

**Meditation:**

In the stillness of this moment there is peace  
And I rest and trust and breathe and know  
In the stillness of this moment there is love,  
And I rest and trust and breathe and know

Wherever you stand be the soul of that place. ~Rumi

**Message:**

Do you remember where you were 5 years ago as the whole world stilled in the wake of this powerful, unseeable virus? Friday the 13th, exploring options for teaching virtually “just in case” and by Wednesday the 17th, zoom classes began because lockdown had begun. Canceled visits, canceled graduations, canceled proms and parties, canceled weddings, canceled funerals— so many life-moments marked in isolation instead of community. So many simple acts of daily living we suddenly could NOT take for granted. In the stillness of those moments, peace, trust— breath- were hard to find!

“What if 2020 isn’t cancelled?  
What if 2020 is the year we’ve been waiting for?  
A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw  
— that it finally forces us to grow.  
A year that screams so loud,  
finally awakening us from our ignorant slumber.  
A year we finally accept the need for change.  
Declare change. Work for change. Become the change.  
A year we finally band together, instead of  
pushing each other further apart.

What if 2020 isn’t cancelled, but rather  
the most important year of them all.” ~ Leslie Dwight

It’s painful to witness in this spring of 2025 all the ways that we have stopped banding together. The pushing apart of whole communities, of our very foundations of a democracy that has always been fragile— that pushing apart is screaming so loud that it often feels nearly impossible to find the quietness, the stillness that helps us hear the voice of the Beloved. Yet what if this too, is the most important year of them all? What is our invitation in THIS moment?

Wherever you stand, be the soul of that place. ~Rumi

As our resident Unity of Albany Historian Dennis Ryan reminds us, St Patrick's Day is Unity of Albany's anniversary of *this* place, Unity's physical home for 39 years. This place is the soul of our community. Not because of the bricks and mortar, or because of our renovations and care of it– but because of our **soulful presence** here together, year after year, week after week, day after day.

At Friday's Shabbat service, Rabbi Zach, Michael the birthday boy, the musicians, Michael's wife Marika, and all of the family, friends and loved ones gathered created a sacred container to FORTIFY each other with song, dancing, prayer, ritual, blessings– community and connection. We were the soul of *that* place– with presence, with giving and receiving soul friendship, whether we knew each other intimately well or not– the giving and receiving happened at a soul and spirit level, just like what we experience here!

In Celtic spirituality the practice of having a friendship with one who knows the depths of our soul is called *anam cara*. In ***Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul***, John Philip Newell writes about Pelagius, one of the earliest teachers of this spiritual practice.

“It is vital for us in our personal journey of inner awakening to have a friend who knows the depth of our soul...because the very act of trying to give expression to our soul, in the presence of someone who loves and trusts us, will enable us to grow in awareness. **Then what may have been lying unconscious in our depths will move up into greater consciousness, further enabling us to translate this awareness into action in our lives and relationships in the world.**”

We CLAIM our spiritual identity as the Truth of who we are. In soul friendships, in places that awaken our souls to the PRESENCE of ALL that is, we are then *fortified* to live from that Truth.

Do you remember the WWJD bracelets and bumper stickers from a few years ago? What would Jesus do? What if we instead DWJD– DO WHAT JESUS DID!

- **Go off by ourselves to pray Matthew 26:39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed (lenten booklet).** Spend time in the stillness “mining” the Truth of our sacred responsibility to express our full divinity in every moment of our fully human lives– the joyful, soulful moments, and the moments that make our souls feel unmoored..

- Gather and grow beloved community, soul friendships. Eat, work, heal, pray together.
- Feed the hungry. Care for the sick, for widows and orphans, for those in most need of healing, for those imprisoned by greed and power-over.
- Show the way of kinship, kin-dom with the least of these, with all of creation, kin-dom that flies in the face of tyranny and empire and leans instead on the power of the Source of ALL life and love.

***How might you live if you remembered wherever you stand you are the soul of that place?***

***How might you need a soul friend to help you translate your awareness of your divine consciousness into action in your life and relationships? How might you BE that soul friend?***

***How might we seek fortification FIRST so that our actions grow from deeply grounded awareness, not from the energy of outrage, judgement and fear?***

***How might our deep love and appreciation for the soul of THIS place inspire us to commit to growing Beloved Community, community that brings us to greater awareness of our wholeness, our truth, our light?***

***For Solitude*** by John O'Donohue

May you recognize in your life the presence,  
power, and light of your soul.

May you realize that you are never alone,  
that your soul in its brightness and belonging  
connects you intimately with the rhythm of the universe.

May you have respect for your individuality and difference.

May you realize that the shape of your soul is unique,  
that you have a special destiny here,  
that behind the facade of your life  
there is something beautiful and eternal happening.

May you learn to see yourself

with the same delight, pride, and expectation  
with which God sees you in every moment.

And so it is. Amen.