

Service – Nov. 29, 2020 HOPE
Leader – Penny Blake

Slide – Kamala Harris, shadow of Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges, who was just 6 years old in 1960 when she integrated the previously all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.

The family paid dearly for the decision to send her to an integrated school --- but people stepped up & sent donations to help sustain them. Only later in life that Ruby herself learnt of the whole impact of what she had done.

Opening Words – Chalice lighting

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

[Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

Joys & Concerns

Offertory – (Here’s something Anita’s sent me. Later, for discussion ask – When you have needed hope, and what gives you hope.) Slide from Anita

Hope – Service Text

What is hope? The dictionary rather dryly defines it as “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen” – Also “trust” But we know it as a much deeper feeling than that brief definition – something akin to faith. There’s something different about hope as opposed to optimism: I can’t put it better than other writers have done, so I won’t – here’s an excerpt from Winter Hope, by Doug Muder:

Hope cares for the eggs without counting the chickens that might come from them. Hope plants as wisely as it can, knowing that the rains and the harvest are uncertain...It is important to remember the difference between hope and optimism. Optimism is an expectation of the future, but hope is a way of experiencing the present.

Hope reassures, but it also emboldens. It doesn’t just offer us a promise; it gives us a push. When we believe that a new day is dawning, we get up and go out to meet the light. Hope changes who we are in the present. So maybe the most important question is: “Are we listening to everything hope has to say?”

We are now in a season of holidays – Christmas, Diwali, Chanukah and Kwanza, to name the best known. What are they trying to tell us about hope?

I'm going to pause right now, and play a video clip. When I talked to Karen about this service she told me it was the first Sunday of Advent – a waiting period, an expectation time, you might say, for Jesus birth. And that the song for this Sunday was O, Come, O, Come, Emmanuel. I thought you might enjoy a dance version of it – it's a very graceful tune, after all:

Play clip. <https://youtu.be/iOFHjGjHIrs>

So – Christmas comes in a small package – a baby – but like a baby it had huge potential, and a huge impact. So much so that Christmas at this time of year can feel overwhelming.

And what are you going to do if you're not from that faith tradition? Chanukah has a far different origin. Long ago, a few hundred years before Christ, an enemy – one of the many empires that surrounded Israel- tried to conquer the land, but the much smaller Hebrew forces, known as Maccabees, beat them back – and for a time won back the country's sovereignty. And as most of you know we celebrate by lighting candles for eight days. – doesn't exactly celebrate the military victory – It celebrates a tiny, tiny miracle: that when they came to rededicate the temple, and needed sanctified oil, they found only enough for one day – but somehow it lasted eight. But why did the Rabbis focus on the light, and not the military victory?

Well, circumstances, for one – the holiday was formulated when the country had finally succumbed to the biggest empire of the ancient world: Rome. Perhaps not a good time to celebrate military victory. But how could the Rabbi's maintain hope, perhaps slyly suggest that Rome's values were not the answer, and contain a military victory – all country's value their military – but what can you do if its gone? – in a capsule with more eternal values. (And) the genius of using light, is that it is an accessible symbol, yet reminds one of the temple, its services, the Menorah that stood inside it – and also the Ner Tamid – a light that stood for eternal light.

Still – it's a small miracle – and does not have, at least here, near the hoopla and public celebration that Christmas has.

I know, as a Mom – my kids would insist that I go to their schools and do a Chanukah presentation – (and for my son, fresh latkes) – which I did – and we all had fun with it. But this

is practically the only public kind of celebration that we could muster here.

Well, small is small - but sometimes, you know - its enough.

Hope often comes to us in the form of stories. I'm going to read a story now for you- its about how we all need hope in darkness and in dark times. And that hope has a power, it's a guide, no matter how small.

The Power of Light - Isaac Baashevis Singer

Discussion, Personal reflections - When have you needed hope?
What gives you hope?

Selection from choir - Come with Me.

(text) **Come with Me**

When its dark light a candle for kindness,
When its dark light a candle with love
When its dark light a candle for me and for you,
Light a candle, its light will see us through.

Chorus: Come with me
Let's shine the light
For in our hands
Lies hope tonight.

Come with me
The path is clear
A land of hope (peace, love)
Is very near.

We have spent many days, many hours,
Fearing those that would tear us apart.
Light a candle and counter the hate and the fear,
And with courage we'll face the day anew.

Closing words/ Chalice Ex.

The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.

BARACK OBAMA

Announcements
