

Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ekklesia and the hope of the world.

But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom . . .

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour.

—Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail”

The Promise and the Practice

Welcome

Good morning!

Welcome to The Towson Unitarian Universalist Church on this Sunday when our nation is celebrating the birth of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

At the invitation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, our congregation is celebrating The Promise and the Practice Sunday. The Unitarian Universalist Association has asked us to set aside a Sunday before February 4 to turn our attention toward the voices of black Unitarian Universalists and stretch our minds, hearts, and spirits to hear stories that have not been heard and taken to heart.

What would it be like if our Unitarian Universalist service centered entirely around the voices and the experiences of black Unitarian Universalists? What truths might we hear, however difficult? What might we learn? What might we be inspired to do?

That we might reflect on these questions, I will intentionally NOT be preaching a sermon today. Instead, we will hear readings and a homily and music from black Unitarian Universalist religious professionals as described in your order of service.

The Covenant

(read in unison)

L. Griswold Williams

**LOVE IS THE DOCTRINE OF THIS CHURCH,
THE QUEST OF TRUTH IS ITS SACRAMENT,
AND SERVICE IS ITS PRAYER.**

**TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE,
TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE IN FREEDOM,
TO SERVE HUMAN NEED,
TO THE END THAT ALL SOULS SHALL
GROW INTO HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE—
THUS DO WE COVENANT WITH EACH OTHER.**

Opening Words

Invocation

By Viola Abbitt

We are Unitarian Universalists.

When we lift up our Seven Principles, some of us think of them as a form of theology—but they are more important to our collective than that:

They do not tell us what we should believe; they tell us how we should *be*.

They tell us how we should act in the larger world and with each other.

We are brought here today by the fact that Unitarian Universalism has fallen short of the image that was presented to the world, and to many of those who embraced this religion.

But we are also brought here today by the truth that Unitarian Universalism has shifted course to move toward a place of wholeness: a place that perhaps never existed for us as a denomination.

It has been a long, and sometimes unforgiving road to today. But we are here today because we are mindful of that past, and because we have hope for the future. We want the practice of this faith to be a fulfilling manifestation of its promise.

Open your hearts. Seek new ways of understanding.

Come, let us worship together.

[Viola Abbitt is a candidate for the Unitarian Universalist ministry and a seminarian at Meadville Lombard Theological School. She is currently the ministerial intern at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield in Massachusetts, and a board member at Unirondack, a Unitarian Universalist camp and conference center in upstate New York.]

Chalice Lighting

(Read responsively)

By Adrian L. H. Graham

We kindle a flame of power, illuminating the Holy in each of our faces.

**WE RECOGNIZE IN THE FLAME
A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO OUR SHARED FAITH.**

We are held and carried from day to day, week to week, in the shining of the light.

THIS FLAME IS MINE, AS WELL AS YOURS.

We are brought together on this day, called to growth, to expansion, within its glow.

**WHAT DOES YOUR HEART KNOW
WHILE BEHOLDING THIS HOLY FIRE?**

[Adrian L. H. Graham has been a Unitarian Universalist since 1999 and a church lay-leader since 2003. He has served as a trustee and officer of the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore and as a member of several congregational committees, including a Ministerial Internship Committee, Ministerial Search Committee, and Committee on Ministry. Considering himself a "Uvangelist," he has been Director of Communications & Membership at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville since 2016.]

A Time for All Ages

Repairing Our Mistakes with Love

By Jae Pema-la Scott, Erika A. Hewitt

Delivered by Spice Kleinmann, Jane D'Ambrogi, and Rev. Clare

Spice/Jane, coming forward sorrowfully with her bowl: "I was so excited to show you this bowl—but it broke on the way here this morning, and now I'm feeling upset. Can we try to fix it?"

Rev. Clare: (defensively): "I didn't break it."

Spice/Jane: "I know you didn't break it—but can you help me fix it anyway?"

Rev. Clare: "You mean help you fix it even though I didn't break it? I just need you to understand that I'm a good person. I don't go around breaking bowls."

Spice/Jane (patiently): "It's important to me that we figure out how to fix this bowl, because it means a lot to me."

Rev. Clare invites the children to agree that yes, we should help Spice/Jane fix her broken bowl. Then: "Okay, then: do you have any ideas about how we could fix the bowl?"

Rev. Clare solicits suggestions, offering some themselves, if necessary. Possibilities to present to the children include:

- *tape*
- *glue*
- *give everyone a piece of chewing gum, and then use it on the bowl*

After several suggestions, Spice/Jane brightens: "I have an idea, too! It's called kintsugi."

Rev. Clare: "What's kintsugi?"

Spice/Jane explains that kintsugi is the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery and ceramics: gold is used to highlight the beauty of the imperfections that remain when a broken item has been repaired. *As Spice/Jane explains, video displays photos of different examples of kintsugi.*

Rev. Clare: "So what I'm learning is that the point of kintsugi isn't to hide the broken parts, right?"

Spice/Jane: "That's right! The gold is used to remind the user, over and over, that something that was once broken is whole again and it has a different beauty."

Rev. Clare: "In a way, that's what happens when other things break, right?"

Spice/Jane: “What kinds of things?”

Rev. Clare: “Like, relationships. Friendships. Sometimes we hurt each other’s feelings, and it’s like the thread between two (or more) people breaks. But as Unitarian Universalists, we don’t ignore that: we try to rebuild the relationship so that it’s stronger than it was before.”

Spice/Jane: “I agree! The work of healing is all of our jobs, no matter how big or small we are. And when we repair our mistakes with love and with our covenant, we remember that our relationships are more beautiful once we have acknowledged hurt, asked for forgiveness, corrected our mistakes, and made a sacred promise to do better in the future.”

Rev. Clare: “When our children go to their Religious Exploration classes, we adults will be thinking about how to heal our relationships with Black Unitarian Universalists, so that our faith and our congregations will be more beautiful than they were before.”

[Rev. Jae Pema-la Scott is the Director of Lifelong Learning at Woodinville Unitarian Universalist Church. She is a graduate of Naropa University's Buddhist Divinity program, was subsequently ordained by Ven.'s Bhante Chao Chu and Tampalavela Dhammaratana, and brings 20 years of dedicated meditation experience to her ministry.]

Erika Hewitt is the UUA's Minister of Worship Arts and Editor of Braver/Wiser, a weekly spirituality series. She also serves as a Unitarian Universalist parish minister and wedding officiant in Maine.

Her book of theme-based ministry resources, co-written with educator Becky Brooks, will be published in 2018. Erika's previous books are Story, Song and Spirit and The Shared Pulpit.]

Prayer/Meditation

“There Is More Love Somewhere”

By Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout

Read by Wendell Finner

Last summer at General Assembly, I walked out of the sanctuary we had made from the convention center space. As tired as I was, I returned more and more to my deeply introverted default of self, and I passed a woman who had to stop to talk with me.

Many religious professionals who have led a morning worship service know this is where the work begins.

She walked up to me and said, “Doctor Rideout!” Because she had enough grace to remind me of my title, she gave me the opportunity to resume my church face and posture. She held my hands as if we had known each other for the longest time. She looked into eyes and she said, “You know what? I always sing that song: *There is more love right here . . . There is more love right here . . . I'm gonna keep on 'cause I found it . . . There is more love right here . . .* I don’t understand why it is that we don’t sing that here at GA. We’ve already found a community of love.”

And because she had enough compassion and grace to call me Dr. Rideout, she had given me enough time and opportunity to summon up a bit of stillness from the weary remnants of my churchman’s posture.

She looked into my eyes and spoke and sang to me with her own truth. She asked with genuine curiosity why it is that we don't all sing the words that she had come to know.

I was compelled to respond to the woman I had just met with, "Thank you for trusting me with that question." And then I explained to her why I thought it was necessary—particularly with the music of people of color—that we enter and examine these songs with more curiosity than colonization.

I thanked her, and I explained that for those of us who live with the privilege of knowing love, it can be difficult to understand the perspective of one who lives without such a privilege.

I explained that it can be difficult to understand the lived experience of those who have trouble finding the evidence of love in their immediate vicinity; in their church; in their neighborhood; in their city; in their nation; even in their planet.

I thanked her, and I explained that for some who don't share the privilege of perceiving love "right here," moving toward that idea of privilege had become a vital practice of Black faith.

I offered that if we, as a spiritual community of Unitarian Universalists, populated by well-meaning people, are to mean anything to the lives and the deaths of people of color, we must begin by learning—not squelching—the forms of expression that arise from these living perspectives.

And she said, "Thank you. I've never heard it expressed that way. I've never understood it that way. And I will never sing it that same way again."

When we inhabit the music, the forms of expression of people who lived their lives along the margins of notice, we must notice that we have entered holy ground, a sacred space of learning; a sacred space of relationship.

[A native of Baltimore, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout holds a bachelor's degree in voice from Vanderbilt University, and graduate degrees in conducting from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Dr. Rideout has served First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor August, 2007, as Interim Director of Music (2007), Acting Director of Music (2008) and Director of Music (July, 2008). He was appointed Director of Worship & Music in September, 2015. Since, Dr. Rideout was named Director of Worship and Music for the 2017 New England Regional Assembly, featured panelist and closing worship leader of the Unitarian Universalist - United Nations Office 2017 Spring Symposium on the eradication of armed conflict.]

The Promise and the Practice

The Healing Is Not Done

By Rebekah Savage

Read by Sheila Malenski (11:15)

I play this moment over and over again in my head: the day I heard of the Thomas Jefferson Ball, hosted by Unitarian Universalists in 1993. As a person of color, raised in a UU congregation, I felt a shiver down my spine as I learned something new and unsettling about the faith that I call home.

You may be wondering why this gathering of UUs in 1993 struck me as a profoundly memorable and painful moment. Beloveds, this is why: attendees were encouraged to wear period clothes to the Ball to celebrate Thomas Jefferson, who attended Unitarian churches. In the spirit of welcome, those who conceived of this social gathering did not take into account the centering of whiteness by asking people to attend in period dress. The organizers forgot or ignored the fact that in Jefferson's time, we black and brown UUs would have been slaves: property to be traded and sold, brutalized and subjected.

The matter was taken up at General Assembly when delegates challenged the appropriateness of holding this event. During a plenary session, delegates voiced their concerns by reading a statement of protest. In response, the organizers and other leaders gathered to consider how to proceed and came to a decision: the Thomas Jefferson Ball would proceed ahead as planned.

I ask myself: What would I wear? Would I be a house slave, favored for my lighter skin and "good hair"? My skin is a light brown that my daughter refers to as cinnamon, a product of a beautiful multi-racial family history. Would I catch the eye of a white man who could leverage any opportunity to take my body as his property?

What would I wear? Would I have had shoes on my work-worn feet? Would I have stretch marks across my belly from babies that were taken from me to sell to other plantations? Would I sing to myself faithful, mournful songs of liberation, dreaming for the day when I can taste freedom for myself and my family?

What would I wear? Would I be allowed to come through the front entrance or directed to the back, to enter through the kitchen with the other slaves and servants? Would I be allowed to drink from the same punch bowl, eat from the same platters? Would I sit with the other people of color, in a separate room or at the back of the gathering? Would I be permitted to look a white person in the eye or even speak their name?

What would I wear, dear beloved UU's? Tell me: what I would have worn to attend this ball? What period clothes would represent who I would have been in Thomas Jefferson's time?

OUCH.

When we feel something deeply and are still finding the words: OUCH.
Seriously, OUCH.

Why do I raise this deeply wounding moment in our shared UU history?

Because this isn't just a reflection about my lived experience as a person of color in a majority-white denomination. This is also part of the story of how people of color experience sharing worship and community within our faith. It's a chapter in the story of who we are as a people, living in this country, swimming in the waters of white supremacy and centering whiteness, supported by centuries of indoctrinations and institutional structures.

I grieve for the hurts that this time in our history caused. I grieve for those who left our communities because of how this event was handled, which broke their trust in finding spacious rest in our congregations from the pervasive, violent racism in our country. I grieve for those who, at the time, were unable to traverse the gaps in their spiritual understanding of justice and belonging. I grieve that it has taken this long to have this level of conversation about centering people of color.

This Ball was conceived by well-meaning people, beloved kin of mine and yours, who were able to identify welcome only through the eyes of white privilege. That is the insidious nature of centering whiteness: it denies personhood and the God given right for all to be fully accounted.

To put primacy on whiteness as the default setting in how we see and experience our world means that we are being theologically inconsistent. We covenant to affirm and promote the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, and yet we have devalued the full inclusion of too many.

In small ways, this trend emerges when music and readings for worship draw primarily from Anglo-European composers and writers and the paintings that hang in our congregations disproportionately represent our white foremothers and forefathers. We see this trend when congregational leadership is cultivated without honoring the diversity in our midst as a rich source of inspiration and prophetic messaging. We see this in considering that people of color have been a part of our living tradition for centuries—but our voices have been overlooked, silenced, or outright rejected with hostility.

I ignite my flame of justice and shine a light on this scar because the healing is not done. The healing is not done because we are still called to do the work of dismantling white supremacy culture and decentering whiteness from our bones: from our congregations, from the ways in which we interact and support each other. We are called to fulfill the promises once made in the name of faith and proclaiming Beloved Community. We are called to match our words with our actions, to bring the holy into our midst by truly and without fear honoring the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

This is a beautiful time of opportunity, Beloveds, born of truly listening to people of color and beginning to repair the fabric of community that has been torn. Ripped asunder by years of broken and empty promises: words of good intention, unmatched by purposeful action.

I love being a Unitarian Universalist. I was birthed into this world with the calling of service on my heart; I was shaped and molded in our congregations. I also know that, as Dr. Cornell West shared with us in his 2015 Ware Lecture at General Assembly, if I have white supremacy in my heart because I was raised in this country, so do we all.

While I grieve, I also have much reason to claim hope. I celebrate where we are as a people of faith because we are bravely facing the devastation and illness of “othering” people. We are looking at ourselves in the mirror and seeking a new way. I celebrate that we have the moral and spiritual courage to listen deeply to voices that have been marginalized. I celebrate that beloveds are choosing to move back humbly, to make space for an evolution in leadership and consciousness. The spark of working towards the greatest good is seen in every moment of insight as so many are waking up to our participation in centering whiteness.

Beloveds, now is our time to lead with love and make right the ways our denomination has fallen short of our shared principles. We are a powerful, aspirational covenanted people and we are being called to account for our historic moral and spiritual failings, in order to move into authentic Beloved Community.

Now is our time to harness our ability to reflect inward in order to reemerge with a power greater than ourselves that gives rise to a new day. Beloveds, with love and peace in our hearts, may it be so.

[Rev. Rebekah Savage (formerly Montgomery) is the full time Associate Minister at the UU Congregation of Rockville, MD, serves in the US Army Reserve and is completing a Doctorate in Ministry at Wesley Seminary in Washington, DC.]

The Promise and the Practice

"Missing Voices"

By Connie Simon

Read by Monica Sweidel (11:15)

When I started attending a UU church, I was excited by the promise of worship that would draw from the arts, science, nature, literature and a multitude of voices. Indeed, some of the voices that Unitarian Universalists hear in worship each week belong to Thoreau, Emerson, Ballou, and others. Their words are beautiful, but they come from a culture and experience that's foreign to me. When do I get to hear voices from my culture? I quickly learned that, other than the same few quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Howard Thurman's "The Work of Christmas," it wasn't gonna happen. I sit attentively and listen with my head to "their" voices while my heart longs to hear more of "our" voices.

I am a Black Woman. When I look around on Sunday morning, I don't see many people who look like me. In most of the congregations I visit, I don't see anybody who looks like me. So I guess I shouldn't be surprised that I don't hear voices of people who share my experience. But it still hurts. I want to hear voices that tell the struggle of living under the weight of oppression in this culture of White Supremacy. I want to hear stories of trying to stay afloat in the water we swim in. I want to hear voices of Living While Black in America.

I don't hear those voices in UU churches so I have to supplement my worship by reading black theologians like Anthony Pinn and Monica Coleman. I read Maya Angelou, James Baldwin and my favorite poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. Though not a Unitarian or a Universalist, Dunbar chronicled the African American experience in the years following the Civil War and the emancipation of enslaved Africans—a time of opportunities for blacks as we migrated north in droves seeking employment and education but also a time of continuing segregation, racism and oppression.

Dunbar acknowledged this tension in his writing. We hear him long for joy and prosperity while at the same time knowing that the system would conspire to keep true happiness just beyond his grasp. "A pint of joy to a peck of trouble and never a laugh but the moans come double; and that is life!" Still, he was a champion of social justice, believing that God has sympathy for the plight of the oppressed and that his grace will be bestowed not on those "who soar, but they who plod their rugged way, unhelped to God."

For Dunbar, the struggle was real. One hundred years later, hearing Dunbar express his frustration and give voice to the contradictions of our existence as African Americans encourages me and nourishes my soul. His voice speaks to my heart. He knows my pain and understands my sadness, my fear and my rage. He understands the tears I cry as I pray for strength to get through another day in this world. He gives voice to my deep faith that real change is coming someday. He didn't see it in his lifetime and I might not see it in mine, but I have to keep believing it's possible.

That's the message many African Americans long to hear in church. I know that's what I need to hear every now and then. Will it ever happen? Or will we always have to go "outside" to hear our voices? If that's the

case, maybe there's no place for us in Unitarian Universalism. The thought of leaving is painful—but so is being in a faith that ignores our voices.

[Connie Simon is Intern Minister at the Unitarian Society of Germantown and Contract Chaplain at Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. Following graduation from Meadville Lombard Theological School in 2018, she intends to pursue parish ministry.]

The Promise and the Practice

"Words Matter"

By Carol Thomas Cissel

Read by Jeffrey Arnstein (11:15)

Diverse. Multicultural. Inclusive. Welcoming.

If I made a list of every single Unitarian Universalist congregation I have served, visited or worshipped at, they would have a few things in common—including the use of these words.

Perhaps on the front of the Order of Service? Or scrolling across the home page of their website? Maybe they've been emblazoned on a rainbow-colored banner hanging in the sanctuary? Wherever they are, more often than not, the words are proudly combined with another expression that has been embraced in everyday UU vernacular: "All Are Welcome Here!" The congregations, churches, and fellowships on my list, all have one or more of these words proudly on display.

I know why they are used so freely. Initially, I feel embraced by them. There's a warmth of recognition when my eyes first catch, capture their sight. A sense of being acknowledged and valued moves from heart to head and then a smile settles on my lips. My heart blooms. I feel like the Welcome Table has been set for me, and I am eager to pull up a chair.

All of this takes place in an unmeasurable instant. In the next moment, it is tempered. I remember past experiences and unconsciously recalculate and measure my response. The petals of my heart close a bit, protecting the delicate stigma and stamen that lie within. Fear of disappointment rises within me like the sun.

I love those words. I want what they promise. But I have been repeatedly disappointed. It is simply not enough to print them on an Order of Service or in a newsletter; they must have meaning and intention at their core. A desire for multicultural worship is wonderful, but it will not flower if that seed of yearning is not nurtured by a commitment and a plan.

Longing for diversity (of race, gender or age) is only a beginning. It calls for caring and creative programming. Our congregations are primarily white, female and over 60. If we are to serve into the future that must change. I believe that we can transform first ourselves and then the world. I am injured repeatedly when we do not. When we use words just for the sake of using them I am hurt.

Without true resolve, planning and measurable goals behind the things I see, my trust and hope are broken anew.

Why does it hurt? Every time I see those words I feel the possible revival of Unitarian Universalism germinating in the warm soil of Spirit. I've seen the transformation begin to take place in Washington State, Washington, DC, and California. Congregations in Oklahoma continue to push our faith forward. So, yes: I am hopeful—hopeful but wary. On too many occasions and in too many places, these words and the ideals which they carry are given lip-service.

Words matter. They lift and hold us. They illuminate the future and shower us with possibilities. When misused, they hurt. Verbal cuts and abrasions sting. Language leaves wounds that become scars.

Words matter. If you and your congregation are not ready to meet the promises you craft, and then share with the world—stop publishing them. Please don't invite me to sit at your table unless you have a warm, satisfying meal to serve. It doesn't have to be a gourmet feast; a potluck is fine. The soufflé may only have risen halfway. The cookies might be burned on the edges. The pasta can be overcooked. That's okay. I'm starving. What it must be is full-filling, real, made with love and ready to be eaten.

Remember: I believe what you say and write. Words matter.

[Rev. Carol Thomas Cissel, (M.S., M.Div.), is the settled minister of the UU Fellowship of Centre County in State College, PA. She is passionate about homiletics, crafting exuberant worship, travel, and small batch bourbon. Carol collects the masterworks of both Native American and First Nations Peoples, Contemporary Art Glass, and kisses from her delicious grandson, Andrew.]

The Promise and the Practice

"Joy Unspeakable"

By Kimberly Quinn Johnson

Read by Dr. Neil Porter

Joy Unspeakable
is not silent,
it moans, hums, and bends
to the rhythm of a dancing universe . . .

For our free African ancestors,
joy unspeakable is drum talk . . .

For enslaved Africans during the
Middle Passage,
joy unspeakable is the surprise
of living one more day . . .

For Africans in bondage
in the Americas,
joy unspeakable is the moment of
mystical encounter
when God tiptoes into the hush arbor . . .

Joy unspeakable is humming
“how I got over”

After swimming safely
to the other shore of a swollen Ohio river
when you know that you can't swim.

—Barbara A. Holmes
(used with the author's permission)

When theologian Barbara A. Holmes talks about “joy unspeakable,” she’s talking specifically about how the contemplative practices of the Black church have sustained Black people in America through suffering and survival. More than referring to a particular church or denomination, this experience is collective and transhistorical. It’s also a different expression of Black religion than I’m expected to exhibit, as a Black woman.

On more than one occasion, I’ve had a particular mode of black worship projected onto me: the more charismatic modes of Black worship that we’re so familiar with—the shout, the stomp, the song. That particular style of Black worship sometimes strikes me as a caricature of joy—a shallow stereotype. I see this in the expectation that more “black” worship will bring more lively singing, more rhythmic clapping, more energetic worship. I see this in the anxiety that more “black” worship will bring more lively singing, more rhythmic clapping, more energetic worship. The shout. The stomp. The song.

But this caricature—this stereotype—is a narrow sliver of the complexity and the richness of black spirituality and black worship.

The modes of black spirituality that are most powerful, nourishing and nurturing for me aren’t the stomp, shout or song. Instead, I think of the rock, the sway, the bend, the moan, the hum. And I think of these things done in community. I marvel that in the midst of sadness and sorrow, in the midst of feeling the effects of generations of trauma wrought by racism and white supremacy, we can still find joy with each other. We are finding joy in each other.

I call it Black Joy because I am Black and it is the joy that I have been familiar with my whole life. It is the joy that I have learned from Black people. It is the joy created through our collective healing — our laying down of burdens, to be picked up and shared by our people, our community. This is not joy in spite of suffering — a mask put on to hide pain, an armor put on to push through pain. This is an embrace, holding and soothing us in our suffering. This Black Joy is joy created through our being together. This Black Joy reminds me that I am not alone, that trouble don’t last always, that I am held and carried forward by a power beyond what I can comprehend.

I call it Black Joy, but I want to offer it—to the extent that it is mine to offer—to this faith. One of my gifts to Unitarian Universalism is the suggestion that joy is ours. We are the people who commit to justice, equity, and compassion. We are the people who aspire to world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. We are the people who affirm our interdependence with each other and the universe itself. I want to challenge Unitarian Universalism and Unitarian Universalists to claim Joy.

Unitarian Universalist Joy will require a different way of imagining ourselves and a different way of being with each other. Claiming the possibility of Unitarian Universalist joy requires making space for the surprise that Holmes describes. Claiming the possibility of Unitarian Universalist joy requires slowing down to hear the

talk of the drum—pausing to move to the rhythms of the drum. Unitarian Universalist joy requires opening to the possibility of the mystical encounter. Unitarian Universalist joy requires embodying this faith differently than many of us are accustomed to.

[Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson is minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork. Among her specialties are anti-racism and youth ministry.]

Barbara A. Holmes is president emerita of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. She also served as V.P. of Academic Affairs/Dean of Memphis Theological Seminary. Her Fortress Press books include Liberation and the Cosmos: Conversations with the Elders (2008) and Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church (2004, 2017).]

Closing Words

“Benediction”

By Kimberly Quinn Johnson

Hush:

Somebody’s calling your name—

Can you hear it?

Calling you to a past not quite forgotten,

Calling us to a future not fully imagined?

Hush, hush:

Somebody’s calling our name.

What shall we do?

GO NOW IN PEACE.

Note:

For more information about this UUA-provided service, see https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_promise_and_the_practice_revised_worship_guidelines.docx.pdf

This packet includes other powerful materials that were not used in today’s service, but which should be of interest and inspiration to our congregation.