

*“The plant people have taught me to be generous and not be shy about blossoming, that it is our nature. I think when others see us, it can inspire them to open up and blossom too and we can be a field ablaze with dignity and beauty together.”*

—Brenda Salgado

## What Renews and Transforms Us?

### Welcome

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

### The Covenant

—*First Parish of Norwell Unitarian Universalists*

**WE PLEDGE TO WALK TOGETHER  
IN FELLOWSHIP AND LOVE,  
TO CULTIVATE REVERENCE,  
TO PROMOTE SPIRITUAL GROWTH  
AND ETHICAL COMMITMENT,  
TO MINISTER TO EACH OTHER’S NEEDS  
AND TO THOSE OF HUMANITY,  
TO CELEBRATE THE SACRED MOMENTS OF LIFE’S  
PASSAGE,  
AND TO HONOR THE HOLINESS AT THE HEART OF BEING.**

### Opening Words

From “Nature Needs a New Pronoun”

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a botanist—a scientist who studies plants. Her heritage is Native American. With the help of her community, she taught herself Anishinaabe, the language of her people. And this made her curious about pronouns. We are a people of curiosity. So let us be inquisitive about pronouns, too!

Robin Wall Kimmerer writes: “Imagine your grandmother standing at the stove in her apron and someone says, ‘Look, it is making soup. It has gray hair.’ In English, we never refer to a person as ‘it.’ Such a grammatical error would be a profound act of disrespect. ‘It’ robs a person of selfhood and kinship, reducing a person to a thing. And yet in English, we speak of our beloved Grandmother Earth in exactly that way: as ‘it.’”

[Kimmerer goes on to observe that in English, a being is either human or “it,” affording no linguistic respect to the other beings who inhabit the Earth. She invites us to imagine feeling ourselves part of a family that includes birches, beavers, and butterflies, and how such a feeling would enlarge our sense of belonging. She notes that in her indigenous language, other species have standing, not just as “persons,” but as teachers who can inspire the way we live.]

Robin Wall Kimmerer learned that there is a word in Anishinaabe for beings of the living Earth, *Bemaadiziiiaaki*. Now that’s a big word. So she observed that we might take the last two letters of that word.

She went on to write: “One possibility is ‘Ki’ to signify a being of the living Earth. Not ‘he’ or ‘she,’ but ‘ki.’ So that when we speak of Sugar Maple, we say, ‘Oh that beautiful tree, ki is giving us sap again this spring.’ And we’ll need a plural pronoun, too, for those Earth beings. Let’s make that new pronoun ‘kin.’ So we can now refer to birds and trees not as things, but as our earthly relatives. When it comes to geese overhead, we could say, ‘Look, kin are flying back north for the summer. Welcome back!’”

Robin Wall Kimmerer concludes: “Let our words reaffirm our respect and kinship with the more-than-human world. Let us speak of the beings of Earth as the ‘kin’ they are.”

[Robin Wall Kimmerer’s essay can be read at <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/together-with-earth/alternative-grammar-a-new-language-of-kinship>. Accessed June 30, 2019.]

## **Chalice Lighting**

(Read responsively)

Rev. Elizabeth Strong

**Enter into the communion of flowers.**

**ENTER WITH JOYFUL HEARTS.  
ENTER WITH REVERENT THOUGHTS.**

**It has taken long months beneath  
cold ground for these flowers  
to prepare their blooming.**

**IT HAS TAKEN EACH OF US LONG TIMES OF GROWTH  
THROUGH SORROW AND JOY  
TO PREPARE FOR OUR LIVING NOW.**

**The blossoming season is short,  
The flowers stay only a brief time.**

**WE ARE TRAVELERS UPON THE EARTH:  
TRAVELERS THROUGH ALL TOO BRIEF LIFE TIMES.**

**Therefore let our moments be bountiful.  
Let us rejoice in our unique colors, aromas, and sounds.**

**LET US CELEBRATE TOGETHER IN LOVE;  
THAT AS WE TRAVEL AWAY, WE TAKE WITH US  
THE MEMORY OF GOLDEN HOURS TOGETHER  
AMONG THE FLOWERS.**

## **Prelude**

“Be Thou My Vision”

Traditional/Dan Forrest, arr.

TUUC Choir

## **Story**

“The Best Flower in the Garden”

The Wisdom of Kabbalah

This month, we are thinking about what it means to be a people of curiosity. Our story, in honor of Flower Communion, is what it might mean to be a garden of curiosity. What question might you ask if you were a flower in a garden? Well, according to our story, as summer came to an end, all of the flowers in the garden wanted to know which flower was the best.

[Story summary: The pink roses began it, bragging that they were best because they were spring’s first bloomers. The white daisies disagreed, claiming that it was they who were best because their flowers persisted all summer long. But the yellow mums declared their primacy because they were the last to bloom in the autumn. The arguments ended when people came to the garden; all the flowers waited to hear themselves praised as the best.

One day the gardener came to the garden, and the flowers all preened to look their best, the roses fluffing their petals, the daisies standing their tallest, and the mums glowing bright in the sunlight. Each waited for the gardener to declare it best. But the gardener, delighted at their beauty, could only exclaim about all the pretty flowers before beginning to cut them for a bouquet.

The roses, cut first, felt selected and special, while the daisies declared that the roses were being removed from the garden. But when the gardener began to cut the daisies, the mums boasted that only they were pretty enough to stay in the garden. And then the gardener cut the mums. In the basket, the flowers continued their argument.

The gardener unknowingly settled the argument as the flowers were arranged together in the vase. Having valued the roses for their early bloom, the daisies for their enduring blossoms, and the mums for blooming in autumn after waiting through spring and summer, the gardener admired the flowers, saying, that alone, each flower is the best, but together, they look perfect.

The flowers realized that each was the best that they could be, and that as a mixed bouquet, they became something more. All were happy.]

The flowers whose curiosity about which flower was the best flower in the garden led them to discover that they became something special when they came together in a bouquet.

Our annual Flower Communion ceremony celebrates that each one of us is growing into the best person we can be. By coming together, we help one another and others to do just that, and become a special bouquet of beloved community.

Let us bless the flowers by sending our love and hope to them. Please repeat after me:

Flowers,/Flowers,

Thank you for coming out of the ground./ Thank you for coming out of the ground.

It was hard work./It was hard work.

Thank you for being beautiful./ Thank you for being beautiful.

Thank you for showing us that we are beautiful./ Thank you for showing us that we are beautiful.

Thank you, bouquets of community,/ Thank you, bouquets of community,

for showing that together, as a congregation,/ for showing that together, as a congregation,  
we are something truly special./ we are something truly special.

We bless you with our love./ We bless you with our love.

## Hymn

#21 “For the Beauty of the Earth”

## Meditation

From “Color My World with Joy”

Rev. Kathy Duhon

“Flowers represent so many different important aspects of our lives that they are present for all the big transitions, all the tender loving moments of triumph and tragedy, joy and sorrow, beginnings and endings. Flowers accompany births, accomplishments, rites of passage, weddings, birthdays, illnesses, anniversaries, celebrations, graduations, and funerals—and always they speak to us special messages: “Hope is possible.” “Love is here.” “Suffering is accompanied.” “Beauty and joy are shared.” “You are not alone.” “Life is glorious.”

Flowers remind us that we will continue to blossom and unfold, with hope and with love, in ways that are as varied and lovely and unique and amazing as flowers.

Flowers are trustworthy; they always return to us, in varying form. Maybe they travel a bit, or crowd each other too much, but we can rely upon their seasonal presence in our lives in a world that often feels unreliable, untrustworthy. When losses and anxieties try to root themselves around us, when fear comes nipping at our heels, flowers are the sign that we can trust the universe to be good, and trust ourselves to be well, for even the most vulnerable life, like the fragile flower, is strong and resilient.”

So may it be.

Amen.

## Musical Interlude

“May the Peace of the World’s Beauty”

Thomas Benjamin

## Recognition of New Members

### Reading

From *Norbert Fabian Čapek: A Spiritual Journey*

Richard Henry

Delivered by Karyn Marsh, Chair of TUUC's Membership Committee

Today, we are celebrating a Flower Ceremony consciously created by the Reverend Dr. Norbert Čapek for the Unitarian congregation he founded in Prague in 1921. At the end of the church year in 1923, Čapek asked members to bring a flower of their choice and, when they arrived at church—just as you have been asked today—they were directed to take it inside and place it in a large vase. This simple act was understood to be symbolic of each individual's free desire to join with others in religious community. The vase that contained the flowers was itself symbolic of the religious community.

Speaking of the vase in which the flowers were gathered, Čapek said:

“For us, in our Unitarian (community,) the vase is our church organization. We need it to help us share the beauties but also the responsibilities of communal life. In the proper community, by giving the best that is in us for the common good, we grow up and are able to do what no single person is able to do. Each of us needs to receive in order to grow up, but each of us needs to give something away for the same reason.”

At the close of the service each member was to leave with a different flower from the one they brought. Čapek said, [this is] a public confession that we accept “each other as brothers and sisters without regard to class, race, or other distinction, acknowledging everybody as our friend who is a human and wants to be good.”

Today, we are formally welcoming new members who have joined our congregation since January, who have freely chosen to add the unique flower of their being to our communal bouquet and to receive, in turn, the blossoming wisdom, nurture, and commitment of a community of seekers who are human and want to be good.

At this time, I invite the members who have joined us since January to gather up front, share your name, and, as you are comfortable, a few words about what lead you to join our congregation.

Joan Ellenberger  
Beverly Ginsburg  
Mel Ginsburg  
Cynthia Saalfield  
Dave Wehner  
Kimberly Zahm

### **Welcome from the Board**

Thank you for sharing what lead you to choose The Towson Unitarian Universalist Church as your spiritual home. Sue Royer, TUUC Board President-Elect and Dr. Neil Porter, TUUC Board President, will now offer words of welcome. (Text of remarks is not available.)

### **Right Hand of Fellowship and presentation of gifts**

Rev. Clare Petersberger and Monica Sweidel

## **New Member Covenant**

Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti

(New members recite in unison.)

**We enter this faith with hope and possibility in our hearts,  
pledging to participate in and support  
the ministries of this church.**

**We covenant to remain true to the spirit of love  
that flows through this church  
and guides us.**

**We seek your welcome as we join you in this faith.**

## **Congregational Response**

(Congregation responds in unison)

**WE WELCOME YOU AS ONCE WE WERE WELCOMED  
OURSELVES.**

**WE SEEK TO BE OPEN AND INCLUSIVE;  
RESPECTING YOUR INHERENT DIGNITY,  
YOUR IDEAS AND YOUR VISION,  
IN TIMES WHEN IT IS EASY  
AND IN TIMES WHEN IT IS DIFFICULT.**

**WE SEEK TO BE SUPPORTIVE,  
NOT ONLY WHEN YOU REACH OUT IN COURAGE TO US,  
BUT ALSO WHEN YOU NEED US TO REACH OUT TO YOU.  
IN RETURN WE ASK THAT YOU RECOGNIZE OUR HUMANITY:**

**WE WILL NOT ALWAYS LIVE UP TO OUR IDEALS.  
AND, WHEN WE FALL SHORT  
WE INVITE YOU TO STAY IN RELATIONSHIP WITH US  
AND HELP US MORE FULLY BRING ALIVE  
THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.**

**WE WELCOME YOU AS AN EQUAL MEMBER  
OF THIS CONGREGATION, OF THIS FAITH,  
AND OF OUR SHARED SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.**

## **Offertory**

“Draw the Circle”

Mark A. Miller

TUUC Choir

## Homily

*What Renews and Transforms Us?*

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

During our discussion of the Soul Matters question for May, “What does it mean to be a people of curiosity?” one colleague raised the question, “What is the difference between helping, fixing, or serving?”

This colleague envisioned creating a worship service on this question in May to be followed by the annual meeting of the congregation she serves.

“What is the difference between helping, fixing, or serving?” It turns out this question was not original to the colleague. The author Rachel Naomi Remen had written “Helping, fixing and serving represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole.”

How does this description of the difference between helping, fixing, and serving resonate with your own life experience? When have you, like Dr. Remen, realized that “Fixing and helping create a distance between people . . . ?” When, in your experience, did trying to fix or help another drain you and start you down the path to burnout?

Conversely, when have you, like Dr. Remen, discovered, “We cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected?” When have you learned that rather than leading to burnout, your service has renewed your spirit (because you) know that (you) belong to life and to that purpose?

Today, recognizing our newest members reminds us that when people meet, endless possibilities emerge: new ways of understanding, new ways of serving something larger than ourselves, and new ways of taking action together. And we desperately need new ways of understanding and new ways of taking action together.

This week, women in this country have less control over their bodies and lives following the passage of state laws banning abortion and contraceptives. This week, estimates are that the ongoing trade war between China and the United States will cost American families \$500-\$800 more a year. This week’s headlines have been peppered with the question, “Is the U.S. headed for war with Iran?”

We need to be reminded of possibilities for wholeness in ourselves and others and in other life forms on planet Earth. Today, we are appreciating all the volunteers whose service to our common purpose makes this beloved community possible. We are appreciating all of the volunteers who are serving our mission to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives together as we work for racial, social, and environmental justice.

The Program Council’s vision was to list on scrolls the unique ways members and friends brings wholeness into our community and healing into the world. After worship, please take time to read the scrolls appreciating all the varied programs and ministries of this congregation and the people serving them. In the words of Dr. Remen, “From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering, and all joy is like my joy.” Through such service, we are transformed.

I was reminded of this visiting with Omi May this week. Omi is in Home Hospice. She expressed appreciation for all the cards she had received from TUUC members and friends expressing care for her. Omi

handed me a beautiful card from someone who had written about the birds she had just seen with her young granddaughter. Omi was so touched. I replied, “Omi, I remember when you wrote cards to members and friends on behalf of the TUUC Caring Committee. Thank you for all your care, Omi. I’m glad your kindness has been returned.” She smiled and nodded.

We are all connected. The Reverend Christina Leone Tracy reminds her congregation that the blessings we receive in community are often ones we might not expect, and don't get to choose. She says, “religious community is not like a store—you don't get to ‘pick out what you want’ or ‘select’ the ways in which you are transformed. You simply *are* transformed by being in diverse beloved community. You receive the gifts people bring, and you bring the gift of yourself to offer others.”

Dr. Čapek hoped to communicate this message through the Flower Ceremony he created for his congregation in Prague in 1923. This year, in honor of serving in ways which renew and transform us, we’re going to engage this ritual in a new way. As we sing hymn number 78, you are invited to form two lines down the center aisle. You will receive a flower that the person ahead of you chose just for you. As they hand it to you, the person ahead of you will say, “May you bloom like the flowers.” As you receive the flower, you will say, “Thank you.” Then you will hold onto the flower you just received and choose a different flower from the bouquets to give to the person behind you. As you hand it to them, please say, “May you bloom like the flowers.” They will respond, “Thank you.” Then please move towards the side aisle closest to the vase, and return to your seat.

We give thanks for the gifts of diversity and love, friendship and hope, curiosity and community. Through our service, through serving the spirit of kinship, may we be renewed and transformed in ways we never imagined, and become a vision of growing wholeness. Amen.

## **Flower Ceremony**

### **Hymn**

#78 “Color and Fragrance”

### **Closing Words**

From “Flower Power”

Rev. Gary Kowalski

Our closing words from The Reverend Gary Kowalski are a meditation on your flower.

Take a moment now to contemplate your flower.

Notice it has a center, a focal point from which everything radiates.

Ask yourself, where your own center lies.

Flowers stretch up toward the life-giving sun.

Ask yourself, toward what lofty aim does your own soul aspire?

Flowers have roots, hugging the earth.

Ask yourself, where do you draw your own strength and nourishment?

As we go forth this day,

May we grow in curiosity, in beauty, in light,

in cheer and joy,  
And share our gifts as freely as these pleasant flowers bloom.

GO NOW IN PEACE.