

## Flower Communion: All-Ages Worship Service

Rev. Roger Jones & Rev. Lucy Bunch  
Miranda Massa, Religious Education Coordinator

Sunday, June 1, 2014

Unitarian Universalist Society

Special Music by [Heartroot](#)  
(Mindy Dillard & Eric McEuen)

### Hymns

#38, Morning Has Broken; The Word We Are  
Singing (Joyce Poley);  
#1018, Come and Go With Me.

### Homily

The Czech Unitarian Flower Communion is about sharing and enjoying flowers with others. Many of you brought fresh flowers and placed them up here in these vases. All of you will be invited to take a flower with you, which someone else has given. Even if you didn't know to bring a flower today, we have plenty to go around. Don't be shy.

Also called the Flower Celebration, this ritual was created more than 90 years ago in Prague, by a Czech minister and his wife, Norbert Capek and Maja Capek. Born a Roman Catholic, he became disillusioned with what he saw as the cynical attitudes of church priests. He became a Baptist at age 18, and soon entered the ministry.

As a Baptist preacher and missionary he distributed Bibles and started new congregations. His theology grew increasingly liberal. His criticism of the Catholic priesthood continued. The blowback from the church and state forced Capek to leave the country in 1914, 100 years ago.

Norbert, Maja and the family came to the United States and stayed for seven years. He served a few churches as a Baptist minister, but his beliefs kept shifting, and he left that path. The family joined the Unitarian church in Orange, New Jersey, "having been led there by their children's enthusiasm for the church's religious education program."<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s the family returned home

and built a Unitarian church in Prague. The church grew to have 3,000 members, the largest Unitarian church in the world. It also helped other ones to start in Czechoslovakia.

Because Capek's church had many former Catholics, Protestants and Jews in it, he wanted to create a ritual in which all members could participate without any reservations, in order to bind the members closer together in spirit and fellowship. They created the Flower Communion and began celebrating it every year on the first Sunday of June.

During the Nazi occupation by Germany, the Capek family became activists, and Norbert spoke out from the pulpit for freedom and against the Nazis. The late husband of one of our members grew up there, and he used to tell about Nazi officials visiting the church to spy on it.

In 1941, the Gestapo arrested Norbert and his daughter, Zora, who was 29. She was sentenced to a forced labor camp. Her father was executed in the Dachau concentration camp in 1942.

After the war, Maja Capek moved to the United States, and joined First Parish Church of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She brought the Flower Communion to them, and that's how it was introduced to North American Unitarian Universalists.

Today, on the first Sunday in June, we will celebrate this ritual, which began amid political struggle as a sign of unity, an embrace of diversity, and a gesture of hope.

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<sup>1</sup> "Norbert F. Capek," in *Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography*, accessed online June 1, 2014: <http://uudb.org/articles/norbertcapek.html>

schools and at various levels. Let us mention aloud those who are graduating.

As our voices rise with joy, let us also remember those young people who struggle with school, those who face high hurdles for achievement, and those who are beset with dangers to their well-being. May they find encouragement. Let them know they are loved and worthy of love.

Others may be recognizing different celebrations and reasons for gratitude. At this time, let us speak the names or events that give us good cheer. Let us speak them into the space of our sanctuary.

May another's good news give to all of us cause for joy.

June is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month, when we join in celebrating the diversity of sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity which enrich our human family. We give thanks for all those who have given of their work and their prayers for a more inclusive community.

Spirit of Life and of Love, give us hearts full of gratitude, kindness and courage for the living of our days. In the name of all that is holy and all that is human, blessed be. Amen

### Music, Prayer, Song

We hear the tune to #123, Spirit of Life, during the Pastoral Prayer, the congregation sings.

### Prayer

Spirit of Life and Love, we give thanks for the gift of life and the gift of this new day, in this new month of June.

Let us remember the fragility of life and of this planet we share with our human kin and other forms of life. Help us tend our home with care.

Our thoughts are drawn to places of senseless violence and loss: to Santa Barbara County, to Northern India, and elsewhere in our land and in lands far off. We send prayers for healing. We strive to commit ourselves anew to ways of peace and understanding.

In this congregation, we give our love to those living with loss. We extend our condolences to Don and Cathy and their family, on the passing of Ruth, Don's mother, this past week.

At this time we have other names on our hearts of those we have lost recently and those lost some time ago. Now into the space of our sanctuary, let us call out the names of those we mourn and remember.

May their memory be a blessing.

We lift up those dealing with financial troubles, a health crisis, chronic pain, isolation, or uncertainty about the road ahead. There are people on our hearts who need good wishes, prayers, or gestures of care. At this time we say the names of those we know, whether whispering to ourselves or speaking their names and needs aloud in the space of our sanctuary. Aggie, healing from surgery earlier this week.

May we find the courage to reach out and the grace to give the simple gift of our presence.

We recognize also that life has its joyful milestones. Many of the younger people in our lives are celebrating commencements at all kinds of