

Prelude

Announcements

Opening Words

We gather here as individual people

By [Barbara Hamilton-Holway](#)

We gather here as individual people:

young and old;

male, female, and non-binary;

temporarily able and disabled;

gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, and straight people,

all the colors of the human race;

theist, atheist, agnostic;

Christian, Buddhist, feminist, humanist.

We gather here as a community of people who are more than categories.

We gather here—each ministering to the other, meeting one another's strength, encouraging wholeness.

We give thanks for this extraordinary blessing—the gathering together of separate, unique individuals as one whole, one body, our church.

Here may our minds stretch, our hearts open, our spirits deepen.

Here may we acknowledge our brokenness and be ever stirred by love's infinite possibilities.

Come, let us worship.

Chalice Lighting

Why We're Here by Erik Walk Wikstrom

In Unison:

Here, today, in this place and with these people,

May we listen so that we can hear;

May we hear so that we can feel;

May we feel so that we can know; and

May we know so that we can change ourselves and this world.

Reading

Excerpt from *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals* by Aurora Levins Morales.

I still remember how the earth moved that day. I was sixteen, sitting in a group of half-dozen young women who were all part of the Chicago Women's liberation Union, talking about the places where we struggled in our lives. One after another we said variations of the same things, and slowly comprehension dawned that what we had been experiencing as personal shortcomings were the markers of a shared social oppression. We were just fine. Our situations were not.

This is a moment that organizers strive for, when the systemic forces behind individual miser become clear, when people's dissatisfactions turn outward, away from self-blame, blame of other oppressed people, blame of "human nature", and towards the workings of an unjust society.

We try many different strategies to make that shift happen, but the successful ones all begin with the particulars of people's lives and follow them down into our shared root systems. There are stories that reveal the scapegoats we have been criticizing as fully human and struggling like ourselves. There are stories that show resistance is not futile when we assumed it was. There are stories that make connections between experiences that seem completely separate and expose the underpinnings of domination. There are stories that build trust, allow catharsis, honor grief, validate rage, offer unexpected and heart-melting examples of solidarity and bestow courage.

The work of the organizer is always to identify the existing story and, in collaboration with others, propose new ones that allow people to see different possibilities and make new choices. Doing this well means listening more than making speeches—really hearing the narratives people are living by.

Actions are always a form of storytelling. Sitting in the front of a bus, lying down in front of a train, stopping work, leaving a school building, blocking the loading of a ship—these are all new stories about reality that contradict official versions meant to uphold the horrible status quo.

In the 1970s and 1980s the Chilean sailing ship Esmeralda was used as a torture center where many political prisoners suffered horrors at the hands of the regime. During that time, it also made international voyages as a historic “tall ship”. When it arrived in San Francisco, a group of protesters paid admission for the official tour, wearing jackets over T-Shirts, each of which bore a single letter. Then they stood in a line and opened their jackets, revealing a human banner that said STOP THE TORTURE SHIP. Their action disrupted a story of graceful sails and tall masts, an apparently innocent celebration of shipbuilding craft and Chilean seafaring, and in one simple act, recaptioned the event.

Actions tell stories, but often we don’t pay enough attention. Each time we craft a slogan for a march, we need to think beyond our own expressions of outrage and the structures of rhythm and make the story we’re changing is the most effective way to change how people around us think.

Listening to, analyzing, creating, and disseminating stories, and doing so with courage, keenness, skill, and cunning, with the clear purpose of changing human consciousness in the direction of choosing justice—this is what organizing is really about.

Offering

Patriot Service Dogs

For the offering this morning, I would like to suggest Patriot Service Dogs. I will be going out to Florida in November to train with and receive a service dog so the organization is close to my heart.

<https://www.patriotservicedogs.org/donate/>

They provide trained service dogs to veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress and mobility related conditions while developing the skills of inmates serving time. Service dogs are provided at no cost to the veterans. Volunteers raise and train puppies for about 18 months to 2 years before the dogs receive their specialized training. The organization initiated a program called WOOF which stands for Women Offering Obedience and Friendship at Lowell

Correctional in Marion County, FL. Some WOOF inmates are assigned to service dogs in training and are responsible for their training as well as their care. Volunteer weekend raisers expose the prison pups to experiences such as riding in cars, going to restaurants, and stores. Other inmates help train basic obedience to dogs and puppies up for adoption through a local rescue. This provides dogs who are not suitable to live in the shelter such as reactive canines, shy dogs that need socialization, submissive dogs that need help building confidence and unruly dogs that would benefit boundaries, a chance to thrive and be adopted. At work camp, the dogs and inmates are housed in a cottage-like dorm with 4 inmates and 2 dogs per room. Dogs are kenneled next to their trainers during the night or when the trainer is participating in group activities. The dogs have a play yard, training room, and agility room. 100% of the WOOF trained dogs have found permanent homes. While in the program, WOOF inmates not only gain experience with canine handling and care skills, but also public speaking, time management, and working with groups of people from all walks of life. Eligibility is based on charges.

Joys and Sorrow

In Unison:

We honor the joys and concerns spoken today

As well as those held silently in our hearts

With our thoughts and words, we enfold this community in love.

Hymn

Reading

Excerpt from *To Survive Climate Catastrophe, Look to Queer and Disabled Folks* by Patty Berne and Vanessa Raditz.

Communities around the world are grappling with the growing number and intensity of climate-related disasters because of climate change. Immediately after one of these disasters in the U.S., federal, state, and nonprofit agencies frequently pour financial resources into the communities affected by the latest fire, flood, or earthquake. But these emergency support systems are usually unable to address the long-term needs of those affected, and all too often, these structural support systems entirely overlook those of us who live at the intersection of multiple oppressions: race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, to name a few.

The forces of capitalism, racism, ableism, transphobia, and homophobia may have cornered us into a vulnerable position in this unprecedented moment in our planet's history, but the wisdom we've gained along the way could allow us all to survive in the face of climate chaos. The history of disabled queer and trans people has continually been one of creative problem-solving within a society that refuses to center our needs. If we can build an intersectional climate justice movement, our species might have a chance to survive. Let's start by openly, joyously proclaiming that we are natural beings, not aberrations of nature. We find healing and justice in the realm of queer ecology, a growing field exploring the vast diversity of gender and sexuality that exists in nature, such as the more than 50 species of coral reef fish that undergo one or more sex transitions in their lifetime, completely transforming their behaviors, bodies, and even reproductive organs.

When we begin to see the planet through this lens, we remember that the entire world has biodiversity that is precious, necessary for our survival, and deeply threatened. Whether we're looking at ecology, society, or our human culture, biodiversity is our best defense to the threats of climate change. When we begin to see our own diversity reflected in the ecology of this planet, we can also recognize that the same forces threaten both.

Just as capitalism is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity on this planet—seen in the clear-cutting of forests to plant monocultures for fuel—it is also the driving force behind the violence towards marginalized people with disabilities, because our bodies are not perceived as being “productive.” we're seeing in the climate chaos that's erupting is the Earth's resistance. The question is: How can we ally with this Brown, queer, disabled, femme planet to support her survival, and the survival of all who depend on her?

We have to know our worth to value others. We have to fight for the valuable lives of butterflies, and moss, and elders. Because our lives—and all life—depends on it. We must move beyond our cultural beliefs that tell us we are only worth as much as we can produce. Just as each component in Earth's ecosystem plays a vital role in supporting everything around it, so do each of us have an essential role to play in sustaining our communities, our environment, our planet.

Even in the moments when we're in pain, when we're uncomfortable, when the task ahead feels overwhelming, and we feel defeated by the sheer scope of everything that's

wrong in the world, we don't have to give up on life or on humanity. Queer and trans disabled people know that, because that's how we live. At this moment of climate chaos, we're saying: Welcome to our world. We have some things to teach you if you'll listen, so that we can all survive.

Sermon

Discussion After Service?

Chalice Extinguishing

It Becomes More

By [Amy Zucker Morgenstern](#)

When we take fire from our chalice, it does not become less.

It becomes more.

And so we extinguish our chalice, but we take its light and warmth with us, multiplying their power by all of our lives, and sharing it with the world.

Closing Words

Life is Always Unfinished Business

By [Richard S. Gilbert](#)

In the midst of the whirling day,

In the hectic rush to be doing,

In the frantic pace of life,

Pause here for a moment.

Catch your breath;

Relax your body;

Loosen your grip on life.

Consider that our lives are always unfinished business;

Imagine that the picture of our being is never complete;

Allow your life to be a work in progress.

Do not hurry to mold the masterpiece;

Do not rush to finish the picture;

Do not be impatient to complete the drawing.

From beckoning birth to dawning death we are in process,

And always there is more to be done.

Do not let the incompleteness weigh on your spirit;

Do not despair that imperfection marks your every day;

Do not fear that we are still in the making.

Let us instead be grateful that the world is still to be created;

Let us give thanks that we can be more than we are;

Let us celebrate the power of the incomplete;

For life is always unfinished business.