



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York

"From Joy to Joy: Flower Communion"

Delivered 2 June 2024

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"May we cherish friendship as one of thy most precious gifts. May we not let awareness of another's talents discourage us, or sully our relationship, but may we realize that, whatever we can do, great or small, the efforts of all of us are needed to do thy work in this world."

Thank you, [Dr. Čapek](#), for the words of this prayer.

"O, to take what we love inside,
to carry within us an orchard, to eat
not only the skin, but the shade,
not only the sugar, but the days, to hold
the fruit in our hands, adore it, then bite into
the round jubilation of peach."

Thank you, Li-Young Lee, for the words of this [poem](#).

Thank you, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York, for rolling with us this morning through ritual upon ritual, song upon song. It is always and ever my profound wish and hope that there is joy for you to find in these Sunday morning times of worship, when we gather together to give our attention to that which is of highest worth in our shared lives. That joy will be complicated, each week, by the things you carry on your own. That joy will be complicated, each week, by the things that we hear about on the news and from other people in our lives.

Whatever we can do, great or small, the efforts of all of us are needed to do thy work in this world.

To carry within us an orchard.

I return to these metaphors of cultivation, of growth, of fruit and harvest, of death and rebirth such as the Earth teaches us each year - I come back to them again and again though I can barely keep a succulent alive. I am one of the best gardeners in the world of my imagination, and not so much anywhere else.

But this work we do together each week, that does not happen without the hard work, love, and dedication of so many - that does not happen without both complications and joys - this can be our garden, too. It doesn't matter if your blooms today were tended by you, or picked from the side of the path, or picked up at the grocery store (guess where mine came from?!) [or leftover from a wedding!!] - they are beautiful regardless.

But regard them we do. And we are asked, during our ceremony of Flower Communion, to regard the beauty of the gift that we are presented with, the gift that comes from another within this shared community of love and joy and complication and struggle. We are asked to regard the beauty of each flower, we are asked to regard the beauty of each person. We are asked to center love, the still heart of the flower from which life flows. We are asked to center love when we regard ourselves. We are asked to center love when we regard one another. We are asked to center love when we regard our communities, our schools, our public spaces, our public systems and institutions. We are asked to place one word, love, within our own heart center and to consider each action through its echo.

We come today in a spirit of ritual and remembering, of tradition and of transition. My time with you here, my time working in the garden that is this beautiful and growing community, is drawing to a close. We have done hard work in this time together, and it is so easy to place love in my heart when I speak to you, and of you, in this world. You have planted so much within me to

help me grow. I have done my best to contribute to the flourishing of this community. For when I have fallen short, I pray for your grace. For when I have planted a seed of joy that resonated for you, I pray for you to pass that joy on, to plant it in your own garden to harvest for this hurting world. For when we think of the time to come, consider the cycle. We have planted and cultivated, fruited and harvested, have witnessed birth and death and the cycle will begin ever anew.

“There are days we live
as if death were nowhere
in the background; from joy
to joy to joy, from wing to wing,
from blossom to blossom to
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.”

Cultivate, together, those days. Those joys. And receive the gifts of this beautiful community with love, with grace. Offer them to all you meet, as you have offered them to me.

So may it be.