

“Callings” 7 January, 2007
A service created by Sally Klinkon & Sara Norquay

PRELUDE Adagio Cantabile, (from Op.1, No. 1) Beethoven

CALL TO WORSHIP

There is a call, an inner question, that is a quest for identity. It is a call to explore, to go boldly where no identity has gone before, to stretch beyond our present boundaries to the endless reaches of who we are and what we can become. As we come together this morning, to rest for a moment on the forming edge of our lives, we welcome new beginnings and open to new visions of life.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE (to be read together)

We light this chalice
as a symbol of the inner flame
that burns brightly within us,
leading us onward to greater awareness,
and igniting us into action.

HYMN “Wake Now My Senses” #298

FOOD OFFERING “From You I Receive”

LIGHTING THE CANDLES

The joys and sorrows of our lives call us to remember and reflect on the inner and outer concerns we have today. I light these candles as a symbol of our response to these calls.

SOUNDING THE CALL

In many traditions, calls – in the form of sound – precede prayer, rites of initiation, major life events, healings, and significant passages of time. The purpose of calls is to summon people away from their daily grind to a new level of awareness, into a sacred frame of mind, into communion with something that is larger than themselves.

In the primary creation myth of Western cosmology, the very first call came through the voice that said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Every call since then has been a call to form a call to each of us to bring more of ourselves into visible reality.

Calls ask the question, “Who or what is calling?” It doesn’t matter what we call it.... the Patterning Intelligence, the Design Mind, the Unconscious, the Soul, the Center Court, God, or Life’s Longing for Itself, as Kahlil Gibran said.

Primarily, this force announces the need for change, and the response for which it calls is an awakening of some kind.

A call by itself is only a monologue. It is the return call, or response, that creates a dialogue.

The calls may be calls to do something –
become self-employed, go back to school, leave or start a relationship,
move, change careers.

Or calls to be something –
more creative, less judgemental, more loving, less fearful.

Or calls toward or away from something –

Or calls to change something –
renew our commitment to it, or come back to it in an entirely new way.

Or calls toward whatever we've dared and double-dared ourselves to do for as long as we can remember.

Saying “yes” to the calls tends to place us on a path that half of the time doesn't make a bit of sense, yet the rest of the time, we know that our life won't make sense without it. This latter part continually pushes out from within us as a centrifugal force, driving us toward authenticity, against the tyranny of fear and inertia, and occasionally even reason.

Against terrific odds, and against the knocking in our hearts that signals the hour.

MUSIC FOR IMAGING: Sounding the Call

Adagio (from Op. 11)

Beethoven

Calls as Questions

Calls are essentially questions – questions to which we need to respond, expose ourselves, and kneel before.

You don't want an answer you put in a box and sit on a shelf.

You want a question that will become a chariot to carry you across the breadth of your life, a question that will offer you a lifetime of pondering, that will lead you toward what you need to know for your integrity, and draw you to what you need for your journey.

Nothing shapes our lives so much as the questions we ask, says Sam Keen, who wears a small silver question mark on a chain around his neck. The way we live our lives depends on the questions we ask.

Spiritual journeys, like stories, have at their core a central question – as do our lives – and if we understand not even the answer, but merely the questions, we’ve understood a lot.

Like pilgrims to Delphi, we must come bearing questions. We need to know what we are looking for, and by having a clear question, we are halfway to getting an intelligible answer. Questioning is a prerequisite to change and innovation. Without it there is no discovering.

We may have questions about the type of call that is emerging. For example:

“What is my purpose?”

“To whom do I belong?”

“What can I believe in?”

“Who are my teachers?”

“What is the name of the dragon in my life?”

“What changes must I make?”

“How can I use my talents?”

“How can I serve the world?”

“Where am I going and how can I get there?”

MUSIC FOR IMAGING: Calls as Questions

Andante and Variations 1 - 3, (from Op. 87)

Brahms

Calls as Challenges

The critical point of discernment requires that we tread a path between two essential questions:

“What is right for me?” and “Where am I willing to be led?”

Nothing grows without friction. We must be willing to get shaken up, to submit ourselves to the dark blossoming of chaos, in order to reap the blessings of growth.

As Jonah discovered, a call may rock the boat.
Every response to a call, every step toward action, necessitates a leap of faith,
and is done without knowing the outcome. It is Jonah leaping overboard!
It is, as Kierkegaard described, the epitome of anxiety meeting courage. At some
level, we have to make an ultimate sacrifice to our callings.
A part-time effort, a “sorta-kinda” commitment, an untested promise, won’t
suffice. In making the leap from vision to form, we will be tested. Only when
we try our vision in the world, can we test whether it’s true.

In the words of Joseph Campbell:

We must be willing to get rid of
the life we’ve planned, so as to have
The life that is waiting for us.

Out of perfection nothing can be made
Every process involves breaking something up.
The earth must be broken up
To bring forth new life.

It takes courage to do what you want
Other people have a lot of plans for you
Nobody wants you to do
What you want.

The heroic life is living the individual adventure
Nothing is exciting if you know
What the outcome is going to be.

Where there is a way or path,
It is someone else’s path.
Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves
Come when life seems most challenging....
You enter the forest at the darkest point
Where there is no path.

As Schopenhauer says,

***When you look back on your life, it looks as though it were a plot,
but when you are in it, it is a mess, just one surprise after another.
Then, later, you see it was perfect.***

MUSIC FOR IMAGING: Calls as Challenges

Andante & Variations 5 & 4, Op. 87

Brahms

HYMM

“I Know This Rose Will Open”

#396

Calls for an Inner Journey

In Hindu and Sanskrit, the word for a pilgrim site means “a ford, a crossing place, or a point of transit.”

People seem most inclined to take spiritual journeys at points of transit in their lives. These journeys are rites of passage, ritual we enact to help us cross over into maturity of one kind or another. Historically, these crossings take place at times of change in our lives, such as birth, puberty, marriage, or death. They also can occur at such crossing points as the change of seasons, or the passing of a year.

Without these rituals, without actively honoring that we change in dramatic or significant ways, the passages of our lives can become impasses.

Spiritual journeys follow the three-fold progression of separation – initiation – return, as do rites of passage or heroic myths. We open a door, step across a threshold, and return through it from the other side. We leave an old life behind, experience a life transition up close, receive its wisdom, and then head home, with the intent to follow through on whatever we’ve learned.

Nature is central to many spiritual journeys. Retreat centers are often located at places of great natural beauty. Nature is a proper setting for a return to ourselves, our source, our place of origin. By “going back to nature”, we are in a sense returning to the original garden, where we were contained within natural wholeness. We were not separate from the divine, but in right relationship to the larger forces, as well as our own senses.

Whether or not our spiritual journeys involve an excursion into nature, all rites of passage and pilgrimages necessitate that we leave our old selves behind, and go to a place where, for a while, no one knows or cares who we are. Like pilgrims on the way to Mecca, when we take to the road, we wear the cloak of anonymity.

As a Prelude to the music which follows, I would like to read a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay. It describes a summer place she went to in Maine, which evoked for her the feeling of a spiritual journey or retreat. The title of the poem is “Ragged Island.”

There, there where those black spruces crowd
to the edge of the precipitous cliff,
Above your boat, under the eastern shore of the island;
And no wave breaks; as if
All had been done, and long ago, that needed
Doing; and the cold tide, unimpeded
By shoal or shelving ledge, moves up and down,

Instead of in and out;
And there is no driftwood there because there is no beach;
Clean cliff going down as deep as clear water can reach;

There, thought unbraids itself, and the mind becomes single.
There you row with tranquil oars, and the ocean
Shows no scar from the cutting of your placid keel;
Care becomes senseless there; pride and promotion
Remote; you only look; you scarcely feel.

Even adventure, with its vital uses,
Is aimless ardour now; and thrift is waste.

Oh, to be there, under the silent spruces,
Where the wide, quiet evening darkens without haste
Over a sea with death acquainted, yet forever chaste.

The following Adagio by Schubert expresses in music the feeling tone of what Edna St. Vincent Millay captured so beautifully in words. Allow the sounds of the music to embrace you with their tranquil beauty and glowing warmth, and allow the currents of its rhythm to transport you, so that they carry you toward the callings in your lives.

MUSIC FOR AN INNER JOURNEY

Andante (from Op. 99)

Schubert

PRAYER

The Reality that is present to us and in us:
Call it Being Silence.
And the simple fact that by being attentive,
By learning to listen
(Or recovering the natural capacity to listen)
We can find ourselves engulfed in such happiness
That it cannot be explained:
The happiness of being at one with everything
In that hidden ground of Love
For which there can be no explanations
May we all grow in grace and peace,
And not neglect the silence that is printed in the centre of our being.
It will not fail us.

--- Thomas Merton

In attempting to weather the tests and win our spurs, it is essential to know how to gain and regain strength. To what people, place teaching, priorities, beliefs, and sanctuaries can we turn? Who and what are our allies?

Just as Theseus was guided out the Labyrinth by Ariadne's thread, we all need to have a thread that can guide us through the labyrinths of life back to safety. What can guide you back from your encounters with the dark? Perhaps it is the lamp of someone else's love, or the support and feedback of people who genuinely believe you can do it, or your connection to something larger than yourself, such as family, community, nature, music, or God.

Whatever the connection, it can help you remember who you are. Our relationship to Live Oak is a relationship of community. Let us pause now to reflect on the ways Live Oak provides a thread of continuity and support that weaves our lives together, and helps us remember who we are

SHARING IN STEWARDSHIP

Andante Cantabile, Op. 1, No. 3

Beethoven

HYMN

“Sing Out Praises for the Journey”

#295

BENEDICTION

May the light around us guide our footsteps,
and hold us fast to the best
and most righteous that we seek.

May the darkness around nurture our dreams,
and give us rest so that we may
give ourselves to the work of our world.
Let us seek to remember the
Wholeness of our lives,
The weaving of light and shadow
in this great and astonishing
dance in which we move.

RESPONSE

Go now in peace, go now in peace,
May the Spirit of Love surround you
Everywhere, everywhere you may go.

POSTLUDE

Allegretto, (from Op. 4, Variations V, VIII & III)

Beethoven

The musicians in this service are:
Julia Lattimer, violin; Ervin Klinkon, cello; Sally Klinkon, piano

The text for this service was adapted from
Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life by Gregg Levoy