

**JOY** Service led by Renee Hills 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2016

Gathering in Music Ode to Joy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87qT5BOI2XU>  
(Play at 9.55am)

And that was of course, was Ode to Joy, composed by Beethoven in 1824 as the final movement of his last symphony (No. 9) – a groundbreaking, amazing work for its time, with the use of voice, the biggest orchestra ever used. It was a turning point for classical music. It gave permission for future composers to try new things.

When it was first performed in Vienna, the audience was ecstatic. In addition to clapping, they threw their hats and scarves in the air so that he could see their overwhelming approval.) This of course was because Beethoven at this point in his life was almost totally deaf and had other health issues. I find it truly inspirational that he wrote this glorious music as his final gift to the world when dealing with such personal adversity.

### **Welcome**

My name is Renee Hills. You are truly welcome here today. (ASC Welcome Read)

### **Words of Reconciliation**

*We acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples,  
Traditional custodians of the country where we are meeting today.*

### **Opening Words: Call to Worship**

In the Struggle, Singing, Shining.

*Renee: From all our stories comes the call to gather together in our common story.  
Please join with me in our Call to Worship as I light the Chalice*

### **Chalice Lighting**

Deep calls unto deep, joy calls unto joy, light calls unto light. Let the kindling of this flame rekindle in us the inner light of love, of peace, of hope. And "as one flame lights another, nor grows the less," we pledge ourselves to be bearers of the light, wherever we are.

### **Covenant**

**Song** *Great is the Love*

### **Joys and Concerns**

*There are lots of ways we stay connected - sharing the joys and sorrows and milestones of our lives is one way to bring the matters of your heart into the embrace of this community. (pause) You are invited to come forward and light a candle to honour a special milestone, joy or sorrow in your life. If you've arrived today with sorrow or joy but you're not ready or able to share the details out loud, you may like to simply light a candle in silence.*

**Meditation** (celtic harp instrumental---there is more love somewhere)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpaWJm3ySMo>

## **Offering:**

*From You I Receive, to You I Give  
Together we share and by this we live.*

### **ODE TO JOY - ADDRESS**

It's a great day to be alive and it's good to be here with you.

There's a well-known saying: 'We teach best what we most need to learn'. Lately, I've had a great need to learn about joy and my preparation for this presentation has been a beautiful gift to myself.

I hope we can all share some of the things I learned and experience the gift of joy to ourselves today.

What exactly are we talking about? It's an emotion of extreme happiness according to the dictionary, ecstasy even, but it has a touch of something grander, something larger, doesn't it?

It's something we hope for; something we wish other people on their birthdays and at Christmas.

It is bequeathed on a lucky few? Do we earn it?

Is it possible that Joy could in fact be an attitude, a choosing every day, that 'this is the life I'd risk anything to save,' as Victoria Safford said in the reading we heard earlier.

Some people think that it's possible to live a life of joy without always being happy or having fun; that we seek out fun which is very important but lasts a brief moment; while joy is a life-long task, the product of effort and time resulting in fulfilment.

David Whyte, poet and philosopher says about Joy in his latest book 'Consolations',

*Joy can be made by practiced, hard-won achievement,  
as much as by an unlooked for, passing act of grace arriving out of nowhere;  
joy is a measure of our relationship to death and our living with death,  
joy is the act of giving ourselves away before we need to or are asked to,  
joy is practiced generosity*

The tricky thing about Joy is that it often comes out of, or is blended with its polar opposites: Sadness, Fear and Unhappiness.

Being human, we generally don't want to know about those feelings; generally we'll do what we can to avoid them and ignore them; if we had a magic wand, we'd probably choose to banish them from our lives.

It's something mankind at least in the western world has struggled with for centuries.

About 40 years after Beethoven composed his wonderful symphony, William Blake's words on Joy and Woe were published. Incidentally #17 in the Hymnal is based on these verses.

## JOY & WOE

### *Auguries of Innocence (E491)*

"It is right it should be so  
Man was made for Joy & Woe  
And when this we rightly know  
Thro the World we safely go  
Joy & Woe are woven fine  
A Clothing for the soul divine  
Under every grief & pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine

Here Blake is explaining the paradox of the human condition: we know both joy and woe; in fact Joy and Woe are both necessary accessories to being human – they are woven into a garment for the soul, or that ineffable part of ourselves, that part of us that represents deep love, deep compassion and peace.

It's only when we accept this, that 'thro the world we safely go', Blake says.

The Rev Shana Lyngood of the First Unitarian Church of Victoria writes about these same verses: *In ministry and in life, I am often reminded that very few experiences and moments are wholly positive or negative.*

*Most of the time we find ourselves feeling perhaps primarily one thing with a tinge of some other emotion also at play.*

*Joy and delight in a summer vacation sometimes carries the sadness about its end, or the sense that we wish we felt this free more often.*

*The deep sadness of grief in losing someone who has meant so much to us can be interspersed with gratitude at just how much richer life has been for having loved this person.*

*I have seen many struggle with this mixed-bag dimension of life. Acknowledging that we hold simultaneously different feelings about life can be challenging.*

*I have noticed this is particularly true with intensely personal experiences, and perceptions about the news of the world.*

She writes about the difficulty of dealing with news of world events, of maintaining equanimity or joy as we consider the cruelties and injustices that seem to characterize the current state of human beings on Earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*This feels like the hardest work for me these days. I am part of a faith tradition that places tremendous faith in the capacity of all people to be good and do well in the world.*

*Not because any one of us is special or chosen, but because we are all as Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said, "God-carriers."*

*We are inherently capable of living out of the goodness in our nature and can do so in a way that is good not only for our own wellbeing, but the betterment of all.*

Similarly Rev Stephen Shick, senior minister at the Unitarian Church of Marlborough and Hudson writes that *joy is not the absence of pain and suffering but the affirmation that life is always worthy of our reverent attention, for it is in prayerful mindfulness we can discover the renewing power of love in life.*

So if Joy is a commitment to value life, a choice to honour the essential goodness in our nature, is there something we can do to keep this choice front and centre in our lives?

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk and teacher thinks the key to Joy is Gratitude. He says:

*"The root of joy is gratefulness.*

*We notice that joyful people are grateful, and we suppose that they are grateful for their joy.*

*But the reverse is true: Their joy springs from their gratefulness."*

I found some useful questions posed by Rev Lilli Nye exploring the attitude of gratitude. You may like to ask yourself these questions:

- *How much attention and time did you give today to genuinely giving thanks?*
- *Have you given yourself over to the joy of appreciation, to recognizing how you are blessed, to experiencing the gifts you receive from life?*
- *Have you paused to drink in the sky with your eyes?*
- *Did you listen to the birdsong this morning?*
- *Were you happy to wake in a warm bed, under the shelter of a sturdy house, and to be able to sustain your body with food?*
- *Do you appreciate the ones you love and the way they enrich your life? Did you tell them?*
- *Did you notice your health—the extent of all you can do?*
- *Do you realize how much you already have of what you love?*
- *Do you see how much is already available, rather than perpetually desiring it as if it were not there?*

Like Rev Nye, I have to admit that sometimes a lot of my internal dialogue has been about what's lacking, what's missing, what does not measure up to some imaginary ideal of perfection, instead of noticing the abundance or at least the sufficiency. Perhaps you can relate to this?

What is clear, is that the more we indulge in such thoughts, the further we move from joy and delight, from peace, from enthusiasm and the spirit of generosity.

I'd like to introduce my final thoughts about Joy with a story.

<http://freestoriesforkids.com/children/stories-and-tales/knight-and-world>

There was once a heroic knight.

He was one of the knights whose triumphant deeds are still recounted in the old stories, in all languages, everywhere.

His bravery was great, and his sword was feared, but he was tired of hunting for dragons, ogres and monsters in story after story.

He decided to abandon that fairytale world, and come and test out his bravery and skill in the real world.

However, when he arrived here, he found no terrible creatures, no evil wizards, not even a poor stepmother to wave his sword at.

It was very strange.

All he saw were worried people, with the same looks on their faces as he had seen on the faces of people he had previously rescued from dragons or ogres.

It didn't seem like there was anyone to put them in such fear, or to make them live in a state of such anxiety.

Everyone hurried here and there, not speaking to anyone, as though something terrible was about to happen.

But, at the end of the day, nothing really bad ever happened. And so it was, day after day.

The knight thought that maybe this could turn out to be his most heroic adventure ever, and he decided to totally devote himself to finding the source of this mysterious worry in the real world.

He searched, he inquired, he investigated, he sailed, he climbed... but he found nothing.

Not willing to give up, he returned to the fairytale world to speak to The Wise Old Man.

"Tell me, wise one. What is the great invisible enemy that strikes fear into the hearts of people in the real world?"

I still haven't found it, but I won't rest until I have defeated whatever it is, and freed everyone.

Just like I did here, for so many cities."

The Wise Old Man was quiet for a long while, then finally said:

"You have neither the strength nor courage to win this battle.

The enemy does not exist, yet it is powerful, and as numerous as the stars in the sky."

"What?!" protested the Knight, "Is that even possible?"

"In the real world, because they have no dragons or ogres, they invent their enemies, and they carry them inside.

Each person there has an enemy made to measure, which lives inside their heart.

For some it is called greed, for others envy, for others selfishness, pessimism or desperation.

They have sown the seeds of negativity in their souls, and take the fruits with them wherever they go. It is no easy task to uproot all that."

"I will do it," answered the knight, "I will set them free."

And so the knight returned to the real world, bringing all his weapons with him.

Everyone he met, he would offer to free them from their negative inner life.

However, no one paid him the slightest attention, all he found was indifference and looks of surprise.

Finally, exhausted and confused, he threw down his weapons and went over to a rock at the side of the road, to rest.  
On his way there he tripped over his sword, and fell to the ground, knocking his head against a cockerel which had been crowing in the vicinity.

A sad looking little man was passing by, and when he saw this he burst out laughing, so much so that he could hardly stay on his feet.  
The knight was angry, but on looking closely at the man, he could see in his eyes a joyful shine that he had never yet seen in the real world...

And so it was, that the knight finally found the solution to the deep sickness of the people in the real world.  
They only needed a smile, a laugh, a little help to banish their negative feelings, and to finally enjoy life...

From that day on, the knight, armed with a big smile, started recruiting an army of liberators: a large and growing group of people able to remind anyone of the joy that is life.

And what do you know! The knight won the battle just as impressively as he always had.

Pedro Pablo Sacristán

And so to ensure we leave today having experienced laughter, that physical expression of Joy, let's take a moment to follow along with the suggestions in this video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZMJbRtx2gI>

Dr. Madan Kataria, a medical doctor from Mumbai, India popularly known as the 'Guru of Giggling' (London Times), is the founder of Laughter Yoga Clubs movement started in 1995. He says that laughter medicine has five major benefits:

1. It can change your mood in minutes through releasing endorphins.
2. Reduces stress from your life and strengthens your immune system – heal faster with chronic conditions
3. Your brain needs 25% more oxygen for optimal function - laughter medicine increases oxygen to body and brain = feel more energetic and motivated.
4. Laughter is great social connector –everyone wants to be with the happy person and no wants to sit with the grumpy person. Connect with people – good quality relationships
5. Everybody can laugh when times are good. Laughter yoga will give you a positive mental attitude, to help you to go through the difficult times in a much better way.

Yiddish Proverb: what soap is for the body, laughter is for the soul.

### **Closing Hymn #95 *There is More Love Somewhere***

#### **Closing Words:**

I'd like to close with a final description of Joy from David Whyte:

*To feel a full and untrammelled joy is to have become fully generous;  
to allow our selves to be joyful is to have walked through the doorway of fear, the dropping away of the anxious worried self felt like a thankful death itself, a disappearance, a giving away, overheard in the laughter of friendship, the*

*vulnerability of happiness felt suddenly as a strength, a solace and a source, the claiming of our place in the living conversation, the sheer privilege of being in the presence of a mountain, a sky or a well loved familiar face - I was here and you were here and together we made a world.*

**Extinguish the Chalice (together)**

*And now we take our leave. Before we gather here again,  
May each of us bring happiness into another's life... - Barbara Cheatham*

**A warm welcome to all guests this morning.**

We're glad you are here!

Please fill out our visitors' book if you are interested in receiving information about our Fellowship.

Our meetings are followed by a social time with food to share; all are welcome.