

## **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER OPENING SERVICE: “ALL IS WELL WITH MY SOUL”**

Sept. 8, 2020

Revs. Lori Fleming and Richard Rogers

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Good evening, everyone! [*Congregation: “Good evening!”*] Welcome to our Wednesday Soul Celebration. I’m Rev. Lori Fleming; I’m the pastoral care minister here. It’s a joy and a pleasure to be here with you this evening, and to be here again with you, sir!

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Well, it’s great to have you with us on a Wednesday night!

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Yes! I know!

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** We love it when you’re here on a Wednesday night!

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Thank you!

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** I’m Richard Rogers. I usually lead the Wednesday night service. Tonight we begin our World Day of Prayer, and we are so excited! We have people from all over the country – all over the world! – that will be joining in this 24-hour period. So welcome! We’re glad you’re here!

[*Pauses*] And now it’s my part ....

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Uh huh. You get to pray!

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Opening prayer.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** World Day of Prayer. You should pray! [*Congregation laughs*]

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** We even rehearsed this; God help us, right? [*Congregation laughs*]

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** So take a deep breath. I just want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to this activity we call prayer: where we quiet our mind, where we open our heart, and we feel our connection to the Divine. Prayer is not an elaborate process. It’s not begging or beseeching. It’s acknowledging God. It’s acknowledging God right where we are. So tonight we open our minds, our hearts, our souls to begin a 24-hour journey with God. That right where we are, God is. Right where we are is infinite Presence and Power. That we are created in the image and likeness of God. And so we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

### **INTRODUCTION TO WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Thank you! That was a beautiful prayer! Well, just a little bit of information about World Day of Prayer. This is the 28th annual opening ceremony of World Day of Prayer. Unity churches and centers across the world are praying for the next 24 hours; some have already started. In Kansas City, it’s two hours ahead of us, so they’ve already started. And they’re going to join with people around the world in the sacred activity of prayer.

The theme is: As we unite hearts and minds with people from around the globe, this year we are affirming together: “No matter the circumstances, all is well with my soul.”

At Unity Village during World Day of prayer, they will be doing their services online. If you go to [unity.org](http://unity.org), all day tomorrow they have speakers. You might want to check that out. At Silent Unity, they will be collecting all the prayer slips of all the people’s names that have been sent in to them, and they

will speak each of those names out loud. We'll be using our amazing power of affirmative prayer, and for those who love into a higher consciousness of healing and wholeness in body and mind and spirit. We have a group of people here at Unity of Phoenix who have generously volunteered to pray for one hour for the next 24 hours. Some of these people have been doing this work for many, many years. Some are prayer chaplains, some are chaplains emeritus, and some are just congregation members who have a powerful prayer consciousness. We are very grateful to them for their service. They will be in their homes praying; because of Covid, we felt that would be safer.

We've collected over 450 names that were written on the prayer slips or put online. They also have a list of nations of the world they'll be praying for, as well as all the religions of the world.

## THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF PRAYER

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** You know, Rev. Richard, from the time I was a little girl until now, my prayer life has really deepened. You know, when I was a little girl, I used to pray that kind of begging prayer, where I'd say, "God, if you please do this for me, I promise I'll be a good girl." And most of the time I was. But then when I was in my 20s, I learned how to meditate, and that made all the difference, because it gave me an avenue to really connect deeply with the God of my being. I stopped saying those prayers, and just said, "God, you know what I need; you know what everyone needs, so I'm just going to connect with you." And today – I use it every day ... practice it every day. The other day I drove from Cave Creek all the way down here, and I only had to stop for two red lights. *[Congregation laughs]*

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Spiritual mastery!

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** And then, even better, I went to Starbucks. And there were two cars ahead of me, and they were getting a million "fufu" drinks. And I waited and I waited. And finally when I got up to the window, she said, "Oh, you had to wait so long, I'm going to give you your coffee for free!" Yes!

And you know, sometimes when you're waiting for one of those medical tests and you just don't know how it's going to turn out, I just turn it over to God. Because I know that, no matter what happens, with God everything's going to be fine. How about you? What's your prayer life like?

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Well, you know, my prayer life has also changed a great deal. For me it's about finding peace. And that, through prayer and meditation – no matter what's going on in my life, what's going on in the world – through prayer and meditation, there is just a level of peace that's available to all of us as we connect with the presence and power of God. That, peace for me is ... When I was younger, it wasn't very important. As I mature, peace is pretty attractive! And it really is a process of letting go. You know, it's letting go into the Infinite. Letting go into God. And I think that it makes me a better husband. I think it makes me a better minister. I think it makes me a better man, a better father, grandfather. Because the more that we live peace, the more we not only diffuse situations, but we're just part of the solution instead of the problem. So, for me, prayer and meditation is really my path to peace.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Beautiful! Well, we have some prayers, don't we?

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Yes, we do! *[Both move over to a table with numerous candles.]*

## CANDLELIGHTING-WORLD RELIGIONS:

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** So there are many religions, sects, philosophies and beliefs systems in the world. They represent a variety of perspectives that honor some kind of higher power. Most use prayer in some way to connect with source, what we call God in Unity.

We will light a candle for each of the major religions of the world and hear a short prayer from their tradition.

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Let us pray with our Baha'i friends. O, Thou who art generous and merciful! The sun of Your mercy is shining upon all ... Your loving providence sustains all. Your protection overshadows all, and the glances of Your favor are cast upon all. Let the light of Your guidance shine, illumine the eyes, and gladden the hearts of all with abiding joy. Confer a new spirit upon all people ... Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent. Gather all people beneath the shadow of Your bounty to unite in harmony, so that they may become as the rays of one sun, as the waves of one ocean and as the fruit of one tree. May they be refreshed by the same breeze. May they receive illumination from the same source.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Our Buddhist friends pray this way: Evoking the presence of great compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion—toward ourselves and toward all living beings. Let us pray that all living beings realize that they are all brothers and sisters, all nourished from the same source of life. May we be a guard for those who need protection; a guide for those on the path; a boat, a raft, a bridge for those who wish to cross the flood. May we be a lamp in the darkness, a resting place for the weary, a healing medicine for all who are sick, a vase of plenty, a tree of miracles, and for the countless multitudes of living beings, may we bring sustenance and awakening ... enduring like the earth and sky until all beings are freed from sorrow and all are awakened.

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** With our Catholic brothers and sisters: Let us pray. God for us, we call you Father. God alongside us, we call you Jesus. God within us, we call you Holy Spirit. You are the eternal mystery that enables, enfolds, and enliven all things. Even us and even me. We can only see You in what is. We ask for such perfect seeing—In the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** In the Christian tradition, we strive to: Silence our thoughts of confusion and anxiety. Silence our thoughts of grief, despair, hurt and anger. When there is chaos and turmoil, fill us with Your peaceful presence. With each breath we take, we breathe in Your peace that surpasses understanding. We surrender our unrest to You so that we may receive peace. Help us to be a spark that ignites peace in others. Help us to see Your face in the faces of the people around us. Give us courage and compassion to love one another even when love seems like a risk. Teach us to listen to those we disagree with, to hear stories that make us uncomfortable. Heal the hatred in the world around us by healing our own hearts first. Amen.

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** We pray in the spirit of Hinduism: O, mighty God! We are Yours. Bless us always so we may do good, and never do bad. So we may die happily! Whenever there is a rise in crime, take care of us. Even when others do bad, we do good. We should never have feelings of revenge; All our efforts should be towards love. So there is no hatred around us!

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Our Muslim friends pray this way: In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations, that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other. If the enemy inclines toward peace, do thou also incline toward peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is the one that hears and know all things. And the servant of God, Most Gracious, are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when we address them, we say, "Peace."

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** We join with our Jewish brothers and sisters as we pray Dear Lord: Grant us the grace of wonder. Surprise us, amaze us, awe us in every crevice of Your universe. Each day enrapture us with Your marvelous things without number ... We do not ask to see the reason for it all: We ask only to share the wonder of it all. Grant us peace, Your most precious gift, and give us the will to proclaim its message to all the people on earth. Although differences in thought and belief divide us, let the love of

truth, and the pursuit of holiness, unite us with all life. Strengthen the bonds of friendship among the inhabitants of all lands, and may the love of Your name hallow every home and every heart. May the one who makes peace in the heavens make peace for us all.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** We honor the prayers of our Native American friends: As the Grandfather Spirit moves within each being, so it is we are all sacred beings wherein spirit resides and interconnects with all Life within this Great Web of Life upon Mother Earth and in the Spirit Breath of Father Sky. Great Spirit is formless and changeless, and is the purest essence of Love. We need only align ourselves with Great Spirit to set the example of living with the understanding that we are responsible for one another. We then know, no matter the imagined distress of fear, or circumstances of appearance, Great Spirit is the constant and eternal Love and Peace. So it is. Aho.

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** We share a New Thought prayer: As we align our mind and heart with the mind and heart of God, we center ourselves in Pure Being. In a state of Spiritual realization, we remember we can never be broken, limited, or unworthy. Courageously, we rise into our true Spiritual nature in this moment of healing. We heal as we accept that we are brave, we are powerful, we are worthy. We take time to go within to that calm, quiet place where we am one with God. With our faith, we see peace in the midst of conflict, and abundance where there was once lack. We recognize our oneness with God, and the entire human family. We open our hearts for something new—a new spirit, a new life, a new presence of love and peace. Healing power moves through our lives and the world as we align and harmonize our being with Divine love. We are healed at depth. Amen.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** The ancient Pagan tradition prays in this way: Deep within the still center of our being, may we feel peace. Silently within the quiet of the Grove, may we share peace. Gently and powerfully within the greater circle of humankind, may we radiate peace. May the peace of the goddess go in our hearts, and the dance of the god enliven our days. And may we care for the Earth and each other because our lives depend on it. May our intention be to empower the true light within that enables us to transform our lives, reach out to others, and heal our ailing earth.

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Let us join our Sikh friends in prayer: Peace is empty; Peace is kind and to those who are neither empty nor kind, be kind. Fill them with your love. Fill them with your longing. There is no path wider nor straighter. It is the way of your heart to see the gates swing open, welcoming you and welcoming me, the we, the us, the universal being. The song is infinite. The sound resonant and uplifting. Nothing more to search for, we are found unresistant to the truth, surrendered, compelled to love and understand. The wrinkles in our hesitation, the greenness in our vision, unbalanced and trusting, we all be true to you and to ourselves. So be at peace and peace will be with us.

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** We pray For All the Religions in the World: Sweet Spirit, teach us to love and honor all the paths to God. Let us find similarities and celebrate our oneness. Let us see diversity and treasure it as part of the greater whole. Let us value our uniqueness as part of the creative process for growth and unfoldment. Help us to remember that each of us is a valuable and important part of the tapestry of life and that our color and texture contributes to the greater whole in a way that would be diminished if we were not here. As we come to know our oneness, let us create peace within the nations. Let us cooperate and share natural resources, recognizing that there is enough for all. Let our children play together, learn together and grow together as we teach them to value each other, no matter the color of their skin or what religion they practice. As we teach them to love unconditionally, we will celebrate as walls of separation are torn down and borders disappear. We come in gratitude for a world powerfully transformed by your unconditional love. Let peace prevail across the land. Amen.

## MEDITATION

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** So we move into this time of prayer and meditation. There's a moment in meditation when you let yourself go. When you let go of who you have been – who you thought you were – and you fully embrace the Infinite. You let go of your personality and you embrace all that God has always been. And we step out of that sense of separation – that sense of illusion – and we step into the fullness of God. That you were created in the image and likeness of God. You are an extension of all that God is. And, as you let go of yourself – as you let go of your thoughts and your beliefs – you begin to express the infinite nature that has always been within you.

Tonight, let go. Let go of all the things that you hold on to so tightly. Let go of the stories and the drama. Let go. Let go, let go, let go! And embrace the fullness of God. Embrace the Infinite that is within you and all around you. There is a deeper level of peace. There is a deeper realization, and it comes from letting go and coming into all that God is.

Take another deep breath. And all the things that you've worried about, and all the plans and all the things you've tried to create, today let go. Empty your mind and your heart, and embrace the fullness of God. And become one with the One. Become the living expression of all that God is.

## SILENCE

God is fully present in each and every one of us. And, as we let go, we come into the fullness of who we are. So all the names on our prayer list tonight, all of our family and friends, all the people around the world, we pray that every man, woman and child may truly experience the fullness of God within each and every one. And it is so. Amen.

## SOLO

***Cerise Patron – "In the Silence" (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)***

In the silence  
There is a sacred place,  
A secret meeting place,  
Love is there.

In the silence  
Where every color blends,  
And every rainbow ends,  
Good is there.

In the light  
Now you find  
That you know  
Peace of mind.

In the silence  
Your path is paved in gold,  
And all your dreams unfold;  
Love is there.  
Peace is there.  
Truth is there.  
God is there.

## MESSAGE:

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** So no matter what the circumstances, all is well with my soul. This affirmation gives us the opportunity to see our experiences through a more spiritual lens. I know a lot of us say we're not religious; we're spiritual. It's an affirmation that, no matter what's happening in our lives, everything will turn out alright. No matter what that is.

My first statement to nourish your soul and to begin to see through a spiritual lens is: "**All is well with my mind.**" Charles Fillmore, in his book, *Jesus Christ Heals*, writes: "We can have fullness of life by realizing that we live in a sea of abundant, omnipresent, eternal life. And by refusing to allow any thought to come in that stops of consciousness of the universal life flow."

We have about ... hmmm ... maybe 60,000 thoughts every day. Most of them we're probably not even aware of. Many of them are the same thought over and over again, like, "What'll I have for lunch?" "I'd like to go out to a movie this weekend." "Yeah, I need to do some laundry." You know; the same things over and over again. Sometimes those thoughts happen just automatically; we don't even pay any attention to them, and that's where we get into trouble.

We may be thinking negative thoughts that lead to more negative thoughts that need to negative consequences. Now, I know I'm preaching to the choir. I know none of you do that, so I'm really glad about that! [*Congregation laughs*] Yeah. When you point a finger, you've got three pointing back at yourself, right? See, you have to preach it to learn it; that's just the way it works.

So how do we harness the power of our minds? We've got this computer – this amazing computing machine – in our head. First, we begin to notice any disempowering thoughts that we might have. You know those things like you do something that's maybe not the greatest thing you ever did, and you say, "Boy, that was really stupid!"? I don't say that any more. I say, "You know what? I'm not going to do that again. That didn't work this time."

So we look for this disempowering thoughts, and then we create something I call a "denial." Now, a denial doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, because obviously it does; you can see it, right? Rather, a denial is denying that whatever you're thinking about that's not working for you really has no power over you. That's a whole different way of looking at it. Rather than that disempowering thought having power over us, we'd say a denial statement like, "I now deny that my negative thinking has any power over me."

Okay, it might be hard to believe the first few times you say that. But keeping saying it, and then replace that erroneous thought with a positive affirmation. An affirmation is a short, positive statement that states clearly exactly what you want. And if you create it so that you can really feel it, it'll happen a lot faster. For example: "I am thinking clear, positive thoughts that uplift me." I can get behind that! I'm thinking clear, positive thoughts that uplift me! Yeah; I think I'm going to be able to get rid of this disempowering thinking if I use an affirmation like that!

So my second statement to nourish our soul and begin to see through a spiritual lens is: "**All is well with my heart.**" Charles Fillmore, in *12 Powers of Man*, writes: "Love is from God. And it is given to humanity in its virgin purity. It is the pure essence of being that binds together the whole human family." All those religions, all those colors, all those countries, all those nations, all those everything! Binds them together as a whole human family – with love.

St. Paul does not call love a gift; rather, he calls it a "way." A way of life. A way of using the gifts of the Spirit, of the heart. Love isn't just another gift, Paul says, like faith or healing or wisdom or strength. He says, "Love permeates all the spiritual gifts themselves." It's the essence of it! That's how we do the work of God; we're God's hands and feet! We do it with love. To love fully is a whole way of life: a holy way of life.

We cannot receive love in full unless we give it to others, especially those who hurt us. Now, I just went from preaching to meddling! But that's okay! [Congregation laughs] Harold Sherman says in his book, *How to Use the Power of Prayer*: "True love must be shared; it cannot be hoarded." I never thought of that! "To be blessed by love, it must be expressed, not repressed."

How many times have you withheld your love from someone you really wanted to love? But you were just too afraid to do it? Love is to be expressed, not repressed! Love shines through our hands as the healing touch. It shines through our eyes as understanding and compassion and faith. Love shines through our smiles as a wordless message saying, "I love you, and I behold the Christ in you."

How do we harness the power of love in our lives? Well, it's easy to love the people we get along with and want to be with, right? Start there! And then move on. It's harder to love those people who've hurt us; I know that. I've been hurt; you've all been hurt. But our resentment becomes like a shield; it becomes a barrier that binds us outside of our true relationship with God, which is love.

But as we begin to peel away those levels of habitual resentment: the levels of anger ... When we do our inner work of forgiveness – that's almost a "dirty" word, but I'm telling you: When you do it, you'll feel lighter. You'll be able to love more fully. When we do all that inner work, the real loving person that we truly are shines forth in all our actions, in all our thoughts, in all our deeds. And that becomes love in action; that's who we really are!

My third statement to nourish our souls and begin to see through a spiritual lens is: "**All is well in my life.**" Elizabeth Lesser, in her book, *Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow* – that sounds like a self-help book to me! This is a beautiful quotation: "If we can stay awake when our lives are changing, secrets will be revealed to us: secrets about ourselves, about our nature, about the nature of life, and about the eternal source of happiness and peace that's always available, always renewable, always within us." It's an inside job, my friends.

We all know that, sooner or later, something changes. Right? Change is as inevitable as the rising and setting of the sun. Hopefully, our life changes for the better. The important thing is to look at each and every change as a messenger revealing to us more about who and what we are: about our own spiritual nature. How we react to change in our life points to just exactly where our consciousness is.

When there's a change in our life we don't want, how do we bring spiritual awareness into those unwanted conditions? By looking deeply. By learning the lessons that challenge us: the things that come into our life that we don't like. The hard things. We look at them deeply and look at the lessons. Because when we claim our spiritual power, we know that – with God – all things are possible, no matter what the changes look like today. That the human condition is temporary, but Spirit is eternal.

And my fourth and final statement to nourish our souls and begin to see through a spiritual lens is the theme of the World Day of Prayer. Imagine that! "**All is well with my soul.**" In her book, *Make Your Dreams Come True*, Stella Terrill Mann writes: "The purpose of our life on earth is to help our soul grow. When we leave earth, all we take with us is that which we have become."

When we leave earth, all we take with us is that which we have become! Our souls are evolving in this human experience ... hopefully, onward and upward. We're spiritual beings with an immortal soul on an immortal journey. No person or experience can keep us from this onward journey ... at least not forever. Only if we let them!

But our souls are pivotal. We can turn inward and look for that inspiration from God within: that internal guidance I talk about all the time. That voice of the Holy Spirit. Or we can look without, and we can use our five senses to tell us what the world is really like, and we know that they don't always tell us exactly the truth. It's our choice!

Cultivating the soul is a lifelong undertaking. It may take many lives to purify our souls as we unfold into this inherent, perfect pattern of spirituality that's already in our souls.

And so, on this 28th annual day of World Prayer, I affirm: *"No matter the circumstances, all is well with my soul!"*

Thank you! *[Congregation applauds]*

**SOLO:**

***Cerise Patron – "Get Ready My Soul" (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)***

Get ready, my soul; I'm diving in  
Get ready, my soul; I'm diving in  
To the deepest kind of love  
Into the sweetest kind of life  
Get ready; get ready, my soul

Everything I've ever done  
Everything I've ever seen  
Everything I've lost or won  
Every dream I've ever dreamed

Have brought me here  
To this present moment  
Here: to a new beginning  
Here: and I'm seeing life so clearly now

Get ready, my soul; I'm diving in  
Get ready, my soul; I'm diving in  
To the deepest kind of love  
Into the sweetest kind of life  
So get ready; get ready, my soul

Here I go: deeper, deeper  
Deeper than I've ever been before  
Here I go: closer, closer, closer to my sacred Source  
Here I go: deeper, deeper, deeper than I've ever been before  
Here I go: closer, closer, closer to my sacred Source

Get ready, my soul; because I'm diving in  
Get ready, my soul; because I'm diving in  
To the deepest kind of love  
Into the sweetest kind of life  
Get ready; get ready, my soul

Get ready; get ready, my ... my soul

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