

Reflect & Renewal

SERMON + Flower Communion

a Sermon by Rev. "Twinkle" Marie Manning

Last year we celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the Flower Communion.

This UU ritual *predates* the Water Communion, and even predates the ritual of the lighting of the Chalice.

A few reminders about The Flower Communion:

It is sometimes called the *Flower Ceremony*, and it was first introduced to the Unitarian Church in Prague in 1923 by their founding minister, **Rev. Dr. Norbert Capek**.

Norbert's ministry was one that made his God accessible to everyone.

In Norbert's teachings and the services he created, in a congregation of people, who like him, came out of other religions and faith traditions seeking something...*more*... his goal was to foster a sense of unity and belonging among members.

Highlighting in the rituals he created both the things they had in common *and* the things that made them different from one another.

An entirely "new way" of "doing church."

His religious experiment was successful as his congregation in Prague grew quickly to be the largest UU Congregation in the world at the time.

The Water Communion he initiated was later brought to American Unitarian congregations in 1940 by Dr. Capek's wife, Maja, also an ordained minister.

Maja Capek was in the US when WWII broke out, and was unable to return home to Prague.

Her husband, Norbert Capek was tragically, like so many at that time, detained in a concentration camp.

It was there he was known as the *minister to the ministers*.

He and other clergy were kept apart from *other prisoners* so they could not provide spiritual solace and comfort to them.

And, in turn, without being able to answer their calls to ministry, a goal of the nazi's was their hope - the clergies' Hope - would be diminished.

More than that, a goal seemed to be pit these leaders of opposing faiths against each other, in an attempt to further undermine their faith.

Norbert, however, did not let this deter him.

His ministry grew up from within the context of diversities.

While in the concentration camp, it is said he led a flower ceremony; instructing other prisoners to go out among the weeds and bring anything that looked like a flower for the interfaith communion.

Čapek described the flowers to those clergy gathered with him in the concentration camp, as he had described them over the years to his congregation before that, to him flowers represented:
“messengers of fellowship and love.”

“messengers of *fellowship* and love.”

A catholic priest who was imprisoned with him said this after the war,
“He (Norbert) achieved his greatest ministry there, among the despairing who lived in the very shadow of death. Without him we could not have endured.”

Sadly, Norbert was killed in a Nazi concentration camp, yet his legacy of courage and love lives on.

About his own ministry, on the eve of World War II, in 1939, when war was imminent, Norbert published one of his books stating his wish was that it might spread
"a few rays of sun to the wounds of the heart"

Indeed his words, his works and his ministry have to this day offered rays of light that help soothe hearts all around the world.

We commemorate the Flower Communion each year as a ritual practice of renewal and love.

We gather together, as Norbert and his congregation did, we gather together a **Common bouquet.**

A bouquet comprised of all the flowers we've brought to the service. And, we each select a flower to take home with us.

One of the significant aspects of Flower Communion is that no two flowers are alike, just as no two of us are *exactly alike*.

Look at the Beautiful Flowers YOU brought today!

Look at the ones you contributed.
See how it adds to the the arrangement.
It's uniqueness adding to the diversity of shape and color,
adding to the beauty.

Some have been carefully cultured *and monitored* as they were grown.

Like some of us :)

Others are as wild as the day they sprouted!

Like some of us!! ;)

A few are beginning to wilt, as the day has been long for them, and soon the sun will set for the final time.

Others are still spry and have many more sunrises to greet.

Together they hold each other up.

Like you do, here, as a congregation overflowing with Love for one another!

As you come forward to take part in the Flower Communion, I would like you to consider what *kind of flower you are* to this congregation?

And, what *kind of soil you'd like to be planted in* for nourishment?

COME FORWARD TO SELECT YOUR FLOWER.

AFTER EVERYONE SELECTS
AND RETURNS TO THEIR SEATS CONTINUE

Please share

what kind of flower you are to this congregation?

- What gifts do you bring?
- Skills to share?
- Positive Personality Traits?

And, also, **what kind of soil** you'd like to be planted in for *nourishment*?

- What kinds of nutrients are most beneficial to you?
- What aspects of the church bring you Joy?
- What attitudes of others fill you with strength and gratitude?

TWINKLE SHARE ALSO Next Page....

My goal is to bring meaningful messages to you.
Sometimes as reminders;
Sometimes as introduction to something new;
Each as a touchstone to draw inspiration from,
Or at least give you something to think about ;)

What nourishes me is the collaborative community of leaders
that help make every service possible.

The Worship Committee

The Tech Team

The Musicians

The Storytellers

And...You.

This congregation who welcomes me, a bit of a *wildflower*,
into their soil.

You, together, create a *sense of Belonging* for all who enter
here.

May it ever be so!