

SALISBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Deacons' Service, January 1, 2023

(Detailed Order of Service, Including all Music and Readings)

David Baranowski

PRELUDE: *Sheep May Safely Graze* J.S. Bach

Theresa Carroll

WELCOME

Good morning! You are welcome here, no matter where you are on your journey. Full of doubt or full of faith, or in between. We strive for spiritual progress, not perfection.

Welcome to the annual Deacons' service. Every year, the Sunday after Christmas the Deacons write the service as a gift to the Pastor and the Congregation. Today we have prepared a celebration intended to reflect on our perception of our faith, including a discussion and hopefully re-dedicate ourselves anew to our Faith journey and our church.

HYMN: *In the Bleak Midwinter* Cranham

ANNOUNCEMENTS/JOYS AND CONCERNS/SILENT PRAYER

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Dear Father, we praise you, we thank you for your glorious creation and for this world you have given us. Forgive us for neglecting it and show us the path to renewal. Thank you for opening our hearts

All: Your Will be Done.

Dear Jesus, thank you for walking among us, teaching us how to glorify our Father and how to Love each other, including our enemies. Thank you for opening our hearts.

All: Your Will be Done.

Holy Spirit, thank you for your Presence here among us. Move among us, inspire us to in our desire to know You and to renew our Faith. Thank you for opening our hearts.

All: Your Will be done.

One: In silence we offer our prayers.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lorna Edmundson

OFFERTORY

David Baranowski

MUSICAL OFFERING:

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist

J.S. Bach

DOXOLOGY

All

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Daniel Edmundson

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah: 63: 7-9

⁷ I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD,
the deeds for which he is to be praised,
according to all the LORD has done for us—
yes, the many good things
he has done for Israel,
according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

⁸ He said, “Surely they are my people,
children who will be true to me”;
and so he became their Savior.

⁹ In all their distress he too was distressed,
and the angel of his presence saved them.^[a]
In his love and mercy he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them
all the days of old.

Lorna D. Edmundson

ANCIENT AND MODERN TESTIMONY:

Thoughts for Young and Older Minds on How God’s Children Should Now Live

Among the many memorable phrases in Pastor John’s extravagant weekly Sunday welcome, this one is most likely to stay with me: “...*Whether you are believing or doubting, or a little bit of each*”...

Keeping the faith is not always easy in this modern world. And it is surely true that “keeping the faith” takes slightly different forms in each of our lives and at different stages in each life. Sometimes our beliefs seem to take shape – creating a coherent Credo; sometimes our beliefs are seem more muddled or moving in a variety of bewildering directions. Work always in progress...

Today, as the New Year begins, I ask that we turn our thoughts to who we are as God’s children, what we believe, what we doubt, and who we hope to be. We Deacons thought that this

process of reflection might be best informed by revisiting Ancient and Modern testimony from a variety of faith and thought traditions – Buddhism, Judaism, Native American Lakota, Christianity, and even – somewhat whimsically – the writings of Robert Fulghum. Each tradition offers inspiration and thought to nourish young and older minds on how God’s children should now live.

As we hear the words that follow, let’s listen carefully for both commonality and variations in nuance; listen carefully for the words that speak most directly to our own lives and souls.

Following the readings, we’d like to engage you in a brief, informal conversation about what you found to be most stirring, meaningful, and helpful to you as you seek to renew and reaffirm your own personal credo.

Betsy Beck

From the Buddhist Tradition

Anatman: Let go of your ego. Stop chasing fame, likes on social media, and other empty things.

Shila: Don’t engage in actions because they are good for you. Do them because they are the right thing to do.

Prajna: Study how the world works, and act according to that knowledge.

Karuna: Feel compassion towards others, help them when they are down, and help them even if they are up.

Mudita: Enjoy the little things. Be happy for others.

John Estabrook

From the Jewish Tradition

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” –
Viktor Frankl

If you are not a better person tomorrow than you are today, what need have you for a tomorrow?”
– *Rabbi Nachman of Breslov*

Thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, but, above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”
– *Yehuda Bauer*

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore me to the joy of your Salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.
PSALMS 51:10, 51:12:

Patricia Palmer

From the Native American Lakota Tradition

Friend do it this way – that is, whatever you do in life, do the very best you can with both your heart and mind.

And if you do it that way, the Power of The Universe will come to your assistance, if your heart and mind are in Unity.

When one sits in the Hoop of The People, one must be responsible because All of Creation is related.

And the hurt of one is the hurt of all. And the honor of one is the honor of all. And whatever we do affects everything in the universe.

If you do it that way – that is, if you truly join your heart and mind as One – whatever you ask for, that's the Way It's Going To Be.

Sue Morrill

From the Christian Tradition

So it's pretty simple for me:

Love when you can.

Do the work that is yours to do.

Be the person that is yours to be at any given time.

Think to wish for what is yours at this very moment. To love. To serve. To touch. To know.

Think to wish for all that is yours to have. Think to wish for all that is yours to do. And think to wish that you might be who it is that you might most fully be.

Avoid wishful thinking. Avoid the traps and pitfalls of nostalgia for the past. Savor every moment as it passes. And enlist yourself in saving that which can be saved this very moment, in order that it, too, may endure for others to enjoy".

– Reverend Forrest Church

Barbara Collins

From the Wit and Wisdom of Robert Fulghum

Recently, I set out to get my statement of personal belief down to one page in simple terms, fully understanding the naive idealism that implied.I realized then that I already know most of what's necessary to live a meaningful life – that it isn't all that complicated. I KNOW it. And have known it for a long, long time. Living it? That's another matter.

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. ... and the sandpile at Sunday School.

Share everything. Play Fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Lead a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant comes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.

And then remember the Dick and Jane books and the first word you learned – and the biggest word of all – LOOK.

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true, clear and firm.

Think what a better world it would be if we all – the whole world – had cookies and milk at about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are – when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

DISCUSSION: *A very animated and rich discussion ensued, moderated by Lorna Edmundson.*

Many who were present at the worship service – both longtime church members and newcomers – came forward, describing the words that resonated most strongly with them and offering insight into their own faith journeys.

Janet Kaufman

PRAYER

Several years ago, the UCC adopted the theme “Be the Church”. Our church had a banner that hung inside our Meeting House and outside in good weather. It said:

*“Be the Church.
Protect the Environment.
Care for the poor.
Forgive often.*

*Reject racism.
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
Love God.
Enjoy this life."*

We still have this banner safely stored away. Perhaps it's time to bring it out once more as a gentle, visual reminder of how God's children should live.

HYMN: *On This Day Earth Shall Ring*, Personent Hodie

BENEDICTION

May the strength of God sustain us; may the power of God preserve us; may the hands of God protect us; may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us this day and forever. Amen.

David Baranowski

SUNG AMEN

POSTLUDE:

Vom Himmel Hoch da komm'ich her

Pachelbel