

Encountering the Holy in Each Other

March 3, 2024 Annual Meeting Sunday

Rev Brigid Beckman

Meditation

Centering, paying attention to your breath, paying attention to the places you feel your body supported where you sit...

*“Hey I'm just trying to pay attention
While the silence patiently explains
The need for such a gratitude
That nothing else but Love remains...”* (lyrics by Mark Shepard)

We take a few moments to let
our attention settle into the quiet,

paying attention to what emotions are present in you;
perhaps curiosity is here; or sorrow is here;
Or joy is here; or peace is here

such a gratitude is here;
Love and companionship are here...

such a gratitude is here;
Love and companionship are here...
In our encounters with the Holy
In the encounters in our own hearts and lives
and in each other...

Message:

Happy Unity of Albany New Year! Every year, the month of March holds not only the annual meeting on this first Sunday, but also the anniversary of the first service held in this sanctuary. On March 17th, 28 years ago, the early “Unitic inhabitants” stepped out in faith to say yes to this building as a home for a community of seekers. These two dates offer us a chance to check in on where we’ve been, where we are, and where we’re going.

So here are a few questions for our annual check up!

- On your first or second time here, how many of you were greeted by someone who recognized that you were new?

- How many of you have felt stirred by music, or a prayer, or a message that lifted your heart and touched your spirit?
- How many of you felt a sense of openness and connection that drew you in, and made you want to come back?
- How many of you read the message, “Peace, Be Still” on this wall and something shifted inside?
- How many of you have you encountered the Holy, in this place that WE make holy by our presence?
- How many of you have found the grace to live out of step with the noise of the world, to live more fully from your Divine Essence?
- And how many of you have felt the comfort of knowing you’re not alone when your full humanity showed up as less than Go-Being-Us behavior??

Invocation: Come into this place ~ Rebecca A Edmiston-Lange

Come in. Come into this place which we make holy by our presence.

Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths, fears and anxieties, loves and hopes.

For here you need not hide, nor pretend, nor be anything other than who you are and are called to be.

Come into this place where we can touch and be touched, heal and be healed, forgive and be forgiven.

Come into this place, where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected.

Come into this place. Together we make it a holy place.

Meg Wheatly

*Mother Earth knows to create places of refuge: **Refugia** (reh-FU-jee-ah) is a biological term describing places of shelter where life endures in times of crisis, such as a volcanic eruption, fire, or stressed climate. Ideally, these refugia endure, expand, and connect so that new life emerges.*

She writes in her forthcoming book about how we create “Refugia” in our human terms:

An Island of Sanity is a gift of possibility and refuge created by people's commitment to form healthy community to do meaningful work. We realize we cannot keep swimming alone in these toxic seas... We create these islands in our

organizations, communities, and with dear colleagues. **We are not seeking safety, we are seeking contribution.** We don't move physically, but we withdraw psychically and spiritually (*from the noise of the world*) to create conditions that can awaken our human spirits. We willingly commit to build healthy community and to learn practices for working together harmoniously to accomplish meaningful work. No matter what is happening around us, we can discover practices that enliven our human spirits and produce meaningful contributions for this time.

John O' Donohue

(Click [here](#) to read a review of the book "[*Bless the Space Between Us*](#)," where the unadapted version of this poem is published.)

For A New Home by John O'Donohue, *words added or adapted by Rev Brigid in italics*

May this *community* shelter your life.

When you come home here,

May all the weight of the world

Fall from your shoulders.

May your heart be tranquil here,

Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this home be a place *of divine givingness*,

Where the graces your life desires

Always find the pathway to your door.

May nothing destructive

Ever cross your threshold.

May this be a safe place

Full of understanding and acceptance,

Where you can be as you are,

Without the need of any mask

Of pretense or image.

May this home be a place of discovery,

Where the possibilities that sleep

In the clay of your soul can emerge
To deepen and refine your vision
For all that is yet to come to birth
In a world transformed by the spiritual awakening of all.

May this be a *sacred space* of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A home where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey be difficult and slow.
May there be great delight around this *sanctuary*
May it be a house of welcome
For the broken and diminished.

May you have the eyes to see
And embrace the Divine essence of All Beings,
to see that no visitor arrives without a gift
And no guest leaves without a blessing.

We are a community on a path of cooperation with the infinite, with the Divine
Givingness of the Universe. Together, we pay attention to the awakening inside of you,
inside of me, and inside all of us, and we transform our world.

And so it is. Amen!