

Word Cloud built before service began

# What simple gifts are bringing you joy?



Gathering Music: [Simple Gifts](#)

## Welcome—

Good morning! My name is Carrie Rice. I am a member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato and am happy to be here with you in worship this morning. In these hard times, it is good and right to lean on our faith and each other.

As we do in person each Sunday, we will now take some time to greet each other. You will be unmuted and may speak your welcome to each other!

## CALL TO WORSHIP

Currents that Beckon Us

Rev. Emily Wright-Magoon

Here in this sanctuary this morning we do find the world,

because we are of and in and from the world: ...

some of us weary with exhaustion,

some bitter from too much testing,

some with a yearning for more than the surface life,

some aching to give and receive,

some eager to cross new thresholds –

*all* of us wounded in some ways,

*all* of us triumphant in some ways.

The *world* is all here, among us, within us...

*And yet:* we also consecrate here and now a *different* time,

a different space –

in which we can practice settling into the deeper waters of life...

in which we can feel the ripples

of currents that beckon us

into the heart of our lives...

into the heart of the world.

Come into this space, where this morning we consider

the practice of the Sabbath

as a discipline of wholeheartedness.

Come and be welcome.

### **Chalice Lighting—**

As we virtually light our chalice, let us share unison words:

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

I invite you to light a candle or chalice at home. As you do, please write in the Chat that a chalice is lit on your street.

## **Meditation**

I invite you now into a time of prayer, reflection, and meditation.

Settle into your mind and your body as it is in this moment. . .

Close your eyes or simply soften your gaze. . .

Perhaps turn your camera off and focus only on my voice...

Bring gentle awareness to those parts of you that hurt. . .

Follow your breath, knowing you are not alone in your pain,

no matter its nature. . .

We breathe together into this space of witness and compassion. . .

Open your heart to the spirit of connection. . .

Hear now these words from . . .

Meditation

By [Laura Mancuso](#)

I take care of myself first, because I am deserving of exquisite care.

I take care of myself to maintain the capacity to help others.

I move and stretch my body every day.

I spend time in nature, attuning my senses to the earth's wisdom.

I ration my daily exposure to the news. I identify and access credible sources of information. I protect myself from

I pace myself.

I sit with the reality of uncertainty and impermanence, and allow it to temper my desire for control.(2x)

I listen without judgment to others' reactions, which may be different from mine.

I forgive myself and others when stress brings out our shadow selves.

I feel fear fully when I am fearful.

I experience sadness fully when I am sad.

I allow anger fully when I am angry.

I relish joy fully when I am joyful.

I seek out healthy pleasures and indulge in them without guilt.

I remind myself that feelings are transient states that move through me. They do not last. And they do not define

I balance my drive for self-improvement with compassionate acceptance of myself as I am right now.

I initiate contact with loved ones to let them know I hold them in my heart.

I seek out, with increased sensitivity, those who are the most vulnerable.

If possible, I share my resources with those who need help to survive.

When possible, I move away from people, situations, and experiences that do not serve my highest good.

I strengthen my connection to my sources of spiritual strength so that I continue to be replenished.

I acknowledge the nearness of death as a key motivator for living a full life.

I pray for the suffering of all beings to cease.

I grieve my losses and celebrate my successes.

I remain open to new ways of being, surprising sources of joy,

and unanticipated discoveries every day.

SHARE SCREEN AGAIN - JOYS AND SORROWS

### **Sorrows & Joys—**

Despite the moments of feeling lost or simply not understanding what to do in the now, or what will happen next, our lives are full right now,. We still hurt and have loved ones who hurt and need love and support. We still experience events of joy and beauty. We share these events in our lives so that sorry may be shared and joy can be multiplied. Let us know take a few moments to share with each other

I ask that those of you with sorrows to share go first. Use the icon in “Participants” to raise your hand or write in the Chat something you want me to share. I will unmute you, so you can speak. Let’s be mindful that we make space for each other’s need to share.

If you have a sorrow, please share it now.

Add: We hold in our hearts essential workers at every level- the healthcare providers, the grocery store workers, the bus drivers and the teachers. All the

people who are helping to hold our world together. Let us lift up all those who are sick, all those who have lost a loved one to COVID-19 or to other illness and accident in this time of physical distancing.

Let us acknowledge that the pandemic unveils injustice of all sorts that we as people of faith are called to fight against.

I ask that those with joys now share.

Add: We remember in these hard times that life is good and beauty abounds, and we have much for which to be grateful.

Let us honor all this marvelous and terrible beauty with a moment of stillness.

### **Singing Meditation—**

Friends, I invite you to sing our song of comfort and joy. Thanks to Jeff Lowry for the recording.

### **Singing: “Comfort Me”**

### **Reading: The Poet Speaks of Praising**

**by Rainer Maria Rilke**

**Oh speak, poet, what do you do?**

**--I praise.**

**But the monstrosities and the murderous days,  
how do you endure them, how do you take them?**

**--I praise.**

**But the anonymous, the nameless grays,  
how, poet, do you still invoke them?**

**--I praise.**

**What right have you, in all displays,**

**in very mask, to be genuine?**

**--I praise.**

**And that the stillness and the turbulent sprays  
know you like star and storm?**

**!--because I praise.**

### **Homily— “In These Hard Times”**

Some weeks ago, we discovered on some social media platform an “Isolation Well Being Checklist.” It is easily found on the internet now. David and I have both shared it widely with our students. Each of us added elements which were important to us specifically (I would never add “eat one Soylent meal” to my daily checklist!) but I’ll share some elements of it with you this morning. I find these are tasks to focus on “in these hard times,” which really do help me.

In these hard times, there will always be self-care. Shower daily. I can’t even believe how some days this is difficult. Still, when I come home from walking the dogs, the list is there and it prompts me. Take your medication or your vitamins. Drink water. Such simple tasks, but the reminder is useful or I might slip into habits which don’t make me feel good about myself. “I take care of myself first,



because I am deserving of exquisite care.” The last item in this category is to do one thing each day that raises your heart rate a little bit. This could be as simple as waving your arms in the air, or touching your toes five times. For me, it is, as it has been for years, to go for long walks with my dogs. Even longer these days, because: why not?

At this point in the service, I really wanted to have a UUFM dance party, and play “When the Spirit Says Do,” but that’s just not happening. So, make a commitment to having a little dance party this afternoon. Even if you never leave your seat.

In these hard times, there will always be laughter.

The wellness checklist reminds me daily to find a good belly laugh. While I believe the medical research is not conclusive about the benefits of laughter (and the difference between the benefits of HUMOR and LAUGHTER, which are different), I offer you these words of Minneapolis comedian and public speaker Scott Burton. In an online article titled, “Why Not Laugh,” he talks about how humor and laughter helped him through a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment, including nine surgeries. He writes:

In assessing all the ways I could've responded to my diagnosis -- my surgeries, my seven months of chemo -- laughter was the only one that made sense. I could have raged. I could have kept to myself and stewed. I could have felt slighted, cheated or abused by life. I could have felt a world of different things from depression to cynicism. But laughter was the only response that, as I used it,

helped me grow. And there was a byproduct to sharing laughter. While loosening up my body, easing fears of others and building lines of communication, it provided the most powerful and needful tool in fighting any trial in life -- a positive attitude.

The other reactions; anger, depression, suppression, denial, took a little piece of me with them. Each made me feel just a little less human. Yet laughter made me more open to ideas, more inviting to others, and even a little stronger inside. It proved to me that, even as my body was devastated and my spirit challenged, I was still a vital human.

It's often hard to understand the healing power of laughter because it doesn't make sense to relate physical and spiritual mending to the same feeling you got when Milton Berle donned a dress. But it's there. Medical scientists have proved the existence of healing endorphins released by laughter but, in plain terms, the magic of laughter is, when you laugh -- if only for that moment -- you love your life. And, when facing tragedy, that is a deep knowledge we all can use.

I admit, this check list item is tough for me. Sometimes the laughter comes naturally and sometimes I have to go pull up an Ellen DeGeneres video when she sends her "Average Andy" producer through a haunted house. Either way, laughter every day lifts my mood.

So, here's a little UU self-deprecating humor for you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNjLz0-70ZA>

In these hard times, there will always be personal connections with others. I am reminded daily to reach out to someone outside of my home. This can be by text, phone call, an email, or as I have started to do, by writing a letter. I do not include my daily contact with students because that is scheduled and while I care for them, I am looking for others with whom I can connect.

In these hard times, there is joy to be found in simple gifts - a sight or smell, the taste of food. I was stopped in my tracks one morning last week when I walked under a flowering apple tree and looked up to see the delicate white and pink petals silhouetted against a blue, blue sky. And the smell! Author Katrina Kenison writes in her book "the Gift of an Ordinary Day," about her family's move and struggle to live in a dilapidated old house. They have additional struggles on top of that, yet she notes:

"After a year of rootlessness and uncertainty, we have figured out what we needed to know - that it is okay to not have everything; that it is possible to have a meaningful and satisfying life without moving too fast, that at every stage of our lives, there is a place where the plain and common becomes cherished and the ordinary becomes sacred."

This challenge we are all collectively experiencing calls us to recognize the beauty which is all around us. The maverick religious thinker and priest Matthew Fox says that as adults we become “automatized to the beauty and form and shapes and colors and smells that are around us all the time; we lose our sense of pleasure, of the preciousness of life. **Unwished for pain, provided we do not cover it up and run from it,** can often bring back that love of life to us.”

The real inspiration for this service today was a song written by singer songwriter Linda Hirschorn and shared on the UUA’s worshipweb site. created in March 2020 and inspired a Bertolt Brecht quote: "In the dark times will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing about the dark times." It is given for use with her permission and so I would like to end our time together with this beautiful song. I will share the sheet music and those of you in the know will notice that it is in four parts.

### **Chalice Extinguishing**

As we worship times comes to an end this morning, let us commit to taking exquisite care of ourselves so that we may care for others, to allowing ourselves the gift of laughter and to being mindful of the simple beauties and joys which are all around us all the time. let us make a promise that through all this threshold time we will remain committed to sustained and robust relationship with each other, to the vision of our faith communities, to the values of Unitarian Universalism, and to the interdependent web holding us all.

As we say unison words, which are in the Chat, I invite you to extinguish your chalice or candle at home:

[Switch from lit to extinguished chalice.]

*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.*

[Then stop screen share, switch back to maximized screen, and re-start video.]

### **Long Time Sun—**

Thus we bless each other, and thus we are a blessing to each other.

And may you all remember, today and every day, that

You are loved,

You are worthy,

You are welcome, and

You are needed.

May you feel it so. May it be so.

And let the people say together, "Amen."

The words for the Singing Benediction are in the Chat.

[Stop video, shrink screen, move to desktop, and click music file. **DO NOT SING!**

Stop it when complete. Maximize screen back to Main mode and re-start video.]

**[Bell chime]**

### **Virtual Coffee "Hour" and Small Group Visiting**

For those of you who wish to stay around to visit in small groups together, welcome! Here is how it works.

1. I will create breakout rooms so you can visit with just a few congregants.
  - a. Zoom will sort you randomly into small groups.
  - b. You will get a prompt to join your group (please do!).
  - c. You can leave the group at any time, either to leave the meeting completely or to enter the Big Room and be re-assigned to another breakout room.
  - d. The room will be open for 30 minutes, a little longer than last week.
  - e. I will give you an “Ending in 10 minutes” and an “Ending in 5 minutes” Broadcast Alert.
  - f. You will also get a 1-minute alert before the breakout room closes.
  - g. You will then be returned to the big room, where we can all say good-bye and you can give me any feedback you wish to give publicly.
2. When you enter the breakout room be sure to:
  - a. Introduce yourself.
  - b. Make space for everyone to check in for a minute or two.
  - c. Make space for reflecting on the service theme
  - d. You can always reconnect in other ways if you have more you want to say with each other.

I'll see you back here in 30 minutes!

[Stop video. Activate the breakout rooms. Make as many rooms as makes sense for those remaining. Make a note of the timing for 10- and 5-minute broadcasts. Broadcast at 10 minutes and at 5 minutes of closing. Watch for people exiting back to the Worship Space before breakouts are over. Stay until no one wants to

talk any more, but no later than 12:00 noon. A meeting host can be designated if they want to continue to visit.]

<https://onbeing.org/blog/the-journey-of-transformation/>