**VIUU Service Script 2.4.2023**

**Justice & Equity: Who do I Need to Help me Find a Way?**

Speaker: Rev. Victoria

Service Leader: Robbie Rohr

Musician: Kat Eggleston

Tech: Alix Clarke

Monthly theme: Justice & Equity

**Music - Prelude: Kat Eggleston**

**Gathering Bell**: Robbie Rohr

**Welcome:** Robbie Rohr

Good Morning and welcome to the Vashon Island Unitarian Universalists. My name is , I use ( / ) pronouns (optional), and I will be your service leader today. If you are visiting, please participate as you feel comfortable. You’re invited to stay and introduce yourself in conversation following the service.

Our congregation is committed to individual freedom of belief, welcomes diversity, seeks to promote a sense of community and fosters religion, which enriches the spirit.

We are a mostly lay-led community strengthened and enriched by weaving together the volunteer contributions of members and friends. Our community is supported and guided by our minister, Rev. Victoria Poling.

As we begin our service, please take a couple of breaths to become fully present. Relax and bring your attention into this moment of communal reflection and sharing.

**Land Acknowledgement:**

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional homelands of the (Swuh – BABsh) Coast Salish Native People. The Puyallup people have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time, and continue to do so today. We recognize that this land acknowledgement is one small step toward true allyship and we commit to uplifting the voices, experiences, and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.

**Spoken Affirmation**:

*Option 1–Belonging:* Whoever you are, whomever you love, however you arrived here, you belong here.

I’d like to invite **Craig Hull** to come forward to light our chalice.

**Chalice Lighting:** Craig

Let us light our chalices together, in person and online, (gesture to the camera) with these words:

Thirsting for restorative justice, by Rev. Rebekah Savage

We light our flaming chalice as a beloved people united in love

and thirsting for restorative justice.

May it melt away the tethers that uphold whiteness in our midst.

May it spark in us a spirit of humility.

May it ignite in us radical love that transforms our energy into purposeful action.

This a chalice of audacious hope.

This chalice shines a light on our shared past, signaling our intention to listen deeply, reflect wisely,

and move boldly toward our highest ideals.

**Introduction of Speaker:** I’m Rev. Victoria Poling, minister to this congregation and to Kitsap Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. I use she/her pronouns, and identify as a queer, Hispanic and white Pacific Northwesterner.

**Opening Words: Rev. Victoria**

Our opening words are “Into the Circle” by Rev. Dr. David Breeden

We gather into this circle.

We gather into this circle of care

to dream, to envision,

to embody and achieve

the compassion we dream,

the justice we envision,

the dignity of each

in an ever-growing

circle of love and justice.

**Hymn/First Song:** Please rise in body or spirit, and join me in singing hymn #1035, Freedom is Coming, a South African song from the anti-apartheid struggle which is in your [teal] hymnal.

**Readings:** When we sing, Freedom is Coming, what does this freedom look like? How will we know?

Our 1st reading is a graphic that started as an internet meme about equality vs. equity. It has evolved as people have commented and given input on what freedom, or liberation might look like. Thanks, Alix for bringing it up on screen for us.

In the image are 4 panels. Each one shows 3 people who want to watch a baseball game, who don’t have tickets, and are trying to see over the fence. The sequence is labeled: Reality, Equality, Equity & Liberation.

In the struggle for justice, we often come up against these terms. And this image is a helpful way to understand them. In **reality**, one person has many more boxes than the others and can easily see over the fence from their tower, while one person is down in a hole.

When the situation is addressed by **equality**, each person gets the same support: one box to stand on. But you can see that the people are not all the same height. The tall person can still see well, while the short person can’t see at all. That’s still not fair, is it?

When the situation is addressed using the concept of **equity**, more boxes are given to the person who has received the short end of the stick, figuratively speaking. The tall person receives no boxes. In this way, all three can see over the fence.

The shortcomings of addressing injustice through the lens of equality and equity are revealed in the final panel. When the structural barrier is removed, this is what justice or **liberation** might look like. No boxes are needed at all, as there is no longer a fence.

This is the work of liberation or justice that we are called to do as Unitarian Universalists. It is deeply aspirational and a large task.

Let’s listen to some prayerful encouragement from “A Letter To A Young Activist During Troubled Times” by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, mestiza chicana poet and psychoanalyst.

Mis estimados queridos, My Esteemed Ones:

Do not lose heart. We were made for these times…

It is hard to say which one of the current egregious matters has rocked people’s worlds and beliefs more.…

Yet … I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is – we were made for these times.

Yes. For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement…I grew up on the Great Lakes and recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one.

I would like to take your hands for a moment and assure you that you are built well for these times. Despite your stints of doubt, …or feeling you have lost the map entirely, you are not without resource, you are not alone…Look out over the prow; there are millions of boats of righteous souls on the waters with you.

…

In my uttermost bones I know something, as do you. It is that there can be no despair when you remember why you came to Earth, who you serve, and who sent you here. The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours: They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here.

In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall: When a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But … that is not what great ships are built for.

The Words of Dr. Pinkola Estés.

As Vashon Island Unitarian Universalists, we gather here for an important mission to promote a sense of community and foster religion. And to do this work calls us to support spaces for liberation. Craig Hull will now come forward to share a testimonial about why he supports VIUU for our stewardship campaign this year.

**Stewardship Testimonial: Craig Hull**

**Special Music / Musical Response: Rev. Victoria**

Please join me in listening to special music “We Rise,” by Batya Levine. If audio is not working, Kat Eggleston will play $20 Bill

**Sermon**: “Justice & Equity: Who Do I Need to Find a Way?” by Rev. Victoria

**Topic:** Stewardship is about more than money. It’s about our relationships. Relationships give us audacious hope, and ways of being generous, just and equitable in our communities. Today we’ll learn about UU ancestor and Civil Rights advocate Whitney Young, and Seattle’s “Gang of Four” audacious hopes. And we’ll ask ourselves, “what does Vashon need from our faith community at this time?”

**Audacious Hope**

Today is our Stewardship Sunday, and it is also our month of studying Justice & Equity. Stewardship and justice go hand in hand as ways in which “radical love transforms our energy into purposeful action,” as Rev. Dr. Rebekah Savage wrote in our chalice lighting. Our flaming chalice is a chalice of audacious hope.

What are our audacious hopes as a congregation? I have been hearing the hope that, when we raise our annual pledges to support our community, we aren’t doing it for ourselves alone.

We have an audacious hope to share with Vashon Island: as a people who Side with Love, we hope that Love can heal and restore. Of course, there’s evidence that this is not always true. But we Love as if it is. We show up as if it is. Because really, how else is there to respond in this life?”

As we come together to be nourished in spirit and restored to a sense of belonging, we are able to give this restorative experience to others. This is the work of justice.

As we begin our stewardship campaign, we face the need for economic justice. We all know that not everyone has the right number of boxes to be able to look over that fence at the ballgame. In this context, by ballgame, I mean economic sufficiency. Some of us live paycheck to paycheck or social security payment. Some of us have investments to share. I name this truth, because it’s not just a reality outside our congregation.

Stewardship is more than money: it’s a humble power

I name it to remind us that stewardship is about more than money. We all have something to give, most importantly, the gift of ourselves. Of friendship. This isn’t our superpower, it’s our “humble-power.” Our humble-power is that we show up and risk friendships and relationships. We risk agape–being loved into wholeness. We find ways to ask for what is needed for the whole. So that we might experience the joy of being generous, equitable, and just in our community.

Stewardship is about supporting a shared vision.

Stewardship is about giving and receiving our labor over time. And Stewardship is about community organizing, in which we create power together. We create humble-power when we bring together people + money + resources to influence a situation that we’d like to heal, and restore to justice.

“We are made for these times.” We are a seaworthy vessel. And a ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

As stewards of this ship, of our congregation, we are also stewards of our interdepenent community of Vashon, the Salish Sea and friends and family far and wide. We are stewards of the web of life in this time and moment, in this life we share.

Who in this web do we need to help us find a way towards justice? We need perspective from those who are on the margins, to listen to those experiencing injustice, in order to find a way forward together.

**Howard Thurman**

Let’s listen for a moment to Howard Thurman, the great 20th century preacher and spiritual guide to many leaders of the Civil Rights movement.

Thurman had a message about vocation. He counselled those who were oppressed because of race, saying “Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

The world needs people who have come alive.

This message was intended for people who were suffering in systems of racial and economic exploitation that never considered the value of their coming alive.

For those of us with privilege, racial and otherwise, vocation is not just about aliveness, it’s where we find that overlap between our coming alive and the world’s deep need.

So, where can we go for guidance on were our congregation’s aliveness and our resources might meet the world’s deep need?

Let’s go to our 2nd UU source: the words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. Let’s listen to our UU ancestors who were leaders in the civil rights movement.

**Big Six**

While Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King is often lifted up as a single, driving personality of that movement, what is often left out is that he was part of an organized group of leaders of prominent civil rights organizations. Friends, colleagues, and advisors to the White House who became known as “The Big Six”, including James Farmer, John Lewis., A. Philip Randolph., Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young.

Historian Drew Dellinger notes, “In the months leading up to his assassination, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s final focus was on poverty and economic injustice…” And he was advised by his friend and former fraternity brother, Whitney Young.

**Whitney Young**  [Show photo of Young with Pres. Kennedy.]

Whitney Young was the head of the National Urban League and… a Unitarian Universalist. His vocation for civil rights was of economic prosperity for people who are Black. His vocation wasn’t for a moral call to nonviolent protest, like King, or for Black Power, like Malcolm X.

As a gifted negotiatior, with a Masters in Social Work, and a middle class affect and presence, Whitney Young built power behind-the-scenes. He gained access to middle-class jobs for people who were Black through relationships with the leaders of Fortune 500 companies. And he developed social programs with three U.S. presidents.

Young was very effective at working with white people against racism, at a time when the nation was divided. In the documentary, The Powerbroker, his niece Bonnie Boswell shows how “[Young] used [his powerful] relationships to gain better access to employment, education, housing, and healthcare for African Americans, other minorities, and those in need. His unique position and approach earned him praise, but also scorn from the Black Power movement for being too close to the white establishment.”

Young's legacy and influence are profound and touch most of you in this room. His proposal to President Johnson for a “Domestic Marshall Plan” was intended to offer not just equality to Black people, but equity: better schools and hospitals and social workers to restore justice. His plan started the social programs we now know as Head Start for pre-Kindergarden education, JobCorps, and Medicare.

“I am not anxious to be the loudest voice or the most popular,” he once said. “But I would like to think that at a crucial moment, I was an effective voice of the voiceless, an effective hope of the hopeless.”

His experience as a Unitarian Universalist was not without hurdles. Some people who were Black said he should not be part of Unitarian Universalism because it was so white. He replied that his congregation needed him to help change it.

**How might studying Whitney Young’s life story help us understand the change that VIUU could make together?**

Like Young, we have and can build on our web of relationships. Some of us could use white middle-class privilege, and the physical presence many of us carry here, as people who are accustomed to being able to make change.

Like Young, we could organize our community for the benefit of those who are marginalized and to create middle-class jobs. At VIUU we have a connection with Community Passageways, an organization that supports alternatives to incarceration. We heard from Karenjeet Dhaliwal a few weeks ago who works on reintegration for people coming out of prison. Imagine what a group of organized white people with middle-class privilege could do to support this work in taking the next steps: to create conditions of prosperity?

**Gang of Four**

I think it’s helpful for us to also learn the history of justice workers here, in this area. In the 1970s and 80s there was a group of community organizers in Seattle, called the Gang of Four and sometimes the Four Amigos. [Photo on screen] Larry Gosset, Bob Santos, Roberto Maestas, Bernie Whitebear.

According to PBS, “What made them unique was that they weren’t just community leaders, they were best friends who knew how to work together efficiently and effectively.” Sound familiar?

Their backgrounds and communities were quite different.

Bernie Whitebear founded the Seattle Indian Health Board, which is opening the inpatient care center on Vashon for people experiencing addiction, where, according to the Seattle Times, “People … will be treated with Indigenous Knowledge Informed Systems of Care.”

Larry Gosset created the Central Area Motivation Program for youth in Seattle’s Central District, serving Black and other people of color. He went on to public office, as a member of the King County Council for many years.

Bob Santos directed the Asian Coalition and Inter\*Im. According to HistoryLink, he was “Born and raised in Seattle's International District, [where] he…secured affordable housing, child-care services and social outlets for the elderly. And he kept out a garbage incinerator, a prison or work-release facility, a transportation hub, and a McDonald's.

On Vashon, have you ever had to organize against any of these coming to the island?

Roberto Maestas founded and directed El Centro de la Raza, in what was an abandoned school building on Seattle’s Beacon Hill. This organization continues to provide community services to Latino/a communities, and is surrounded by affordable apartment housing and a plaza that holds community events.

A sidenote: I had the honor of meeting Roberto Maestas when I was in college at the University of Washington. I played violin in a Mariachi band with his daughter, and we performed for a Cinco de Mayo celebration at El Centro.

While each of the Four Amigos supported their own communities, they organized an alliance to show up for each other.

“The system always pitted one group against the other,” Maestas recalled in 2009 to KCTS 9, “but when we showed up at a protest or negotiation as a multi-racial group, you could see bureaucrats and politicians suddenly change and take us seriously because now they faced four communities united together, and the pressure was too great.”

These then, are some of our regional community organizing ancestors. Stewards of this place. Friends who needed each other to “transcend the racial differences in their communities and build an alliance to break down barriers in employment, housing, education, and politics.” (PBS) Together, we might say, they gathered boxes, and took down fences.

**Side with Love**

So what can we, at VIUU learn from these local ancestor stories?

For one, stewardship of this place we love is about shared vision, community organizing, building alliances, and very importantly: about friendship. As our ancestor Rhoda Karusaitis would say, “just showing up” – and showing up for each other.

So I am going to be bold and say, what Vashon needs from our faith community at this time is for us to be a people who show up and Side with Love. A people who have a faith that love can heal and restore. And even though this is not always true, we can choose to love as if it is.

**VIUU’s Humble Power**

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King reminds us, Love without Power is anemic. So we have an opportunity. If we stretch ourselves in our stewardship campaign this year, we can create a VIUU fund–a pool of money that we could give as a congregation to make change. Then we get to decide where that money goes. Giving together is equitable: it shares power with those among us who aren’t otherwise able to make large gifts.

Where is our aliveness? As I’ve been listening to you, I’m hearing a longing for Vashon to be a place where Black, Indigenous, and People of color can be at home. I hear aliveness around youth and family well-being. I hear aliveness around creating a sanctuary for peace in the midst of suffering, and for resiliency to climate change. I hear aliveness around giving with Love.

In our chalice lighting, there is this line about melting away whiteness. What if melting away whiteness meant becoming visible—and vulnerable—by putting our values out there with our money on Vashon. By seeking to build alliances with those we need to help us find a way. By risking our hearts to make new friends to do the work of justice.

However we risk our hearts together, remember, we are made for these times. We have something humble and particular to do in this place and time, on this island, in this UU congregation.

Let us take that step today.

**Silent reflection:** Rev. Victoria

Let’s hold a moment of silence.

**Music / Second Song or Hymn: Rev. Victoria**

Please rise in body or spirit, and join me in singing hymn #168 One More Step, found in your [gray] hymnal.

**Joys and Concerns**: **Robbie**

We will now pause the recording as we prepare our hearts for Joys & Concerns. (Pause Recording)

Option 1: As a caring community, we set aside time to share the Joys and Concerns of our members and friends, honoring the common humanity and sacred spirit within each of us. We support each other in difficult times and celebrate our joys together.

**Invitation:**  (this text stays the same)

If you have a joy you would like to share, or a burden that might be eased by sharing it in community, you are invited to briefly share it. For those participating online through zoom, please share your joy or concern in the chat to be read aloud. For those in person in Lewis Hall, you are invited to share a few brief words. Please come up and form a line along the side of the sanctuary or raise your hand and the mic will be brought to you. After you light your candle and place it in the bowl, share your joy and concern at the mic.

***(After Joys and Concerns have been expressed)***

Let’s take a moment in silence to cultivate our open hearts.

*(Light the last candle.)* I light this candle for unspoken joys and concerns, within our hearts and beyond this community. Please join us as you feel comfortable in singing “name of hymn.”

**Music:** #123 Spirit of Life

**Robbie**: We will now resume recording as we finish the service. *(resume recording)*

**Offertory: Robbie**

As members and friends of the Vashon Island Unitarian Universalists, we commit to supporting our congregation. Financial resources help us pay speakers and staff, support our social justice programs and maintain our building. Please support VIUU with your pledges and offerings so that we can continue to be a vital community.

Our congregation engages beyond our walls for peace, social and economic justice, freedom of belief, and protection of our planet and its inhabitants. Once a month we contribute the financial offering to a regional, national, or international organization that aligns with our values. This week’s offering supports *[our beloved community – or – name of organization, plus short description of that organization’s mission.]*

Our greeters will now pass around the offering baskets. As we receive our offering, please join in singing “From You I Receive,” #402 in the gray hymnal.

**Music:**  #402 From You I Receive

(*As music is playing greeters pass the baskets around.*

TRANSITION STRAIGHT FROM SONG TO FINAL READING.)

**Closing Reading: Rev. Victoria**

“Holy and Generous Love” by Elena Westwind

Go in hope, for the arc of the universe is long and we can bend it toward justice.

Go in courage, for together we have the strength to confront injustice in our daily lives and the larger world.

Go in love, because a holy and generous love is both the reason and the means by which we transform our lives.

**Extinguishing the Chalice: Craig**

We extinguish our chalices with these words, “Justice is Our Prayer” by Rev. Rebekah Savage

We have come to the end of our service,

but not our calling in the world.

May we close our time together

with the humble reminder that Justice and Equity are our spiritual practices to embrace.

Each day, every day,

we are blessed to be the embodiment

of what is possible,

When Justice and Equity ground us

in all that we do.

May we go forth with the light and warmth of the chalice in our hearts

Until we are together again.

**Ringing the Chime**: Robbie

**Closing:** Robbie

Thank you to Alix Clarke, Kat Eggleston, Craig Hull and Rev. Victoria for participating in today’s service here at Lewis Hall and online. Please join us for refreshments following our VIUU events announcements.

**Announcements**: Robbie

If you have an announcement to share related to a VIUU activity, please come up and form a line along the side of the sanctuary.

**Musical Postlude**

Thank you for sharing your announcements. Please join me in listening to Kat Eggleston share our musical postlude.