

Order of Service

Sunday, December 30, 2018
Last Night and a New Day
James Fisher, Worship Leader
Amy Fiorilli, Worship Associate

Ringing of the Bowl - *Invitation to Contemplative Listening* James Fisher

We are a gregarious lot. We love each other's company and we love to talk. At the risk of shushing my library full of happy children, I will invite you to hear the music and to feel the love of this sacred community. Especially, I invite you to reflect on this year now ending, your triumphs, tragedies and all those unrealized plans that you will carry forward in the new year. There will be an examination at the end of the period.

Gathering Music Wayne Smith, Music Director

Welcome & Announcements UUCE Board Member

Ringing of the Bowl Amy Fiorilli, Intern Minister

Prelude Wayne Smith, Music Director

Call to Worship James Fisher

I am Jim Fisher, a crib-born Unitarian Universalist, a long-time member of this church and I am delighted to share this Sunday with you. The theme for December is and shortly will have been "mystery. What can be more mysterious than 2018? This year, that has gyrated wildly, as climate change makes clear its presence, as our economic fortunes rose and fell, as our political pendulum apparently reached an extreme and now swings back, as people struggle to enter our country against barriers of walls, fences, tear gas and humiliation, as our private lives have become entwined in a complex matrix of social media and our jobs, our driving, even our kitchen utensils face the prospect of automation. We gather in this sanctuary aware that our lives are all connected, not only with our families and neighbors, but with our ancestors and our descendents. Our individual experiences so filled with mystery are connected. We reach out with our hearts and minds this Sunday morning to look back, to reflect and to peer into the future with hope and prayer.

* **Opening Hymn** #128 *For All That Is Our Life*

Chalice Lighting Amy Fiorilli, Intern Minister

Affirmation of Covenant (spoken in unison) words by James Villa Blake

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

Time for All Ages

James Fisher

HANS BRINKER OR THE SILVER SKATES

By Mary Mapes Dodge The Hero of Haarlem

Many years ago, there lived in Haarlem, one of the principal cities of Holland, a sunny-haired boy of gentle disposition. His father was a sluicer, that is, a man whose business it was to open and close the sluices, or large oaken gates, that are placed at regular distances across the entrances of the canals, to regulate the amount of water that shall flow into them.



“The sluicer raises the gates more or less according to the quantity of water required, and closes them carefully at night, in order to avoid all possible danger of an oversupply running into the canal, or the water would soon overflow it and inundate the surrounding country. As a great portion of Holland is lower than the level of the sea, the waters are kept from flooding the land only by means of strong dikes, or barriers, and by means of these sluices, which are often strained to the utmost by the pressure of the rising tides. Even the little children in Holland know that constant watchfulness is required to keep the rivers and ocean from overwhelming the country, and that a moment’s neglect of the sluicer’s duty may bring ruin and death to all.”

“One lovely autumn afternoon, when the boy was about eight years old, he obtained his parents’ consent to carry some cakes to a blind man who lived out in the country, on the other side of the dike. The little fellow started on his errand with a light heart, and having spent an hour with his grateful old friend, he bade him farewell and started on his homeward walk.



“Trudging stoutly along the canal, he noticed how the autumn rains had swollen the waters. Even while humming his careless, childish song, he thought of his father’s brave old gates and felt glad of their strength, for, thought he, ‘If THEY gave way, where would Father and Mother be? These pretty fields would all be covered with the angry waters—Father always calls them the ANGRY waters. I suppose he thinks they are mad at him for keeping them out so long.’ And with these thoughts just flitting across his brain, the little fellow stooped to pick the pretty flowers that grew along his way. Sometimes he stopped to throw some feathery seed ball in the air and watch it as it floated away; sometimes he listened to

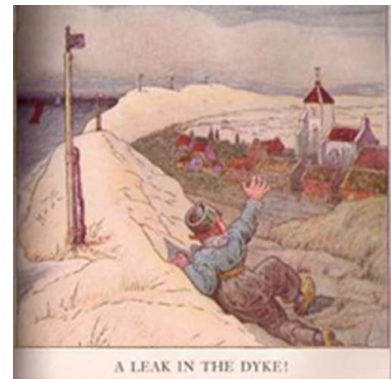
the stealthy rustling of a rabbit, speeding through the grass, but oftener he smiled as he recalled the happy light he had seen arise on the weary, listening face of his blind old friend.”

“Suddenly the boy looked around him in dismay. He had not noticed that the sun was setting. Now he saw that his long shadow on the grass had vanished. It was growing dark, he was still some distance from home, and in a lonely ravine, where even the blue flowers had turned to gray. He quickened his footsteps and, with a beating heart recalled many a nursery tale of children belated in dreary forests. Just as he was bracing himself for a run, he was startled by the sound of trickling water. Whence did it come? He looked up and saw a small hole in the dike through which a tiny stream was flowing. Any child in Holland will shudder at the thought of A LEAK IN THE DIKE! The boy understood the danger at a glance. That little hole, if the water were allowed to trickle through, would soon be a large one, and a terrible inundation would be the result.



“Quick as a flash, he saw his duty. Throwing away his flowers, the boy clambered up the heights until he reached the hole. His chubby little finger was thrust in, almost before he knew it. The flowing was stopped! Ah! he thought, with a chuckle of boyish delight, the angry waters must stay back now! Haarlem shall not be drowned while I am here!

“This was all very well at first, but the night was falling rapidly. Chill vapors filled the air. Our little hero began to tremble with cold and dread. He shouted loudly; he screamed, ‘Come here! come here!’ but no one came. The cold grew more intense, a numbness, commencing in the tired little finger, crept over his hand and arm, and soon his whole body was filled with pain. He shouted again, ‘Will no one come? Mother! Mother!’ Alas, his mother, good, practical soul, had already locked the doors and had fully resolved to scold him on the morrow for spending the night with blind Jansen without her permission. He tried to whistle. Perhaps some straggling boy might heed the signal, but his teeth chattered so, it was impossible. Then he called on God for help. And the answer came, through a holy resolution: ‘I will stay here till morning.’”



“The midnight moon looked down upon that small, solitary form, sitting upon a stone, halfway up the dike. His head was bent but he was not asleep, for every now and then one restless hand rubbed feebly the outstretched arm that seemed fastened to the dike—and often the pale, tearful face turned quickly at some real or fancied sounds.

“How can we know the sufferings of that long and fearful watch—what falterings of purpose, what childish terrors came over the boy as he thought of the warm little bed at home, of his



parents, his brothers and sisters, then looked into the cold, dreary night! If he drew away that tiny finger, the angry waters, grown angrier still, would rush forth, and never stop until they had swept over the town. No, he would hold it there till daylight—if he lived! He was not very sure of living. What did this strange buzzing mean? And then the knives that seemed pricking and piercing him from head to foot? He was not certain now that he could draw his finger away, even if he wished to.

“At daybreak a clergyman, returning from the bedside of a sick parishioner, thought he heard groans as he walked along on the top of the dike. Bending, he saw, far down on the side, a child apparently writhing with pain.

“‘In the name of wonder, boy,’ he exclaimed, ‘what are you doing there?’

“‘I am keeping the water from running out,’ was the simple answer of the little hero. ‘Tell them to come quick.’

“It is needless to add that they did come quickly and that—”

That little boy represents the spirit of the whole country. Not a leak can show itself anywhere either in its politics, honor, or public safety, that a million fingers are not ready to stop it, at any cost.”



Offering

James Fisher

What better time is there to take up this offering, this the penultimate day of the year. Your kitchen tables, if they are like mine, are piled with requests for money. The causes are compelling. My grandmother once consoled me that my loss of a girlfriend was a case of not being in the right place at the right time. She said, “distance lends enchantment, but propinquity gets the kiss”. The ushers will now collect the morning offering. First time visitors may let the basket pass you by as your presence, indeed your propinquity, is a gift.

Joys and Sorrows

Amy Fiorilli

Silence and Pastoral Prayer

Amy Fiorilli

Meditative Hymn #46 And Now the Day is Over

A hymn written in the late 1800s by the Lutheran Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, who also notably wrote the famous hymn, Onward Christian Soldiers.

SERMON

Now we get to the heart of the service. I’ve worn many hats in my varied careers. As I jump from regional planning to teaching sociology, to coordinating drug addiction research, public health, international development and town management, I have picked up a few tricks that have served me well. One of my favorites is called Keep, Stop, Start. Let’s say you are one year into a project, lots of planning, lots of moving parts, and you need to work with your team to fine-tune the process, or even the goals of the project. You can plan a small retreat, shut off the cell phones

and ask yourselves, “Looking back over the last year, what should we keep doing, what should we stop doing and what should we start doing?”. I’m going to suggest this morning that the same process is helpful as a means for wrapping up the year in our lives and the lives of our families and communities. For each segment of these three ruminations I will provide a reading or two or three. We will spend two full minutes in silence thinking about our lives in 2018. I will open the floor for 1 to 3 word statements for the congregation, then reflect on ideas I have discovered in my work. I have a timer and will end feedback in order to stay on track.

What do you want to KEEP from this past year?

Reading Various Quotes

Charles Dickens I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.

John Muir Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.

Robert Frost The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.

Barack Obama If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress.

Thomas Aquinas If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever.

Silent Meditation (bell)

Congregational Response

Reflection: ABCD: Asset Based Community Development - Success Stories from the World

I can't say when I discovered my purpose in life, my foundational truth. I know my mother's strong will and passion for art and for human justice and my father's commitment to a sustainable world shaped my career path. My bottom line evolved from their lessons, and lessons I learned working in the developing world. At least for now, my bottom line is to find the right mix of economic development, a sustainable environment and a healthier population.



If I could I think I would take care of these three goals on my own. Just do it. I run from one broken thing to another, effecting the best repairs that I can, given constraints of time, materials and know-how. This is very much a finger-in-the-dike strategy for life, and one that is prone to failure.

I cannot help but draw a connection between the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike, hoping to hold back the ocean and President Donald Trump imagining he can build a wall the length of the US-Mexico border and thus end the historic and prehistoric pattern of human migration. Finger in the dike strategies are often necessary, but they are short-lived and easily corrupted.

My better angels call out for a very different process for improving our economy, environment and health. Here is an easy acronym for you to put in your pockets. ABCD stands for Asset Based Community Development. This is a big package to unpack, so we'll hit a few high points that should resonate with you. The key is that we begin with and build upon our assets. We recognize that there are problems, but we recognize that long-term solutions require many hands. The glass is half-full.

Three foundational truths in Asset Based Community Development are 1) Everyone has gifts, 2) Everyone has something to contribute and 3) Everyone cares about something and that passion is his or her motivation to act.

Going back to the wall, we would ask what migrants care about so much that they are motivated to act? They want security, a better life for their children, freedom of expression, food to eat, a chance to lead productive lives with the skills that they have and can acquire. Understanding what people can do for themselves and for society, we will surely identify better strategies than building walls.

In 2019 I want to practice my A, B, C, Ds. I want to recognize the gifts in others and find what motivates them to act for a better future. Collaboration is key.

What would you like to STOP doing?

The massive wildfires of California in 2018 forced thousands of families to decide what they could do without, what to leave behind. This was done in crisis, and I am sure many are wondering now at the choices they made.

As we bring 2018 to a close, we should look back individually and collectively and consider the many things that we would rather not carry forward into the new year. Perhaps these things or actions or relationships just didn't work, or perhaps their consequences were not what we intended. Perhaps we don't have energy to do them anymore.

Reading: What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel? (In Won't you be my Neighbor)
Fred Rogers www.neighborhoodarchive.com/music/songs/what_do_you_do.html

What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel? (Song)

Written by Fred Rogers | © 1968 Fred M. Rogers

What do you do with the mad that you feel
When you feel so mad you could bite?
When the whole wide world seems oh, so wrong...
And nothing you do seems very right?

What do you do? Do you punch a bag?
Do you pound some clay or some dough?
Do you round up friends for a game of tag?
Or see how fast you go?

It's great to be able to stop
When you've planned a thing that's wrong,
And be able to do something else instead
And think this song:

I can stop when I want to
Can stop when I wish
I can stop, stop, stop any time.
And what a good feeling to feel like this
And know that the feeling is really mine.
Know that there's something deep inside
That helps us become what we can.
For a girl can be someday a woman
And a boy can be someday a man.

Silent Meditation

[Congregational Response]

Reflection: What Can We Live Without?

I traveled to India in 1977 on a junior year abroad study program. From the moment you step off the plane you are surrounded by people that have lived with very little You cannot help but reflect on the great disparities in wealth, power and prestige in the world. Clearly we can live without an awful lot of stuff.

This is not to say that my friends in India did not have material aspirations. At that time I was interested in ethnomusicology and specifically about the lyrics of neo-Buddhist Mahar Indian devotional songs. My Indian friends were, for the most part, studying science, engineering, business, journalism and other very practical subjects to prepare for productive lives. They were amused that I would travel so far to study folk songs.

On the other hand, the parents and grandparents of my friends were more interested, and perhaps less attached to the material world. The Hindu tradition provides for a very different model of retirement. It is not universally practiced. In broad brush people pass through phases in their lives, from a childhood devoted to learning, adulthood devoted to production and reproduction, retirement devoted to simple living and a twilight when we may become sanyasi devoted to reflection and prayer. This final stage, in its fullest expression may include a renunciation of material goods, dressing in simple bit of cloth and carrying a begging bowl for meals. Wider Indian society supports the senyasi through alms, and in return may receive prayers. Our retreat from the material world is less planned I think. We must eventually give up our quest for material goods. It is said, “you can’t take it with you”.

I wonder whether Charles Dickens was aware of Hindu tradition as he penned the Christmas Carol. What did Ebenezer Scrooge give up in the end?
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>)

The spirit of Christmas past concludes that, “He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?”

“It isn’t that,” said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. “It isn’t that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count ’em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”



What would you like to START doing in the coming year?

An so dawns a new day in a new year and we set out with optimism, new intentions, and new resolve.

We’ll sing this quote together.

**Hymn #38 Morning has Broken* Eleanor Farjeon

Silent Meditation

Congregational Response

Reflection: A New Day

There are many things to start in our new year. Popular resolutions may starting: making more friends, eating better, exercising more, earning more money. They may be stopping: losing weight, spending less, quitting tobacco or a bad relationship. They may be about keeping: valuing and spending more time with my friends or family, doing well at my job, practicing my craft. It's all good. If, like 95% of people, you do not entirely achieve your resolution, you are nevertheless more likely to make progress if you make a resolution.

You may have been thinking at a different level, promoting peace, a cleaner environment, volunteering for a good cause.

I want to invite you all to come to Last Night in Blue Hill. It's a cultural tradition of music, dance, theater and poetry, one last free admission, chem-free, family friendly gathering as we usher out 2018. The celebration of the old year ending and the new year dawning, no doubt connected to the passing of the solstice, is an opportunity to take stock, to keep what is good, stop what is not and start on new adventures.

New Year Eve traditions takes many forms throughout the world. In Ecuador each small village or urban neighborhood would build an "old year muñeca / doll / effigy" In 1979 effigies included Ecuadorian and US elected leaders, sports figures, popular local residents and cartoon characters like the incredible hulk. The muñecas were burned at midnight in a party atmosphere with music, dancing and celebration for the new year.



New Year is not always the same day. In Bangladesh the new year is celebrated on April 14, in accordance with the Bengali calendar and is celebrated with large, inter-denominational processions. In Bolivia, the Aymara calendar places New Year on June 21. The Catholic Church accommodated this long-standing celebration of the longest night, this being the southern hemisphere, declaring June 23 to be a celebration of San Juan de Batista featuring music, dance and all-night fires. The smoke from these solstice fires is so thick that airports are closed the following day.

I appreciate these rituals of passage, our communal desire to close out the year, take stock of our assets, evaluate what went well, what failed, what we learned, what we are ready and willing to do next year. We gather around the yule log, the fire, the burning muñeca, we embrace our common fate, and celebrate the dawn of a new year.

The Peace of Wild Things Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Farewell to the Old Year, Happy New Year

* **Closing Hymn**. Auld Lang Syne Robert Burns in 1788 [and Here's to Last Night. Noel Paul Stookey 2016]

Notes on Auld Lang Syne

At [Hogmanay](#) in Scotland, it is common practice that everyone joins hands with the person next to them to form a great circle around the dance floor. At the beginning of the last verse, everyone crosses their arms across their breast, so that the right hand reaches out to the neighbour on the left and vice versa. When the tune ends, everyone rushes to the middle, while still holding hands. When the circle is re-established, everyone turns under the arms to end up facing outwards with hands still joined.

<p>Should old acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind? Should old acquaintance be forgot, and old lang syne?</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne, we'll take a cup of kindness yet, for auld lang syne.</p>	<p>Here's to the last night of the old year And to the new year yet to be Yet, before these days become A distant memory</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Old friend, new friend Come and gather here (and) Raise a toast to celebrate This last night of the year O</p>
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CHORUS

And surely you'll buy your pint cup!
and surely I'll buy mine!
And we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS

We two have paddled in the stream,
from morning sun till dine†;
But seas between us broad have roared
since auld lang syne.

CHORUS

And there's a hand my trusty friend!
And give me a hand o' thine!
And we'll take a right good-will draught,
for auld lang syne.

CHORUS

Benediction

Amy Fiorilli, Intern Minister

Postlude

Wayne Smith, Music Director

(Backup Blessing)

A BLESSING FOR RISK-TAKERS AND FAILURES

A Blessing for Risk-Takers and Failures

By Robin Tanner

Today we share in a blessing for losers, risk-takers, all failures far and wide....

Blessed are they who fall in the mud, who jump with gusto and rip the pants, who skin the elbows, and bruise the ego,

- for they shall know the sweetness of risk.

Blessed are they who make giant mistakes, whose intentions are good but impact has injured, who know the hot sense of regret and ask for mercy,
for their hearts will know the gift of forgiveness.

Blessed are they who have seen a D or an F or C or any letter less than perfect, who are painfully familiar with the red pen and the labels as "less than,"

- for they know the wisdom in the imperfect.

Blessed are they who try again, who dust off, who wash up, who extend the wish for peace, who return to sites of failure, who are dogged in their pursuit,

- or they will discover the secret to dreams.

Blessed are they who refuse to listen to the naysayers,
for their hearts will be houses for hope.

Blessed are they who see beyond the surface of another,
- for they will be able to delight in the gift of compassion.

Blessed are they who stop running the race to help a fellow traveler, who pick up the fallen, who stop for injured life,
for they shall know the kindness of strangers.

Blessed are they who wildly, boldly abandon winning,
- for they shall know the path of justice.

About the Author

Robin Tanner

Robin Tanner is a Unitarian Universalist minister, poet, and activist who serves as the Minister of Worship and Outreach at Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, New Jersey.