

"Easter Sunday"
Worship Service for
The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Wayne County
April 12, 2020
The Rev. Jennie Barrington, Interim Minister
Ivie Sorkin, CLM, Worship Associate
Sharon Delgadillo, Pianist and Music Director

Welcome and Announcements IVIE

Prelude "Lean on Me," by Bill Withers

Opening Words by the Rev. Sara Moores Campbell Rev. Jennie

"In the tomb of the soul, we carry secret yearnings, pains, frustrations, loneliness, fears, regrets, worries... In this season where light and dark balance the day, we seek balance for ourselves. Grateful for the darkness that has nourished us, we push away the stone and invite the light to awaken us to the possibilities within us and among us-- possibilities for new life in ourselves and in our world."

Chalice Lighting by Jennifer McGlothin IVIE

As the first hint of green begins to peek through the barren ground
As that little sprig grows into a healthy stem
As that stem grows into a stalk and forms a bud
As that bud slowly opens with each new day
To form a yellow daffodil
Let us be, like that first hint of green, renewed by the warm of the sun's rays
And ready to emerge with a new energy, ready to face the day.
We light this chalice to bring a glimmer of that warmth into our space.

*Hymn #61 Lo, the Earth Awakes Again

Time for All Ages

Chelsea Churpek

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Rev. Jennie

Unison Blessing Sanctuary - Scruggs and Thompson

Spoken Blessing and Moment of Silence

[Rev. Jennie]

This morning we are thinking with loving kindness of all those in our congregation, or known and loved by our congregation, who are in a time of transition, loss, uncertainty, or fear. May their fears be assuaged, their minds be put at ease, and their hearts be comforted. We are mindful of all the Joys, Concerns, Milestones, and Remembrances which remain silent in our hearts. Let us join our hearts together in a moment of silence in contemplation on the joys and concerns of the day. [Pause for a few minutes of silence.] Blessed be.

Offering

IVIE

Offertory by Marianne and Alyah Hutchins

First Reading Author Unknown, from the Lewiston Tribune

IVIE

"Easter is not a time for groping through dusty, musty tomes or tombs to disprove spontaneous generation or even to prove life eternal. It is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubts and seek the slopes where the sun is rising, to revel in the faith which transports us out of ourselves and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown."

Second Reading by Sophia Fahs and Dorothy Spoerl

Rev. Jennie

The words of Sophia Fahs and Dorothy Spoerl, from their book, called, *Beginnings: Earth, Sky, Life, Death*, co-written with Dorothy Spoerl in 1958. It includes myths and legends from peoples all over the world about creation, birth, death, and the cosmos, as well as contemporary science. In the introduction to it they wrote:

“Perhaps as long as there have been stars in the sky and people who could look up and see them, men [and women] have been wondering. As long as there have been sunrises and sunsets, and people to watch them. As long as there have been seeds growing into flowers and trees, and people to remember their beginnings. As long as babies have been born and old people have died, and there have been people who loved them.” [People have been wondering.]

Sermon “Easter Sunday”

Rev. Jennie

This morning we are honoring Easter. And so it is a fitting morning to remember what Unitarian Universalism has taught about Easter and Jesus. Unitarian Universalist Religious Education for children and youth has a unique and inspiring history we can be proud of, and it has evolved and improved over the decades since then. Unitarian Universalist Religious Education has always been designed to be appropriate and engaging for specific age groups, depending on their interests, and stage of human development.

Beginning in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, Unitarian Universalists created a new philosophy of liberal religious education, with new materials and methods. Two of the leaders of that movement were Sophia Lyon Fahs, and the Rev. Angus MacLean. They developed programming so that children would grow up to feel, on the one hand, confident about themselves and their abilities, with, on the other hand, a sense of awe, wonder, and reverence for this fascinating and beautiful universe of which we are a small part. They wanted children to be able to approach becoming religious with “a sense of wonder and a questioning mind.” And they wrote that, “each child should have his [or her] chance at an original approach to the universe.” They believed that little children should not be told doctrine about God and the Bible, for them to memorize and recite by rote, but that we should awaken their sense of awe about all they are experiencing, and help them find answers to their questions, as appropriate for their age and stage of development, and we should share those experiences with them.

Sophia Lyon Fahs was the woman and professional religious educator who we call the founder of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education for children and youth. And she had a connection to Wooster, Ohio! She was raised in Wooster, and graduated from the College of Wooster in 1897. When she died in 1978, at the age of 101, she was the college's oldest living alumna. Our Fellowship's meeting room and library are named in honor of her.

Sophia Lyon Fahs emphasized Jesus' teachings and the loving and ethical way he lived his life. She talked respectfully about the Christian belief in Jesus as a savior who rose up into heaven after his death. But those were not the teachings about Jesus that Sophia Fahs, and other Unitarians of her day emphasized. Instead they taught that how we live our lives is more important than what a person says they believe. For our Time for All Ages this morning, our Director of Religious Education, Chelsea Churpek, shared with us Sophia Fahs' own words about what she believed is most important for us to keep in our minds and hearts about Jesus and Easter. They are beautiful words. In brief, she taught that the Bible is one source book among many other worthy sources of religious or spiritual truth. She did not believe that any religious book should be followed as the one source of God-given law. Sophia Fahs' view of what is important in the Bible is that it contains stories of very real human experiences in which we can find some wisdom, insight, and comfort. And Sophia Fahs believed that children and teens could benefit from that wisdom, insight, and comfort, as appropriate to their age and stage of child development.

When Jesus began preaching, the people were awaiting a Messiah who would save their nation from political oppression and persecution by military means. What Jesus preached to them was radically different than anything they had heard before-- He preached that all nations of the world would be saved by the establishment of a "Kingdom of God" that was --not hierarchical, with some oppressing others-- but a kingdom of equals, a brotherhood of men and women, a Beloved Community. Jesus' vision was not parochial; it was universalist. He said that we must love one another, even our enemies; love our neighbors as ourselves; show compassion for the weak and the poor; when we are attacked, we must turn the other cheek rather than retaliate. The central message of Jesus' teachings was non-violence. In the Kingdom of Equals Jesus described, there was a place for sinners as well as saints; for the meek and humble as well as the

righteous. And divine forgiveness and grace were available to those who had erred, through confession and repentance before God-- That's what alarmed the political authorities of Jesus' day so much that they had him killed. Three days later, Jesus' followers believed they saw Jesus walking with them and talking to them, continuing to guide them, even after his death. During his lifetime, Jesus called himself the Son of Man; since his death, his followers have called him the Son of God, imbuing him with supernatural abilities, praying to him as a God in and of himself, a Savior who died to take away the sins of humankind. That doctrine was written down in what we now call the four Gospels between thirty-five and sixty years after Jesus' death. They are called the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But they were written by many different authors over quite a period of time. Some lines were even taken out or added in by the scribes who were recording the "dictation" as it were. The Gospels were written down for the purpose of, not recording historical facts, but spreading the belief in the divinity of Jesus. The intent of the Gospels was proselytism. The Gospels were written for Christians to use to try to convert non-Christians to Christianity.

Since those early days of Christianity, many different ways of proselytizing have evolved. The intense beam of that early exclusivism has broadened into the softer light of inclusivism and pluralism, more open-minded and open-hearted, more reasonable, less pushy. Along that historical continuum, we can each discern where our beliefs best fit. In an exclusivist view of Christianity, people are inherently sinful from birth and God caused his son to suffer and die. The Unitarian and Universalist beliefs have been that we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings, and that, just as a loving and just earthly parent would never unfairly condemn and punish their earthly child, so would a loving and just God never unfairly condemn and punish its children.

In our Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, we profess religious beliefs that are respectful and empowering, rather than denigrating and damning. I wouldn't have it any other way. But a side-effect of that is that we tend not to talk much about guilt. And I don't think we are doing ourselves any favors in our denomination by avoiding looking at guilt and ways to resolve it. Some guilt feelings are appropriate when the acts someone has committed or omitted violated important social, moral, or ethical rules. But sometimes people are burdened with feelings of guilt when reasonably

they should not be. "Survivor guilt is a type of remorse felt by people who manage to survive a tragic event involving loss of life, especially the lives of friends and loved-ones or other people commonly associated with the survivor. Sufferers often feel guilty that they get to move on with their lives, whereas other people were not as lucky... All great tragedies can provoke survivor guilt... Over time [such people] become guilty over their survival to the point where they depreciate their own actions to embellish the actions of the fallen." [from Wikipedia] When someone suffers from survivor guilt, they keep looking back to the time before the traumatic tragedy, thinking that there must have been something they should have done to prevent it; they get emotionally stuck there, and can't move forward with their life productively and happily. What they aren't realizing is that during a traumatic tragedy, what anyone is able to do to be helpful is far more limited than in a non-crisis situation. It can take help from a therapist for the person to see what their culpability realistically was and was not. [This information about survivor guilt is from the paper, "Guilt Following Traumatic Events," by Kathleen Nadar, DSW, social worker and mental health professional.] [Unresolved guilt can cause harm. It can lead to self-condemnation, punishing self or others, hopelessness, depression, suicidal feelings, or substance abuse. Survival guilt can produce an amplified perspective of the person who died and a strong bonding with the group or culture that is associated with the tragedy. People with a strong sense of responsibility for others are particularly susceptible to feelings of survivor guilt.]

I propose that after Jesus died, his followers suffered from survivor guilt; that that guilt was at the heart of the first evangelists' teachings; and that it persists to this day. Interlocked with that guilt is the doctrine that Jesus died to wash away our sense of sinfulness. Then, the first Christians did not have the benefit of modern psychology. Today, we do. We can take concrete steps to resolve feelings of guilt and move on to lead more productive and happy lives. When any of us looks at ourselves, our family members, our friends, co-workers, or neighbors, we may recognize some signs of some survivor guilt that is unresolved. Dr. Nadar gives us some guidance for processing survivor's guilt:

- Know that there is no offense in surviving
- It is good to survive
- It is okay to delight in being alive
- Feel free to reassess your life

- Reassess what is valuable to you
- Make the best of your life
- Making the best of your life can be a tribute to your survival and to those who died
- What is or can be your purpose? Your talent? Your benefit to life?
- Bloom where you are planted. This does not mean you have to stay in your current circumstances but that you can create something good from the circumstances in which you find yourself
- Process the traumatic experience and its associated symptoms with appropriate assistance
- Put guilt to good use
- As much as it is in your nature to do so, cherish life
- Treasure being alive.”

In the life-affirming tradition of Unitarian Universalist beliefs about Jesus, let us go out into the day living so as to honor the compassionate and justice-filled life of that great teacher who has been beloved by so many through the ages.

Closing Hymn #38 Morning has Broken

Parting Words by Sophia Lyon Fahs

Rev. Jennie

“Life becomes religious whenever we make it so: when some new light is seen, when some deeper appreciation is felt, when some larger outlook is gained, when some nobler purpose is formed, when some task is well done.”

Extinguishing the Chalice

Postlude by Susan English

CHIME

[Virtual Coffee Hour]

