

Order of Service February 18

Call to Worship: Hymn # 361, *Enter, Rejoice, and Come In*

Welcome & Announcements

Reading A Segment of The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff

Prelude

Chalice Lighting Let There Be Light by Rev. Andrew Pakula

Joys and Concerns

Hymn #34, *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*

Story for All Ages T'ai Chi: The Story of Its Beginning by Rev. Denise Tracy

Sing out the Children -

Go now in peace. Go now in peace.

May the light of love surround you

Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.

Reading Letting Go Meditation adapted from To Die Well: A Holistic Approach for the Dying and Their Caregivers by Richard Roech

Moment of Reflective Silence

Hymn #123, *Spirit of Life*

Message: Everything in Moderation

Hymn #16, *'Tis a Gift to be Simple*

Offertory:

Let this be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place, which is so sacred to many of us, a community of memory and hope, for we are the keepers of the dream.

Closing Words

Discussion

Extinguishing Chalice *We extinguish this flame* by Elizabeth Selle Jones

Welcome & Announcements

Reading

A Segment of *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff

Benjamin Hoff (and Pooh) reminds us that happiness lies in *how we live* our lives....

“When you wake up in the morning, Pooh,” said Piglet at last, “what’s the first thing you say to yourself?”

“What’s for breakfast?” said Pooh. “What do you say, Piglet?”

“I say, I wonder what’s going to happen exciting today?” said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully. “It’s the same thing,” he said.

A basic Taoist principle is that we appreciate life as it is—the sweet with the bitter; that we savor the sweet and that we learn from the bitter. Pooh Bear has that figured out, except he doesn’t know that he has.....

...He often tells his friends ...that he loves honey, but he will ...admit that he isn’t sure if he loves the actual taste of honey more than the anticipation of the taste of honey. Both are so, so sweet!

When we enjoy our everyday moments fully, we, too, realize that we can enjoy the journey as much as the destination. Like Pooh, the *anticipation* of arriving at the destination is just as sweet to us as the final quest.

And *The Tao of Pooh* reminds us that nothing and doing are equally important. Because in Taoism, doing nothing signifies *something*.

...I can’t arrive at inner peace if I am too busy (or too distracted) doing something... I can only arrive at inner stillness if I do nothing. Of course, the goal is to arrive at inner stillness even when we are busy doing something.

On any spiritual journey we learn that balance and harmony within our bodies and minds will lead to balance and harmony in our lives....

Hoff ...gently reminds us ...that we are enough just as we are. No one realizes this more than Pooh Bear. Pooh just does what he does and all the while, happy while doing it. And if a simple bear can know this, surely, we can, too.¹

Prelude

Chalice Lighting *Let There Be Light* by Rev. Andrew Pakula

Let there be light

The light of joy, the light of happiness, and the light of contentment

May it illuminate our paths and fill our lives with peace

And let there be dark

For it is from our dark places that we are brought forward

Tried and tested

And impelled toward growth

It is in these places that we realize compassion and learn to love

And there was day and there was night.

And there was joy and there was sorrow.

And it was good.

Joys and Concerns

Hymn #34 *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*

¹ <https://thegiftsthatweshare.wordpress.com/2015/08/23/winnie-the-pooh-has-all-the-answers/>

Story for All Ages T'ai Chi: The Story of Its Beginning by Rev. Denise Tracy

There was a young man who grew up in China. Everyone said that he was so calm and peaceful, he should become a monk. Not wanting to displease his family and friends by telling the truth, the young man let them think he was indeed peaceful and calm. Inside, however, the young man was filled with feelings of doubt, joy, love, happiness, sadness—and many questions.

Because he wanted others' approval, he kept his feelings and questions to himself. He went on looking calm and peaceful to everyone.

When he was old enough, he entered the monastery, because everyone said he looked so peaceful and calm. They did not know of his secret inner life. Everyone was pleased because they felt he would be a great monk.

For years, he practiced sitting calmly and peacefully, and his masters were pleased. Little did they know that behind that calm exterior bubbled energy, exuberance and still more questions. The young man kept all these things to himself.

After years at the monastery, the young man was to be tested for his deep, inner religious peace. He was to go to a mountain top to meditate daily for many months, and on a final day the master would observe his meditation.

He went to the mountains for many days. He sat and sat and sat. He looked very calm and peaceful on the outside, but on the inside, his mind was filled with the crane's flight, fire and shadows, and the earth's elements, as well as questions of beginnings and endings. He did not tell anyone of the scenes and questions that filled his mind.

One day, he was at the top of the mountain sitting peacefully, pretending to be calm, meditating and preparing for the day of his exam (which was only two weeks away), when a fly landed right on the end of his nose.

He tried wiggling his nose to get the fly off. This did not work. He wiggled his nose again. What a stubborn fly! Next, he waved his hand and the fly danced. As he waved his hand, he discovered how joyful it felt to move. The fly then landed on his nose again. The young man waved his other hand. This, too, felt wonderful.

The fly began to turn circles and move with the wind and earth. The young monk leaped and laughed, dancing with the fly. As the

days passed, the young man looked forward to his dancing and moving with the fly.

He lost all track of time—hours, days, or minutes. He knew only the joy of moving in harmony with the elements, earth, water, fire, wood, wind, and metal.

The young man went to the top of the mountain on the day of his exam, but he had forgotten that this was a most important day. He saw the fly and they began their dance together, earth, water, fire, wood, wind, metal. They moved with focused energy and great joy. Neither the fly nor the young man noticed the Master of Masters seated, watching their movements.

After a while, the Master of Masters approached. The young man grew silent, embarrassed and fearful. He was supposed to be calm and meditative. He looked down in shame. He had failed his training.

The Master of Masters then said, “Young man, you must teach me this movement. You use the energy of the life force to mirror the earth, fire, wind, sky, birds, and water. This focused energy complements our study of inner peace. Since all is in balance, we need stillness and energy; we need peace and activity; we need meditation and movement.

“Teach me. Then you will teach all the monks this new miracle of focused energy.”

So from one young man whose creativity spilled over to dance with a fly came a meditation of movement called “T’ai Chi.”

Sing out the Children -

*Go now in peace. Go now in peace.
May the light of love surround you
Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.*

Reading: Letting Go Meditation adapted from To Die Well: A Holistic Approach for the Dying and Their Caregivers by Richard Roech

Now we begin our time of meditation and reflection. After the reading we will have a few moments of silence.

As you settle into the noisy silence of the room, center yourself on being in this space together. Allow yourself to relax comfortably in your chair, eyes open or closed.

We will close this moment of silence with singing "Spirit of Life", while remaining seated.

As our diaphragm tenses and relaxes, we breathe in and breathe out

As the muscles of our heart contract and relax, blood pulses throughout the body

All our vital functions have this wave like quality

We wake and we sleep

We remember and we forget

We are attracted to some things, and reject others

The speed and rhythm varies, but the pattern itself is the thumbprint of our being

When the pattern is disrupted our own inner harmony is disrupted

Today we are going to take time to reset ourselves

Let us begin by becoming aware of our breathing

If you are comfortable, close your eyes and allow yourself to settle into this moment

Take a breath in through your nose and then gently release your breath

Breathing in for a count of three

Then out for a count of three

Breathing in one, two, three

Releasing one, two, three

Breathing in one, two, three

And out one, two, three

Let your mind become blank

Anytime you feel yourself wander, simply return to your breathing

I want you to begin to imagine a flower

When the flower is closed it is self-protective
Tense, isolated, resistant, tight, suspicious, anxious, it's painful
When then closed bud opens, it is able to blossom
Its true nature is open and wide
Open the flower is tender, fertile, generous, inspiring, relaxed,
welcoming, forgiving
Stay with the flower you have imagined
Imagine that the very center of the bud is in your heart
Imagine it is fully closed
Then allow it to open wide in your mind
Try to use the power of all your senses:
See its color,
Smell its fragrance
Feel its delicacy
Hear all the sounds of nature around it
The sweetness of it
Then watch and feel it close again
What feels different now, do you feel tense?
Let the flower open wide again, imagining that your whole body
become the open blossom
As the flower closes up again let your body feel the sensations of
closing off, of shutting up oneself
And then the relief of opening back up, of releasing your anxiety
Sync your breathing to the image of the flower opening and closing
As you breathe in the flower closes
As you breathe out the flower open wide

Let the flower expand so that the tips of the petals expand to the limits of your body, feel your whole body relax

Continue this process as it feels comfortable and when you are ready return to this moment, to your being, your breathing

Moment of Reflective Silence

Hymn #123, *Spirit of Life*

Message:

The minister I grew up with used to say “everything in moderation, including moderation”

It’s hard for me think about balance without thinking about him and his Buddhist leanings

As I prepared to write this message I was also reminded of a minister I served under while still in seminary

One Sunday he told me we were going to do a tea communion, modeled after the Japanese practice of tea ceremonies

He introduced me to the concept of “Wabi-Sabi”

In its essence, Wabi-Sabi is the Japanese art of finding beauty in the imperfect; of accepting the natural cycle of growth, decay and death²

Wabi stems from the root word wa, often translated as harmony, peace, tranquility and balance

This is at the heart of the Zen tradition

To be a peace with oneself as you are

Sabi means “the bloom of time” referring to how things age and change over time

² <https://nobleharbor.com/tea/chado/WhatIsWabi-Sabi.htm>

Together they make up the philosophy behind the artistic tradition of Kintsugi, in which cracks in pottery are repaired with gold lacquer³

There are several Japanese stories and some legends that tell about how this tradition came to be

One such story is of a showgun who breaks a favorite cup

At the time, repairs would have been done with ugly metal staples

So instead, he sent the cup to some local craftsmen

They are surprised by his interest in such an ordinary thing and decide to fill the cracks with a gold lacquer⁴

What we can take from this is a desire not to throw away broken things

That something broken can still serve a purpose

It can show us that which breaks us makes us stronger, more beautiful, more complex

I wanted to share these concepts with you today in the hopes that it might open up a bigger conversation about our spiritual selves and how to find personal healing through balance

Wabi-Sabi developed from the Buddhist belief in the three marks of existence: impermanence, suffering, and non self⁵

The teaching is that all beings in existence will face delusions that life is permanent, that suffering is avoidable, and that some part of the essence of who you are will always exist

This translates easily for those of you familiar with the four noble truths;

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kintsugi>

⁴ <https://www.lifegate.com/people/lifestyle/kintsugi>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_marks_of_existence

that life is suffering, suffering is caused by our attachments, that there is a way free from suffering, and that way is the Eightfold Path

Wabi-Sabi brings these religious and philosophical teachings into our experience of the everyday

In short, I am speaking about mindfulness

I believe spiritual healing comes from balance

And I believe that through mindfulness, balance can be achieved

I have not yet found a way to free myself from my attachments

Like in “Galileo” by the Indigo Girls:

“Now I’m serving time for mistakes, made by another in another lifetime

How long till my soul gets it right?

Can any human being ever reach that kind of light?”⁶

But I have often found that a change in my perspective can do a lot to release the anxiety caused by my attachments

What I have learned is that I have the power to step back from what I am experiencing and see it for what it truly is

The best advice at this came from a chaplain mentor

I was in my first clinical pastoral care residency

I had been on call all night and a baby had died

The night was exhausting and I had slept very little

I was also still very new to what it meant to be a chaplain

⁶ <http://www.metrolyrics.com/galileo-lyrics-indigo-girls.html>

I feel into routine all the same

Every morning, my day began with an all staff meeting,

we would read through the calls and events of the night before and make referrals to other staff members for the day ahead

When the meeting ended, I was supposed to join some of my peers in a group session and then head out to my floors for rounds

As I sat down for group, my supervisor, now a long time mentor, looked at me and said “what are you doing here?”

I said, “we have group”

Again, he said “what are you doing here? Would you rather be here or at home eating bon bons and taking a bath?”

I said “eating bon bons and taking a bath”

He said “what are you doing here?”

This was the first of many times I would realize, I had a choice. Even if I was expected to be at group, that didn’t mean I couldn’t say I needed to go home.

This was how I started to learn self care.

In the old words of the serenity prayer, God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference

And you don’t have to ask God, you just have to look within yourself

A mentor once confronted me asking, what I had I ever achieved from worrying? The answer, of course, is nothing

But I have found peace in sorting out those three simple questions: what can I not change, what can I change, and how can I walk my path in life between the two?

The good news of Wabi-Sabi is that we are beautiful in our
imperfection

This is brought to life in the ceremonial cup of a tea ceremony

Often a hand made cup, asymmetrical, and flawed in its design

It may be a cup that has been dropped many times before, and
cracks and chips have been filled in with gold

We see the cup as beautiful because of its character

Or perhaps because of the story that lies behind the cup

We are similar vessels

We have often been mishandled and dropped more than a few times

But what stories we have to share

And our stories can help one another

Through the art of sharing, we begin to see our world as much bigger
and our trials and tribulations as much smaller

We find answers to what we can change and what we cannot
change.

We find our own path towards freedom from suffering comes from
human relationships

It comes from finding balance

It comes from knowing yourself and finding grounding in the here and
now

Please stand as you are able in body and spirit as we sing **Hymn #16**
Tis a Gift to be Simple

Offertory:

*Let this be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place,
which is so sacred to many of us, a community of memory and
hope, for we are the keepers of the dream.*

Closing Words

“Flow with whatever may happen, and let your mind be free:
Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing.
This is the ultimate.” Zhuangzi

Discussion**Extinguishing Chalice**

We extinguish this flame by Elizabeth Selle Jones

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of
community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our
hearts until we are together again.