Introduction to the Offering - (Diane)**

Generosity is one of the spiritual qualities we aspire to, and one of the practices we nurture in this community.

With our offering, we give of our resources to support the work of this church. We know that giving financially is only one of the ways we support that work—we do it, too, with our time and our talents. All three are necessary for the vital work we do, for each other and for the wider community.

### **Second collection:**

Our second collections support one of our community partners, organizations who are in alignment with our values. The second collection in July is a donation for postage to mail the UU the VOTE postcards to renter-voters in MN.

For both the regular and second collections, you can give in person, as baskets are brought around, or online, using either the QR Code on your Zoom screen and on the pew card, or the giving link on our UUFM webpage.

If you are here in person but give online, as many of us do, we invite you to touch the basket as it passes you, in a small ritual of recognition of your financial commitment to the congregation.

Please give as generously as you are able.

### **Offertory instrumental piano music**

**Reading (Diane, first reading; Meleah, second reading)**



“The Place Where We Are Right” by Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai

From the place where we are right  
flowers will never grow  
in the spring.

The place where you are right  
is hard and trampled  
like a yard.

But doubts and loves  
dig up the world  
like a mole, a plow.  
And a whisper will be heard in the place  
where the ruined  
house once stood.

### **Sermon (Meleah)**

“Readying the Soil for the Seeds of Transformation”

Slide 1: Mole image

Slide 2: Less on point. More on purpose.

## Ritual (Meleah)

Now, it's time to use that piece of paper that you were handed when you walked in this morning. If you're at home on Zoom you can grab any scrap of paper, just as long as there isn't anything on the other side that you'll need to reference later. Does everyone have their paper and a pen or pencil?

Along the top of the paper you're going to write down something you said, or even thought, that felt at the time like an important Truth, maybe something that seemed really on point, that you weaponized against someone you care about or someone that you don't know. A time you chose the feeling of being right over being in relationship. Let's take a couple of minutes to write down whatever comes to mind.

***Slide 3: "Describe a time you chose the feeling of being right over concern for another person or your relationship."***

Ok, hopefully that was enough time to just get something on the paper. Next, I want you to fold your paper so that you're looking at the backside of where you just wrote. Now we're going to write a question or two. What is one question that you might pose to yourself about that little piece of truth? A question you could have chosen instead of dispensing that truth? Let's just dig at it a little bit. We're going to take another minute or two for this.

***Slide 4: “What is one question that you might pose to yourself about that little piece of truth? A question you could have chosen instead of dispensing that truth?”***

Now, I encourage you to take this strip of paper and plant it. If you have a garden, great, or if you have a potted plant you can put it in there, or maybe you want to keep it closer and let that question be a mole that turns the hard ground. Put it somewhere that you can be reminded that if us Type Ones can turn our hardened ground, you can too. We all can.

### **Chalice Extinguishing (Diane speaks, Meleah extinguishes)**

As **Meleah** extinguishes the sanctuary chalice, please extinguish your chalice at home, and say the words with me:

*We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

### **Benediction - (Meleah)**

“Earthworms” by Lynn Ungar

Imagine. The only thing that  
God requires of them  
is a persistent, wriggling, moving forward,  
passing the earth through

the crinkled tube of their bodies  
in a motion less like chewing  
than like song.

Everything they encounter  
goes through them,  
as if sunsets, drug store clerks,  
diesel fumes and sidewalks  
were to move through our very centers  
and emerge subtly different  
for having fed us — looser somehow,  
more open to the possibility of life.

They say the job of angels  
is to sing to God in serried choirs.  
Perhaps. But most jobs  
aren't so glamorous.  
Mostly the world depends upon  
the silent chanting underneath our feet.  
To every grain that enters: "Welcome."  
To every parting mote: "Be blessed."

"We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love,

curiosity, and respect.” We tend and till, we aerate and plant. We listen for the whispers and silent chants and watch for blinking across the meadow so that we might have fruit to harvest another day.

**Singing Benediction: (Diane introduces)**

I now invite you to turn toward each other for our singing benediction, blessing each other with these words, knowing that we are each a blessing to each other.

*May the longtime sun shine upon you*

*All love surround you*

*And the pure pure light that's within you*

*Guide your way home.*