

*Christ wanted love to be called his single commandment.  
This we owe to all (people). Nobody is excepted.*  
—Bartolomé de las Casas

## A Tale of Two Journeys

### Welcome

Rev. Clare Petersberger

### 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

“This Place Is Sanctuary”

From *Shine and Shadows: Meditations*

Rev. Kathleen McTigue

The Reverend Kathleen McTigue wrote an invitation entitled, “This Place Is Sanctuary.”

You who are broken-hearted,  
who woke today with the winds of despair  
whistling through your mind,  
come in.

You who are brave but wounded,  
limping through life and hurting with every step,  
come in.

You who are fearful,  
who live with shadows  
hovering over your shoulders,  
come in.

This place is sanctuary, and it is for you.

[Read the rest of the Rev. Kathleen McTigue’s meditation at <https://books.google.com/books?id=GWB9Yhh895sC&pg=PT62&lpg=PT62&dq=kathleen+mctigue+this+place+is+sanctuary&source=bl&ots=xbm4nh-llV&sig=0Vaqfk0v01bQIw5EReQsg2UCFss&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiQ7-zz1YHeAhVpTd8KHZarCQwQ6AEwAnoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=kathleen%20mctigue%20this%20place%20is%20sanctuary&f=false> (Accessed 10-10-2018)]

## **Chalice Lighting**

The Soul Matters Team

**WE KINDLE THIS FLAME AS A SIGN OF WELCOME  
TO THIS SHELTER FOR OUR HEARTS AND HOPES,  
A SANCTUARY FOR OUR DEEPEST LONGINGS.**

**HERE MAY WE FIND REST AND REPAIR,  
CONNECTION AND COMFORT.**

**HERE MAY WE FIND OUR CENTER, OUR BREATH,  
OUR VOICE,  
AND THE STRENGTH TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD  
AND BE A SHELTER FOR OTHERS.**

## **Prelude**

“Love Is the Seventh Wave”

Sting

Once Around the Horn

## **Time for All Ages**

*You Hold Me Up*

Monique Gray Smith

In Canada, for over 150 years, it felt like some people had forgotten the power of love. Indigenous children as young as five were taken from their families—parents and siblings—taken from their communities, and placed in residential schools. There, they were forbidden to speak their own language. There, they were not treated well.

Monique Gray Smith wrote a book to remind us of our common humanity and the importance of holding each other up. She hoped it would begin a journey of healing and reconciliation. The book is entitled *You Hold Me Up*.

[Summary: How do we hold each other up? Ms. Smith explains that we hold one another up with kindness, sharing, companionship, play, laughter, music, comfort, attention, and respect. And in these ways, we create shelter and safety for each other.]

## Hymn

#1023

“Building Bridges”

## Meditation

“Remember”

Joy Harjo

Delivered by Lora Powell-Haney

Let us continue in the spirit of contemplation on building bridges and creating harmony with a spoken meditation—the poem, “*Remember*,” by Joy Harjo, who is a member of the Mvskoke Nation.

Remember the sky that you were born under,  
know each of the star’s stories.  
Remember the moon, know who she is.  
Remember the sun’s birth at dawn, that is the  
strongest point of time. Remember sundown  
and the giving away to night.  
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled  
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of  
her life, and her mother’s, and hers.  
Remember your father. He is your life, also.

[Read Joy Harjo’s entire poem at <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/remember-0>, (accessed 10-10-2018)]

## Musical Interlude

“Revival”

Dickey Betts/Allman Brothers

Once Around the Horn

## Reflection

“Whose Story Do We Tell?”

Lora Powell-Haney

I travel to Chicago a few times each year to attend face-to-face classes for seminary, but much of my work gets done right here at home. My sons (now 19, 19, and 16) have come with me and gotten to know the city, or parts of it, while I am in class.

And then my sixteen-year-old asked if he could bring his best friend for the week I went in late August. Two sixteen-year-olds from a small town, on their own in a big city where they didn’t know anyone but each other and me? *Great* idea!

After numerous discussions with my son, with his friend and his friend’s mom, all was set, and we drove to Chicago; yes, my son drove part of the way. We spent a day together, getting oriented to our hotel’s

neighborhood, going over where to visit, how to be aware of your surroundings, to check in via text regularly, and how to keep your wallet safe. And then they were on their own.

I walked to class by myself and started thinking about what I *didn't* need to say to them.

I didn't need to tell them not to wear a hoodie.

I didn't need to tell them to be extra polite.

I didn't need to tell them to stick with me so we wouldn't get separated.

I didn't need to remind them of the boundaries set for them by other people.

They had the sanctuary of their outward identities of white, straight, neatly dressed (sort of), healthy, males. They could and would assume welcome everywhere they went, without their presence being questioned, without being followed, without being asked for proof of citizenship.

My son and his friend had a great time exploring the city by walking and walking and walking. They found out where the luxury car dealerships were, and went to admire; they even went into the showroom. Sanctuary. Privilege?

The three of us talked about that kind of sanctuary as we had dinner in different restaurants each night. I want them both to remember how the world likely sees them . . . and to remember they have a choice: to live behind the sanctuary wall that is their privilege, or to co-create sanctuary with and for those who have been denied even the *hope* of sanctuary, for no reason but their *otherness*.

I've been on Facebook and Twitter too much this week, reading posts from my friends and colleagues, witnessing their pain, their anger, their hope. Last night I even went Live on Facebook after expressing a need for my community of people there. We found the solace of sanctuary just knowing we were all together at the same time.

At a Liberal Religious Educators Association Fall Conference several years ago, one song made the gathered religious educators rise to their feet, hold hands, hug, as they sang it. "Sanctuary" with lyrics adapted for a Unitarian Universalist theology:

*Make us aware  
We are a sanctuary  
Each made holy  
And loved right through  
With thanksgiving  
We are a living  
Sanctuary  
Anew*

Exploring new places, gathering together, worshipping together, working together to build the beloved community: these are all a sanctuary, too.

## Offertory

*We Are . . .*

Ysaye Barnwell

Tracy Hall, piano; Andy Peterson, congas

## Sermon

*A Tale of Two Journeys*

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

So here we are on an October holiday weekend—when some have left home to see the American Airforce Thunderbirds show; or to go camping; or for the historic house tour in Chestertown Maryland; or for one last long weekend at the beach. The national holiday known as Columbus Day was established in the 1930's.

Not surprisingly, the Knights of Columbus lobbied President Roosevelt into making Columbus Day a federal holiday in 1934. At the time, when a current of anti-Catholicism still ran through our nation, this Catholic fraternal benevolent organization wanted to convey that there was no contradiction in being a Catholic and an American. More recently, Italian Americans have defended Christopher Columbus as an example of the contributions of Italians to the history of the United States.

In 2014, *The New York Times* quoted the President of the National Italian American Foundation as saying, “We believe Christopher Columbus represents the values of discovery and risk that are at the heart of the American dream, and that it is our job as the community most closely associated with his legacy to be at the forefront of a sensitive and engaging path forward.”

When you were in grade school, what did you learn about Christopher Columbus? My generation and those who are older may remember the poem

*“In fourteen hundred ninety-two  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*

*He had three ships and left from Spain;  
He sailed through sunshine, wind and rain.*

*He sailed by night; he sailed by day;  
He used the stars to find his way.*

*A compass also helped him know  
How to find the way to go.”*

You may also remember sitting at tables with boxes of crayons and mimeographed copies of outlines of the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. I was taught that Columbus left home willing to risk exploration and discovering a whole new landscape, a whole new world— kind of like Matt Damon in *The Martian*.

But those under the age of 45 most likely remember very different lessons in school. Illustrations were not of a man leaving home on a ship but of the some of the indigenous people who already considered what we now know as the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Haiti, to be home. These people were the descendants of semi-nomadic groups who had lived in on that land since 8,500 BCE. When a large boat

appeared off the coast of the Bahamas 526 years ago, men and women from the indigenous community who were curious swam out from the beaches. They offered Columbus and his sailors food and gifts. Columbus himself offered this description of his first encounter with the people who called the Bahamas home: “They have large communal bell-shaped buildings, housing up to 600 people at one time . . . They lack all manner of commerce, neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions.” But then came the next sentence, “With fifty men, we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.”

Poems the next generations have learned remember how the indigenous people were forced to do whatever the Europeans with the power and specifically, the guns, wanted: their gold, their silks, their young girls, their labor, their culture, their religion, their freedom, their dignity.

In his poem, “Tomorrow, Today,” Alfred Arteaga writes:

“Tomorrow marks  
five hundred and three years  
since Columbus found his way  
to the Americas, half  
a millennium and three years  
since the story of contact began,  
since Europe came west.  
Tomorrow marks the anniversary.  
Five hundred and three winters  
have transpired, as many springs,  
summers, and falls. Those seasons  
are gone, those times have passed,  
there is nothing we can do,  
they are gone.”

Arteaga is not just referencing the passing of the seasons and the passage of time. He is referencing the genocide of the indigenous people through violence, rape, murder, pestilence, and enslavement. By 1496, a population of an estimated eight million people was reduced to three million—that’s within four years. By 1516, to 12,000—that’s within a quarter of a century; by 1542, to 200 people—within a half century; and by 1555 to . . . none. The indigenous people were all gone.

And so Arteaga writes: “The first joy at the sight of land happened. The unspeakable terror of parents watching their child fed to the conquistadors' dogs happened. Five hundred and three years of events took place, we cannot change that. We cannot stand up like Las Casas and say this must stop; we cannot tell Tainos, on first seeing the Spanish arrive, to run, to run, and not stop running. What was, was. We cannot change the number of days, nor can we change the events that happened.

We can, though, choose to remember or forget, to celebrate, solemnize, recognize.”

For some, tomorrow is Columbus Day. For others, it is Indigenous Peoples Day. Just over a decade ago the United Nations adopted a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. 143 nations voted for this declaration setting aside a day of mourning for the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Four nations voted against this declaration: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.

We collectively appear to have a hard time remembering. Or perhaps it is a matter of who is doing the remembering. The next generations do not seem to have such a difficult time understanding that abusing power and oppression are wrong. A number of years ago, fourth grade students in McDonald, Pennsylvania put Christopher Columbus on trial. In their mock courtroom, Columbus was found guilty of thievery and misrepresenting the Spanish crown. For this, the students sentenced him to life in prison. Their teacher observed that the students concluded, “In their own verbiage, he was a bad guy.”

So what does all of this have to do with sanctuary? Well, a few years after Columbus encountered the Taino people for the first time, a man named Bartolomé de las Casas accompanied Columbus on his third voyage in 1498. By 1512, de las Casas owned a plantation with slaves in Cuba. He was part of the colonization by Spain.

But the inhumane treatment of the indigenous people troubled his conscience. He said this is wrong. He said this is bad. He released his slaves. He became an advocate for the indigenous people, first as a secular priest, then as an ordained Dominican priest, and then as a bishop. He wrote to his king that “the reason the Christians have murdered on such a vast scale and killed anyone and everyone in their way is purely and simply greed . . . their insatiable greed and overweening ambition know no bounds.”

Bartolomé de las Casas was interested in the humanity of the indigenous people. He was sent to convert them to Christianity, and that is a form of paternalism. So he was not perfect! But he respected that the indigenous people had their own ways of worshipping. He argued: “Because nature itself teaches that every race of man must worship God, and because divine worship is made up of ceremonies, it follows that, just as men cannot live without the true God or a false god believed to be true, they cannot live without the exercise of some ceremonies, especially since the common opinion among the gentiles has been that the whole status of a country is preserved in happiness by means of ceremonies and sacrifices.”

Bartolomé de las Casas opposed burning the books and writings of the indigenous peoples. And he is considered to be one of the first advocates for universal human rights. He wrote: “All the races of the world are men, and of all men and of each individual there is but one definition, and this is that they are rational. All have understanding and will and free choice, as all are made in the image and likeness of God . . . Thus the entire human race is one.” He argued for the rights of indigenous peoples based on the unity of human nature and the unity of the human family.

A colleague observed that Columbus left home and discovered a world new to him. Bartolomé de las Casas, on the other hand, left home and discovered his own humanity. A phrase that is often used to describe his life and work is “his resistance to political, economic, and religious powers.” He took on the king. He took on the right of colonists to demand tribute and forced labor from the indigenous people. He even took on the right of the church to demand conversion instead of peaceful persuasion. He was appointed “Protector of the Indians” by the Spanish Crown. He was not able to save the indigenous people. But he is remembered for

having resisted political, economic, and religious forces.

Columbus and de las Casas made a similar geographical journey, but very different existential journeys. Columbus left home and discovered a world new to him. For it, he gained wealth and power. But he is remembered for genocide and the slave trade.

George Tinker, a prominent American Indian theologian and scholar, writes in a Unitarian Universalist publication entitled *Soul Work*, "we must understand that Columbus Day functions to sustain structures of oppression and racism. It becomes a legitimization of the conquest, an act of self-righteous self-justification by white men in North America. It is thus an act in defense of both white privilege and male privilege. Columbus is a sexist, racist, and classist act of self-validation."

By way of contrast, Bartolomé de las Casas left home and discovered his humanity. For it, he gained a reputation for following the teachings of Jesus and for being a predecessor to the movement for liberation theology. Through his work, he sought to bring comfort to the indigenous people and to protect them from exploitation by resisting the powers that were.

Many of us have been reflecting on these two ways of being in the world in the wake of the confirmation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. We saw too much self-righteous self-justification by white men. Dan Rather, who is a journalist by profession and not a theologian, noted that "the old bulls won." He went on to write, "For most women and many men it's a bitter, devastating loss. Which makes it all the sweeter for the old bulls, and for the forces of power, privilege and money everywhere."

But Rather went on to take the long view of history. And in the long view of history, the true winners are the people who do not devalue people of another race, gender, or class. The true winners are the people like Bartolomé de las Casas who listen for the voice of conscience, resist privilege, cultivate empathy, respect different life experiences, and find a way to live together from a profound Love that grounds, inspires, and activates us.

Here in Maryland, we may not get mail tomorrow, but students will be in school. These students and their children and their children's children will be the ones who will remember us and our collective history. So in the days to come, may we find a way to hold each other up with respect, with dignity, and with love. By affirming our shared humanity, let's make a better world.

## **Song**

"Let's Make a Better World"

Earl King/Dr. John

Once Around the Horn

## **Closing Words**

From "It Is Important"

From *Indian Singing: Poems*

Gail Tremblay

Our closing words come from the poem "It Is Important" by Gail Tremblay, a Mi'kmag and Onondaga writer and artist.

“On dark nights, when those who think only of themselves  
conjure over stones and sing spells to feed their wills  
it is important to give gifts and to love everything  
that shows itself as good. It is time to turn  
to the Great Mystery and know the Grandfathers have  
mercy on us that we may help the people to survive.  
On dark nights, when confusion makes those who envy  
hate and curse the winds, face the four directions  
and mumble names, it is important to stand  
and see that our only work is to give what others  
need, that everything that touches us is a holy  
gift to teach us we are loved.”

GO NOW IN PEACE.