

Universalist Unitarian Church of Joliet
Sunday, January 26, 2025 - 10:30 a.m.

"Now Old Winter Starts to Fail - An Imbolc Celebration"

Presenters: Susan Urban & Phil Cooper ("February Sky")

*Please feel free to sing at home at any point in the service
where you feel moved to do so!*

Words to all the songs and readings, including congregational songs,
are on the pages following this one.

RINGING OF THE OPENING CHIME
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND WELCOME
INVITATION TO WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC: "Leave the Light On," by Chris Smither

OPENING WORDS: "Calgary 2 A.M." by Christopher Wiseman

***OPENING CONGREGATIONAL SONG:** "Imbolc Song," by Susan Urban (see below)

LIGHTING THE CHALICE (unison) "We Will Be Renewed," by Pat Uribe-Lichty (see below)

COVENANT (see below)

SHARING OF JOYS & CONCERNS

A time for joys and sorrows of your personal life. So that all may share, please keep your remarks brief and consider the sacredness of this time.

TIME FOR ALL AGES: Imbolc Chant (see below)

OFFERTORY

OFFERTORY MUSIC: "Rowing from Isla to Uist," Trad. Arr.

RESPONSIVE READING: "Imbolc" by Jill Yarnall (see below)

HOMILY PART I: Old Winter Starts to Fail

SONG: "February Thunder," by Zoe Mulford

HOMILY PART II: Thanks for Times to Come

SONG: "Child of the Future," by Susan Urban

GUIDED IMBOLC MEDITATION: "February: An Inner Journey to invoke Brigid: The Forge in the Forest," by Mara Freeman, adapted

***CLOSING CONGREGATIONAL SONG:** "Thinkin'," by Kathryn Morski (see below)

BENEDICTION

UNISON CHALICE EXTINGUISHING (see below)

POSTLUDE: "Quite Early Morning," by Pete Seeger

LEAVE THE LIGHT ON

Chris Smither

If I were young again, I'd pay attention
To that little-known dimension, a taste in endless time.
Just like water, it runs right through our fingers,
But the flavor of it lingers, like a rich, red wine.

In those days we were single, we lived them one by one,
Now we hardly see 'em, they don't walk, they run.

But I got plenty left I've set my sight on,
Don't wait up - leave the light on, I'll be home soon.

I've never seen my life in such a hurry,
But if I start to worry, I get left behind.

It's just a party, but you don't get invitations,
And there's just one destination, you better be on time.

For years we rhymed in couplets, and we sang 'em two by two,
Now we hardly rhyme at all, but here's a few.

And if they heard there's bullets left to bite on,
Don't wait up - leave the light on, I'll be home soon.

That drummer in my head needs inspiration,
There's a lack of syncopation, little holes need to align.

It's just so hard to leave these cages that we think in,
By stages we just sink in to a slow decline.

For years we lived in waltz time, danced it three by three,
Now it's hard to dance, but if you stick with me,

We've got what we need to spend the night on,
Don't wait up - leave the light on, I'll be home soon.

These races that we've run were not for glory, no moral to the story,
We run for peace of mind.

But the race we're running now is never-ending,
Space and time are bending, and there's no finish line.

I will live to be a hundred - I was born in '54,
30 more to go, but I ain't keepin' score.

I been left for dead before, but I still fight on,
Don't wait up - leave the light on, I'll be home soon.

'Cause I've been left for dead before, but I still fight on
Don't wait up - leave the light on, I'll be home soon.

IMBOLC SONG

Susan Urban

Lazy northern wind, it bites on these chilly winter nights,
Though the howling winds torment, darkest times are nearly spent.
Days of promise, landscape bright, evenings lighter, shorter nights,
Subtle hints of days to come, shining snow and rain and sun.

CHORUS:

Time to plant our wishes now
And watch them as they grow.

Brigid, goddess of the land, patroness of poetry,
Bards and singers hear your call, by your touch inspired all.
Lambs are born on icy ground, snowdrops blossom all around,
Help us face life unafraid, heal us now as winter fades.

CHORUS

LIGHTING THE CHALICE (unison)

“We Will Be Renewed,” by Pat Uribe-Lichty

We come together with our tired minds and bodies,
With our confusion and questions,
Our uncertainties and our fears.
We come together with our hopes,
With our pasts and our ideas,
Our passions and our faith.

We come together bringing all of who we are,
Trusting that in gathering we will be renewed,
And that together we can create the world we long for.

COVENANT

Love is the Doctrine of this Church.

Our beliefs are as individual as those who believe.

To learn, to serve, and to live in peace,

This is the flame we carry, this is our Covenant.

IMBOLC CHANT

Though our Mother Earth is sleeping,

Roots and seeds will start to grow.

She will waken when we call her

Underneath the Winter snow -

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!

RESPONSIVE READING: "Imbolc" by Jill Yarnall

So the skies rumbled and the snows came,

And everywhere down through the centuries of this gray night,

Came men and women gathering to pray,

And to sink their hands into the dark earth.

They gathered seeds and prepared them for planting,

They meditated in the icy darkness,

And they celebrated the lambing of the first ewe, to hasten spring.

And when through the earth they felt the stirring,

They sang songs encouraging the tiny seeds to grow.

In the dark, wet soil you can smell their work still;

They are digging along beside us. Listen!

The north wind carries their song across the snow,

At this time of Imbolc,

As the Earth prepares for Spring,

Wise women and men gather to await the promise of new life,

And to sing praises for the green earth.

And so do we, here and now, this year, and every year,

ALL *Welcome Imbolc!*

February thunder foretells the coming snow;
The icicles are lengthening, the frost is letting go.
Signs are in the weather, they are written on the moon
The ice is on the river, but the thaw is coming soon.

Everyone knows Jenny, you'll see her round the town,
In the back pew on a Sunday, she never makes a sound.
Eyes deep as water, god knows what they saw,
So long she's been frozen, but she's ready for the thaw.

CHORUS:

And the signs are written on the moon,
The ice is on the river, but the thaw is coming soon.

Winter is not gentle, and neither is the thaw.
It tears the trees out of the banks and leaves them racked and raw.
But silence can be broken, and secrets can be told,
You can hear the winter cracking as the river breaks its hold.

CHORUS (INSTRUMENTAL)

Jenny sees the sunrise come earlier each day,
There's sweetness in the breeze now, and blue behind the gray,
And Jenny lays her burden down and walks the country free,
And the future swells within her like the buds on every tree.

CHORUS

CHILD OF THE FUTURE

Susan Urban

I met your handsome granddad at a march against the war,
Chicago, nineteen-sixty-eight, Grant Park.

His hair was grown out natural, his skin was smooth and brown,
His eyes set round with lashes long and dark.

And maybe you could say we fell in love there at first sight,
Or maybe it was something else we shared.

But either way we spent three days together, noon to night,
His dusky skin against my own so fair.

And then he hit the road again, and as we kissed goodbye,
He told me he'd return to me in Spring.

When May came round, I'd nothing of him but his baby girl,
A single mom who had no wedding ring.

CHORUS:

Child of the future, hope of humanity,
You shine with the pride of your different races,
You are both the doorway and the key.

Your mother had her father's skin, so smooth and velvet brown,
With my green eyes and auburn hair in curls.

And neither black nor white kids would accept her as their own,
A sad and very lonely little girl.

But we adopted mongrel cats and puppies from the pound,
We'd go and see the hybrids at the zoo.

She saw that they were stronger than the purebred ones by far,
And I would say, "You see, they're just like you."

In college there were many mixed-race students like your mom,
At last she could be happy and serene.

She fell in love and married with a Spanish boy from France,
And they had you, my grandson, now eighteen. CHORUS

And in the year 2008, we labored side by side
To make a dream into reality.

And when a man with skin of brown became our President,
You cried and cheered and sang along with me.

And in Grant Park that warm November night, I found the man
Who'd been my lover 40 years before.

And all the bitter words I could have said just fell away,
No room for them in my heart any more.

He told me of his family, they lived out in L.A.,
He wept so hard in hearing of my own.

But when the man who changed the world that day got up to speak,
We dried our tears and vowed to carry on. CHORUS

THINKIN' by Kathryn Morski

CHORUS:

I was thinkin' 'bout water, wearin' away the hardest stone.

I was thinkin' 'bout spring bloomin' up through the snow.

I was thinkin' 'bout wind movin' earth one grain at a time as it blows.

I was thinkin' 'bout time. Tell me, where does it go?

If it left me behind, tell me, where would I be?

If I went on ahead, tell me, what would I see?

If it doesn't exist, why am I always behind?

It went something like this: I was thinkin' 'bout time. CHORUS

Is it all a big joke? Are we running in place?

Are we rats in a cosmic, huge, experimental rat race?

Do we come from an ape or unicellular slime?

Are we just a mistake? Well, I was thinkin' 'bout time. CHORUS

If you have time on your hands, is it heavy or light?

If it flies like an arrow, does it land or is it always in flight?

Does it flow like a stream? In a wave or a line?

Well, I wanted to scream! I was thinkin' 'bout time. CHORUS

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE (In Unison)

Carry the Flame of Peace and Love Until We Meet Again.

QUITE EARLY MORNING

Pete Seeger

You know it's darkest before the dawn

This thought keeps me moving on

If we could heed these early warnings

The time is now quite early morning

 If we could heed these early warnings

 The time is now quite early morning

 If we could heed these early warnings

 The time is now quite early

Some say that humankind won't long endure

But what makes them feel so doggone sure?

 I know that you who hear my singing

 Could make those freedom bells go ringing

 I know that you who hear my singing

 Could make those freedom bells go ringing

And so keep on while we live

Until we have no, no more to give

 And when these fingers can strum no longer

 Hand the old guitar to young ones stronger

 And when these fingers can strum no longer

 Hand the old guitar to young ones stronger

So though it's darkest before the dawn

This thought keeps us moving on

 Through all this world of joy and sorrow

 We still can have singing tomorrows

 Through all this world of joy and sorrow

 We still can have singing tomorrows

Yes, though it's darkest before the dawn

This thought keeps us moving on

 If we could heed these early warnings

 The time is now quite early morning

 If we could heed these early warnings

 The time is now quite early morning