

**Flower Communion Service Script**  
**April 28, 2019**

*Someone will be outside before the service, offering a flower to each person without one.*

*Greeter and/or Rev. Kee will ask each person to put their flower in the vase on the credenza before they sit down.*

**PRELUDE** – Jayne Jacobs

**HYMN OF THE MONTH #9**

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING** *by Alice Berry*

Children of the earth and sky, we are nurtured, sustained, given warmth and light from above and below.

Supported by earth's strong, firm crust, we build our homes, till the fields, plant our gardens and orchards.

When we turn from self and seek to be aware, we will find holy light in human faces, in blossom, birdsong, and sky.

Then earth is truly our home, and we are one with all earth's creatures, Parents of earth's children yet to be.

*Volunteer carries vase of flowers to altar*

**\*Hymn #21 – For the Beauty of the Earth**

**\*Unison Covenant**

**Joys & Concerns**

**Sharing the Fruits of our Labor and Good Fortune**

**FIRST READING** A Brief History, *by Reginald Zottoli* – **Werner Studer**

The Flower communion service was created by Norbert Čapek [*pronounced CHAH peck*](1870-1942), who founded the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. He introduced this special service to that church on June 4, 1923. For some time he had felt the need for some symbolic ritual that would bind people more closely together. The format had to be one that would not alienate any who had forsaken

other religious traditions. The traditional Christian communion service with bread and wine was unacceptable to the members of his congregation because of their strong reaction against the Catholic faith. So he turned to the native beauty of their countryside for elements of a communion which would be genuine to them. This simple service was the result. It was such a success that it was held yearly just before the summer recess of the church.

The flower communion was brought to the United States in 1940 and introduced to the members of our Cambridge, Massachusetts, church by Dr. Čapek's wife, Maja [*pronounced MAH yah*] V. Čapek. The Czech-born Maja had met Norbert Čapek in New York City while he was studying for his Ph.D., and it was at her urging that Norbert left the Baptist ministry and turned to Unitarianism. The Čapeks returned to Czechoslovakia in 1921 and established the dynamic liberal church in Prague; Maja Čapek was ordained in 1926. It was during her tour of the United States that Maja introduced the flower communion, which had been developed in the Prague church, at the Unitarian church in Cambridge. Unfortunately, Maja was unable to return to Prague due to the outbreak of World War II, and it was not until the war was over that Norbert Čapek's death in a Nazi concentration camp was revealed. From this beginning the service has spread to many of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and has been adapted along the way.

People were asked to bring a flower of their choice, either from their own gardens, or from the field or roadside. When they arrived at church, a large vase stood waiting in the vestibule, attended by two young members of the Church School. Each person was asked to place their own flower in the vase. This signified that it was by their own free will they joined with the others. The vase that contained all the flowers was a symbol of the united church fellowship.

The young attendants helped with the arrangement of the bouquet. Later they carried the vase up to the front of the auditorium and placed it on a table there. Dr. Čapek then said a prayer, after which he walked over and consecrated the flowers while the congregation stood. The two attendants then took the vase back out into the vestibule.

After the service, as people left the church, they went to the vase and each took a flower from the vase other than the one that they had brought. The significance of the flower communion is that as no two flowers are alike, so no two people are alike, yet each has a contribution to make. Together the different flowers form a beautiful bouquet. Our common bouquet would not be the same without the unique addition of each individual flower, and thus it is with our church community, it would not be the same without each and every one of us. Thus this service is a statement of our community.

By exchanging flowers, we show our willingness to walk together in our Search for truth, disregarding all that might divide us. Each person takes home a flower brought by someone else - thus symbolizing our shared celebration in community. This communion of sharing is essential to a free people of a free religion.

**\*Song: "Spring Has Now Unwrapped the Flowers"**

*(sung to the tune of the old English Christmas carol, "Good King Wenceslas")*

Spring has now unwrapped the flowers, Day is fast reviving;  
Life in all her growing powers, Towards the light is striving;  
Gone the iron touch of cold, Winter time and frost time;  
Seedlings working through the mold, Now make up for lost time.

All the world with beauty fills, Gold the green enhancing;  
Flowers make merry on the hills, Set the meadows dancing.  
Earth puts on her dress of glee; Flowers and grasses hide her.  
Go we forth in charity, One and all beside her.

**Prayer** – Rev. Leslie Kee

**The Flower Communion** – Janice Holz (*from <https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/zottolireginald/flowercommunion.pdf>*)

The Unitarian Universalist Flower Communion service which we are about to celebrate was originated in 1923 by Dr. Norbert Čapek [*pronounced CHAH-Peck*] for his Unitarian church in Prague. On the last Sunday before the summer recess, all the children and adults participated in this colorful ritual, which gives concrete expression to the humanity-affirming principles of our liberal faith. When the Nazis took control of Prague in 1940, they found Dr. Čapek's gospel of the inherent worth and beauty of every human person to be – as Nazi court records show – "...too dangerous to the Reich [for him] to be allowed to live."

Dr. Čapek was sent to Dachau, where he was killed the next year during a Nazi "medical experiment." This gentle man suffered a cruel death, but his message of human hope and decency lives on through his Flower Communion, which is widely celebrated today. It is a noble and meaning-filled ritual we are about to recreate. This service includes the original prayers of Dr. Čapek to help us remember the principles and dreams for which he died.

**The Consecration**

Whenever Dr. Čapek conducted his Flower Communion in Prague, he would say this proverb as he "consecrated" the flowers:

"Infinite Spirit of Life, we ask thy blessing on these, thy messengers of fellowship and love. May they remind us amid diversities of knowledge and of gifts, to be one in desire and affection, and devotion to thy holy will. May they also remind us of the value of comradeship, of doing and sharing alike. May we cherish friendship as one of thy most precious gifts. May we not let awareness of another's talents discourage us, or sully our relationship, but may we realize that, whatever we can do, great or small, the efforts of all of us are needed to do thy work in this world."

*<Elizabeth will bless & consecrate the flowers>*

### **Partaking of the Communion**

"It is time now for us to share in the Flower Communion. I ask that as you each in turn approach the communion vase you do so quietly – reverently – with a sense of how important it is for each of us to address our world and one another with gentleness, justice, and love. I ask that you select a flower – different from the one you brought – that particularly appeals to you. As you take your chosen flower – noting its particular shape and beauty – please remember to handle it carefully. It is a gift that someone else has brought to you. It represents that person's unique humanity, and therefore deserves your kindest touch. Let us share quietly in this Unitarian Universalist ritual of oneness and love."

*The communion is shared silently.*

### **The Communion Prayer**

Listen now to Dr. Čapek's Flower Communion prayer:

In the name of Providence, which implants in the seed the future of the tree and in the hearts of [all people], the longing for people living in [human] love; in the name of the highest, in whom we move and who makes [our family members] who they are; in the name of sages and great religious leaders, who sacrificed their lives to hasten the coming of [peace and justice]--let us renew our resolution--sincerely to be (our best selves) regardless of any kind of bar which estranges [one from another]. In this holy resolution may we be strengthened, knowing that we are [a family who shares a holy spirit;] that one spirit, the spirit of [life and] love, unites us. [May we] endeavor for a more perfect and joyful life. Amen.

Just before he was put to death in Dachau, Dr. Čapek wrote a prayer, reflecting on his own life and the state of his spirit. (As I read it, please be patient with the then-current use of "he" to refer to a person of any gender):

It is worthwhile to live and fight courageously for sacred ideals.

Oh blow ye evil winds into my body's fire; my soul you'll never unravel.

Even though disappointed a thousand times or fallen in the fight and everything would worthless seem,

I have lived amidst eternity. Be grateful, my soul, My life was worth living.  
He who was pressed from all sides but remained victorious in spirit is welcomed  
into the choir of heroes.

He who overcame the fetters giving wing to the mind is entering into the golden  
age of the victorious.

**Closing Words** – *children's RE participants come to the front and take turns  
reading the words of the Flower Ceremony into a microphone*

*Nora:* "We use flowers in our ceremony this morning to help us symbolize the love  
that is hidden deep inside us."

*Gavin:* "Flowers are beautiful, and so are the feelings of love among people.  
Their beauty cannot be measured, and neither can the feelings of people be  
measured. Their life is short but new flowers will replace the flowers that die, and  
new love can come into our hearts."

*Orion:* "This bud is for the new babies who have joined us this year. Last year  
these babies did not exist. This year they are here among us. Before they could lift  
a hand, they learned to smile. Before they could speak, they learned to love. If we  
help them keep this love in their hearts, they will pass it on to others, many years in  
the future."

"This flower represents the people living all over the world. Maybe we will  
never see them face to face, or touch their hands. But we can still warm our hands  
on their hearts, because we know that their hopes are like our hopes, their pain is  
like our pain, their love like our love."

*Nora:* "These flowers were each brought here by a different person and put  
together on these trays. They stand for all the people here today."

*Gavin:* "These flowers, so lovely today, will fade tomorrow. But the love (humans  
choose to share with each other) will go on and on. We (who are here this  
morning) know one another, we know what is in each other's hearts."

*All children's RE participants:* "We have brought our flowers and our love to  
brighten our church and gladden our hearts."

*<participants may sit down>*

**\*Song** "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" by Pete Seeger – Jayne on guitar

**\*Unison Affirmation** from "Rhymes and Reasons" by John Denver (adapted)

We believe it is here we must begin  
To seek the wisdom of children,

And the graceful way of flowers in the wind.  
For the children and the flowers are my siblings  
Their laughter and their loveliness could clear a cloudy day.  
Like music of the mountains and the colors of the rainbow  
They are a promise of the future and a blessing for today  
And the song that we are singing is a prayer...  
Come and stand beside us, we can find a better way.

**Postlude** – Jayne Jacobs