

“We Remember Them”
The Unitarian Church of Lincoln
May 29, 2016

*So long as we live, they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.*

adapted from Roland B. Gittelsohn

Gathering of the Community

Ringling of Bell

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude: Sonata in f minor for clarinet and piano,
Op. 120, No.1.....Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
III. Allegretto grazioso - Pance ZaeV, clarinet
and Larry Jones, piano

Stating Intent

Chalice Lighting: by G. Woods
read by Sheila Thomas, Worship Associate

Opening words: “The Larger Circle”

by Wendell Berry

read by Gretchen Woods

Hymn: #96 “I Cannot Think of Them as Dead”

Time for all ages

Story: “Keeper of Soles”

Told by Beryl Aschenberg and Chelsea Krafka

Children’s Song: #402 “From You I Receive”

Deepening

Responsive Reading: #720 “We Remember Them”

Musical Interlude:

Sermon: “We Remember Them”

Offering and Offertory: Sonata in f minor J. Brahms
II. Andante un poco Adagio

Returning to Community: the work of the people
Sharing of Joys and Sorrows
Meditation

Integration and Release

Closing Hymn: #412 “Let Hope and Sorrow”

Closing Words: by May Sarton

Postlude: Concertino for clarinet and piano

Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770)

IV. Allegro risoluto

Stating Intent

Chalice Lighting: by G. Woods

read by Sheila Thomas, Worship Associate

We kindle a flame of remembrance

For all those who have inspired us

With their words, their acts for peace and justice,

Their lives given for a greater cause,

Their love that transcends death.

We remember them.

Opening words: “The Larger Circle”

by Wendell Berry

read by Gretchen Woods

We clasp the hands of those who go before us,
And the hands of those who come after us.
We enter the little circle of each other's arms
And the larger circle of lovers,
Whose hands are joined in a dance,
To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
Except in fragments.

Hymn: #96 "I Cannot Think of Them as Dead"

Time for all ages

Story: "Keeper of Soles"

Told by Beryl Aschenberg and Chelsea Krafka

Children's Song: #402 "From You I Receive"

Deepening

Responsive Reading: #720 "We Remember Them"

Musical Interlude: (improvisation by L. Jones)

Sermon: "We Remember Them"

When I first went to serve the Unitarian Universalist

Fellowship of Corvallis, Oregon, I offered a service for

Memorial Day to honor those who had died in wars. I

remember an esteemed elder telling me that Memorial Day

was about honoring all loved ones who had died by

decorating their graves and having picnics in the graveyard.

He believed that veterans of war had Veteran's Day and

Memorial Day was to serve other losses. Well, I decided to research Memorial Day to find out if what he said was true.

Here is what I found:

Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former sailors and soldiers. On May 5, 1868, Logan declared in General Order No. 11 that:

The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts

and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

This 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances of the day in several towns throughout America that had taken place in the three years since the Civil War. In fact, several Northern and Southern cities claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day, including Columbus, Miss.; Macon, Ga.; Richmond, Va.; Boalsburg, Pa.; and Carbondale, Ill.

In 1966, the federal government, under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson, declared Waterloo, N.Y., the official birthplace of Memorial Day. They chose Waterloo—

which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—
because the town had made Memorial Day an annual,
community-wide event during which businesses closed and
residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and
flags.

By the late 1800s, many communities across the country
had begun to celebrate Memorial Day and, after World War
I, observances also began to honor those who had died in
all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial
Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in
May. (Veterans Day, a day set aside to honor all veterans,
living and dead, is celebrated each year on November 11,
AKA Armistice Day, when WWI ended.)

Currently, Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National
Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is
placed on each grave. Also, it is customary for the president
or vice-president to give a speech honoring the

contributions of the dead and lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. About 5,000 people attend the ceremony annually.

Several Southern states continue to set aside a special day for honoring the Confederate dead, which is usually called Confederate Memorial Day.

Then there is the history we rarely learn: According to Professor David Blight of the Yale University History Department, the first memorial day was observed by formerly enslaved black people at the Washington Race Course (today the location of Hampton Park) in Charleston, South Carolina. The race course had been used as a temporary Confederate prison camp in 1865 as well as a mass grave for Union soldiers who died there. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, formerly enslaved people exhumed the bodies from the mass grave and reinterred them properly with individual graves. They built a fence

around the graveyard with an entry arch and declared it a Union graveyard. The work was completed in only ten days. On May 1, 1865, the Charleston newspaper reported that a crowd of up to ten thousand, mainly black residents, including 2800 children, proceeded to the location for (a commemoration that) included sermons, singing, and a picnic on the grounds, thereby creating the first Decoration Day.

Many of the states of the U.S. South refused to celebrate Decoration Day, due to lingering hostility towards the Union Army and also because there were relatively few veterans of the Union Army who were buried in the South. A notable exception was Columbus, Mississippi, which on April 25, 1866, at its Decoration Day commemorated both the Union and Confederate casualties buried in its cemetery.

(Wikipedia)

So, Memorial Day, which falls on the last Monday of May, commemorates the men and women who died while serving in the American military. Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings and participating in parades. Unofficially, at least, it marks the beginning of summer.

Whether you are a pacifist or not, I believe it is valuable to consider war, its costs, whom it serves, and those who served their country when called. How can we not make some meaningful observance? Hence this service today.

For those who find all this talk of war uncomfortable, It may be helpful to know that May 30 is the day the compact disc was introduced (1981), the first daily newspaper was

published in the United States (1783), the first spacecraft orbited another planet (Mars, 1971), the ice cream freezer was patented (1848), and the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated (1922). It is also the feast day of Saint Ferdinand, patron saint of engineers, rulers, governors, magistrates, prisoners, the poor, and Seville, Spain, and the feast day of Saint Joan of Arc. Thus we come full circle.

I close with the first two stanzas of the poem, "All Souls," by

Unitarian poet, May Sarton:

Did someone say that there would be an end,
An end, Oh, an end, to love and mourning?
Such voices speak when sleep and waking blend,
The cold bleak voices of the early morning
When all the birds are dumb in dark November –
Remember and forget, forget, remember.

After the false night, warm true voices, wake!
Voice of the dead that touches the cold living,
Through the pale sunlight once more gravely speak.
Tell me again, while the leaves are falling:
"Dear child, what has been once so interwoven
cannot be raveled, nor the gift ungiven."

Offering and Offertory: Sonata in f minor J. Brahms

II. Andante un poco Adagio

Returning to Community: the work of the people
Sharing of Joys and Sorrows
Meditation

Integration and Release

Closing Hymn: #412 “Let Hope and Sorrow”

Closing Words: by May Sarton

Now the dead move through all of us still glowing,
Mother and child, lover and lover mated,
Are wound and bound together and enflowing.
What has been plaited cannot be unplaited –
Only the strands grow richer with each loss
And memory makes kings and queens of us.

Dark into light, light into darkness, spin.
When all the birds have flown to some real haven,
We who find shelter in the warmth within,
Listen, and feel new-cherished, new-forgiven,
As the lost human voices speak through us and blend
Our complex love, our mourning without end.