

Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship

Kirribilli Centre
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli



ORDER OF SERVICE

10.30am. Sunday 25 September 2022

Theme:

*“In Celebration of the Life of Norbert Capek (1870-1942)
and in the spirit of his unique Flower Communion”*

Acknowledgement of Country/First Peoples

For thousands of years Indigenous people have walked
in this land, on their own country.
Their relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives.

We acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, past, present, emerging,
and their stewardship of this land throughout the ages...

And we recognise and give thanks that we humans
are creatures of the Earth living in the ecosystem
—flowers, trees and insects; land, waters and mountain range—
that is unique to Australia.
May we honour one another and honour life itself.

Gathering Music

Opening Words

v2 Enter into this sacred time.
Enter with joyful hearts.
Enter with reverent thoughts.

It has taken long months beneath cold ground
for flowers to prepare their blooming.

It has taken each of us long times of growth,
through sorrow and joy,
to prepare for our living now.

The blooming season is short.
Flowers stay only a brief time.
We are travellers upon the earth:
travellers through all too brief life times.

Therefore let our moments together be bountiful.
And let us rejoice in our unique colours, aromas, and sounds.

Lighting of Chalice

The Chalice is lit

- v2 Each week when we gather we light the Chalice or a candle
that burns in our midst.

It burns as a symbol of our intentions
to live in ways that seek light,
that reflect light, and that honour the light in others.

Joys and Concerns

People share

Song “Come Together in Love” 176

Reading

“Flowers”

By Thich Nhat Hanh

- v4 When we look into the heart of a flower,
we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth,
and everything else in the cosmos in it.

Without clouds, there could be no rain,
and there would be no flowers.

Without time, the flowers could not bloom.
In fact, the flower is made entirely of
non-flower elements:
it has no independent, individual existence.

As We Gather/Address

- v2 The Flower Communion service
had its origins in 1923 when Norbert Capek,
a former Baptist and later founder of the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia,
introduced it to his congregation...
A congregation that was made up of former Roman Catholics,
former orthodox Protestants and former liberal Jews.

He knew ritual was important.
But the traditional rituals had alienated many.
What to do!

Geoffrey shared much of this history last week.

Today's liturgy—part two of our remembrance and celebration—
is shaped from sections of various spring and flower liturgies,
all in the spirit of Capek's original.

Over the years I have continued to include and use the word 'communion'.
While some of you—perhaps 'rusted-on' Unitarians—
may have memories of traditional notions of Communion,
including images of bread and red wine, and associations of body and blood,
that is not the meaning I attach to this
or to other liturgies when that word is used.

After more than 50 years of study and reflecting on 'communion',
some things stand out.

Members of the Jesus movements regularly ate a meal together
when they met as a community. It was not what is now called Eucharist.
It was a characteristic that they had in common
with virtually every other social group in their world.
It was considered primary to the early developments
in the movements' meal liturgy.

So I claim, the meal traditions are not about sacramental elements, or creeds,
personal salvation or payment for sin.
None of these issues shaped the various meal or banquet traditions
of Greco-Roman culture or the early Jesus movements.

Instead, they were about actions and offering hospitality, social identity,
and being in solidarity with those around them...
The liturgical movements centred on celebration, presence, and joy.

Such an understanding stands in sharp contrast to traditional liturgy, as I said,
where today the movement is from confession to pardon,
reflecting a presupposition of human guilt.

Which of course this different movement
is what I feel Norbert Capek was also suggesting, 99 years ago,
be it expressed in different language and style back then.
All human beings are equal.
All life forms are to be respected.

So I invite you to join with me and share in that solidarity
as we celebrate this Flower Communion service.
Because meals are and were important.

Thanksgiving (Communion)

v1 The earth has gone the round of seasons:
from the vibrant green of spring's new life

to the lush richness of warm summer,
to the brilliant fulfillment of riotous autumn,
to the generosity and self-giving of winter...

- v1 Now we stand again, touched by the promise
of new life in the spring.
- v2 Have you considered the flowers, the lilies of the fields?
v3 They spin not, neither do they sew,
v2 yet Solomon, in all his glory
v3 was not arrayed as one of these.
- v2 Say what you will about the economy of life,
flowers are irrefutable proof
of nature's extravagance.
- v1 Everywhere you look,
in every nook and cranny,
during this season of life,
the flowers are there...
- v3 Spilling down a creek bank,
along a bush path,
in shopping centre parking lots,
in outback desert places, where the landscape
is not just there, it took 4.4 billion years to be there.
- v1 Flowers do not bloom for us.
They do not care whether or not we see them.
They grow and bloom
because they are full of life.
- v2 They are a gift of grace.
They invite us to seek the beauty in each moment.
They encourage us to find fulfilment in life
and the living of it.
- v3 And what nature has done for flowers,
nature has done for us.
We, too, are products of nature's extravagance.
Each of us is unique.
- v3 Mingled together,
interacting,
we do not lose our uniqueness,
but rather find our uniqueness heightened.
- v1 Here, in this place,

here in this human community,
we find the fuller dimensions,
of our individuality,
the richer meaning of our existence,
the profound delight of this world
and our existence in this world.

v2 As you came into this Centre this morning,
you brought with you a flower,
from your yard,
from along your street,
from a florist,
from your neighbour's flower bed,
from the cluster near the entrance.

v2 From many different sources
these many different flowers have come.

v1 Together they symbolise the extravagance of nature,
for as various as these flowers are,
they do not begin to exhaust nature's inventiveness
in creating forms and colours and beauty.

v1 And what nature has done for flowers,
nature has done for us.

In Solidarity... With Food and Drink and Conversation

v2 In all the colours and scents and tastes and sounds
of the world, we see the beauty of the universe.

v2 In this season of spring it is fitting we should celebrate
the renewal of life and hope, using
the symbols of spreads and biscuits, of coffee, tea, and flowers.

v2 Time out of mind we have watched
grain buried in the dark soil.

v2 Time out of mind we have watched sprouting seeds
break through the soil, reaching towards the warm sun.

v2 Time out of mind we have watched grain broken,
ground into dust-like flour.
Yet mixed with water and leavening,
it stirs, rises, becomes bread, and scones and biscuits,
sustainers of our lives.

v2 For longer than we can remember
the fruit of the vine has been our companion.

Its clustered fruit is harvested
and crushed, and juice is stored and fermented
saved for festive occasions.

- v2 We have shared the fruit of the vine
in moments of joy and sorrow,
and to mark momentous turnings.

Sharing (Communion)

- v1 And so... We give thanks
v3 And seek to live in harmony with all about us.
v1 We give thanks
v3 And take our place in the human story,
struggling for the unity of humankind.
v1 We give thanks
v3 And join with all in a quest for justice.
v1 We give thanks
v2 And celebrate that we, too, come from the earth,
the same life that has made flowers and creatures,
that we might add to the earth's richness.

Food and Drinks and Conversation

After Communion

- v2 And now we prepare to leave this place.
As you do, you are invited to take one of the flowers.
Take a different one than the flower you brought.
Take it not to keep forever and forever.
Nothing is forever.
- v1 Take a flower as a symbol of gratitude
for beauty we did not create,
for joys which come when unexpected.
- v1 Take a flower as a symbol of your participation
in the community of this gathering,
in the community of human kind,
in the community of all living things,
in the universal community.
- v3 In this world we cannot earn or deserve
that which is most important.
It comes to us as a gift.
- v1 If you did not bring a flower take one anyway.
Take a flower as a symbol
of beauty
and grace
and joy

and love.
For knowing how to receive
is fully as important as knowing how to give.

Extinguishing of Chalice

v2 We now extinguish this chalice, symbol of our Gathering...
Chalice flame is extinguished

Parting Words

v2 In the name of Providence, which implants
in the seed the future of the tree, and in
the human heart the longing for people
to live together in love;

v1 In the name of the highest, in whom we move,
and who makes the mother and the father,
the brother and the sister,
what they are;

v2 In the name of the sages and religious
leaders who sacrificed their lives to
hasten the coming of peace and justice;

v1 In the name of all these, let us renew
our resolution—sincerely to be real
sisters and brothers, regardless of any
bar that might estrange us from one another.

v2 In this holy resolution may we be
strengthened, knowing that we are God's family,
that one spirit—the spirit of love—unites us,
and may we endeavour for a better and more joyful life.

(In the spirit of Norbert Capek's Flower Communion prayer)

Farewell "Spirit of Life"

No. 123

Spirit of Life, come unto me.
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me. *(Carolyn McDade)*

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