

ORDER OF WORSHIP Sunday 30th May 2010

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WELCOME

CHALICE - CMC

As we light our chalice flame, beacon of our faith let us know that

This is our meeting house for worship, here we are a

Community connected by ties of faith and fellowship.

May the diversity of our beliefs be a blessing to share;

That all may grow in harmony with the divine.

CALL TO WORSHIP - Peter Sampson

This place is a house of the spirits,

The spirits of our forebears in the Unitarian faith,

Who proclaimed the eternal values of

Freedom, Reason and Tolerance,

And on every convivial occasion proposed a toast

To Civil and Religious Liberty the World Over.

May we be happy to boast of our spiritual freedom,

And to work for the spiritual freedom of all those

Whose faith in life is confined and mocked,

Showing by our actions what we believe in our hearts.

HYMN Green 101 Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

PRAYER: Margaret Keip (adapted for Kendal use)

– from *For Praying Out Loud – Skinner House Books*

We are here today

Each with our individual, uniquely personal faiths.

Each with our individual, understandings of God.

In this way we are not unlike the world –

A world in which we invest our lives and hope.

So let us invoke *love* and *hope* - attributes of God –

And of ourselves, in reverence to that which is worthy.

Let us spend one whole and holy minute together in silent prayer

In which we each, true to our own faith,

Call forth within ourselves our *hope* and our *love*. [pause].

Holding this reality close, may we become verbs,

May we *hope*.

May we *love*.

May we *do* peace, and make it real -

Make it our destiny, and make it *now*.

Amen.

READING: by Annie Lennox – singer and songwriter: from *Voices for Peace*

published in association with the charity WARchild. The publisher wrote as an

introduction to the book: *'The terrorist attacks of September 11th united the world*

in condemnation of such breathtaking acts of malice. New Yorkers hugged strangers

in the streets and the Big Apple, briefly, became a village. In the numbed aftermath

of the bombing, a neighbourly peace emerged. But the Rhetoric for war, for a

'Crusade' against terrorism, was soon to the fore and the ramparts were drawn up

again and the bombs fell. Peace, what is that? Was Annie Lennox's response to

the complex issues raised by the prior act of aggression and the acts which followed:

Peace, what is that?

Something I have taken so much for granted in all my forty-six years on our planet. I have never had to endure the suffering experienced by millions and it intrigues me how I could have managed to avoid the implications of warfare so easily.

The possibility of a completely different reality began to dawn on me on Sunday afternoon a few weeks ago in the supermarket. While trailing through the corridors of tins and packaging, I wondered what could happen if the whole system suddenly stopped? Could I take the children and flee to another country where no bombs would fall and where no deadly chemicals could reach us?

And then what?

How would we live?

What about money? With the world economy crashed, there would be no handy cashpoint in the high street. The high street might no longer exist, I wondered if perhaps I ought to withdraw some cash now and stash it safely somewhere.

Where though? Under the mattress? Far too risky. I remembered that's what people did in World War II. Yes in easily secreted pockets. Then I realised I was being too ludicrous, too paranoid. How ridiculous. The image of a wheelbarrow piled with roubles for the price of a loaf of bread and scores of downtrodden people queuing for endless hours at the rumour of potatoes raced through my mind.

What else? What else?

No electricity; no heating; no light. Remember to stock up on candles and matches. Bad water - probably contaminated.

Food. Should we start planting now? I've never grown a thing in my life. Plants wilt when they hear me coming.

School. Well, it would probably be shut down. Wouldn't it?

Transport. Would there be any petrol?

I'm making a record but there'd be no music industry. Will anyone survive to hear this small masterpiece anyway?

And what would happen if you got ill? A toothache or sudden appendicitis? How would you get any medicine with the chemist closed and no supplies available?

A plethora of potentially irresolvable dilemmas invaded my brain.

And of course, I haven't even mentioned the big issue.

Mainly the d-word. That terrible something that happens to us all. Don't know where, don't know when. Only, surely, not everybody, all at once. Visions of Armageddon.

A few months ago I had an incredibly vivid and disturbing dream. I seemed to be standing outside on a bright sunny day somewhere in the City of London. Through the buildings, in the distance, I suddenly realised that a massive fireball was heading rapidly in my direction. I spun round and saw lots of people running out of the tube station in panic.

"What's happening?" I called to the man nearest me.

"That's it! It's all over!" he said.

And I woke up instantly with my heart pounding, having just witnessed the end of the world.

How do you stop terrorism? Go to war with it?

"Come out, come out wherever you are ... We're gonna get you!"

I'm sorry, but I just don't get it.

HYMN red 313 To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love

READING: from John O'Donohue's *Benedictus* (from Blessing can make distance kind and forgiving)

While we live in the world, we always live in distance. Often the greatest distance is not physical but mental. Maya Angelou has said that even lovers, who lie side by side, think different thoughts. Often the nature of one's mind is what separates us most from another. There is also the emotional distance when some hurt or wounding places a wall between friends. In the west of Ireland, there is an illuminating phrase: I have fallen out with someone. Once the bond of kinship and togetherness is broken, you fall out of it; that is you fall into distance again. Though distance can have many forms of separation, it need never be spiritual. One can continue to remain close in spirit to the distanced one.

The beauty of blessing is that it recognises no barriers - and no distances. All the given frontiers of blockage that separate and distance us can be penetrated by the loving subtlety of blessing. This can be the key to awakening and creating forgiveness.....

MEDITATION - Kendyl Gibbons - "Meditation on Peace"

from *For Praying our Loud* – Skinner House Books

Let us hold lovingly in our thoughts all the people of the earth;
Those who are consumed by mutual hatred and bitterness;
Those who make bloody war upon their neighbours;
Those who oppress their brothers and sisters
With any form of tyranny;
And all who suffer in subjection, cruelty, and injustice.
Let us recognise our solidarity with all the outcast,
With the downtrodden, the abused, the deprived,
And our common humanity with all who bear the
 Responsibilities of leadership and power.
Let us remember humanity's ancient and universal dream
 Of peace:
That we live together in harmony,
No one exploiting the weak, no one hating the strong,
Each of us working out our own destiny,
Self-respecting and unafraid.
May we seek to be worthy of freedom,
Free from institutional wrong,
Free from individual oppression and contempt,
Pure of heart and hand,
Despising none, defrauding none,
Giving to all people in all encounters of life
The honour due to those who, like us,
Are children of the earth's great love.

HYMN green 226 This is my song

ADDRESS

Peace, perfect peace, world peace, peace and quiet, peace be with you, give me some peace please; we use the word so often but in so many different ways, with so many nuances of meaning it is hard to put a real definition on it. I once had a poster in a long ago room that said something about peace being not simply an absence of noise, far from it, peace without noise can be the silence of fear and trepidation. Peace, the poster said, is the sound of children playing, laughing, freely and happily without a care in the world, it is the carefree actions of people who do not live in fear. I remember the old "Miss World" contestants, who all said their goal was "world peace", I wondered what they would say if they were asked to explain that, it sounds highly moral and desirable but what did it mean, perhaps they meant a time when there would be now war, but I think it fair to say that peace is not simply the absence of war. The actions in Afghanistan are not considered war, yet people live in fear and people die in dreadful and cruel ways. What we remember as the Korean war was called a "police action" but the re-runs of MASH remind us that often the difference between war and "police keeping" or "peace keeping" is simply a political nuance, fear, death, and the destruction remain the same.

Perhaps it would be better to say that Peace between people is an acceptance that we are all different and we need to find the determination to live together in harmony, learning to understand each other's foibles and quirks, whether that is between two people of two nations or all the nations of the world. But peace or lack of war between nations is not the only understanding of what peace means, I suspect that most of us crave peace not in some global sense but in a more personal sense.

In the back of the red hymn book in the chapel office is a type-written hymn, stuck there before my time certainly, it may well be in yours now; "Give me joy in my heart" it is called and the second verse runs:

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Give me peace in my heart I pray,
Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Keep me loving till the break of day.

The chorus that follows contains many Hosannas to the King of Kings. But whether we address our wish for peace to whatever we understand by 'God,' I guess many of us will feel a sense of understanding in this request for help to maintain that desired way of being peaceful in heart and mind and soul. When the stresses and strains of our lives overflow our capacity to cope easily don't we all seek some place of peace in which to rest?

Jesus is reported as saying, "Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". This seems to indicate that there is a strong element of divineness in the creation of peace.

Peace, human and/or divine is something we all seek yet often find hard to find. Perhaps we need to be more deliberate about our search for peace; perhaps we tend to look in the wrong places; perhaps we assume it will come from someone or some other as a gift. Maybe we need to turn not outwardly but inwardly, seek that place of peace we seek in prayer and meditation.

"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." So the song goes and I suspect that whatever our own interpretation of "peace", the only way to achieve peace is to begin with oneself. Eila Forrester, a Unitarian Lay Leader and President of the General Assembly some years back wrote of her realisation one chill day at the side of a stretch of calm water that though it was her task to nurture peace in others she had become so busy that she had failed to ensure that her own soul knew peace and as in time before determined to take better care of her own need for peace and healing.

So I suppose the question is how do we achieve peace? So much of life seems to be spent in propping up the great damn behind which the concerns of the world pile up and up, and we fear that it may at any time overwhelm us. I suspect some of us are more gifted in the "finding peace" field than others, but I also suspect that under many a calm and tranquil exterior there beats an engine bursting its rivets! I remember a time when I was a student at Luther King House, Simon John Barlow telling me that I had "duck syndrome". "Duck syndrome?" I queried. "Duck syndrome" he replied "you are calm and tranquil as a mill pond on the outside, but under the water you are paddling like fury to keep up!!" And he was and is right, I still suffer from Duck syndrome, though perhaps not quite so severely as I once did!

There is still a sense of the separate parts of my life not quite fitting into the space I have, and like an overstuffed mattress, bits keep popping out here and there and I have to try and stuff them back in again. Do I strike a chord with anyone? If not, form an orderly queue and start teaching me!!

Jesting aside, I believe peace does start within each of us, each individual, coming to terms with their own capacity and having the grace to accept that which will create disharmony. I think I want to equate peace with harmony, for when there is balance in the individual, the community, the nation, it comes when there is an absence of dis-harmony and the presence of harmony. I struggle to find inner peace, and yet I am conscious of that struggle and know that over time there has been a shift in the balance between harmony and disharmony within – perhaps the intention is all that is needed, and a remaining conscious of that intention.

Having said that peace is only come by practise and attention it seems clear that when we are dealing with not one person, ourselves, but the members of our family or our congregation, or our club, or our town, or our country, the job of creating harmony becomes exponentially more difficult; and yet surely the same attention, and perseverance remains the key. Maybe we all give in too easily because we are unsure of what others want or feel or hope to achieve? Maybe we need to be more positive, more precise, more up-front and vocal about our desire for harmony, for peace? We might take a leaf out of John O'Donohue's book and think about the blessing of opening ourselves to others, of communication that opens hearts and souls to peace.

In the Old Testament there is a clear response to hurt done to a person or a people, "an eye for an eye" was the "just" response. An eye for an eye is such an attractive proposition isn't it? We get hurt so we hurt back – you hit me, I hit you. They attack us, we attack them. An eye for an eye, surely it's only fair! But is it? Where does all this tit for tatting lead us? It leads to a state of stalemate where all loose, and by then we are ruined, our homes are ruined, our towns and cities are ruined and our

countries are ruined our world is ruined – all that is left is mistrust and misery. I feel in sympathy with Annie Lennox, I just don't get it either!

Peace is not a word to be bandied around carelessly, to be aligned with blue steel helmets and cocked rifles; it deserves some honour respect – whether that is personal peace, peace within a family, a peaceful society or community or the ideal of global peace. We cannot afford to skim over the idea of peace without real and serious thought and follow that up with some serious commitment, to self and to the world beyond self. In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attack on New York, and the cry by the US President for a War on Evil, someone wrote on a New York wall, "an eye for an eye can make everybody blind!" The Dalai Lama said of that style of response to the attack, "If we could love even those who have attacked us, and seek to understand why they have done so, what then would be our response? Yet if we meet negativity with negativity, rage with rage, attack with attack, what then will be the outcome? These are the questions that are placed before the human race today. They are questions that we have failed to answer for thousands of years. Failure to answer them now could eliminate the need to answer them all.

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God" Where are the children of God?

You know, I am with the Dalai Lama, surely it is time the human race came up with a better answer disharmony than a call to arms! We have learned some pretty odd lessons about communication and response over time, we have posited some very strange conclusions – commenting about the response the Sep 11th US tragedy Caryl Churchill, playwright wrote "talking to your enemy is hard, so is killing him, but it makes better television". Cynicism or a clear view of reality?

Whether we are attempting to find our own peace or to encourage others to create their peace it is my contention that we need to stop beating up ourselves and others, it doesn't do any good, it only makes pain. Let's stop hurting ourselves and

each other, and start keeping our peace whole and wholesome; let us love our neighbour and love ourselves and understand the God that is in each and every one; let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me, and you, and us, and then them..... I want to end this address with a meditative invocation, written by Eileen Karpeles for an interfaith peace group dinner.

Let us join in the spirit of quiet meditation.

Let peace flow into you. Let it calm your troubled self, heal your needy self, help your angry self to remember to listen - fully and compassionately - to the Other.

Let Peace flow around you, until you walk with peace and speak words of peace and reflect all the radiance of this beautiful world.

Let Peace flow through you and beyond you. Let peace guide you and fill you with wisdom. Let it be the bridge that connects you, not just with people of good will but also with people whose hearts are centred in their own needs and desires, who are not yet free to bring peace into their hearts.

Let Peace fill the world. Let it begin now. Here. Today.

We ask this in the name of that power that dwells within us and beyond us:

A power called by many names in many times and places,

But whose universal name is *Love*.

AMEN

HYMN green 63 Holy Spirit, Truth Divine.

OFFERTORY

NOTICES

BENEDICTION: by Richard Gilbert – *Where Shall I Seek Peace?*

from *For Praying Out Loud* - Skinner House Books

Shalom – how magical the sound.

Pacem - how lofty the thought.

Salaam - how welcome the feeling.

Peace - how far the journey.

The world seems at war with itself:

There are strident voices among people,

There are clashes among groups,

There are conflicts among nations.

The world seems to be nothing so much as a battleground,

Strewn with the wreckage of people, hurt and afraid.

Be it within the walls of a house,

The confines of a city,

The boundaries of a nation,

Or the broader reaches of the globe,

Peace is sought in vain.

Where shall I seek Peace?

In the halls of men and women of state?

Where shall I seek Peace?

In the chambers of politicians?

Where shall I seek Peace?

In the Bosom of my family?

Amen

HYMN red 463 Part in Peace, is day before us?