

**Order of Worship  
January 14, 2024**

Join Zoom Meeting  
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+19292056099,,87521034152# US (New York)

**10:00am RECORDING TO START**

**What are we owed?**

***Welcome and Announcements***

***Ivy Lobato***

Good morning!! I am \_\_\_\_\_ Welcome to online and in person worship at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast. We are so happy to have you all with us. We are especially happy to have the Ellsworth congregation join us while Rev. Sara is on her 5 month sabbatical. The UU Congregation of Ellsworth will be with us on the second Sunday of every month through May. It is so good to have this connection and collaboration.

If you are with us for the first time on zoom, and would like to introduce yourself and/or become part of our email list, please say hello and leave your contact information in the chat. Or If you would rather contact us directly, you will also see Rev. Amy's contact information in the chat. She'd love to hear from you. If there's anyone here in the sanctuary who is new or back after a long break and you'd like to introduce yourself, raise your hand and Rev. Amy will bring you the microphone. ....

I hope you'll say hello after the service or send an email whenever you can. The most important thing is that you ALL know that you are welcome.

**In the chat:**

[mccormickar11@gmail.com](mailto:mccormickar11@gmail.com)

[office.uubelfast@gmail.com](mailto:office.uubelfast@gmail.com)

207-930-0007 - Rev. Amy

207-338-4482 - Office/Cayla

We have some announcements this morning:

1. Today Join us for a fun brainstorming session regarding Stewardship and the Annual Budget Drive here in the sanctuary from 11:15am to 12:15pm.
2. Then at 12:15pm anyone who is interested will meet in the community room downstairs for a special 90 minute UU and You Class with Rev. Amy. Come learn a little about our UU Origins and talk about our evolution to today.
3. Rev. Amy's Book Group is Starting on Saturday February 3rd 10am-11:30am on ZOOM. UUCE and UUCB folks are invited. On Repentance and Repair by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg the UUA's Common Read. Please reach out to Rev. Amy if you're interested. Books can be ordered in a variety of places, let Amy know if finances are a barrier at all. Please read as much as possible but at least the Intro and first 2 chapters before our first group on February 3rd.
4. More Blessing Bags have been requested for unhoused young adults who are working with Neva's organization But Still I Am One - if you have socks, toiletries, tea, sweaters, or backpacks to donate, please get them to Cayla, and the Youth Group will work their magic assembling kits!
5. This announcement is largely for UUCE however we are all invited to attend, participate and/or donate!

UUCE's annual Talents and Services Auction will be held on February 17th this year with the live auction in the evening and a Silent Auction preceding for several weeks.

Our theme this year is **Cabin Fever Fun!**

Co-chairs Jeff Jeude and Liz True are seeking donations of time, talent, and treasure.

Please let Liz know about donations by February 1st. Her email is in the chat.

**PUT IN CHAT:** [eatrue9@gmail.com](mailto:eatrue9@gmail.com)

6. Finally, UUCE's Winter Parish Meeting is next Sunday at 2pm on ZOOM ONLY. There will be things to vote on so a quorum is needed. We hope to see everyone there.

And now please settle in, take a deep breath and allow yourself to fully arrive as I offer this statement of truth.

### ***Statement of Truth***

***Ivy Lobato***

We acknowledge that we in Maine are on the lands of the Wabanaki Confederacy comprising the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples who have stewarded this land and called it home long before Europeans arrived.

We also acknowledge that our country- Many of its farms, infrastructure, and retail products were and continue to be built and produced using the stolen labor of enslaved and incarcerated people thus robbing them of autonomous personhood. We pledge our continued learning and action to dismantle oppressive systems everywhere. Let us have a moment of silence as we seek wisdom to heal and repair these deep wounds.

**PAUSE HERE for a few beats**

## Ring the Bowl

*Prelude: Come Thou Font of Every Blessing, by John Wyeth, arr by Victor Labenske*  
*Ellie Daniels*

*Call to Worship*

*Rev. Amy*

### **An Invocation to Liberating Love \***

*Rev. Dr. David Breeden*

Buildings speak—  
 not in voices of stone  
 but in the hum of conversation,  
 of flesh and bone gathering,

nearly mystical  
 at times. Almost  
 we sense mental  
 chains shattering,

almost we hear  
 birds wrenching free  
 of their cages.

And the walls long  
 hidden in the corners  
 of our minds—

walls so defining  
 hold us fast

until together  
 our voices rise,

trust blooming

until there,  
there is a sky,  
blue, unending.

Judgments wither  
like cut flowers then,  
and love—love is

the ground on  
which we dance,  
singing of liberation.

by T. De Los Reyes

Sometimes when I glance outside the window and see the sun like a giant yolk sitting atop the clouds I can almost understand why it is worth it. When I think of something funny and I start laughing until I'm crying, when I've eaten a good bowl of soup and I feel the warmth inside my body, when the rain falls gently and the fog moves in and the thunder feels more a murmur than a rumble—I think, yes, this will do. And when you call me beautiful and it gives me the sweetest ache, I remember that I do, you know. Love, I mean. Because I want to be here. Because I want all this, still.

***Opening Hymn    #354 We Laugh, We Cry       Verses 1 and 4***

***Chalice Lighting***

***Ivy Lobato***

As \_\_\_\_\_ lights our Chalice I offer these words by Mark Belletini

Ah, it's true.

When our ancestors spoke of heaven,  
they were speaking of this moment.  
When they went on about nirvana  
they imagined a time like this.  
When they sang of paradise,  
it was this morning they imagined  
A time when all the mysteries of life and death  
are blended in a community of praise,  
when the bones of ancient lovers  
are given flesh again in our own bodies,  
teachers of long ago speaking of love and truth  
once more in lives so ordinary they are  
extraordinary.  
Blest is our breath, in and out, quiet,  
blest is our sitting, our fidgeting, our movement  
blest is our heartbeat echoing  
the pounding alleluias of the distant stars,  
blest is the silence that is presence  
not absence.

***Affirmation***

Please read with me the Affirmation you will see shown on your screen:

Love is the spirit of this church, the quest for truth is its sacrament, and service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge in freedom, to serve humanity in fellowship, to the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the divine – thus do we covenant with one another and with the source of our being.

***Time for All Ages***

***When No One is Watching***

***Cayla and Rev. Amy***

Khawāje Shams-od-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ-e known by his [pen name](#) Hafez, Ḥāfeẓ, or Hafiz meaning 'the memorizer; the (safe) keeper'; 1325–1390) His life and poems have become the subjects of much analysis, commentary, and interpretation, influencing Persian writing more than any other Persian author.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

“There is a Beautiful Creature  
 Living in a hole you have dug.  
 So at night  
 I set fruit and grains  
 And little pots of wine and milk  
 Besides your soft earthen mounds,  
 And I often sing.  
 But still, my dear,  
 You do not come out.  
 I have fallen in love with Someone  
 Who hides inside you.  
 We should talk about this problem--  
 Otherwise,

I will never leave you alone.”

— Hafiz, *I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy*

### **Cayla Reads:**

Even  
After  
All this time  
The Sun never says to the Earth,  
"You owe me."  
Look  
What happens  
With a love like that,  
It lights the whole sky.

Discussion with the Congregation...given something with no expectation.  
Witnessed something good...etc..

***Amy will teach a song...***

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10PN6vNkGNvD1TqJIgl1gn093ccUVumUlsALWuqAr4Ps/edit?usp=sharing>

Gregory Orr Wrote:

Squander it all  
Hold nothing back  
The Heart's a deep well  
And when it is empty  
It will fill again

***Discipline doing right thing even nobody watching***  
***Hymn #118 This little light of mine***



***Offering/Shared Plate*****Ivy Lobato**

Now, we bring your attention to our weekly offering. This continues to be the place and time where we practice generosity together.

In our commitment to a meaningful practice of Reparations 50% of the offering collected each week goes to First Light, a group that addresses land-back restoration for Native Americans in Maine.

We continue to share the other 50% of our shared riches with incredible organizations selected by the Shared Plate team.

During January, this is Maine Family Planning **Maine Family Planning - their mission is to ensure that all Maine people have access to high-quality, affordable reproductive health care, comprehensive sexual health education, and the right to control their reproductive lives.**

Please refer to the Announcements area in the Order of Worship for more information on both of these organizations.

I now invite **need 2 people** forward to pass our baskets this morning.

**In the chat:** 37 Miller St, Belfast ME 04915

uubelfast.com for Breeze, [office.uubelfast@gmail.com](mailto:office.uubelfast@gmail.com) for help.

***Offertory Music: For This We Stand, by Jim Scott***

**Collect baskets then say:** For all the ways you give we are grateful.

***Stewardship Moment******Dan Kirchoff***

***Joys and Sorrows******Rev. Amy***

Every week we make precious space for this community to share its greatest joys and deepest sorrows with one another. Let this be a moment to share a celebration or to lay down a burden. \_\_\_\_\_ First I invite anyone in the congregation to raise your hand and \_\_\_\_\_ will bring you the microphone. As that is happening folks on zoom are welcome to write in the chat and then I will invite anyone online to speak before I read the chat messages. Please say your name so that we might know you better and share what is on your heart.

What needs to be spoken this morning?

***Prayer******Meditative Hymn******#18 What Wondrous Love******Homily******Squander it All******Rev. Amy***

*“True love begins when nothing is looked for in return.”*

**Antoine Marie Jean-Baptiste Roger, comte de Saint-Exupéry** who was a French writer, poet, journalist and pioneering aviator. Most famous for his novella “The Little Prince”. He tried to convince the US to enter the fight against Nazi Germany and flew with the French Air Force long after his age and health allowed. He disappeared while on a reconnaissance mission for the French Air Force on 31 July 1944 at the age of 44. Now, some 80 years later a quote attributed to him is one of the inspirations for this service. I bet he never would’ve expected the ripples of this wisdom impacting people still today.

*“True love begins when nothing is looked for in return.”*

And that got me thinking about the transactional culture that we live in. The “You can’t get something for nothing”

“You get what you pay for”

Our expectations, the way “gifts” are regularly given with explicit or more often unspoken/hidden expectations. Given with “strings attached” a sense of owing left in their wake...an obligation created in the receiving.

“Quid pro Quo”

“You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.” That seems to permeate everything everywhere. Especially in our systems of politics and social power.

Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd calls it, “Putting our love in boxes with qualifications: I will love you if – I will see you if – I will bear the truth of my soul alongside you if – and only if... you agree with me, you look like me, you act like me, you sing like me, you wear your gender on your sleeve and produce it upon demand. I will

love you and will meet you in the sanctuary of our hearts – If and only if...

I recently read an article titled: The Transactional Flow of Society is Making us Sick. It was written by Mark Feinberg published in Elephant Journal, an independent online publication focused on living a mindful life. **Mark Feinberg** is a dad, dog owner, entrepreneur, podcast host, author and community activist. Mark was raised Jewish in New York and is now a practicing Buddhist.

*>> Suicide rates up 35% since 2000, up more than 50% in women*

*>> Heart disease cases are up 40% since 2000*

*>> Drug overdoses are up over 400% since 2000*

*>> Religion affiliation down from 70% to less than 50% from 2000-2020 (and falling)*

Feinberg's hypothesis about why this is, is that we've forgotten how to be in, what he calls "flow". Our impatience, fear, belief in scarcity and the concept of being owed something as a mark of worth or a motivation to give, blocks us from a sense of hope, love, confidence thus impacting even our physical health. He says what is needed is a focus on transformation rather than transaction.

Transformational: When we give, we are hoping to add more love into the world.

Transactional: When we give we are hoping to get something in return, usually immediately. Transactional states are linear, you do x and I do y. Period. Now.

Clear. (That's why we like them) But transformational states take time, they spiral, the flow of transformation allows for creativity and abundance because the only rules are love freely, and trust. **Quote - Henri Nouwen**

When Jesus talks about faith,  
he means first of all to  
trust unreservedly that  
you are loved,  
so that you can  
abandon every  
false way of obtaining it.

Trust that all you need will come back to you in time from places and people that may surprise you. Your love given to one person may return to you from another. Life is not a transaction, it is a process of transformation.

Our Soul Matters theme for January is Liberating Love. It is about love freely given, and love that is freeing. I think it's also about liberating love from the illusion of limitations. It's remembering what we know, way deep down, in our bones: the nature of true love is infinite, boundless, unending, it can not be used up or wasted. The more it is given, the more there is to give. It asks nothing in return for its existence, you don't even have to accept it or let it in. It just is, always present, always waiting to be chosen. Love is after all a verb.

Ask yourself right now silently in your own heart. Is there any part of you that doesn't know that truth? What would happen if you let go of expectations or the

sense of being owed anything? What would happen if you squandered it all trusting that you will be refilled? What kind of light would come from a love like that?

Squander it all  
 Hold nothing back  
 The Heart's a deep well  
 And when it is empty  
 It will fill again

I'm so very lucky because one of the best things about being friends with Rev. Sara Hayman, the Minister of the Ellsworth Congregation is that she is so very good at sharing inspirations and experiences. She is generous with her resources and her learning. Indirectly, she's the reason I've learned that song.

See, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer leads a class called Poetry as Ritual. In the first class, she opened by singing that little poem/song. And the reason I know that is because it was really Rev. Sara who is taking the class as part of her sabbatical and she, without my asking, has been sending along what she's experiencing. Enriching my life and now yours I hope through her giving.

Sara has shared its beauty and teachings with me. She didn't have to. She could've saved up all the little nuggets of goodness herself. But she didn't, she never does, she just gives and that of course means that I feel more motivated to be more generous and more moved to return the favor. That's how it works isn't it...

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer also shared The Four Promises she makes to herself as a writer.

They are:

1. I will write. cooking painting playing music...working for justice...Love

The first rule is to do the thing.

2. It doesn't have to be good, it just has to be true. What is the next true thing? Which is really about letting go of trying to please, trying to know what people want, trying to be profound or smart or wise. It's the ultimate, You can't expect anything in return in order for this to work. You are owed nothing for your effort.

These first two rules: Squander it all, hold nothing back.

3. You cannot know the ending when you begin. She says, Let the poem know more than you do. This is the one that is tricky when it comes to sermon writing. Just the act of writing a blurb sets the expectation that I know where I'm going with this. Most of the time I find my sermon had different ideas. The first title of this service was "What do we expect?". The second title is "What are we owed?" I don't like either of them. I wish now I had called it "Squander it All".

I often wish it were easier to wait and let it tell me.

I don't think it's different than choosing to love in a transformative way. For justice, for your family, or relationships, for your

community. You just pour it all out...not knowing if or how it will make a difference. The heart's a deep well.

4. I will share it. The power in any endeavor or choice is then to let it go and do what it was meant to do in the world. Pass it along, speak words of kindness, do something good while no one is watching. Write the poem, send the letter to the politician, show up on the bus to DC. Share what you have to give. It will fill again.

So this week I ask you to think about what parts of your life are transactional and what parts are transformational? Where could you make a shift? Ask yourself, What am I expecting from this life, from others, when I come to church even? What do I think I am owed for my efforts, by this place, my people, the world?

And finally, What would it look like, feel like...to squander all your love each and every day of each and every week trusting you will be refilled, somehow and in some way...beyond your ability to predict or control.

Look what happens with a love like that....it lights up the whole sky.

***Closing Hymn***

***#131 Love Will Guide Us***

***Benediction***

Now may the commitment to truth guide you,



the warmth of love hold you,  
and the spirit of peace bless you,  
this day and in the days to come. Amen.

***Postlude: Deep River, American Spiritual, arr by Sandra Eithun***

*Ellie Daniels*

***Extinguish the Chalice***