

NAME

Chances Are Audio.mp3

DATE

September 19, 2021

DURATION

20m 19s

2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from Wellsprings Congregation.

[00:00:05]

Yep. All right. Take two.

[00:00:17] Speaker2

There's a story about Beethoven that I swear to God is true. The great composer had just put together his most recent concerto, and he gathered a select group of friends and admirers to hear it. He played through the entire piece of gorgeous music. And the assembled crowd recognizing how amazed they were by it. Just stood and applauded. After those applause, someone came up to Beethoven and asked. It was beautiful. But what does it mean? And with that, Beethoven went back to his piano. Sat down and played the concerto the entire way through again. And said. This is what it means. I feel that way even before the recent snafu. You all just witnessed and got to share together. I feel that way. This is what it means about this message series that we're starting today. We plan God laughs. I feel like I could just go full zen on you today and say, look at this and look at what's not here and look at the live production that this is and look at all the things we cannot control or predict and look at all the people who were here last week separated out, spread out, safe, masked all the protocols in place. And then this past week, when Chester County had that reading bump up a notch from high to very high. And Reverend Lee and our Board of trustees trustees following the guidelines that they had put together and followed clearly and rigorously all throughout this time.

[00:02:09] Speaker2

I made the decision and shared with all of us that we couldn't gather the congregation here just last week, how many people did I say, I'll see you again a week from today, right back here? Same bat time, bad place back channel. And no. Different than we expected. This message series is based on an old Yiddish proverb. We plan God laughs. I know no one personally who takes this literally who believes that the divine somehow sets us up to fail in the moment we plan anything for the future. The divine laughter peels out through the heavens, mocking us for being foolish enough to anticipate a future and prepare for it. That literal meaning does nothing for me. But the deeper meaning of it. That's wisdom we can live by. Because we're living it right now. We plan in this universe, so. I wanted to say beset by change, but it's not beset, it's just a fact. This universe is so filled of change, made of change and our expectations of and our preparations for the future. The best meaning I know of. We plan God laughs. Is to take our preparations, our expectations seriously, because as human beings, we have to have them. That's part of what our brains do. To take them seriously. And hold them very, very lightly. Because we never know exactly what is going to happen. So, yes, we have suspended. As I look around at most of these empty chairs, save for the folks like me who are involved in today's service, yes, we have suspended in-person worships for how long? I am going to enact for you, I'm going to embody for you right now my favorite emoji of the last 18 months.

[00:04:29] Speaker2

Sometimes that's all there is to say, except for one other Yiddish thing, which is like a vault. As my ancestors taught me how to say, but my goal here today is not to have us fall into despair when our expectations and our plans and our preparations don't. Turn out, as we would have wished, rather the opposite, because this message series is about unpacking living in this universe and this time in this place of uncertainty. Not completely unprepared, even if we know we cannot control all the outcomes. And I was reminded of the deeper meaning of this series about what we might find that can guide us through. Hold us. They can hold our hearts and our hope and something dependable for us to count on. I was reminded of it when I'd say in the last three weeks or so, I got a whole bunch of Facebook memories. You see, I've been a clergy person ordained clergy person for approaching a quarter century. And I have done a lot of weddings. In this time of year, late summer, early fall, that's when my own marriage, my own wedding happened. And so I was reminded in these last few weeks of all of these people's lives that I have been invited into such a blessed, happy occasion.

[00:06:04] Speaker2

And as I always tell the couples and the families that I'm working with the the heart of a marriage ceremony. The vows could be the traditional. Could be the ones that the couples, right? The vow is the message. The vow is the sermon. I mean, just think about the most traditional for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health right there at the very beginning. Of a marriage. Chances are. We don't know exactly what's going to happen. And yet we do not go into that uncertain future. With our hearts just ready to be wounded. The uncertainty of living in this universe. No. We go into that uncertain future in marriages and beyond in marriages, other forms of relationship to. Ready to live by something that is at the heart of our Unitarian Universalist tradition, which we call covenant. Promising. To be there. For better or for worse, et cetera. Now we know that no covenants and no promises are. Perfect, either. Not all marriages and not all relationships and not all forms of communities make it. And still. We can take our vows very, very seriously as we live this life. I think for a certain extent, even as we know that not all our vows are going to make it, not all our covenants and our promises will hold, sometimes covenants and promises are surpassed. By other covenants and promises that need to emerge.

[00:08:09] Speaker2

But that doesn't mean. That we just give up on making vows and promises and holding covenants together. Because I think the other choices. Are actually far worse. A certain kind of nihilism. Things change shrug, and in that shrug is who cares? I remember what is, for me, still the best of all, the recent comic book movies, the personification of chaos for chaos sake. Heath Ledger's amazing role as the Joker in The Dark Knight. Let's give up on making any plans whatsoever. So that all we do is seek to exploit each other. We still need to make and hold promises together. So we don't fall into complete and utter chaos. And to make promises that allow us to have a grounded and sober hope, I say sober, especially today, today is 16 years without a drink for me, since today. Thank you. But that larger sense of sober, right? Clear eyed, openhearted, connected. Because the other extreme from nihilism is this meme that I know a lot of us have seen this past year and perhaps posted. This is fine. Everything's great, everything's perfect. Oh, no. Beyond nihilism and beyond, this is fine. There is covenant. There is being a promise making and a promise keeping and a promise revising and a promise living kind of people together. We need covenant because we live in a world of uncertainty, not in spite of it. Covenants are not about outcomes. That we could promise each other everything is going to turn out exactly as we want or everything is going to turn out, all right.

[00:10:30] Speaker2

Covenants and promises are profoundly about presence. I'm just thinking one right now. It's unpredictable. I would have put this meme up here right now, but I wasn't prepared. It just came to me in this moment, one of my favorite ones that I have shared on social media, and I know many of you have shared on social media as well, too. It simply goes like this and very often of accompanied by a little sliver of moon. We are in space. No one knows what's going on. And I love you. As a covenant right there. We are in space. No one knows what's going on. And I love you. I was reminded. Of the power of this promise of presence. A week ago, the 20th anniversary of 9-11, I'm remembering that at the time. At the time, there were so many materials put out for parents of kids. With this overwhelming, scary world rocking event happening. And yes, there are questions to answer that kids have in developmentally appropriate ways. But you know what, all those guidelines basically boil down to? The loving presences in kids lives, letting them know that they will do their best to be there. That. Is Covenant. Because we live in such a world where uncertainty means things will change. And this plus our human imperfections mean that none of us will, yeah, complete our vows perfectly.

[00:12:14] Speaker2

And yet we still making them we are still making them. Because on the most essential level reality, his relationship. And to show up to promise presence, it is honoring the basic covenant that life has already made with us. The moment that we are born into it. We are born from each other and for each other. And faithfulness to covenant. Means that we do our best to honor that every single one of our days. Even when our covenants appear to break or to end. I saw as so many of us did, a really touching example of this. From this guy not too long ago. Yeah. Steve Burns, former host of Blue's Clues, some of the singers here, because that's what singers do. They're already singing it. Ok. I know a lot of like popular songs and kids songs, that's actually not one I know of. So Julie, you can tell me about that one afterward. My nieces weren't old enough and I was kind of too old. So like Blue's Clues when it was on and really popular. It wasn't so much in my orbit. I was aware of it. But for those who love Blue's Clues, something really sad and kind of devastating did happen when Steve Burns younger version of himself, the host beloved host older version of himself recently, by the way that Steve Burns alive. That's not just a pun there developed kind of all of these internet rumors that like, remember, like, you know, Beatles fans like Paul is dead.

[00:14:04] Speaker2

Steve Burns had died, and they brought in a body double to say goodbye, and Steve Burns was in fact not alive, but Steve Burns alive is real. Recently, many of us know Steve Byrne showed back up. And I want to share his words. With you almost in their entirety. Because this is covenant. Even after covenant seems to end. Steve Burns, who I wasn't all that familiar with, as I said. I got to see why he was so beloved. So earnest. He said, you remember when we were younger, this recent video, we used to run around and hang out with blue and find clues and talk to Mr Salt and freak out about the mail and do all the fun stuff. And then one day I was like, Oh, hey, guess what? Big news, I'm leaving, here's my brother, Joe. He's your new best friend. And then I got on a bus and I left and we didn't see each other for a really long time. Can we just talk about that? Great. Because I realize it was kind of abrupt. And goes on to talk about college, that's where he went, he went away to school, college was really challenging, by the way, but great because I got to use my mind and take a step at a time. And now literally, I am doing many of the things that I wanted to do. I mean, we talk about him in the audience.

[00:15:28] Speaker2

I mean, we started out with clues, and now it's what? Student loans and jobs and families and some of it. Understatement of the year. And some of it has been kind of hard, you know? I know, you know. And then the heart of it. The Covenant. Honoring heart of it. I wanted to tell you that I really couldn't have done all of that without your help. And in fact, all the help that you helped me with when we were younger is still helping me today right now. And that is super cool. I guess I just wanted to say that after all these years. That's the part that makes me tear up a little bit. I guess I just wanted to say that after all these years. I never forgot you. And I am super glad. That we are still friends. That a teen actor grows up and goes away to college is not a tragedy. That the people who loved him and counted on him. And miss him when he moved on is a loss and grief that they once shared a connection, and that connection helped all of them, and knowing that without each other they would not be who they are that reveals that Covenant was operating all along. And to know that covenant is always here. And to be honest. Grateful. And return to it over and over and over again, even when it changes. That is nothing more, nothing less. Than a way to make it through this world.

[00:17:27] Speaker2

Make it through this world. With our hearts intact. Broken and healing. And whole. So today I want to say to those of you, I was expecting to see in these seats. Even though there is distance. You are not here. And yet you are. We are not together. And yet we are. Literally today. We are connected. Even as relationship changes. Some bonds can never be broken. Always connected. Amen. And may you live in blessing. I ask if you would. Unite your heart with mine in prayer. Spirit, we ask guidance in the midst of shifting and changing. A life in which trap doors open underneath our feet over and over and over again, and the unexpected sometimes feels like the only expected thing. We ask, how do we take a stance in the midst of this? How do we remain open? In the midst of what is unpredictable. It is by remembering. The vows that sits most deeply upon our hearts. And to know that although we are imperfect vessels for those vows. Still. Imperfect vessels. They are beautiful. Indeed, this is why we need COVID in in the first place. So today, may we hold lightly the vows, the preparations, the plans that we make knowing that one form or another, eventually they will change. And. May we deepen into these vows we make today and these vows, these plans, these covenants, these promises? For they are life giving. These plans promises covenants. They give us back to life.

[00:20:06] Speaker1

Amen. If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of Wellsprings. Go to our web site Wellspringsuu.org, that's wellsprings the letters u u dot ORG.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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