**The Unitarian Church of Montreal**

**Sunday Service: June 21, 2020**

***Fathers and Music***

**with special guest Mark Abley**

**Chalice Lighting**

Eleutheras Diconca-Lippert

Good morning, and welcome. My name is Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert, and I am the song leader and choir director at the Unitarian Church of Montreal. Welcome to our Sunday service. Today is Sunday, June 21, and our service will be focused around fatherhood and music. Join me in lighting our chalice. Our words today are by Kahlil Gibran.

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer’s hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

**Gathering Music I**

“Saints”

arranged by Elmer Olenick

**Introduction**

Rev. Diane Rollert

My name is Reverend Diane Rollert, and I serve the Unitarian Church of Montreal. Je m’appelle Diane Rollert, et je suis la pasteure de l’Église unitarienne de Montréal. I acknowledge that today I'm speaking to you from unceded land that was once home to the Abenaki First Nation. I invite you to take a moment to acknowledge the land where you find yourself, be it the unceded territory of the Kanienkeha’ka or elsewhere. May we recognize that it is upon these lands that we live, work, and play.

The music you just heard was a tongue-in-cheek piece arranged and composed by my father, Elmer Olenick, based on “When the Saints Go Marching In,” the old Christian hymn that became a jazz standard sometime in the 1920s or 30s. It was a song my father always loved and always thought was appropriate for the beginnings and the endings in life. This Sunday we have many things to celebrate and to contemplate: Father's Day, the summer solstice, National Indigenous Peoples Day. There's so much we could say and do, and there's so little time to do it all and do it well. So we offer you the best that we can, with hopes that you will find something to ground your soul, as we head into the summer.

It is hard to believe that this is our last Sunday before our summer services begin. With gratitude, Sandra, Eleuthera, Katherine, and I say goodbye for the summer, as we go out in search of rest and renewal. With gratitude, we welcome Camelia and Caite—Camellie Jahanshahi and Caite Clark—who will be our summer worship services coordinators and who will take up the reins next week. So please keep tuning in when you can, and also get outside to enjoy the summer as much and as safely as you can.

The next piece of music we're about to hear was written by Mark Abley’s father, Harry Abley. Mark wrote a beautiful book about his father, entitled *The Organist.* And when I read it, I was struck by some of the similarities in our fathers' life stories. Both had difficult childhoods and served during World War Two. Both were musicians who expressed themselves through the keyboard on piano and organ: my father more on piano; Mark's father more on the organ. Both taught music and worked as musicians for churches, and in my dad's case, he worked also for synagogues. And both were emotionally remote in their person-to-person interactions but poured out their softer sides, their sadness, their passion for justice through the music they wrote. Both wished for greater recognition of that music, but they never really received it. But as Mark will tell you later, our relationships with our fathers, not just my father and Mark's father but our relationship with our fathers no matter what they are—well, our stories are not as unique as we think.

And here is Mark explaining this next piece of music we're going to hear: “The Pines of Oka,” by his father, Harry Abley.

Mark: My dad wrote it when he was living in Montreal, in 1990, and he meant it as a tribute to the Mohawk Nation. He was upset at how he felt they were being violated by the majority population, let's say, in the town of Oka. And so it’s a celebration of resistance at Kanesatake. It starts peacefully and then the piece becomes more turbulent in the middle, and then it becomes peaceful again because the pines survive.

**Gathering Music II**

“Pines of Oka” by Henry T. Abley

**Time for All Ages**

“Pinocchio Becomes a Real Boy”

Katherine Childs

Good morning! My name is Katharine Childs, and I serve the Unitarian Church of Montreal as our Director of Religious Exploration. My pronouns are *they* and *them*. And I am so pleased to share our time for all ages with you this morning. It's a story that I wrote, and it's called “Pinocchio Becomes a Real Boy.”

Not very long ago, in a magical kingdom not very far away, there lived woodcarver and a tailor who had always wanted a child. They lived together in a small cottage with a thatched roof and had always wished to grow their family, but since neither of them could bear children, this wish remained unfulfilled, until one day the woodcarver said, “I will make a child out of wood, a puppet, and we will bring her to the Blue Fairy who lives next door, and she will bring her to life for us. And you can make her a fabulous wardrobe of clothing that she will never grow out of because she is a puppet.”

And the tailor agreed, and they set to work. They worked for many weeks, and when their labour was completed, they brought the most beautifully carved wooden puppet in the most sumptuous clothing to the Blue Fairy next door. The Blue Fairy was apprehensive, but agreed to bring the puppet to life, though she issued this warning: “Life is a complicated thing. It wants to grow, always, and often in ways that we don't expect and definitely cannot control.” But the tailor and the woodcarver wanted a child so badly that they asked the Blue Fairy to perform this magic in spite of her warning.

They did exactly as the fairy instructed. They brought the puppet home, tucked it into bed as though it were a real child, said good night, and in the morning, indeed, there was a little girl—a little girl made of wood who moved like a puppet and who had no knowledge of the world, but a little girl nonetheless, and the tailor and the woodcarver were ecstatic. They named the puppet Pinocchia.

At first, everything seemed fine. There were so many things to learn and discover about the world that Pinocchia was endlessly entertained by it all. She was happy with her fathers in the magical kingdom where they lived. But soon, it became clear that there were things that, as a puppet, Pinocchia would never understand or be part of. And soon enough, Pinocchia decided that her only wish was to become real. And so she told her fathers, “When I grow up, I will become a real boy,” and they laughed because, well, she was a puppet who was not going to grow up. And besides, little girls did not grow up to become ‘real boys.’ But the laughter made Pinocchia sad. All Pinocchia wanted was to be real, to taste real food, to feel real love, to cry real tears. And whenever Pinocchia thought about those things, it was a real boy doing them, not a real girl. But it seemed that every time Pinocchia said, “When I grow up, I will become a real boy” to the tailor or the woodcarver or Old Mother Hubbard or the princess who lived down the road, they all laughed. And after a while, they stopped laughing and started to tell Pinocchio that he was lying when he said he was going to become a real boy. They would say, “Stop telling lies! We have told you over and over that this is not true!”

But Pinocchio knew that it was true, and being told he was lying was starting to make him not just sad, but mad inside as well. And Pinocchio started to get madder and sadder inside, two things happened. First, feeling so mad and sad inside all the time made Pinocchio start to do mean and mischievous things to other people in the kingdom. He scared Miss Muffet with spiders; he tried to push Humpty Dumpty off the wall, and led Little Bo Peep’s sheep away into the hills.

But other strange things started to happen to Pinocchio. Whenever someone would say, ”You're lying. You'll never be a real boy,” Pinocchio would get so angry that he would get bigger—just a little bit taller, a little bit bigger around. The changes were so tiny at first that the tailor and the woodcarver both thought they must be imagining things. Though it looked like Pinocchio had gotten bigger, how could that be? Pinocchio was made of wood. Wood doesn't grow. But tiny bit by tiny bit, Pinocchio got bigger and bigger and bigger, and soon the problem became impossible to ignore. Pinocchio had grown out of all the clothes that the tailor had made, and besides was making life very, very difficult for the kingdom around them. The tailor and the woodcarver decided it was time to go back to the Blue Fairy and see if there was anything they could do.

The Blue Fairy said, “I warned you that life has a way of growing beyond what you can expect or control. You have brought life into the world, and now you're trying to keep it from growing! Bah! I will not help you.” And the tailor and the woodcarver returned to their cottage troubled and confused. But the Blue Fairy had been watching Pinocchio. She knew there was real goodness in him and that the spark of life inside him could make him real.

So one evening, she found him pouring watering cans full of rainwater onto helpless spiders. She tapped him on the shoulder. “Pinocchio, I understand you want to become a real boy,” she said. And Pinocchio, so used to being laughed at or told that he was lying, was so surprised to be spoken to with kindness that he stood up, left his watering can behind, and followed the Blue Fairy.

The Blue Fairy snapped her fingers, and she and Pinocchio were suddenly atop the highest spire of the castle. And the two looked out over the whole kingdom. They could see all the way to Peter's pepper patch out by the far edge of the forest. They sat for a while in silence, and Pinocchio asked, “Can you help me become a real boy?”

And the Blue Fairy shook her head. “No,” she said, “You are the only one who can make you a real boy. I can change the way you look, but becoming real—really real—means much more than what you look like. Before you can become real, you must learn two very important things. The first,” she continued, “is to grow from yourself. I have watched you grow and become bigger when you become angry and when others hurt you with their words. You must learn to grow on your own—because of the power of your own good thoughts and deeds. And the second is that you must learn to be good—not because someone told you to—not because your fathers say this is the right way to act, but because real boys—real people—are real because in addition to anger and sadness, they have kindness, compassion, friendship, and love. Even if you can't *feel* these things because your heart is made of wood, you can still *do* these things. You can show kindness, compassion, friendship, and love.”

And Pinocchio sat for a long time, thinking about those things long after the Blue Fairy had disappeared. Fortunately, the Queen was in the parlour eating bread and honey, and saw Pinocchio trapped on the castle turret. She ordered the guards to help Pinocchio down. They were not happy about being asked to help this bothersome and quarrelsome child. They were very pleasantly surprised when Pinocchio said, “Thank you for your assistance” before he scampered off home.

Over the next few months, things began to change in that magical kingdom. Before long, Pinocchio could be found scaring away spiders from Miss Muffet’s tuffet, and he even returned Bo Peep’s lost sheep, even before she went looking for it. He carried groceries for the Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe and delivered muffins for the Muffin Man on Drury Lane when he was out sick.

The Blue Fairy watched this change come over Pinocchio, and she smiled. She also watched as he got bigger and bigger. Every time someone thanked him for his help, he would reply with joy, not anger, “You're welcome. When I grow up, I'm going to become a real boy!” and he would grow, just a little bit—so little that you couldn't see it with your naked eye, unless you were magic, of course.

Because he no longer fit into the sumptuous dresses the tailor has sewed, and now he wore whatever clothes he could find, he was starting to look rattier and rattier, but out of his dresses and with his changed appearance from the Blue Fairy, many fewer people laughed when he said he would become a real boy, and almost no one ever said he was lying anymore.

One evening, he came home, having spent the day helping Jack build a house, and his father the tailor was waiting in the drawing room. Hanging by the full-length mirror was a three-piece suit, just the right size for Pinocchio. “If you keep growing like this,” the tailor said, “I'll have to make you a bigger one.”

And Pinocchio tried on the new suit, and when he looked in the mirror—there was a real boy, full of love, smiling back at him.

And this is the story of how Pinocchio became a real boy.

**Song**

“Bright Morning Stars”

Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

**Introduction to Mark Abley**

a film by John Kenney

When I was growing up in western Canada in the 1960s and 70s, I was puzzled by my father. I think a lot of children are baffled by their parents, and my dad wasn't like a lot of other fathers. He didn't drive a big Detroit-made car. He didn't have a nine-to-five job. He worked as an organist, choir master, and piano teacher, so he worked on evenings and weekends.

My dad was a square peg in a round hole throughout his life. And for much of the time, he was happy about this. He never really wanted to fit in. But, I think also, it made him lonely. He only ever had one really good friend. There were a lot of people he knew superficially and liked to associate with from time to time, but he didn't talk about his emotions easily. He was particularly reluctant to talk about his childhood. He'd had a difficult childhood. He didn't get on well with his own father, and so there were levels and depths that he just did not want to explore. I think through music, he was able to explore those depths. He was able, in the way he played the organ, to express his feelings in a way that was very difficult for him with words.

He was unpredictable. He was volatile. I grew up in the shadow of his volatility, which later I came to recognize as depression. But along with the depression went his incredible musical talent. He’d grown up in a little town on the Welsh-English border, then through the Depression became a theater organist, served as a soldier in World War II, and then emigrated to Canada with my mother. I was an only child.

I would see him from time to time coming to the kitchen table with an envelope in his hand and a pencil behind his ear. This would mean he was composing: he was writing stuff down; he was making something new. He was an artist.

I always loved my father's skill at the pipe organ, but knowing how he frustrated my mother and myself at times, not seeing how much he was admired and respected by students, it took me a long time to love him as fully as I probably should have done from the start. I had to work through a lot of things myself, and I could even say that it was maybe only in the last months of his life when he showed tremendous courage. He was battling colon cancer, and he did not complain. He'd always been someone who’d complained a lot about wherever he was living. He used to say about Montreal where he lived in the last year of his life, “I don't want to die in this place.” But then when he was dying, he didn't say that anymore. He showed tremendous patience and understanding—and perhaps that's when I began to realize how much more there was to him than I had ever understood up until that point.

**Reading**

“Un Gars de Ville”

poème pour son père, par Susan Gray

My name is Susan Gray, and I’m here to read a poem in the spirit of Father’s Day. It’s a tribute to my late father, who was a writer.

Un gars de ville

1.

T’étais pas un gars de campagne;

t’étais un gars de ville,

et Montréal, ta préférée.

D’heures innombrables passées dans des cafés,

des restos, où tu écrivais, tu observais,

tu consommais de copieuses tasses de café,

et dehors, avec ta caméra, pour SAISIR L’INSTANT.

Mon père, tu n’es plus à la portée de la main

et ta disparition me dépasse

mais je me souviens...

vers l’âge de cinq ans

avec de la musique vivante pour nous accompagner,

je marchais sur tes pattes

pour apprendre à bouger gracieusement

on était un grand et une petite,

harmonieusement,

même si tes pieds brûlaient toujours (orteils-marteaux).

Mon premier souvenir est de toi, Papa,

avec ton visage radieux,

ton énergie contagieuse.

Il y avait une connexion forte entre nous deux.

Est-ce que tu aurais aimé avoir un fils?

Rendu comme t’étais avec trois filles

et une femme qui incarnait le *Mona Lisa*

2.

Dans cette photo révélatrice de notre mythe familiale

*Mona* est là en plein centre.

Derrière la caméra

tu brille par ton absence.

On gravite autour d’elle

comme des lunes.

Maintenant c’est toi, le visage caché de la lune.

À quoi ressemble-t-il Montréal

vu d’aussi loin?

Toi, qui aimais tant voyager,

est-ce que tu nous reconnais?

Est-ce que le soleil te fait signe des fois?

Toi, qui n’étais pas *Icare,*

qui n’était pas immodeste,

mais qui aimait rire et faire rire

tes yeux ouverts sur le monde

et sur Montréal,

la ville-reine de ton imaginaire.

**Sharing Our Gifts**

Caite Clark

Good morning, everybody! Thanks for joining us for virtual worship this morning. My name is Caite Clark; my pronouns are she/her, and I am a Religious Explorations teacher at the Unitarian Church of Montreal.

This month for Share the Plate, we are donating to the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal. The Native Friendship Centre is an important resource for Indigenous people here on Tiohtià:ke because it helps connect them to vital community services and gives a sense of kinship in an urban centre.

While we’re here, I'd like to acknowledge that this has been a difficult start to June. There are a lot of troubling things going on in the news, and a lot of people are feeling at risk. When we're in a position of privilege, one of the things that we can do to help is to donate. If you are in the position to give this month, I encourage you to check out local organizations in Montreal that support marginalized communities, such as the Native Friendship Centre. Any gift is welcome.

**Reflection on Father’s Day**

Mark Abley

My name is Mark Abley. When I was growing up in Western Canada in the 1960s and 70s, I thought of Father's Day as something very traditional, very suburban, very patriarchal. I suppose by its essence, it's inevitably patriarchal, but I think of Father's Day in a very different way now. I think of fatherhood as something—not just who someone is, but what someone can *give* to their children or their grandchildren, or just to younger people in general. And I think of Father's Day as being about caring and giving, as well as being about showing strength and resilience and fortitude. And the showing of strength and resilience is something I came to understand with my father in the last couple of years of his life, when he was very ill with cancer, and he showed tremendous strength at that point. He showed great grace under pressure, so to speak, and the caring and the giving is something that it took me longer, in a way, to come to terms with.

One thing I found in the course of writing the book is my experience of my father resonates with a lot of other people, somewhat to my own surprise, because when I was growing up, I thought my father was unique. I thought I was uniquely disadvantaged in having a father like that. I felt, sometimes—as a boy—I felt jealous of other kids who had more traditional sorts of fathers.

My dad was a musician. He was completely devoted to his music—his art. That was what gave him the strength and sustenance, but I realize now he was also, in his own way, really devoted to me, and I look back on him now, and I wish I could have responded more openly—more honestly—to him when I was younger. There was just too much resistance; there were too many difficulties. But now that my father's been dead for many years, I can look back, and I can see the positive things that he gave to me. And I hope I've been able to emulate that—to a certain extent with my own kids, to make sure that I'm there for them and that I provide the kind of unconditional love that we should be celebrating when it's from an older person passed on to a younger person. In saying this, I'm well aware that, unfortunately, a lot of people, including many in our congregation, have not had a positive experience with their own fathers. And so, I hope that in spite of the difficulties of this day, it can still be a day where there's a celebration of mentors, of role models, of people who did pass on something positive to younger people they knew.

**Introduction to “Beauty Fades”**

Rev. Diane Rollert

Just a very short introduction here: This next piece that you're going to hear, played by Sandra and sung by Eleuthera, is a piece called “Beauty Fades,” written by my father Elmer Olenick. And I always thought that my dad wrote this piece for my mom because she never felt she was very beautiful, and he always thought she was. And so, I think he expressed his love for her and his reassurance that there were more important things in life than beauty.

**Song**

“Beauty Fades,” by Elmer Olenick

Sandra Hunt and Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EB-AzaQ1Ks>

**Music for Meditation**

“Enchantment,” by Henry T. Abley

Sandra Hunt

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuyGWCmWyjM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuyGWCmWyjM&list=PLTh9xW-iD5em89Epsxzlyc6SuM__fi3Wl&index=13)

**Closing Song**

“May Your Life Be as a Song,” by Jim Scott

Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert and Lillias Lippert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Iph_XA4crM>

**Closing Words**

Rev. Diane Rollert

I want to offer you this closing as a bridge between the many things we could have celebrated today and we *did* celebrate today—fathers as loving mentors and caring role models, Summer Solstice, National Indigenous Peoples Day.

These are words from the late Ojibwe author Richard Wagamese. They’re words that remind me of my own father, and the stories Mark told about his father, and perhaps a bit of Susan's father thrown in there as well. They remind me of the importance of finding meaning on this earth—and within ourselves.

Richard Wagamese writes:

I'm not here in this life to be well balanced or admired. I'm here to be an oddball, eccentric, different, wildly imaginative, creative, daring, curious, inventive and even a tad strange at times. I'm here to pray and chant and meditate and sing and find Creator in a blues riff, a sunrise, a touch or the laughter of children. I'm here to discover *me* in all of that. I'm here to add clunky, chunky and funky bits of me to this swirl and swagger and churn of life and living. It demands I be authentic. So when you look out at the world, that's me dancing in the fields.