

**26th April 2020 – ‘Godalming Unitarians  
‘Rainbows and Silver Linings’ - Rev Sheena Gabriel**

I'll be offering a version of this service via Zoom at 11am for those able to join me online.

It will include contributions from young people and adults - music, words and positive stories of hope in this time of pandemic. This is an amended version for those unable to join us online.

**Opening Words & Chalice Lighting    *If you have a candle you may want to light it***

Our community knows no boundaries.

We are not confined by the physical limits of walls...

We are freer than we know

When we release ourselves and each other

From expectations of what is needed for true community.

We are here together in space...

And I light this chalice

A beacon of this community

Holding us all together. Here. Now...

Humbled by all that we cannot fathom in this time,

We come into the presence of what we do know,

Perhaps the only thing we can ever know:

That Love is... the only answer

to everything and everyone, in every moment.

*Adapted from words by Nancy Reid-McKee and Amy Carol Webb (source: UUA worship web)*



**Introduction:** Taking my daily exercise round the streets of Farncombe and Godalming, I've been struck by the number of rainbow images posted in windows, some with heartfelt words of encouragement, some even chalked on walls and pavements. So many rainbows created by children and adults alike, are brightening up our streets, and this is replicated across the country and round the world.



In this time of unprecedented challenge, the symbol of the rainbow has become a rallying cry of solidarity and hope. In this service I'd like to reflect a little on the rainbow - a symbol of promise since ancient times. I expect you remember the story from childhood of Noah and the ark – from Genesis – in Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible. This story of a great flood that covers the world, has parallels in similar myths from other ancient civilisations. Like many biblical stories it has 'truth' in it, even if a floating boat filled with animals isn't based on fact. Let's hear the story (in child friendly form with a bit of poetic licence thrown in!)

### **Story: Noah and the Rainbow**

(adapted/expanded from 2 sources: UUA 'Tapestry of Faith' website / SPCK assemblies – Revd Alan M. Barker)

Did you ever make such a mess of your homework, or work project, or a painting (or sermon!) - that you got so mad and frustrated you wanted to crumple the whole thing up, throw it away and start again? Well the story goes that's how God was feeling, looking around at the world many, many years ago.

*"You pour your heart and soul into making this wonderful world, full of people and animals and plants—and if you think it's easy, try getting the stripes on a zebra just right—all that effort and for what? A year or two, or 1,500 go by, and the whole thing is a mess. People! What was I thinking? They're rotten to the core! They lie, cheat, murder, steal—there's not a decent one in the whole bunch!"*

*As if that wasn't enough they're spoiling the earth. The forests are burning, the animals are afraid. There is no peace for any creature."* God felt both angry and sad and the thought came: *"Dang it all. I should get rid of the whole mess and start from scratch. Yep, that's what I'll do."*

But first God looked around to make sure there were not any good people about to be destroyed. It turned out that there was just one kind, good-living family - a man named Noah, his wife and their sons and their wives. So God said to Noah *"This world is no good, I'm planning on getting rid of all the people, and starting again. This is what you must do: Build a really, really, really big boat - big enough for you and your family, and for a pair of every kind of animal. I'm going to rain this whole place out, and anyone not on that boat is going to drown."*

Noah had a hard time believing his ears – who can blame him – but he didn't want to argue with God, so he gathered his family and told them what they must do. His family had a hard time believing Noah, but they decided to give him and God the benefit of the doubt. They cut wood and set about building the boat. After a lot of hard work – there it stood - a gigantic humungous boat.

Noah and his family thought of all the creatures that needed to be brought into the boat. They thought about tiny creatures, with long tails, that scurried and squeaked. They thought of the big brown bird that laid eggs that Noah and his family ate for breakfast. They thought about the spotted cow that provided milk.

They gathered up the animals – a male and female of every kind. It was a very hard job – imagine rounding up a pair of growling tigers, or braying donkeys, or squawking parrots? Don't ask me how they did it - somehow they managed! Every kind of creature – those that creep, crawl and fly - went into Noah's boat.

Of course, all the people watching thought Noah had lost the plot and was totally nuts – and who can blame them? But Noah and his family just kept right on working. They stocked up on food and at last everything was ready. Noah being a kind man offered a place to his neighbours on the ark, but they laughed in his face and carried on with their quarrelling. So, with all the creatures and his family on board Noah shut the door – and waited.

It was sunny when he shut the door and he felt a bit stupid; was it really necessary to shut himself and his family up with 1000s of animals, making a mess and a racket. What if he'd overreacted? What if there wasn't going to be a flood? Maybe God was just kidding?

But then he heard the first splosh. At first just a few drops, then a few more...then the heavens opened and water poured down in buckets... It rained and rained and rained, like no rain you ever saw. And the water got higher and higher and covered the land; and soon Noah's ark was floating in a vast sea of water. The water was grey. The sky was dark. Inside the ark everyone felt gloomy.

Together they counted the days and nights. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 ... It was still raining... 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 - still raining! Noah's family were getting bored, the animals were restless. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 - Would it ever stop? Would they have enough food to last? 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 days and nights. Noah's family didn't know how much longer they could stand being cooped up, with the animals misbehaving big time!

Just when they thought they could stand it no longer, after 40 days and nights, Noah shouted 'It's stopped!' Looking out the windows they could see clear skies. Everyone breathed a big sigh of relief. But they still couldn't leave the ark, because there was no dry land to be seen anywhere. It was many more days before the water began to dry up.

Noah sent out a dove to fly around and look for dry land, but it came back tired, finding no place to rest. He waited another week. This time the dove came back with a twig from an olive tree in its beak—it had found land! Soon the water was low enough for Noah to see the ark had come to rest on top of a mountain. There was land around them - not dry land—but land, all the same!

Finally, finally – after 150 days - the people and animals were able to leave the crowded, smelly ark and touch the earth. They were overcome with relief, as would you be too, cooped up inside all that time - though looking at the muddy ground, with so much destroyed, they also felt sad.

But God hadn't forgotten Noah and the creatures. God vowed never again to curse the earth and decided to make something very special, as a sign of this promise. 'First God made a stripe of red. *'In my new world, red will be the colour of bright poppies, ripe apples and robin's chests.'* Then came orange. *'Orange will be the colour of pumpkins, autumn leaves and ginger cats watching goldfish!* Yellow was next.

God decided that *'yellow would be the colour of buttercups and the honey made by busy bees. I will hide yellow inside hen's eggs.'* 'Here's a nice colour,' God thought, mixing up green.

*"I shall make lots of things that are green - cabbages and caterpillars, grass, and grasshoppers.'*

(Just look around to see green is one of God's favourite colours.)

And next to green God put blue and indigo *"the colour of the sea and the sky.'* Finally God added purple *'a special colour - for hills covered with heather and delicious grapes and juicy plums.'* Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and purple all shone brightly together in the rainbow.

*"Welcome home," said God. "This rainbow will be a promise—a covenant - with all beings. I promise never to flood the earth again. When the rainbow appears in the clouds I will remember the everlasting promise between me and all living beings on Earth...As long as earth endures: seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."*

Noah and his family smiled when he saw the beautiful rainbow lighting up the sky and the animals felt happy too. It was a promise that the world was to be made new."



*Painting by Zac Kindade*

**Song: Raindrops keep falling on my head**

**(in the Zoom service - Shirley and David Faraday will play this on their ukuleles)**

Raindrops are falling on my head  
And just like the guy whose feet are too big for his bed  
Nothing seems to fit  
Those raindrops are falling on my head, they keep falling  
So I just did me some talking to the sun

And I said I didn't like the way he got things done  
Sleeping on the job  
Those raindrops are falling on my head, they keep falling  
But there's one thing I know  
The blues they send to meet me  
Won't defeat me, it won't be long  
Till happiness steps up to greet me

Raindrops keep falling on my head  
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turning red

Crying's not for me  
'Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complaining  
Because I'm free  
Nothing's worrying me

It won't be long till happiness steps up to greet me  
Raindrops keep falling on my head  
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turning red  
Crying's not for me  
'Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complaining  
Because I'm free  
Nothing's worrying me

*Songwriters: Burt Bacharach / Hal David*

**If you have access to a computer or smart phone, you might want to follow this link and play the song: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT1HCQcSHW0&list=RDOT1HCQcSHW0&start\\_radio=1&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT1HCQcSHW0&list=RDOT1HCQcSHW0&start_radio=1&t=0)**

**Reflection:** The ancient Hebrews recognised the rainbow as a sign of God's promise. In numerous cultures the rainbow is a sign of peace, and is seen as a bridge between this world and the realm of the gods. In recent years the rainbow has become a symbol of diversity; a reminder that regardless of colour, faith, creed, gender or sexuality, there should be no division but mutual respect for one another's gifts as well as differences. The rainbow is a powerful symbol across many traditions, so perhaps it's not surprising it's been popping up all over the place during the pandemic.

And whilst it hasn't been raining (blessed with this sunshine!) there are parallels between the story of Noah's ark and what we're living through. Like Noah, humanity was warned about a threat – not floods - but a strange new virus. Just like Noah's neighbours, not everyone took it seriously. Perhaps we too, thought the lock down was a bit OTT. But the reality is, many lives have already been lost. A flood of sorts has been unleashed on the world, and our homes have become our arks – places of safety. Whilst we're cooped up (hopefully not with too many smelly animals, perhaps with the luxury of a garden) we may be counting the days, feeling all at sea - wondering how long till we feel solid ground under our feet again.

And as the virus plateaus, with the hope that the worst is passed, still we remain in lockdown. Just like Noah, we're looking for signs of dry land – but we're not seeing it yet. We might be feeling fed up, frustrated, but as in the story, eventually the dove returns with the olive branch – a sign of new life – so we trust that we will come out of our arks. Things might not be the same (in fact they *can't* be the same - our world will be changed forever) but as with Noah, once the flood has subsided, we have a fresh start – to build the world anew; a chance to change our lifestyles... root out inequalities that have been exposed as never before and find ways of rebuilding the economy that *don't* cost the earth.

So whatever you're living through, however much at sea you feel, however much longer we have cooped up in our arks - remember the rainbow - symbol of promise, hope and new beginnings.



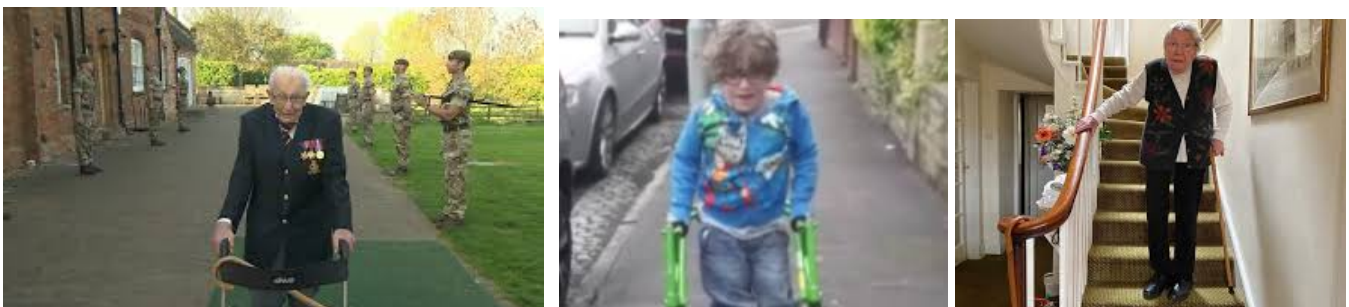
*After a downpour of rain and blustery winds on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> (the day after Easter) a double rainbow arched over New York City's skyline, offering a brief moment of peace.*

At this point during the Zoom service we'll have a time of sharing – where people can voice their good news stories. You might like to spend a few minutes pondering your own 'rainbows' and 'silver linings' at this time - either the positives in your own life [perhaps the kindness of neighbours, appreciation of your garden) or things you've read about in the news.

**To get you started, here's a few 'rainbows' and 'silver linings':**

#### **Fund-raising champions help our under-funded NHS**

Captain Tom Moore aged 99 has inspired a nation and raised more than £28m for NHS charities by walking 100 laps of his garden. He says: "The NHS is something we need to back. We have one of the best things in the world and we have to try to support it."



Many others inspired by him, are carrying out similar fundraising feats - including 6 year old Frank Mills who has spina bifida and raised more than £100k for the NHS in 24 hours by walking 10m with his frame. He originally hoped to raise £99 to match Captain Tom's age. 90 year old Margaret has set out to climb the equivalent of highland mountain Suilven on her stairs, and has already raised over £280,000.

## Clear skies, reduced air pollution, lower carbon emissions:



*Before and after the lock-down – photos of Dehli*

When India (where it's estimated over a million die every year because of air pollution-related diseases) shut down industries and suspended transport to contain the spread of CV19, the skies over its polluted cities quickly turned azure blue and air pollution plummeted to levels unseen in living memory. People shared pictures of Himalayan peaks obscured for decades. Politician and author Shashi Tharoor wrote: the "blissful sight of blue skies and the joy of breathing clean air provides just the contrast to illustrate what we are doing to ourselves the rest of the time" (*source BBC news*). Whatever the cost to the economy, skies are bluer and clearer world-wide. And carbon emissions have dropped a whopping 6% from 2019 (though we have a challenge on our hands to make sure things don't just revert to 'normal' once out of lockdown.)

**Nature is benefitting in other ways:** From seals appearing on deserted beaches usually full of tourists, to migrating toads being spared a trampling (with cross country runs on W.Yorkshire moors called off) and less road kill due to reduced traffic, nature must be breathing a sigh of relief. And after lockdowns in Brazil there will be a few extra endangered hawksbill sea turtles. Wildlife officials were the only humans to see 97 turtles hatch on Paulista beach. The tiny turtles are extremely vulnerable in their first mad dash to the ocean, and many fall prey to hungry birds - or over-curious humans who interfere in the process.





## **Disability no longer such a barrier** *(from Guardian article by Frances Ryan – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020)*

While the coronavirus pandemic has led to restrictions for billions, for many with disabilities, the lockdown has paradoxically opened up the world. As society embraces “virtual” living, those who missed out, are finding themselves able to take part in work, culture, or socialising from their own home. Nicola Welsh has always loved museums, but a painful nerve condition left her housebound for 17 years. Now she’s able to tour the world museums: “Having the opportunity to visit virtually has given me back something I’d resigned myself to not being able to do.”

Brian Spalding on bed rest for 4 years with spina bifida, can now socialise with friends: “Since lockdown I have actually felt better about my situation, given all of society now experiencing a form of ‘bed rest.’” Emma Duke with POTS syndrome tried to get remote access to film classes for her degree for 3 years in LA Angeles. Frequently “told it wasn’t ‘feasible’” her entire university is now online. Rather than “more” opportunities opening up, Tom Staniford with MDP syndrome, describes the phenomenon as a levelling of the playing field” and hopes the lockdown opens up permanent accessibility.

### **Other Silver Linings:**

Thank you notes left on ambulances, care-workers and police cars

Home-made scrubs made and donated by volunteers and businesses

Face shields for NHS workers made from left over stock by school DT departments

Teachers donating tablets / I pads to pupils who don’t have computers at home.

Flowers from nurseries/flower farms donated for funerals, and to keyworkers

Food, free meals and overnight accommodation offered to NHS workers

Food waste (in the home) has gone down, as people buy less and make food go further.

Musicians give free online concerts – and play live from balconies, in the streets

Online church services reach a wider audience and made more accessible for some

Homeless people being housed by some town councils

These are just a few examples. Let’s focus for a few moments on the many rainbows and silver linings; acts of kindness, heroism, generosity; inspired works of art; benefits to nature ... PAUSE

Not ignoring the clouds caused by the pandemic, we hold in our hearts and prayers those for whom there are too few silver linings. Those who are unwell, the bereaved, those struggling to hold onto hope, those with no home to shelter in, those facing hunger and conflict... PAUSE

And so we commit ourselves to build a kinder, fairer world for all, when the storms have passed.

**POEM – (for the Corona Virus – March 2020) Kitty O’Meara**

*And the people stayed at home. And read books  
and listened to music, and rested, and exercised,  
and made art and learned new ways of being and were still  
And they listened more deeply. Some meditated. Some prayed. Some met their shadows  
And the people healed.  
And in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and heartless ways,  
the earth began to heal.  
And when the danger passed and the people came together again,  
they grieved their losses and made new choices  
and dreamed new dreams and created new ways to live  
and to heal the earth fully as they had been healed.*

May it be so, Amen

**Musical Meditation:** At our online service, one of our young people - Florence Miller - will sing a song which offers comfort in hard times: Hushabye Mountain - a ballad by Robert and Richard Sherman. It appeared twice in the 1968 film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* - as a lullaby which Dick Van Dyke sings to his children and when the children of Vulgaria have lost all hope of salvation.

A gentle breeze from Hushabye Mountain  
Softly blows over Lullaby Bay,  
It fills the sails of boats that are waiting,  
Waiting to sail your worries away.

It isn't far to Hushabye Mountain,  
And your boat waits down by the quay.  
The winds of night so softly are sighing,  
Soon they will fly your troubles to sea.

So close your eyes on Hushabye Mountain,  
Wave goodbye to cares of the day,  
And watch your boat from Hushabye Mountain  
Sail far away from Lullaby Bay.

So close your eyes on Hushabye Mountain,  
Wave goodbye to cares of the day,  
And watch your boat from Hushabye Mountain  
Sail far away from Lullaby Bay.

If you have access to a computer or smart phone, you might want to follow this link to the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvaYRYJ70GE> (sung by Hayley Westerna)

Rainbows, it's stating the obvious – they don't appear when the sun shines – you have to have the rain as well; when opposites collide – then rainbows appear. Just so, in the highly charged atmosphere of our time - joy and sorrow, laughter and tears collide. But as in nature, so in our lives in places of tension something new can be born.

**Surface Tension Meditation - by Tess Baumberger** (from UUA Worship web)

*Of course there are people behaving badly  
during this pandemic, using it as an excuse  
to practice prejudice, to hoard, to blame;  
using it to divide and weaken us,  
cashing in on surface tensions  
for their own terrible benefit.  
The news daily shows these heavy things.*

*In nature surface tension gathers  
water molecules together so tightly  
that they form a sort of membrane  
across which light things can dance—  
Leaves, insects, the wavering sun.  
It is why rain falls in discrete drops  
and babies can blow bubbles.*

*Surface tension makes life possible.  
It helps drops collect along  
subtle edges of pine needles or leaves,  
run down to water roots, then helps sap  
rise to nurture those same  
gatherers of sun and water..*

*Bitter tannins in chartreuse mosses  
increase the tension so larger drops can form,  
held aloft by their fragile villi  
until they can be absorbed,  
or used to foster new life.\* (\*for this knowledge I am indebted to Robin Wall Kimmerer's work)*

*Here's the other picture revealed by this pandemic.*

*People are reaching out in kindness and concern  
to acquaintances, neighbors, strangers  
creating aquifers, revealing watersheds running  
through the tiny capillaries of human hearts,  
minds, homes, streets and neighborhoods.*

*Could the bitter tannins cause such large drops  
to form that we can scarcely hold them up  
until they can be absorbed?*

*Until we can use them to foster life?*

*Let us open ourselves wide to gather them  
So we may send them to the suffering, the grieving,  
the caregivers, and all the workers who always were essential.*

*Let us send them across all those spurious divisions  
because there is a deeper, humbler, more beautiful truth.*

*We deeply need one another, especially now.*

*We can pull together across distances to form a surface  
Across which light things can dance and which can nurture life.*

Many of you will remember the classic film 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939) and song 'Over the Rainbow' composed by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg. Five minutes into the film, Dorothy (played by Judy Garland) after Aunt Em tells her to "find yourself a place where you won't get into any trouble", walks off by herself, musing to her dog Toto: "*Some place where there isn't any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place, Toto? There must be. It's not a place you can get to by a boat, or a train. It's far, far away. Behind the moon, beyond the rain...*" and then she sings....

**(In the Zoom service – this will be song by Chloe Miller – another of our young people)**

### **Song - "Over The Rainbow"**

Somewhere over the rainbow way up high  
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby  
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue  
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true

Someday I'll wish upon a star  
And wake up where the clouds are far  
Behind me

Where troubles melt like lemon drops  
Away above the chimney tops  
That's where you'll find me

Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly  
Birds fly over the rainbow  
Why then, oh, why can't I?

If happy little bluebirds fly  
Beyond the rainbow  
Why, oh, why can't I?

**If you have access to a computer or smart phone you may like to listen to this recording sung by Judy Garland from the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW2QZ7KuaxA>**

An introductory verse that was omitted from the film is sometimes used in theatrical productions of *The Wizard of Oz*:

When all the world  
Is a hopeless jumble  
And the raindrops tumble all around  
Heaven opens a magic lane

When all the clouds darken up the skyway  
There's a rainbow highway to be found  
Leading from your window pane  
To a place behind the sun just a step beyond the rain  
Somewhere over the rainbow...

The world certainly seems a hopeless jumble right now, but can we believe, even so, that a rainbow highway might be found, leading from our window pane? Even from a place of confinement, to be able to see outside our windows the rainbow riot of nature's Spring colours is a gift. I know it's easy for me to say this, because I'm able to go outside my house. It's so much harder for those who can't – yet still there are many in the most restricted circumstances who find cause for optimism. Can I from my place of privilege do any less?

### **Reflection: 'Walking our Rainbow Promises'**

Going back to the symbol of the rainbow, in the story of Noah, God makes a promise to future generations. Perhaps we too can make a promise of how we should live - using the rainbow as a reminder. On the website of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Dekalb (IL) their children's curriculum teaches values represented by colours of the rainbow. I've adapted it for these times we are living through:

#### **Red Promise = Respect**

To *respect* each and every person, and ourselves; each in our different ways doing the best we can.

### **Orange Promise = Offer**

To *offer* loving kindness and generosity to others; each doing what we can to make a difference.

### **Yellow Promise = Yes! To learning**

To say *Yes to learning* the lessons that nature is teaching us. To say 'yes' to life at this difficult time

### **Green Promise = Grow**

To use this time well – so that we might *grow* our minds, our spirits, our courage and resilience

### **Blue Promise = Build**

To *build* an open-hearted and inclusive community, even though we cannot meet face to face

### **Indigo Promise = Insist**

To *insist* on justice for all people. To insist that the homeless are housed and the hungry fed

### **Violet Promise = Value our connection**

To *value our connection* to nature, all living things, and the earth - to take care of her.

Perhaps every time we see a rainbow, we can see it as a promise of hope for better times, but also as a rallying cry for what are each called to do during this time of crisis - and beyond.

And as we come to the end of our service, reflecting on Noah – whose name means 'comfort, rest' – may we find the rest and comfort we need – in solitude, in reaching out to family, friends and this community, and from the source of Life and Love which some call God. And as we stay in our arks a little longer, let's try to see them not as places of confinement, but as places of refuge.

### **Blessings on Those Staying Home - by Linda Barnes (edited)**

We're staying home. Love has never asked this of us before....

This is our gift to humanity. Let us wish each other well.

For those staying home alone, I offer you this blessing.

May you grow a deeper understanding of your own worth.

Leaven the aloneness with gentle care, for this too shall pass.

May you be blessed with peace and serenity;

May you find the courage to reach out to hear another's voice  
and remember others need you too.

May you be well.

For those staying home together, I offer you this blessing.  
May you find moments of patience and grace in your relations.  
May you offer each other enough time apart...  
Space enough to cry, to safely rage....For this too shall pass.  
Then, let peace come again into your home.  
May you be well.

For those working from home, I offer you this blessing.  
May you remember to take breaks.

May you find the means to relish your imperfection  
and the imperfection of others as evidence of our shared humanity.  
You are enough....Make order in your days and then let it go.  
May you be well.

For those staying home with children, I offer you this blessing.  
May you find humour and compassion in your days.  
There will be learning of a different kind...unexpected for sure.  
May there be patience and forgiveness, again, and again, and again.  
For this too shall pass.  
May you all remember the deep love that brought your family into being.  
May there be peace and understanding in your home.  
May you be well. May we be well. May it be so.

**Hymn: Come Sing a Sing with Me (*'Sing your Faith' Hymnbook no. 24*)**

Come, Sing a Song with me,  
Come, sing a song with me,  
Come, sing a song with me,  
That I might know your mind.  
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,  
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the wintertime.

Come, dream a dream with me,  
Come, dream a dream with me,  
Come, dream a dream with me,  
That I might know your mind.  
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,  
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the wintertime.

Come, walk in rain with me,  
Come, walk in rain with me,  
Come, walk in rain with me,  
That I might know your mind.  
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,  
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the wintertime

Come share a rose with me,  
Come, share a rose with me,  
Come, share a rose with me,  
That I might know your mind  
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,  
And I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the wintertime

*Carolyn McDade b.1935*

**Closing Words: (from David Steindl-Rast and Ted Loder)**

You, the one from whom on different paths - all of us have come.  
To whom, on different paths - all of us are going,  
Make strong in our hearts, that which unites us,  
Build bridges across all that divides us; united, make us joyful in our diversity  
At One - in our witness to your peace – a rainbow of your glory.  
Empower us to be bold participants, rather than timid saints in waiting,  
in the difficult ordinariness of now;  
And by grace - to find treasures of joy, friendship and peace,  
hidden in the fields of the daily – which you have given us to plough. Amen

Thank you for sharing this time with me. I invite you to sing or read aloud the following blessing for all in our Meadow Chapel family, and all those you care about.

**Sung Blessing: (from purple hymn book 'Sing your Faith no. 102)**

May the road rise with you,  
May the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
May the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again, may God hold you  
In the hollow of His/Her hand.

