

Ingathering Worship
September 8, 2013
Offered at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist
By the Reverend Hilary Landau Krivchenia
And the Reverend Colleen Vahey

Welcome to Our Ingathering! We have been scattered during the summer – near and far. We are blessed to be here again today – to answer the deep invitation to life, to reaffirm the treasure of our tradition, and to awaken into the power and promise of this faith community. Today's service takes place in the heart of the Days of Awe – the High Holy Days in the Jewish tradition – which we honor every year. The days of Awe – the ten days between Rosh Hashanah (which began last Thursday) and Yom Kippur (which ends next Saturday night) are a potent time to reflect on meaning, to make amends to those we have injured, and to awaken into the challenge of living loving, ethical lives, and to write ourselves anew into the book of life. So today we hear the call of the Shofar – the ram's horn, as is traditional during the Days of Awe – to awaken us – body, mind, and spirit. With its ancient and sharp calls we enter our time of worship.

Sounding the Shofar

The Shofar Sounds!

Tekiah

Shevraim

Teruah

Tekiah Gedolah

Chalice Lighting

Back home in our newly renovated worship space, we light this chalice – the symbol of our living tradition. Hearth of this space – may its light welcome you here this morning – whether you are returning here one more Sunday of many Sundays – or if this is your first Sunday here at Countryside.

In this chalice flame we know the light of our sun and of distant stars
 The spark and flash that brought all life into being 14 billion years ago
 And sustains life on this sacred planet today

In this flame we know the illumination of generations
 Who have labored that we might find our way to one another,
 that we might find a faith large enough to embrace the enormous mystery of being,
 and strong enough to hold every soul in love.

May the light of this chalice rise in your awareness like the sun
 Awakening you into this space and time – this gathering of love and faith –
 And into this house of worship – a home for the soul.

Hymn # 1011

Return Again

Doxology When sounds the horn o'er crest and plain
 all minds shall waken once again
 Compassion stirs each hand and heart
 to give our world a just, new start.

words by the Reverend Hilary Krivchenia

Prayer and Reflection

Covenant – means to walk together – and so we do – walk together – covenanted. We stumble together at times – leap with grace and wisdom at other times. We move together in covenant – we listen and speak in covenant. And because we make this place, together – we have a place where we can find comfort in the whirling winds of change – a place where we can find direction when we are spinning in a current not of our choosing or making. Because we make this place together – in recognition of our shared humanity it is here for us when we are joyful and when we are struggling. Let us take time in prayer to recognize this simple truth of our shared humanity.

Spirit of life and love, Ground of Being, and Source of All, God in all names and beyond all naming – awaken us to the great beauty around us here. Return us to an awareness of the nourishment for our souls and of the comfort for our hearts that abounds. We have come here today eager for one another and for an encounter with the depth of being. Many come with hearts filled with hope and celebration, recognizing old friends or eager to make new ones. Some have arrived with tentative steps – hopeful but shy – waiting and wishing for someone to reach out. Some come with light step and the pleasure and memory of glad events. Some face tremendous struggles – and have had heartaches and losses, some of us live with illness and pain. Sometimes when we come into this place we are sharply aware of our suffering. Some of us live in isolation and loneliness uncertain how to open to the possibility of warmth that waits around us.

May we be aware of the tender and profoundly human differences all around us. That both joy and sorrow sit side by side and we have the chance to make the joy greater and sorrow lighter. May we be aware of the tremendous gift each one of us has given by coming here – and the greater gifts that are possible when we give of ourselves in a spiritual community. From our time here on Sundays and through the week – may we find that in the currents of life we are given ballast and balance to move forward more easily.

“Mi shebeirach avoteinu M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu May the source of strength, Who blessed the ones before us, Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing, and let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu
Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah, The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, And let us say, Amen” Lyrics Debbie Friedman

May every body be given vigor and healing.
May every mind be made clear
May our steps be given purpose
May our hands be made strong to do the work of the world
and tender to do the work of the heart.
May every heart be made brave
And every soul be given illumination
That we may all live our faith more fully and our lives more deeply.
Blessed are we who gather in this place
Blessed is this place that we have gathered here.
May we each know here a true home for our souls.

Reading

*We were all going around making the mistake of thinking that we were alone, and we just needed to stop and pay attention;
we could all break through if we tried,*

and even more importantly – from gathering in, remembering, feeling, and living the profound truth that all life is connected.

Tashlich is also used on the level of the society and the world – so that you can cast away greed, conflict, arrogance, war, famine, privilege and gather in your individual and collective power and create the possibility of a sweeter world.

Tashlich is a ritual that speaks of our ancient and intimate living connection to water. Symbolically and really – water is buoying, connecting, moving, cleansing, renewing, life-giving, soft and yet powerful.

At Tashlich we lighten ourselves, empty our spiritual clutter and make room for a new life. The ritual imparts a feeling of relief and of lightness. The casting away makes room for what we really want to hold fast to – keep faith with – what we want to affirm in our lives...

And when we gather in – whether it is this Sunday or the 51 other Sundays or even meetings or potlucks – we do it to be reminded of and called to the highest and best within us in order to love, serve, and heal from our own hearts to our suffering world. This place exists so that any one who comes here can toss away the clutter they carry from a society that too often looks at what I would call the wrong bottom line – productivity, effectiveness, guaranteed and measurable outcomes. And when they have released those crumbs, they can hold in their hands real values – principles – and the spirit of love. It's not instant – it's why spiritual lives take daily work, spiritual practice, returning to the source, mindfulness. And remembering, living, holding those great treasures every day is, only in moment a solitary task – it is, largely, primarily, a collective one – a shared project, it is the purpose and work of congregations. With or without a shofar – congregational life is the place that reminds us that while this world may be full of sorrow – our hearts and our lives can be dedicated to loving, serving, and healing this world.

Water Communion (where people also bring up their yearnings, hopes, and prayers on paper and a professional or lay minister reads those papers and wishes them well and blesses them with the love and support of this faith community in the oncoming year.) We invite you to come forward and bring the water you have gathered this summer – from distant or near places, the kitchen or garden where you spent hours, or, if you left your water by the door as you left the house, or did not have a chance to bring back water, we have water here that serves symbolically, of the places you have been in our times of scattering throughout the year and the wisdom you may have gained in those times. It represents tears as well – the fullness of your life that you pour out into this community – the mingling of our lives – From our many paths we make one river – from our many lives – we shape a common purpose – with our many hearts, we shape one great love.

Blessing the Water

May this water, drenched with our dreams and tears, our fears and love – be blessed. May our gathering in and moving forward be blessed. May the hopes that were shared here, the tenderness, the wisdom, and the love combine to give a growing life to this beloved community. We pour these waters together now – sign of our unity.

Pouring Forth

We open the side door and take the water outside and pour it into the soil of our congregational home. May we tend this place, this faith, and our world – with our own uplifting, connecting, moving, cleansing, renewing, life-giving, soft and loving resources – the resources of our souls. May each one of us drink at the fount of every blessing and with a holy will – may we each in our own lives and even more powerfully in our shared life in

this faith – be a fount of blessing to every thirsting soul whom we may touch. May it be so.
Now let us sing.

Hymn # 126 *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*