

*We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.  
We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts. We act on behalf of life.*

—Extinction Rebellion, <https://rebellion.earth/declaration/>

## The Tide Is Rising, and So Are We

### Welcome

Rev. Clare 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

Rev. Gretchen Haley

(Adapted for several voices)

**Clare:** *Because the tides are rising*

**Lora:** *So must we . . .*

**Congregation:** RISE!

**Clare:** *to this moment . . .*

**Congregation:** RISE!

**Lora:** *to this day . . .*

**Congregation:** RISE!

**Clare:** *to this life*

**Lora:** *This place in the web*

**Clare:** *That is yours, and ours . . .*

**Congregation: RISE!**

**Lora:** *Because the earth remains*

**Clare:** *Our only home and we*

**Lora:** *Fellow travelers*

**Clare:** *Its only hope*

**Lora:** *For healing*

**Clare:** *Wholeness . . .*

**Congregation: RISE!**

**Lora:** *Before the mystery*

**Clare:** *Before the big bang*

**Lora:** *That started it all*

**Clare:** *That this infinite universe . . .*

**Congregation: RISE!**

**Lora:** *Or surrender*

**Clare:** *With gratitude*

**Lora:** *For this beauty*

**Clare:** *This chance*

**Lora:** *To be a part of it all*

**Clare:** *To give back; to . . .*

**Congregation: RISE!**

**Clare:** *Life*

**Lora:** *Past,*

**Clare:** *Present,*

**Lora:** *Future*

**Clare:** *Everywhere, Always*

**Lora:** *As one*

**Clare:** *Come, let us worship, together*

**Lora:** *Let, let us . . .*

**Congregation:** **RISE!**

## **Hymn**

“The Tide Is Rising and So Are We”

Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman and Yotam Schachter

## **Chalice Lighting**

Rev. Peggy Clarke

We light this chalice, the flame of our heritage, in solidarity with Unitarian Universalists and all the peoples of the world, who, this month, will be lighting candles of planetary hope. May this flame ignite a spirit of solidarity, and enthusiasm for the new world we can create, together.

## **Prelude**

“For the Earth Forever Turning”

Kim Oler/Nick Page, arr.

TUUC Choir; Dominique Hall, flute

## **Video**

Greta Thunberg | Climate Change - The Facts | BBC One

Someone who is known, if not for singing, then for striking for the earth, for our lives, for the people and beings we cherish, is Greta Thunberg. On August 28<sup>th</sup>, she completed a 14-day voyage to cross the Atlantic in a 60-foot racing yacht equipped with solar panels and underwater turbines to be carbon neutral. Later this month, she will be attending the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. In a video Mart Mackenzie found for us on the BBC, Greta shares how she became an activist to do something about the climate crisis.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=312687506089902>

[Summary: In this video interview and news coverage, Greta explained how learning about climate change in school made her first sad, then determined to do what she could do, even as a child. Beginning with a solitary act of sitting in front of the Swedish parliament building, Greta was soon joined by thousands of other children striking all over the world to call attention to the threat posed by climate change. The video concludes with this statement from Greta. “Why go to school if there is no future? Why should we learn facts

when the most important facts don't matter? I have learned that you are never too small to make a difference. And if a few children can make headlines just by not going to school then imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to.

Change is coming whether you like it or not. We still have time to turn everything around, to pull the emergency brake and to take action but that short period of time isn't gong to last for long.”]

Greta Thurnberg models a way for humans to help one another by raising awareness of the challenges facing us, facing other life on this planet, facing the health of the planet itself, and then joining with others to address the environmental crisis we humans have created.

## **Responsive Meditation**

“The World According to Shug”

Adapted from Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

### **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** love the entire cosmos  
rather than their own tiny country, city, or farm,  
for to them will be shown the unbroken web of life  
and the meaning of infinity.

### **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** create anything at all,  
for they shall relive the thrill of their own conception,  
and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe  
that keeps them responsible and cheerful.

### **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** love the Earth, their mother,  
and who willingly suffer that she may not die;  
in their grief over her pain they will weep rivers of blood,  
and in their joy in her lively response to love,  
they will converse with trees.

### **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** choose to make every act a prayer for harmony in the Universe,  
for they are the restorers of balance to our planet.

To them will be given the insight  
that every good act done anywhere in the cosmos  
welcomes the life of an animal or a child.

## **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** find the courage to do at least one small thing each day to help the existence of another - plant, animal, river, or other human being.  
They shall be joined by a multitude of the timid.

## **CONGREGATION: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO**

**Minister:** lose their fear of death;  
theirs is the power to envision the future in a blade of grass.

**ALL: HELPED ARE THOSE WHO LOVE AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE; THEY SHALL BE SECURE IN THEIR DIFFERENTNESS.**

Amen and Amen!

## **Musical Interlude**

“We Are One, We Are Many”  
Rick and Hillary Wagner/Jim Scott, arr.  
TUUC Choir; Dominique Hall, flute

## **Reading**

From “Thank you, climate strikers. Your action matters and your power will be felt.”  
Rebecca Solnit  
Delivered by Lora Powell Haney

Last March, students went on strike to hold politicians around the world accountable for not taking bolder action to do something about the climate crisis. The author and activist Rebecca Solnit wrote an editorial entitled “Thank you, climate strikers. Your action matters and your power will be felt.”

As we prepare for more mass climate strikes led by students and joined by people of all ages between September 20 and 27, Rebecca Solnit’s words ring true now.

“I want to say to all the climate strikers today: thank you so much for being unreasonable. That is, if reasonable means playing by the rules, and the rules are presumed to be guidelines for what is and is not possible, then you may be told that what you are asking for is impossible or unreasonable. Don’t listen. Don’t stop. Don’t let your dreams shrink by one inch. Don’t forget that this might be the day and the pivotal year when you rewrite what is possible.

What climate activists are asking for is a profound change in all our energy systems, for leaving fossil fuel in the ground, for taking action adequate to the planet-scale crisis of climate change. And the rules we are so often reminded of by those who aren’t ready for change are not the real rules. Because one day (in August of 2018,) a 15-year-old girl sat down to stage a one-person climate strike, and a lot of adults would like to tell you that the rules say a 15-year-old girl cannot come out of nowhere, alone, and change the world.

Sweden's Greta Thunberg already has.

They will tell you the rules are that those we see in the news and the parliaments and boardrooms hold all the power and you must be nice to them and perhaps they will give you crumbs, or the time of day, or just a door slammed in your face. They will tell you that things can only change in tiny increments by predictable means. They're wrong. Sometimes you don't have to ask for permission or for anything because you hold the power and you yourselves decide which way the door swings. Nothing is possible without action; almost anything is when we rise up together, as you are doing today (and in the weeks to come.)

I am writing you in gratitude and enthusiasm as someone who has lived for almost six decades, which has been time enough to see extraordinary change . . . Through studying what science teaches us about nature and what history teaches us about social forces I have come to see how beautiful and how powerful are the threads that connect us. Here's one. Who did Greta Thunberg describe as a key influence on her actions? Rosa Parks.

That a black woman born in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1913 would influence a white girl born in Sweden 90 years later to take direct action about climate change is a reminder that everything is connected and your actions matter even when the results aren't immediate or obvious. The way Rosa Parks broke the rules and lived according to her ideals still matters, still has power, still has influence beyond what she could have imagined, beyond her lifetime, beyond her continent, beyond her particular area of activism.

Don't ask what will happen. Be what happens. Your power will be felt; your action matters. (On September 20,) in your individual action, you may stand with a few people or with hundreds, but you stand with billions around the world. Today you are standing up for people not yet born, and those ghostly billions are with you too."

Rebecca Solnit's gratitude for those protesting political inaction on our climate crisis.

[Read the entire editorial at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/15/climate-strikers-letter-thank-you>, accessed 09-12-2019.]

## Offertory

"Water Is Life" (Mni Wičoni)

Sara Thomsen

TUUC Choir; Luke Williams & Al Meuhlberger, percussion

## Homily

*The Tide Is Rising and So Are We*

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

After the CNN Forum this week which offered Democratic presidential candidates the opportunity to speak to how they would address the climate crisis, Senator Ted Cruz sent out a tweet. He challenged the story that Beto O'Rourke shared of how his eight-year-old son had expressed fear that that his family would not be able to live in El Paso in the near future unless something dramatic changes to address the climate crisis. Specifically, Senator Cruz tweeted, "Um, El Paso is land-locked."

It appeared that Senator Cruz believed that melting ice caps and rising tides and seas are the only effect of our climate crisis. People tweeted back, “Have you not heard of the sun or 120 degree temperatures, or floods in the Midwest, or fires in California, of the Amazon burning, or how landlocked places are not immune to weather?”

But Senator Cruz is not alone in either not knowing or denying that what was once known as global warming and then became known as climate change is actually a climate catastrophe, an existential crisis, an emergency. Almost a year ago, in October of 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations—a panel made up of the world’s leading scientists—warned that we humans have 12 years. This means that we now have 11 years to make urgent and unprecedented changes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, after which, according the world’s best scientists, it will not be possible to reverse the worst effects.

And the effects are already terrible. Peggy Clarke writes: “We lose about 40 football fields of forest every minute. 58,000 wildfires burned millions of acres of land last year. Half the world’s wetlands are gone; half of the corals are dead; three quarters of the oceans are fished to capacity . . . with a warning that there will be no more fish in the sea in 30 years; plants and animals are disappearing a thousand times faster than ever before, leaving nearly one million species on the brink of extinction while Earth’s ice fields are melting and the world of nature is disappearing at our own hand.”

We just saw the devastation of category 5 Hurricane Dorian—in the Bahamas. Some of the devastation in the Amazon rainforest—76,000 fires between January and August—was created by humans seeking to clear the forest for farms. 20% of the planet’s oxygen is generated by the Amazon rainforest. You wouldn’t clear 20% of your lungs in eight months to make more room for pizza!

Early one morning last October, when I read a summary of the IPCC report on a friend’s Facebook page, I just sat and stared. Then I clicked out of Facebook and just sat and stared at the dark computer. I wasn’t in denial. I was in despair. I understood Greta Thunberg’s deep sadness that led her to not only stop going to school but also to stop talking . . . at least for a while. I understood why she went and sat, silently, by herself outside of the Swedish Parliament with a sign calling for bold climate action.

What I did not know then is that Greta was influenced not only by Rosa Parks, but also by the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who organized a school strike to call attention to the need for gun control. We are part of an interdependent web. In the face of rising tides and the deadline of eleven years to change irreversible harm to our planet, we need to let our tears fall, our hearts break, and feel the overwhelming sadness. After we have allowed ourselves to grieve, we need to ask ourselves, “What do I need to change?”

Greta just modeled taking a solar-powered boat instead of an airplane. From using paper straws or no straws and eating locally to installing solar panels to purchasing electric cars to divesting from fossil fuel companies to taking solar-powered boats instead of airplanes, individuals are taking steps to limit carbon emissions. At the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in June, the Reverend Lindi Ramsden shared a radio interview in which someone asked, “I feel so helpless in the face of the environmental catastrophe. What can I do?”

And the expert answered, “The most important thing you can do is to stop being an individual. Systems only change when you join and work with others.” Or, as Shug might have said, “Helped are those who . . . join and work with others.”

Unitarian Universalist youth are joining and working with others to mitigate the climate catastrophe. On Thursday, some served on a panel to share what they are doing. Twelve-year-old Levi Draheim, who lives on a Florida barrier island, has joined 20 other plaintiffs to file a lawsuit against the United States for the legal right to a stable climate. The lawsuit was filed by Our Children’s Trust in 2015 and has made its way to the 9<sup>th</sup> District Court. Charlotte Stuart Tilley is 13 years old. Inspired by Greta and learning that our world is not threatened by the sun in 5 billion years, but by our own human greed, Charlotte has organized a bi-monthly strike at her middle school in Tallahassee. Every other Friday, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m, she and some of her classmates strike to call attention to the need for a science-based, equitable climate policy.

Closer to home, Sophia Geiger, who is 16 and a member of the UU Church of Silver Spring, is a national organizer for Fridays for Future. This is the group that follows Greta’s model of striking outside of government buildings to hold politicians accountable for legislation that offers an equitable climate policy. In England, Fridays for Future, along with the group Extinction Rebellion, whose manifesto includes the words at the top of your order of service, got Parliament to agree to be carbon neutral by 2050, and they appear to be on track to reach that target sooner—hopefully by 2030.

We all need to work on this goal for our planet. So let’s read the words at the top of your order of service to inspire us to act: *We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now. We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts. We act on behalf of life.*

In this country, our Unitarian Universalist youth are inviting us to join them on September 20<sup>th</sup> and at events through September 27<sup>th</sup> for a global Youth Climate Strike. I hope as many of you as possible will organize your school, take to social media, walk out of work, make your voice heard for our lives, for all we cherish, for life on this earth forever turning. At the end of this month, as you disrupt business as usual, in the words of Rebecca Solnit, “Don’t ask what will happen. Be what happens. Your power will be felt; your action matters. “

Marti Mackenzie and Carel Hedlund will share other ways we can join with Unitarian Universalists and with other groups to create a better, more equitable, and more wholesome future for life on planet Earth. May our profound grief over the existential climate crisis motivate us to join and work with all who are seeking solutions to our climate crisis.

## Hymn

“The Tide Is Rising and So Are We”

Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman and Yotam Schachter

## Reflection

“If Not Now, When?”

Marti Mackenzie

As I thought about this service and what I might say, I realized I continue to be a paradox. On one hand, I am an expert at procrastination. I bask in creative ways to practice inertia. But more often, I follow my heart and answer the call: “If not now, when.” In fact, I expect most of you can say that.

The triggers for me on climate were seeing so many positive gains being reversed, and the UN report citing 2030 as our last chance to reverse some of the damage we have done. And then, the ray of hope. Greta Thunberg in her no-thrills calling on the youth of the world to act now.

How about you? Let’s practice.

Stand up as you are able. Now close your eyes and think about times you might have procrastinated and thought “not now.” Let’s take homework, for example. Or housework or yard work. Are you a “get-it-done-and-out-of-the-way” person—or do you put it off until the last, possible moment. If you’re an “I’ll do it later” person, you can have a seat.

If you are still standing, I want you to think about the seven principles of UUs. #1, the inherent worth and dignity of every person; and #7, respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part. When issues challenge our principles, remain standing if you are one of those who says, “If not now, when?” Great! Would everybody stand one more time. This time, don’t say “If not now, when,” say “I can do that NOW.”

Do what?

1. For the Student Climate Strike, in Baltimore, September 20, join others at noon at the Armistead Monument on Federal Hill and walk in unity to the Inner Harbor. If you are not a student, be an ally; walk out of work or get off the couch, and show your support to stop destroying our planet.
2. Or, come to DC or any of the cities where Climate Strikes are happening September 20. We’ll start walking from the White House to the Capitol at 11 a.m. This is youth led and youth-infused, but all are welcome.
3. Help register others to vote on the mall, or with an art project we plan.
4. Stay in DC or head down there Friday evening. We’ll be in the Rayburn Congressional Building until 9 p.m. with panel discussions and a chance to meet the youth and Congressional members who cared enough to stay in town
5. Tune in to events throughout that week. There are hopes of literally closing DC on Monday, September 23.
6. Participate in our Write Here, Write Now campaign, sending your messages to Congress to be delivered by the UUs for Social Justice Advocacy Corps September 17.
7. There is much, much more. And there is no excuse. Start a Google search; connect on the UUA website; write letters, sign petitions, make phone calls. Act today and don’t stop.

I leave you with words from Eve Ensler that rang true for me and so many in our greater family . . . “An activist is someone who cannot help but fight for something. That person is not usually motivated by a need

for money, or power, or fame, but is in fact slightly driven mad by some injustice, some cruelty, some unfairness—so much that he or she is compelled by some internal engine to act to make it better.”

## **Hymn**

“The Tide Is Rising and So Are We”

Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman and Yotam Schachter

## **Action**

Carel Hedlund

I have two items to mention.

As part of the Green Sanctuary’s (GSC) commitment to environmental justice, three years ago we partnered with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in East Baltimore, to work with them on their community garden, rain garden, labyrinth and common space.

They have just lost their full-time coordinator. So we and other groups are taking turns running the Saturday gardening days. Our turn this month is coming Saturday, Sept. 14th. If any of you would like to join members of the Green Sanctuary Committee in pulling some weeds, watering and perhaps some harvesting, please let me know after the service.

Second, GSC is excited to announce that on November 8th we will be holding a two-hour workshop here on the Drawdown Project. Project Drawdown is a coalition of more than 200 researchers and other experts from 22 countries. Over the course of five years of rigorous scientific research, they identified and modeled the 100 most substantive, already-existing solutions for addressing global warming, and revealed astounding news: that it is possible not just to slow global warming, but to actually reverse it by 2050. It shows ways we can overcome fear, confusion and apathy surrounding the climate crisis, and take action in concrete ways. So mark November 8th on your calendar and stayed tuned for more information.

## **Closing Words**

Pueblo Prayer

I invite you to take a deep breath and exhale. I add my breath to your breath, that our days may be long on the earth, that the days of our people and of all the plants and animals may be long, that we shall be as one.

GO NOW IN PEACE.