

## DO YOU NEED A SPIRITUAL DO-OVER?

Sept. 27, 2020

Rev. Lori Fleming

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center Sunday virtual worship celebration. I'm Rev. Richard Maraj, senior minister here, and we are so glad that you're joining us. And I am so excited that next Sunday, October the 4th, at 9 a.m. only, we're having an outdoor service live here at Unity of Phoenix. Re-starting and re-opening doing worship services together. It's going to be vibrant like Easter; it's going to be powerful and a wonderful experience after six months of not having live services. It will be great to be back together again.

We will still be posting videos of the Sunday service and videos of the Wednesday service; we're just adding going LIVE on Sunday morning at 9 a.m. for one service only. So hopefully you'll join us for that!

Circles of Gratitude begin on October 18, and from today until the 18th, you can sign up on the website. It's virtual, and it will be a powerful and wonderful experience. A lot to be grateful for still, in spite of all the changes that we've had to go through this year.

Rev. Lori is has a powerful, wonderful talk for you today, and we will begin with a meditation. And to lead us into that, the choir will lead us in "Surely the Presence."

### **Unity Choir (singing remotely):**

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;  
I can feel God's mighty power and God's grace.  
I can feel the brush of angel's wings;  
I see glory on each face.  
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

### **MEDITATION**

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** And so now I invite you just to close your eyes and take a deep breath, and just let go. Take another deep, cleansing breath, and let go even further. And just allow your heart to open. Allow your body to relax. Allow your thoughts to slow down. Allow yourself to be right here, and right now: be fully present in this moment. Fully present in your body.

Take another deep breath as we open our hearts fully to the Living Spirit of God. And we know that, the more we let go, that we can truly feel the peace of God: the peace that surpasses all human understanding. That peace that reassures us that we are never alone: in every now moment, that we are loved, that we are supported, that we are guided and provided with all that we need to live life, and to live it more peacefully. To live it more joyously. To live it more lovingly.

Whatever it is you're holding on to, just give it to God. Just let it go, and allow Spirit to open you. To see the fullness and the beauty of life. To see your life through the eyes of love. Through the eyes of thankfulness. Through the eyes of unlimited possibilities of goodness and abundance and blessings and even greater levels of joy than you've experienced before. As we let go and relax, we trust, knowing that all things are truly working together for our highest good. That all the things that are in our lives are here to help us. To bless us. To help us heal, and to help us expand and increase our awareness of that living activity of God, knowing that everything in our lives is there for a reason. Is there for a positive purpose: to guide us and to help us see life and to help us express the fullness of the glory of God that is already in us.

In the Psalms it is written, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* So, for the next few moments, let’s just sit in the silence. Just allow God to minister to your heart and your mind exactly what you need. Helping you to heal whatever needs to be healed. To release what needs to be released, and what needs to be realized: what needs to be fully realized. So let’s just sit in the silence and let God be God in us. Peace; be still!

## SILENCE

And now that we’ve allowed our hearts and minds to be filled with the awareness of the powerful, peaceful presence of God, let us now turn our thoughts and prayers to our loved ones. If you have a family member or a friend, a neighbor or a co-worker in need of healing or guidance or support in any way, I invite you to just bring them into your heart right now. Just see them in your mind’s eye encircled in the healing, loving light of God. And into this light we give all the prayer requests that have been submitted to our ministry, and also include our country and our world and our human family into our prayers as we hold the highest and the best for each and every one of them. We know God has a plan and a purpose for our lives, and right now the healing power of God is bringing about the right answers and order; the right clarity; the right healing; the right reconciliation; the right levels of understanding and compassion that will bring forth a more positive results and more positive outcomes into all our lives. Into our country and into our world. We just see our entire planet just encircled in the loving, healing light of God, knowing that miracles are happening. Lives are being transformed and healed and uplifted in amazing and wonderful ways. For, with God, all things are possible. And it truly is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

So we open ourselves and allow all these great things to come forth. We give thanks for all of the good and the blessings in our lives. And we open a space and give thanks for even the greater things that are still to come. And we pray and affirm this all through the name and the power of the Living Christ Spirit. And so it is. Amen.

## SONG

***Alexandra Ncube: “My Prayer for You” (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)***

For anyone who's prayed a thousand prayers  
Still can't find the answers anywhere  
Fighting off the lie that no one cares  
For anyone who's out there losing hope  
Feeling you're forsaken and alone  
Clinging to the last strands of your rope

May God give you eyes to see He's still greater  
Courage to rise and believe He's able  
May God be your peace in the fire you're walking through  
This is my prayer now  
This is my prayer for you

For all of those with tired and weary souls  
But still have faith to ask for miracles  
Choosing to believe He's in control

May God be your eyes to see He's still greater  
Courage to rise and believe He's able  
May God be your peace in the fire you're walking through  
This is my prayer now

This is my prayer

May your eyes be ever on the Lord, your helper  
May you find your refuge in the Lord, your shelter  
May you find Him closer than a brother all your days  
All of your days!

May God give you eyes to see He's still greater  
Courage to rise and believe He's able  
May God be your peace in the fire you're walking through  
This is my prayer now  
This is my prayer for you!  
You!

*[Light applause]*

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Lori Fleming** *[clapping]*: Oh, thank you, Craig! Thank you, Alexandra. That was amazing! The music is so good here!

Hello, everyone! I'm Rev. Lori Fleming; I'm the pastoral care minister here at Unity of Phoenix.

There was this man. And his plant was off for the week, because they were re-tooling it. And so his wife had a "honey-do" list for him. And he finished everything on the honey-do list, and it was Thursday. So he decided to go fishing. So he takes his rowboat out, and he's in the middle of the lake, and he's fishing. And he keeps throwing the line in, and the fish nibble his bait off, and he brings it back. And he's not catching any fish. So he finally runs out of bait, and decides it's time to go back home. So he's rowing back towards the shore. And along the edge of the shore, there are cattails and reeds. And he sees this cottonmouth snake, and it has a frog in its mouth. And he thinks to himself, "*You know; frogs make really good bait for bass.*" So he sneaks up on the cottonmouth – now cottonmouths are poisonous. He sneaks up on the snake; he grabs it with his hand, right behind the head, and he squeezes. And the snake opens his mouth a little bit to breathe, and he grabs the frog right out of the snake's mouth, throws the frog in his bait bucket, shuts the lid so it can't get away. And he's left holding the snake. He doesn't quite know what to do with this poisonous snake ... So he thinks about it for a minute, because he doesn't want to kill the snake, obviously. But he just happens to have a bottle of Jack Daniels in his boat. So he puts a few drops of Jack Daniels in the snake's mouth. The snake slurps it down; its eyes go in the back of its head. The snake completely relaxes, and the guy tosses the snake back into the reeds with no problem. So he figures, "*Great! Now I've got this bait!*" He rows back out into the middle of the lake; he baits his hook, throws it out. Immediately catches a 12-inch bass. He goes, "*My wife will be so happy to have this for dinner.*" In the next 45 minutes he catches four more really big bass. He goes, "*Great! I've got some for the freezer.*" Well, all of a sudden, he feels the weight in the boat shift just a little bit. And he looks down, and here comes that snake slithering up onto his rowboat. And in the snake's mouth are two frogs! *[Laughs]*

So do you need a spiritual do-over? Have you ever felt like you wanted to just stop the world and get off? Like, maybe life was moving just a little too quickly, and you were tap-dancing as fast as you could, and you couldn't keep up? Or that your past is catching up with you, and there's nothing you can do about it?

What if you had a way of letting go of it all, and were able to start over fresh and new? This morning, I'm going to teach you how to do a "spiritual do-over," so that you can uncover the greatness within you.

Have you ever felt like you wanted to start over? Well, I don't know about this pandemic, but I sure have! Maybe take back something you said that was unkind, or maybe re-do a situation when you hurt yourself or you hurt someone else.

Alan Cohen, the writer who wrote *The Dragon Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *I Had It All the Time*, tells a story about living in Hawaii. And he was required to paint his house numbers on his garbage cans. So he very dutifully got some paint and did that. So the garbage cans were full, and he put them in his car to take them down to the dump. And when he took them out of the car to dump them, he realized he hadn't waited for the paint to dry. And now he has paint on the leather seats in his car. And he began to berate himself. He began to tell himself all these words that we tell ourselves that I don't want to say out loud. You know, all that self-talk that's in our head: the negative way we talk about ourselves and to ourselves when we do something wrong?

Well, in my head, some of that self-talk sounds like my mother's voice saying, "Why did you do that?" Or, "What were you thinking?!" Alan said to himself, "Oh; I should have let the paint dry." He started to "should" on himself! He told himself he was a "fill-in-the-blank": whatever the words are you say to yourself. Sometimes stronger words. He tried to take the paint off, but nothing would take the paint off. And every time he got in his car, and he saw the paint on the seat, he started berating himself all over again.

Now, I know that none of you do anything like that! But several months go by, and he went to pick up a friend to go out to lunch. And he sheepishly told his friend about how the paint got on the leather in the back seat of his car. And how he'd been beating himself up. And the friend said, "Oh! What you need is *Goof Off!*" [Rev. Lori holds up a container of 'Goof Off.'] "Goof Off: any time you make a mistake, you use Goof Off, and it gets rid of your goof!" Well, Goof off does work; it took the paint right off the leather in his car. And he felt pretty bad about himself telling himself all those bad things all that time.

So are you berating yourself for the silly things that you've done? Day after day, over and over? Well, I'm inviting you – when that self-talk starts – to stop it immediately. Because, you know what? Sometimes we fail! So what? Everybody makes mistakes! Sometimes big mistakes. This is Planet Earth; I've said this before. We are here to grow and to learn. We're here to learn what works, and what doesn't work. We're here to test ourselves; to find the greatness that's already in us.

I have a grandson who will be 2-1/2 next month. And we brought him a little wooden puzzle of the alphabet. And he picked the letters out and put them back in one by one. And when he got tired of doing that – the puzzle was on the coffee table – he took the puzzle and he spun it in a circle. And he watched it go round and round and round and round. When it stopped, he spun it in a circle the other way, and he watched it go round and round and round and round. And when it stopped, he took the puzzle off of the table. He got on the table on his belly, and he spun himself around! He's in the world of school: learning what works and what doesn't work!

Well, sometimes we're like a third grader who didn't study for our spelling test, and we fail. That's when we need a really big bottle of Goof Off! Sometimes maybe we didn't do well in a subject. When I was taking Latin when I was in the eighth grade, I did not do well in Latin, and I had to go to summer school. But I went to summer school, and I learned what I need to know, because I wanted to take another year of Latin. Going to summer school was a spiritual do-over for me, because I learned enough Latin to do well the second year.

And you know, if you're a scientist, and you're in a lab, and you mix a couple of chemicals together, and they cure cancer ... Well, that's a really good thing, right? So the moral of the story isn't don't try, because you might fail. It's if you try, and it doesn't work out, do what your mother said: "Try and try and try again!"

We all know the story of Henry Ford. It's reputed that he tried 999 times to develop the metal filament that made the lightbulb work. Nine hundred and ninety-nine times! I bet he had a whole vat of Goof Off in his laboratory! But he refused to give up until he found a solution. He also invented the automation line that enabled him to make Model A and Model T cars at a price that families could afford.

You may know who Mike Dooley; he writes a blog. And he writes it to "Beloved" – that's you! And he signs it, "The Universe." This is one of my favorite ones. He says, "I've got to confess, beloved; every now and then I get this incredible urge to splurge on myself. To really indulge. To pull out all the stops and tickle every one of my senses. Yeah, and that's when I choose a lifetime like yours: with obstacles to challenge me; people to test me" – Oh yeah, you really need the Goof Off then! – "and circumstances that force me to see things that even I have never seen before. And I choose a personality like yours, which possesses faith so daring that, even when lost, I still hope. Dreams so bold that, even when I fail, I get right back up. And a heart so big that, when it breaks – as all big hearts do – there'll be room for second chances and new romances. That's what I'll do. Talk about crazy, sexy and cool! Signed, The Universe."

That sounds like the kind of spiritual do-over I want in my life. I want the ability to be flexible and resilient, no matter what happens. Even when I'm in the middle of something, and it's really clear that this is not going to work out, can we stand in the truth that we only get this one perfect moment, right here and right now? And the past has no power over us, except the power that we give it! And that it's okay to love deeply, even if we get hurt.

There's a little song; you may have heard it. And it goes like this: "Dance like no one is watching; love like you've never been hurt; sing like no one is listening; and live like it's heaven on earth." Yes! I love that! Because every day contains a possibility for a spiritual do-over! Every day is a fresh, new, wonderful day, just like a blank canvas waiting for us to splash paint across it. A fresh new start that maybe – just maybe! – we'll get it right this time! Maybe we'll fail; maybe we'll try again. But maybe it's just the time to let go of our pre-conceived notions of how life should be that no longer serves us.

There was a couple, and they had a very old cat. And they were doing everything they could to keep this cat going, because they loved him so much. They'd had him for so long; he was such a great cat! So every morning the man would get the cat; wrap him in a towel; take the pill they had to give the cat; lean his head back; poke the pill down the cat's throat; and the cat would swallow it. Maybe some of you have done that with one of your beloved pets. I've done it with mine. Well, this particular morning, the man got the towel out. And the cat was in kind of a feisty mood, as cats will do. He wrapped the cat up; he started to lean the cat's head back, and the cat went flying in the air. The pill went this way; the cat went that way. The cat flipped over to land on its feet – you've probably seen a cat do that. The pill bounced on the floor; the cat ran after the pill; licked the pill off the floor; and swallowed it!

I'm talking about pre-conceived notions: how you think things are going to be. He could have been giving that pill to that cat all along without wrapping it in a towel!

But, you know, sometimes we need a spiritual do-over. Do you remember the movie, *Groundhog Day*? Talk about spiritual do-overs! That's the ultimate in spiritual do-overs! The weatherman, Phil Connors, is played by Bill Murray. He was arrogant. He was egotistical. And he looked down on everyone. They sent him from the Pittsburgh TV station to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to be there for the February 2 Groundhog Day festivities: you know, when Punxsutawney Phil looks for his shadow, and it determines whether there will be six more weeks of spring or six more weeks ... six more weeks still spring, or six more weeks of winter. Well, he doesn't think this shadow business is very important; he thinks it's below him. And he wants to get out of Punxsutawney as quickly as he can.

However, that afternoon a freak snowstorm happens that he, as a weatherman, did not predict. And he's stuck in Punxsutawney overnight. The next morning and he thinks it's déjà vu all over again! But, in

reality, he has to experience Groundhog Day over and over and over. Talk about a spiritual do-over! And it happens the next day and the next day and the next day. Initially, he fights this. Finally accepts that maybe he's going to have to live Groundhog Day forever. But he finally realized what he really needed was some Goof Off. As he relives this day over and over, he goes in highs and lows, and he figures, "Well, *this is going to be my fate for eternity.*" So he begins to use this as an opportunity to learn some new skills. He begins to play the piano. He takes up ice sculpture carving. And pretty soon, he becomes the most admired man in Punxsutawney. That's a real spiritual do-over!

Would you enjoy that kind of do-over? Repeating the same day over and over and over again, until you learn what you were supposed to learn? Would it be frustrating? Or would it be liberating when you finally did learn what you needed to learn?

When we learn what we came here to learn, that's what we're here for: to perfect our souls. That's why we're here for life on Planet Earth. Now, we don't live the same day over and over again, thank goodness. But we keep learning the same lessons until we master them. If we had to live the same day over and over again, how soon would you come to the realization that it was time to learn and grow? Well, do you know what you would need? [*Holds up Mr. Clean product*] Mr. Clean Magic Eraser! Every time that you say something unkind, you can just erase the words. Or if you drop a pan on the floor, and you chip the tile, you can use the Magic Eraser to erase the chip in the tile. Or, if you wake up in the morning, and you've got another wrinkle on your forehead, Magic Erase it away! I really like this product; that's a good one. Now you have two tools in your spiritual toolbox to help you every time you need a spiritual do-over!

Eckhart Tolle says that the past has no power on us, and that boredom and anger and fear are really not ours. They're not personal; they're simply conditions of the human mind. They come and they go, and nothing that comes and goes is of you. Some changes look negative on the surface, but you'll soon realize that space is being created for something new to emerge. That the primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation, but the thoughts you have about the situation.

What could be more futile – more insane – than to create inner resistance for what is already there? Surrender to "what is." Say yes to life, and you'll be able to see how life starts working for you, instead of against you. Because being spiritual has nothing to do with what you believe, and everything to do with the state of your consciousness. The only moment you have is now. Whatever that present moment contains for you: accept it as if you have chosen it. Always work with it, not against it.

You do not become great by trying to be great; rather, you become great by finding the greatness that's already in you, and allowing that greatness to emerge. But it can only emerge if something fundamental changes in your consciousness.

So a spiritual do-over is really a shift in consciousness. It's recognizing that we are not what happens to us but, rather, how we react to what happens to us. When things change – and they will; they change all the time! – it's Spirit opening a way in us for something new to emerge. We only have this present moment. When we accept "what is," and work with it and not against, we experience liberation: liberation from all that negative self-talk. Liberation from that judgement of ourselves and each other. Liberation from anything and everything that's holding us back.

Maxine says – she's the cartoon lady. This is her motto to live by: "*Live should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways – chocolate in one hand, martini in the other – body thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and screaming, 'Woo-hoo! What a ride!'*"

I can get behind that kind of an energy! To live my life fully. To let my greatness shine! To enjoy every minute, and not have to worry about spiritual do-overs. To be completely present in every moment,

Well, I will conclude with a story about Petey the Donkey. You may have heard some version of this ... Petey was an aging donkey; he was getting up there in years, and the farmer and the farmer's wife had talked about, *"What are we going to do when it's Petey's time?"* Like maybe you've done with one of your pets. But the farmer needed the donkey to pull his plow. So he takes Petey out in the field, and hooks him up to the plow, and Petey plows the field for about an hour. And then he just stops and stands there; he's had enough. He's old! He's tired! He doesn't want to move. Well, the farmer puts up with him; takes him back to the barn.

A couple hours later, the farmer hears Petey praying his head off, but it sounds like it's really far away. So he looks out in the field; he can't see him anywhere. He goes and gets his two hired hands and says, *"We've got to find Petey; can you hear him?"* *"Yeah; we can hear him!"* So they follow the sound of Petey braying, and when they get there, sadly, Petey has fallen down a well, and he's 50 feet below ground. So they try to figure out if there's a way to get him out. But it's too dangerous for someone to go down there and tie ropes around him, because the well might collapse on them. And so the farmer finally realizes, *"Well, this must be Petey's time."* So they get some shovels, and they start shoveling the dirt down on Petey down in that well.

Petey's not having any of that. He shakes that dirt off; he stomps that dirt down; then he rises up. And every shovelful, he shakes that dirt off; he stomps that dirt down; and he rises up. And before long – well, in about three-and-a-half hours – just the tips of his ears can be seen above ground. And the farmer's amazed! So they kept throwing the dirt on there, and Petey kept shaking it off and stomping it down and rising up! And, pretty soon, he walked right out of that well all by himself.

So remember: if you ever find yourself down a well, remember Petey. Just shake it off; stomp it down; and rise up. Because if something doesn't work out, you can always do a spiritual do-over. You've got your Goof Off; you've got your Mr. Clean Magic Eraser to erase anything you don't want in your life. Why? Because we came here to let that greatness within us shine out to the world.

Namaste!

## OFFERING

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. Our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* Will you say that with me? *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* And so we say thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts, these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love; they are received in love; and that they move through this ministry with the energy of divine love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed: heaped up, pressed down and overflowing, for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

Hey, thanks to those of you who've been sending in your checks and have signed up to give online. We really appreciate

## CLOSING

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** And next Sunday morning at 9 o'clock, we will have our first in-LIVE-person service out on the lawn. We've got a brand new sound system; it sounds really, really great! We want to invite you to come, bring chairs. Wear a hat, sunscreen. Bring some water. There's going to be sunny parts and shady parts that you can sit in. But we're really, really excited you're going to be able to come and be with us in person for our only one service at 9 o'clock in the morning.

And if you'd like to be part of our Circle book study groups, you can sign up for that online right now, from now until October 18, when we start our "40 Days of Gratitude."

So now will you join me in listening as our choir sings the Peace Song?

***Unity Choir (singing remotely):***

Let there be peace on Earth;  
And let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on Earth;  
The peace that was meant to be.

With God as Creator,  
Fam'ly all are we.  
Let us walk with each other  
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,  
Let this be the moment now.  
With ev'ry step I take,  
Let this be my joyous vow:  
To take each moment  
And live each moment  
In peace eternally.

Let there be peace on Earth;  
And let it begin with me!

***Rev. Lori Fleming:*** And will you affirm with me the Prayer for Protection?

The light of God surrounds us;  
The love of God enfolds us;  
The power of God protects us;  
And the presence of God watches over us.  
Wherever we are, God is.

Have a blessed week!

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