

Worship Service Script

SOPHIA FAHS SUNDAY:

JOURNEYS OF THE SPIRIT

Prepared by: Mark David Buckles, Rev. Jude Geiger, Dr. Mark Hicks, Dr. Kate Sullivan, Nikevia Thomas, and Halcyon Westall.

Please adapt this service to fit your congregation's liturgy. See Worship Packet on our website for suggestions on multigenerational activities, sheet music, tools, and notes. The symbol ** marks a slide transition.

Opening

BASED ON YOUR CONGREGATION'S TRADITION SELECT FROM:

Introit: *The Fourth Principle*, by Mark David Buckles (in Worship Packet)
Welcome and Announcements
Congregation's Affirmation/Doxology/Sung Mission

Hymn

#361, *Enter, Rejoice, and Come In*, arrangement by Mark David Buckles (in Worship Packet)

Chalice Lighting

Gandhi Peace Greeting (with optional hand motions)

I offer you peace. (HANDS UP, PALMS FACING AWAY FROM YOU)

I offer you friendship (BOTH HANDS CLASPED IN FRONT OF YOU)

I offer you love. (HANDS CROSSED OVER HEART)

I see your beauty. (FIRST COVER BOTH EYES WITH HANDS AND SLOWLY UNCOVER THEM SO TO SEE)

I hear your needs. (CUP EACH HAND BEHIND EACH EAR)

I feel your feelings. (CROSS BOTH ARMS OVER CHEST AND REST HANDS ON THE HIGH CHEST)

My wisdom comes from a Higher Source. (BOTH HANDS, PALMS UP REACHING UP)

I honor that Source in you. (BOTH PALMS TOGETHER AS IN NAMASTÉ & HEAD SLIGHTLY BOWED)

Let us work together. (BOTH HANDS CLASPED IN FRONT OF YOU)

-M. Gandhi

OR USE THE TEXT FROM:

What Will I Do (if not using the song elsewhere in the service.)

Preface

words by Rev. Jude Geiger

Our lives are made up of many steps and many choices. But our journey is also shaped by the people around us, the places we've come from and the stories of those who led our world to this place. Our service this morning is about the journeys of the spirit - both the work of building the world we dream about - and the motions of our hearts. Through story and song, ritual and reflection, we'll consider these words: "What will I do? Where will I go? When will I know; It's time to set sail, or row?"

Music

words by Rev. Marta Valentin, music by Mark David Buckles (in Worship Packet. Stanzas read during the music. Optional: different voices/props/congregants miming as piece is read/taught.)

What Will I Do?

I was born to look
I was born to see
I was born to find out
Where the world will take me

To sit and pout
There is no time
To wander about
There's only time
To feel your way through
For the journey's the thing
Not the place you'll get to.

**The world's a love song
Our souls long to hear
To fill up our spirits
and dispel the fears
So I will go be
And I will go do
Because one thing I know
Each day hope is renewed.

**What will I do?
Where will I go?
When will I know
It's time to set sail, or row?

**What will I do?
Where will I go?
When will I know
It's time to set sail, or row?

**What will I do?
Where will I go?
Deep down I know
When it's time to set sail, or row.

**When you're born to look,
See, and find out
There is no time

Spoken Word and Music

by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

We all come from many places. There are so many stories woven into a life, and the road we take is full of the places we've been and the people we've known. Though we live into this moment and the next, we are grounded in all the lives that have touched our hearts. Here are two stories of people deeply touched by others.

Spoken Reflection

by Rev. Clyde Grubbs

My first memories were Dallas, Texas. World War Two had just ended, I didn't know much about the meaning of that war but words like "G.I.", "Nazi" and "Atom Bomb" were part of my earliest vocabulary that I learned from other children.

The elders asked us not to use those words during family time. My family were Cherokee Indians in a Jim Crow Texas. The world was divided between White and Black and I was told that we were neither.

My grandmother was proud of her heritage and shared that pride with me. She taught me that the Earth was the source of all life and that I must respect and cherish this Creation. **She told me how the Cherokees had been forced out of their homeland in the Great Smoky Mountains and how the government had broken treaty after treaty with

Indian peoples. For the most part I was respectful of her wisdom. But she didn't approve me going to the movies, because I would see the cowboys killing the Indians and get the wrong idea. It took many years before I understood the wisdom of her caution.

**My mother was a nurse who had discovered Unitarianism as a teenager, and loved liberal religion. She took to heart the ideas and we believed we should live into those ideals. For her, opposing Jim Crow and racial prejudice were important ways we lived as Unitarians.

**So two Spirits have informed my life, one Spirit has made me proud of being American Indian and aware that our lands are occupied by a conqueror. That Spirit urges me to be proud of my people and reach out in solidarity to others who have been oppressed and misused. The other Spirit has urged me to Love and work with all peoples for a better world and restored relationship with our Mother the Earth.

Choral Chant

Chorus of *What Will I Do?*

Spoken Word and Music

words by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

Even though we are part of all that has come before, our lives are ever changing. Who we are, and how we are in the world, may grow day by day. Ever winding, we take step by step.

Spoken Reflection

by Samantha Burden

Now a senior in high school, I often think back to freshman year and wonder how in the world I went from being the judgmental and somewhat cruel person I was to the more compassionate and driven young adult I am now. The clearest answer is that while I've always been a worrier, my worrying ratcheted up many levels last year. I was diagnosed with several severe anxiety disorders. Having struggles in my life for the first time tested me greatly, and now as I start to come out the other side, I like who I've become with help from everyone who has stood with me through my tribulations.

When school got out for the summer last June after an extensively worrisome and lonely semester, I pursued experiences to explore my interests and skills over the summer. I participated in workshops, camps, protests, and university tours. The break from the rigid structure of the public educational system provided me with time and support to heal. Due to my improved state, the mindfulness therapy and medications I had employed finally made a lasting impact. My return to personhood from the depths of apprehension and anguish was similar to the butterfly hatching from its chrysalis. And upon hatching, I was able to see a plethora of amazing people ready and eager to help me.

When the new school year arrived, I had concerns I would backslide. Instead I found that I was again able to remain focused on schoolwork. Not only have I regained skills I worried were lost, but also I have returned to my high-functioning state. I have been able to wholeheartedly throw myself into social justice. Running my school's Women's Club that I co-founded last year and maintaining partnerships with other feminist organizations takes effort and time.

**With the great help of my family, mentors, and psychiatric team, I have mastered healthy coping strategies that will allow me to continue ruthlessly on my spiritual journey.

Community Response

At this point, we invite you to think about those people who have helped you on your spiritual journey. I wonder who has helped you become who you are in the world today? And I wonder how they helped you? Please take a few moments to use the materials in the activity basket to reflect on those that have helped you along your way.

Choral Chant

Chorus of *What Will I Do?*

Choir Anthem

The Third Principle by Mark David Buckles (in Worship Packet)

Spoken Word and Music

words by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

Sometimes we feel alone. Sometimes the road gives us a challenge, or pain, or a deep sense of loss. When we feel lost, community can be the answer to our deepest needs.

Spoken Reflection

by Rev. Fred Wooden

It was a beautiful day, sunny and warm with a bright blue sky; the sort of day you see on postcards of New York City. Because it was so beautiful there were lots of people on the Promenade outside my apartment house. People loved the view of the harbor and the Statue of Liberty and the tall buildings of lower Manhattan across the East River, especially the Twin Towers. It was September 11, 2001.

When the towers fell, making a terrible low sound, we did not know what we should do but we knew we had to do something. As the story of the attacks emerged I knew that fear and anger would spread quickly. I did two things.

First was to organize a service for that evening and put up signs around the neighborhood to invite people. It was a place to be angry and afraid but also sad and safe. When we don't know exactly what to do, finding others who feel the same way is helpful. We need to find a way to be strong and hopeful.

The second thing I did that day was walk down to the local mosque/masjid, the oldest in Brooklyn, where the imam and I were acquainted. We embraced and I said we need to have a public prayer service on the promenade – Sunday afternoon – where every religious leader would be present and we would stand together. The next few days I spent calling my colleagues, talking to the police about the crowds, and telling people about the service.

**That Sunday, over 1000 people came, many marching from the mosque as I did with the imam and other religious leaders. On the promenade, looking at the plume of smoke rising from where the Twin Towers were, we heard the shofar because the Jewish New Year was just two weeks away. The imam chanted from the Qu'ran. Christian clergy prayed. Politicians came and wanted to speak but we said no. This was a moment of prayer. And they do it every year on September 11.

**The people of the First Unitarian Church became friends with the Islamic community nearby. Every year since, they have celebrated a Ramadan Iftar together. I am no longer their minister; this is their ministry now. And in my current church we celebrate Ramadan as we did there in Brooklyn, where we also need to feel strong and hopeful.

Hymn

#123, *Spirit of Life* (Singing the Living Tradition)

Prayer (Joys and Concerns)

by Rev. Mark Belletini

O Love, be praised for the immense family of stars called the galaxy which holds our sun in its embrace.
Be praised for the family of moon and earth and sun which work together to make us a home.
Be praised for the family of earth's seven continents which lift us up into the sunlight and wonders of the night.

Be blest for the family of all peoples...with their cultures, languages, struggles, joys, poetries, sexualities,
& devotions, which bless us with identities both accepted and resisted.
Be blest for the dream of peace in the nations, peace in families of both blood and heart, an immensity of love
which illumines me, and illustrates you O Love.
And so, now, blest is the Amen of our lives, the great Yes to all the families which have brought us to this hour
and this day as exactly who we are.

Silent Meditation (Candle Lighting or Joys and Concerns as fits your tradition)

Choral Chant

Chorus of *What Will I Do?*

Spoken Word and Music

by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

When we feel fear or confusion, or when we feel helpless, sometimes the best things we can do is follow the advice of the beloved Mr. Rogers' mother and "look to the helpers. There are always helpers near by." Here are two stories that highlight the power of connection -- one human being reaching out in a time of need to help another.

Spoken Reflection

by Rev. Kate Braestrup

The family members never fail to surprise me on how terrific they are, how brave they are. A lot of the work I do is around death, and helping people deal with immediate needs after someone they love has died. I'm the Chaplain for the Maine Warden Service, which is the enforcement branch of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and who also is charged with wilderness search and rescue operations.

I am called out for events when there is a good possibility of either significant trauma or death, and my job is to wait with the family and explain what's going on, and to help them marshal their resources for dealing with this. I can be helpful to them, hopefully, in the first few moments of the impact of bad news.

**The loss of a loved one is something I myself have experienced. My husband died in 1996. He was a state trooper and he was killed in a car accident. I've actually been on the receiving end of the kind of care that I'm hoping I'm offering people. It is such a shattering experience, and a moment of such extreme vulnerability, and in my case, it was met with so much love and compassion and care, right from the beginning.

I think I experienced that as a religious experience, or at least it's as close as I'm likely to get, so it really became, in the long run, my definition of God.

I went to seminary both because it was something my husband Drew was going to do after he retired from the State police, he was going to become a Unitarian Universalist minister, but also I think a lot if it was just wanting to participate in this overwhelming sense of love and care that I had experienced.

**If I'm ever asked where is God in such tragedy, or why would God let something like this happen, I will say what's true for me, which is that God is not the accident, not the water in the lungs, not the ice that broke, it's that God is always present in love, always. So if you want to see where God is, you look around for where love is coming into the picture. The rest of it is just biology and physics: the ice will only hold so much weight, and the human body can only stand so much cold, but the fact that someone would be willing to go into the woods to try and find me, try with as much compassion and tenderness as he or she can summon, to tell the people who love me that I'm dead, and to take care of them in that moment, that's God. That's worth it, that's worth worshiping.

Choral Chant

Chorus of *What Will I Do?*

Spoken Word and Music

by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

Sometimes we feel like we're too young, or too old to accomplish something. Or that we're just not ready to be the one who makes a difference. But helpers come in all shapes and sizes.

Spoken Reflection

by Rev. Karen Tse

In 2001, I founded International Bridges to Justice, an organization dedicated to protecting the basic legal rights of ordinary citizens in developing countries. This journey begins with a young boy who has become one of the many heroes for the work that I do today.

Not so long ago, as a lawyer working for the United Nations, I experienced a dramatic shift in my perceptions of approaches to international human rights and issues concerning the detained and imprisoned. **Vishna, a four-year-old boy who was born and lived in a Cambodian prison is my favorite hero. Because he was born in the prison, the guards who knew him his entire life grew quite fond of him and allowed him free range of the prison. He was small enough to climb through the bars. When I met him, though, he was getting older and could no longer get through the bottom rungs of the prison bars. But he could climb up to the third bar, which was slightly bigger, then slowly turn his head to the side and then find a way to barely pass through the bars to the other side. Everyday that I went to the prison, he would go through this process so he could run out to meet me. Then he would take my hand and go with me to each and every prison cell. At each of the 156 prison cells, he would reach his little hand or finger in to make contact with a prisoner. For most of them, he was their greatest joy.

In this boy, I saw thousands like him who would be the direct beneficiaries of a functioning criminal justice system with a standard of basic human rights.** Therefore, IBJ works to guarantee all citizens the right to competent legal representation, the right to be protected from cruel and unusual punishment, and the right to a fair trial.

I often think of Vishna. A boy born into a prison without material or physical comfort. But a boy who had a sense of his own heroic journey and desire to give up a piece of his life to something greater than himself. I think of the contributions he made to the prisoners' wretched lives both on an individual level as he reached out his hand so many times, and also of the contributions he made to human rights through me – for he so often gave me strength when I was not sure why I should continue on. This heroic spirit and journey to reach behind the bars of injustice is open to all of us.

Community Response

Like Vishna, you may be an agent for someone that pulls them through. When you help others, you help yourself. The power of one human being reaching out to others can be life-changing. I wonder if you've been that person, if

you've reached out? I wonder if you can see yourself in these stories? Please take a few moments to again reflect on the ways you have reached out to help others.

Choral Chant

Chorus of *What Will I Do?*

Offering

words by Rev. Makaanah Morriss

Today's service comes to our congregation from The Fahs Collaborative of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. The stories we are hearing this morning, true stories of the faith journeys of fellow Unitarian Universalists, speak to the courage and strength that spark of the human spirit.

Our congregations all across this country and around the world want to nurture and empower the flame of truth, justice, and creativity in individuals of all ages as well as in our religious communities.

The Fahs Collaborative, which focuses on congregational life, is doing amazing work for the present and the future of this liberal religion that means so much to each of us. Today we invite YOU to be a "transformer" by generously giving of your monetary resources to The Fahs Collaborative. Your dollars and cents, concrete in their present form, will "transform" into innovative programs, research, and resources benefiting our individual and shared liberal religious journeys.

This morning's offering will be "shared" between The Fahs Collaborative and our congregation [*or if all of it is going to Fahs Collaborative, that would be noted instead*]. You may make out checks to: Meadville Lombard Theological School. Please write Sophia Fahs Sunday in the memo line.

The morning offering will now be given and gratefully received.

Offertory

The Fourth Principle by Mark David Buckles (in Worship Packet, if not used as Introit) or other piece

Spoken Word and Music

by Rev. Jude Geiger (Words spoken over quiet piano, guitar, or drum)

Helping doesn't always mean doing something to make a difference. Sometimes we're the most helpful when we simply listen and support those struggling on their journey. Sometimes the best way to help, is just to love and to be open to the new.

Spoken Reflection

The Light of a New Day, by Rev. Mykal Slack

Four days before Easter, during my second year of seminary, I sat down at my desk, wrote a letter to all the students, faculty, and staff and, terrified, hit "send." I wrote about the name I'd been using to refer to myself since childhood and all of the things that went into living my life as the man I knew I was called to be. I shared resources for deeper education and understanding about being Trans. And before I knew it, I was also writing about how I connected to notions of resurrection and how stepping into the uncharted territory of disclosure in a predominantly Christian institution was precisely like stepping out on faith.

Because they were part of my chosen family, I wanted them to know; I needed them to. **And in the weeks that followed, I received over a hundred cards and letters of support, lots of flowers, and a commitment from the administration to journey with me through name and gender marker changes, which they did. I even got an impromptu (not entirely on-point, but nonetheless cute) tutorial from some of the CIS guys in my class on how to be the “best guy I could be.” I realized that becoming my truest self, despite not knowing what lay ahead, was what having faith was all about, and that the best way to grow in that faithfulness was in community.

Sometimes, when my state of the world is bringing me down, I need to pull out that letter. I am reminded of how much I have grown and the possibilities for living life anew that surround me.

**I am reminded of the beautiful impact that my seminary community had on the deepening of my faith and how intentional connection with folks can grow us all more powerfully into our own becoming. And then I can have hope – that we can actually meet one another where we are and that, by faith, we can do the work of bringing ourselves and each other into the light of a new day.

Community Response

I wonder if you show your true self to others? I wonder if you feel safe sharing your true self? I wonder if you feel safe being your true self in this community? I wonder who your true self is? Please take a few moments to reflect on how you bring your true self into this beloved community.

“The world’s a love song
Our souls long to hear
To fill up our spirits
and dispel the fears

So I will go be
And I will go do
Because one thing I know
Each day hope is renewed.

What will I do?
Where will I go?
Deep down I know
When it’s time to set sail, or row.”

Hymn

#1064 *Blue Boat Home*, or #1020 *Woyaya*, (Singing the Journey)

Extinguishing the Chalice/Benediction

by Rev. Jude Geiger

We close with the words which began our service:

We’re never alone. Our stories tell us we can make a difference together.

Sometimes in what we do, and sometimes just in how much we share our love with the world.