

All Souls Unitarian

Covenant Theme Guide, December 2016

“Hope”

Despair is anger with no place to go. Hope is the feeling we have that the feeling we have is not permanent. **Mignon McLaughlin**

Hope is the thing with feathers--
That perches in the soul--
And sings the tune without the words--
And never stops--at all--
--Emily Dickinson, from her poem [Hope Is. . . .]

Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, achieves the impossible. Helen Keller

The Importance of Hope

The worst thing that can happen in a democracy - as well as in an individual's life - is to become cynical about the future and lose hope. Hillary Clinton

To eat bread without hope is still slowly to starve to death. Pearl S. Buck

You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.
Michelle Obama

Maintaining Hope

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up. Anne LaMott

I don't think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains. Anne Frank

When you do nothing you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better. **Maya Angelou**

Hope and Community

If you run out of hope at the end of the day, to rise in the morning and put it on again with your shoes. Hope is the only reason you won't give in, burn what's left of the ship and go down with it. The ship of your natural life and your children's only shot. . . . The magic is community. . . .

. . . . You are rocked in the bosom of the people who get what you're going for. You can be as earnest and ridiculous as you need to be, if you don't attempt it in isolation. The ridiculously earnest are known to travel in groups. And they are known to change the world. Look at you. That could be you.

I'll close with a poem:

Hope: An Owner's Manual

Look, you might as well know, this thing is going to take endless repair: rubber bands, crazy glue, tapioca, the square of the hypotenuse. Nineteenth century novels. Heartstrings, sunrise: all of these are useful. Also, feathers.

To keep it humming, sometimes you have to stand on an incline, where everything looks possible; on the line you drew yourself. Or in the grocery line, making faces at a toddler secretly, over his mother's shoulder.

You might have to pop the clutch and run past all the evidence. Past everyone who is laughing or praying for you. Definitely you don't want to go directly to jail, but still, here you go, passing time, passing strange. Don't pass this up. Don't pass this up.

In the worst of times, you will have to pass it off. Park it and fly by the seat of your pants. With nothing in the bank, you'll still want to take the express. Tiptoe past the dogs of the apocalypse that are sleeping in the shade of your future. Pay at the window. Pass your hope like a bad check. You might still have just enough time. To make a deposit.

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Excerpted from the excerpts of a commencement address at Duke University as reported at <https://today.duke.edu/2008/05/kingsolver.html>

And Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

From Maya Angelou's 1978 collection, *And Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou`

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What gives you hope?
2. How do you and loved ones nourish hope in each other?
3. In what ways are you challenged to maintain hope? Have you ever had your hopes crushed?

4. Messages of hope are an important part of the services at All Souls. Has anything you've heard said or sung at church--either from the sanctuary or even from Pierce Hall-- brought you hope? Do any words or songs stand out as especially beneficial? Are there other ways that All Souls helps you maintain hope?

Prepared by Mary Beth Hatem
featuring this month, in a post-election gesture, the voices of women only