**The Unitarian Church of Montreal**

In Recognition of Earth Day

Sunday, April 26, 2020

**Chalice Lighting**

**Katharine Childs, Director of Religious Exploration**

Good morning, and welcome to online worship with the Unitarian Church of Montreal. If you have a candle or a chalice, please light it as I read these words from American Poet Laureate and member of the Creek Nation Joy Harjo.

This is excerpted from her poem “Remember.”

Remember the sky that you were born under,  
know each of the star's stories.  
Remember the moon, know who she is.  
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the  
strongest point of time. Remember sundown  
and the giving away to night.  
Remember the earth whose skin you are:  
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth  
brown earth, we are earth.  
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their  
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,  
listen to them. They are alive poems.  
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the  
origin of this universe.  
Remember you are all people and all people  
are you.  
Remember you are this universe and this  
universe is you.  
Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.  
Remember language comes from this.  
Remember the dance language is, that life is.  
Remember.

**Song**

“In Your Language” by Beth Stupple

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpeCquWPQVA&list=PLTh9xW-iD5elo_NEYimNCYm5xQ1JcfBpL>

**Time for All Ages**

**“In My Backyard”**

Katherine Childs

Hi everyone!

For our Time for All Ages today, I wanted to take you on a tour of my backyard. I live in the Pointe St. Charles neighborhood in Montreal, and we are very lucky that we have a backyard behind our apartment, and we’ve just started taking care of it for the spring.

Like many people, we wait a fairly long time before fully cleaning up our backyard so that we can leave the leaves and the debris from the winter on the ground for pollinators and other bugs and friendly creatures to grow up and to hatch eggs, so that what we're doing in our garden is contributing to the web of life and not a detriment to it.

One of the most important things that I’ve been learning and thinking about as a Unitarian Universalist is really what it means to think about the land as being sacred, and that it's not something that’s just there for us to take and extract from, but that it's something that we're really in a deep relationship with. And so, in the past seven years that we have lived in this apartment, I’ve been getting to know this backyard and getting to know the trees and the plants that come back every year—and to really see what it is able to bring forth if it’s well taken care of.

So here we go. Over here, you can see our herb garden. This is two window boxes that we have suspended from our fence. And this is where we grow herbs during the summer—usually basil and cilantro, sometimes some other things. And then these little friends right here are our chives. These two little chive bushes are some of the most resilient plants in this whole garden, and they spring up early, early in the spring. They're the first things that come up in our garden, and it is always so lovely to see them come up first, and every single year, I think, “Oh no! Poor little chives! You've come too early and it's going to freeze.” But somehow, they just keep coming back every year.

You can see, in behind them, our patch of lilies. I photographed the chives earlier in the season when they had first sprung up, and there are so many more lilies in behind them now. I guess it really is getting on into spring. And over here, you'll see the trellising and the raised beds where we grow our tomatoes. We usually have two beds—these two beds in the middle here—for tomatoes. The far-back bed is to grow beans and peas. And then over in front, we have our poor little fledgling strawberry plant, which is slowly coming back to life. We're going to wait and see what it does this year.

So this is our garden archway. You can see on the right-hand side there’s a raised bed, which will eventually grow zucchini, and the idea is that we’ll train them up over this trellis so that they’ll climb higher, and also make a fun little sheltered spot. You can see that Thora has set up a little table and chair for herself under there. Unfortunately, the squirrels got to our zucchini plants last year, so this didn't really take up, but we're hoping they will this year, with the increased light in the backyard, because there are some trees that have been cut down on the far side of the backyard on a property—as you can probably hear—that’s being renovated. That's the construction noise that you've probably been able to hear in the background.

So, these friends here are cedar bushes. These were planted by a previous tenant of this apartment. And it has just been so magical to watch them grow in the last seven years. They've probably doubled in size in that time. They didn't get a ton of light, and they certainly get buried under the snow in the winter. You can see them leaning out into the garden a little bit because they've been bent down by the snow, but it's really delightful to have them there.

And here we are at one of my absolutely favorite parts of our backyard garden. This is my lilac bush. As you can see, there are some buds just starting. And, I mean, I love lilac flowers; I love the way they smell and the way they look. But this tree is really special to me. You can see it's looking a little patchy. We pruned a whole bunch of it back last year, and it's growing really nicely this year. It starts sprouting about this time, and has usually come to full flower just in time for the May long weekend—when, every other year, I’m away at a conference and I miss it. But in the past few years, it's been flowering earlier and earlier. And it's definitely a way that we can see climate change in action. See some of those buds that are just starting now? The tree is flowering earlier and earlier as a result of our changing climate. And being in a relationship with this tree, learning how to take care of it, learning what it needs and watching it grow, and watching it adapt to our changing climate has been really special and makes me feel connected with the land that I live on.

Thank you for joining me today in my backyard. It was wonderful to have you.

See you soon!

**Reflection**

Marlene Hale

[*Unfortunately the first several minutes of Marlene Hale’s reflection, including her opening drumming, were not recorded for transcription.*]

. . . The dispute between Coastal GasLink (CGL), the RCMP, and our territory of the Wet'suwet'en Nation (which is 22,000 acres) came to a huge, big blow-up when they finally went into Unistʼotʼen and removed our matriarchs. By doing that. . . almost the very next day, they called for Canada to shut down. And after that, it really became not our decision. It was the Indigenous people of Canada—Canadians across the country—that shut Canada down. And also it was worldwide. We were getting daily reports in from Italy, France, Australia, New Zealand, up to the UK, and all the way up to Inuvik, all across Labrador, and all across the coast. Every transport available was shut down—highways, roads. It was a tremendous call from the United Nations—twice this year—a call for Canada to take the RCMP out of our territory. The United Nations also expressed great concern of taking CGL off our territory, which came to deaf ears.

Since then, also, our Hereditary Chiefs—five of them from all five clans—came to Quebec, and they met with the chiefs here, at first in Tyendinaga. Then they traveled late at night to Kahnawake to meet the chiefs there, and we spent the whole day in the longhouse. As you know, I'm from the Laksilyu Clan, and when our chiefs came here to Quebec, my own House Chief was not able to make it because of many things. Well, you know, it just happened that there were many deaths in the Hereditary Chiefs’ families, and we had no representation from my clan. Which we do need—all of us, to have a House Chief. So for the first time, I was a chef by trade and then, for the day, a chief. I was the stand-in chief for my House Chief, which was a very big honour for me, to meet the people of Tyendinaga and the Mohawk Nation, who still stand with our nation. And when the government really sees this, they really back down a little bit, with the Mohawk Nation directly behind us because they have got—totally—an understanding that they are not to be messed with. They had that experience thirty years ago.

And through that, we spent the whole day in the longhouse in Kahnawake. They had our chiefs each introduce themselves, in the traditional way of the Mohawk Nation, which I was very grateful for, because me—living in Quebec, which has eleven nations—I always say it's eleven nations and one Laksilyu. It was very inspiring to have a community like Kahnawake to be behind us.

Then on March 21, as we know, COVID came, and everything totally stopped, but with them coming to Kahnawake, they had to go back—the long journey back to northern British Columbia. Then they finally got to sit down with the government and also the police commission, and it was three days of talking with them. It was very trying, because the first morning, things were not going our way at all. And as things progressed, it was amazing that what could not be understood was to have the RCMP off our territory. It was not working out.

But as it was, the talks did go well, and from there the five chiefs have to go out to all their people—the five clans—explaining to them what has transpired in those three days, and what we all need to be educated on—ourselves with the lawyers—and what the government's talk was, but then to sign finally some paper, hopefully, that will end, maybe, all the atrocities to our people.

Then COVID came. It all went to a stop, but it didn't stop our people. We still do Zoom meetings; the Hereditary Chiefs themselves do Zoom meetings amongst themselves. And as we know, putting on the Zoom, it's very, ah, testy up there because of the slow Internet—or no Internet at all where some of them are. But it has been progressing. Our clan, which is the Laksilyu Clan, was the last one. We had a four-hour meeting with the two lawyers representing our people. And, don't forget, every time we have a lawyer representing our people, the monies that we raise—this is what it‘s for. It was $150,000 just for that four-hour discussion, because it really is a huge, huge thing if it becomes a yes vote.

At the end of the four hours it ended up to be a yes vote. We were the last clients in, so we really hope and pray that it is going to fall in our direction.

Now as this goes on, we need to move forward because, as we know, Diane, the last huge, big thing with COVID today is with our elderly, and most of our speakers in Wet'suwet'en are elderly, including the Hereditary Chiefs themselves. And also, it's going to be a huge, big factor on how we can deal with things when this comes out. And so we really need to push forward and move it fast, so that it does fall in our direction—that they do sign the piece of paper, and then maybe CGL, hopefully.

The other thing that stands in our gain also is that oil is nowhere. So for them to really make sure that putting these pipelines in is a pipe dream! [laughs] Let's put it that way then—putting a massive amount of destruction on our territory.

The Morris River, where the Unistʼotʼen camp is right now, was just tested, only about two weeks ago, and it had a horrible yellow taste to it, apparently, and there was a yellow colour. We're just always terrified, with other people being in our territory and what they're doing. We don't have even access to our own airspace. So we cannot see what they’re up to.

Now the biggest thing that comes with us with COVID is that the RCMP and CGL are still on our territory. They are *still there.* And being that they are, it's very dangerous for them, and it's dangerous for our people, to get sick. And if that happens, that is going to be more than unpardonable to our people, because they bring in RCMP from other communities, and they're apparently changed every two weeks. We have new people from different areas, not just the local people. CGL are flying in workers—probably as we're talking today—still flying them in from Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, into Prince Rupert and then transporting them from there up to where they have the man camps. So this has been a really big concern for our people right now. And we do say, you know, shame on the government for putting this on the back burner.

I've been trying to get a major big letter out to Dr. Tam, who's the government’s doctor, letting her know that if you're really going all directions and keeping people closed in, why are these people not out of our territories and going to put COVID onto us? And most of my elders, they really feel whole-heartedly—which is very sad, when we were having these discussions the other day—that people are maybe just intentionally trying to put the COVID onto our people, because they're not taking any actions to stop it.

And so from then on—the talks, we know as of four days ago. We really wish the chiefs the best.

In our territory so far, in all of northern British Columbia, there is no COVID. There's the Smithers Hospital, BC hospital; that's the interior. The health unit has still said, today, we are clean. And we really want to keep it that way. We work hard. All the communities are shut off like they are here.

And that brings me on to something different. I'll just put a fast track onto what I'm doing today. Why I have my chef's jacket on is, I've just been cooking a lot of big soup and bannock, and this is going to go down to Resilience. It was sponsored by a program at Métèque Gallery, and instead of me going in to do the job, we put it into food, and they're going to come and pick it up within the hour, and they'll be fed. It'll feed a lot of people down in the Atwater and St. Catherine area, so I'm really happy to be a part of that.

One thing to share with you, Diane, and all your congregation. I have started a Zoom meeting every Friday. It goes from seven o'clock Eastern Time. And we are talking still on Wet'suwet'en issues, but we've turned it to solidarity for the elderly, and we've got a GoFundMe started. We just started this two weeks ago, and we've already got $100 there. So we're going to start putting this money toward the elderly. There are a few associations, apparently, that are Canada-wide that we can put the money toward to help the elderly, because we feel it's a pandemic failure to the elderly, what has happened—what’s transpired with the elderly across the land. And we ourselves, as Indigenous people, our elders are kept at home. We keep them home to the end. So we're not worried about them. Most of them are very safe, all over Canada. But the ones that are in the homes—and when we heard what was going on, especially in Dorval, we changed our shift. We’re called “shift disturbers,” and the shift disturbing has gone over to the elderly to help them, and with Wet'suwet'en always still in mind, because we all have the elderly.

I want to say thank you ever so much to all of you—and, Eleuthera, that was so beautiful! I can't wait to share it with my people—across Canada—and it will be heard on Zoom, I think on Friday night, so I would love to have you join us—and the congregation, I would love to have you join us. We’ve had the elderly phone, all the way from Uganda, and a fellow spoke about what their community was going through at this time, and we're trying to get a lady still phoning in from Colombia from the Wayúu region, and we've had people all across Canada joining on this, and their stories, how they're coping with COVID and how things are going for them, their communities, their elderly, and keeping the best of a small space for themselves, you know, and trying to keep the uplift up. And this is why we have people like you, Diane and Eleuthera, and all the Unitarian Church congregation, and all who keep you abreast in that building. It's a beautiful space, and it would be nice to see people back in that space again, and I thank you ever so much for having me here today.

**Rev. Diane:** Thank you so, so much, Marlene. It is such an honour for us. Thank you for that. And just so people know, at the end of the service we'll have a half an hour for those who want to stay to ask Marlene questions. We’re just glad to have you here. And Eleuthera has some music for us. Do you want to add something else?

**Eleuthera:** Yeah, I just wanted to thank you so much, Marlene, and to share my first memory of meeting you. I’d wanted to say in my intro, and forgot. The very first time I met Marlene was at a Unistʼotʼen Camp Legal Fund fundraiser at the Westmount Park United Church, and she was standing at the door. She had organized the event, had cooked for everyone this incredible—I think it was moose—moose stew with bannock. It was delicious. And she was at the door receiving people, and literally received us with open arms. Had never met us before in her life, and took us into her arms and hugged us. And it was so, so moving to be welcomed in that way. I just want to thank you so much for the work that you do for your community. You've been working tirelessly at this for a year and a half, and it must be exhausting, but thank you so, so much for your generosity and dedication. You’re an inspiration!

**Musical Response**

“Before All Else”

Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

**April Share the Plate**

Caite Clark

Hello. Bonjour. My name is Caite Clark, and I am one of the Religious Exploration teachers at the Unitarian Church of Montreal.

This month, for Share the Plate, we will be donating to Les Petits Renards. Les Petits Renards offers a variety of services to people in Verdun who are vulnerable or in need of special support. The organization provides medical and psycho-social services, legal advice, family workshops, art and occupational therapy, and activities for kids and adults, including art, yoga, music, and more.

Les Petits Renards has offered support to families from our community in the past, and they operate on a modest annual budget. It is especially important that we support them this month as they support families who do not qualify for provincial healthcare.

If you are in a position to give this month, please visit their website: [www.cpscverdun.com](http://www.cpscverdun.com) and we will also be including a link to their website in the description of this video.

Even if you cannot give financially this month, know that your gifts are enough—whether it’s delivering groceries to an elderly neighbour, or giving a friend or family member a phone call. It is important that we stay connected at this time.

Thank you for sharing your gifts.

**Meditation and Pastoral Moment**

Prayer for This Day on Earth

Rev. Diane Rollert

Earth, you are mud. You are moss growing on forgotten stones. You are pale, translucent paper peeling from the soft bark of a birch tree. You are birds singing in the branches. You are fire deep below our footsteps. You are the sunlight that dances across your face. Loved and neglected. Meek and powerful. Creator and created. You are the journey. You are all living things. You are the virus, and the whole of our being. You are water rushing from snow melting in mountains. You are pines shifting in the wind.

And who are we? We are people who have been gifted with your beauty. We are people who find love and find joy in small things. And we are people who ache and mourn for our loved ones dying in rooms far from our healing touch. We are people who cry for the 22 souls shot down in a violent rampage in the quiet innocence of small-town Nova Scotia, in the broken heart and shock of a nation. We are people painfully seeking empathy for those who knew and once loved a lone gunman, for those who are asking the same questions we ask, the questions that will never be answered. We are people living with acceptance and struggling with frustration after weeks of lockdown. We are people who worry about the future, after—after all this passes, after we’ve forgotten the silence of this time.

There is work that needs to be done, work that calls us out of ourselves and into our shared humanity, to a place where the past will no longer be an adequate excuse for why we haven’t tried to save the future. We’re still learning how to listen to the song that lives in the silence, when the planes have been cancelled and the traffic has thinned. We’re only beginning to learn the meaning of sacrifice.

Earth, you are as thick as mud, as clear as water, all-consuming as fire, all-embracing as air. You are the source of everything—of us, of our future. May we find our way home to the humble understanding that without you, without deepest care and respect, we will lose you, and you will lose us. There is still time for us to hear your song, if only we will listen.

Amen.

**Music for Meditation**

"Stand Down, Come In" by Oh Pray Tell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK-CVHbSs54&list=PLTh9xW-iD5elo_NEYimNCYm5xQ1JcfBpL>

**Joys and concerns**

**Closing Word and Extinguishing of the Chalice**

Katharine Childs

Our closing words this morning, “The Earth Is a Living Thing,” is a poem by black American poet Lucille Clifton.

the earth is a living thing

is a black shambling bear

ruffling its wild back and tossing

mountains into the sea

is a black hawk circling

the burying ground circling the bones

picked clean and discarded

is a fish black blind in the belly of water

is a diamond blind in the black belly of coal

is a black and living thing

is a favorite child

of the universe

feel her rolling her hand

in its kinky hair

feel her brushing it clean

**Closing Song**

“Unist’ot’en Camp” by Tribe Called Red

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_KsEJF6A0Cc&list=PLTh9xW-iD5elo\_NEYimNCYm5xQ1JcfBpL