

## **Come, Let Us Worship**

### **Cycle of Song, Vol 2**

The anthems in this collection are designed for small church choirs, though they certainly work well with larger choirs too. The fact is that the vast majority of our UU congregations are pretty small, and they have small choirs. 7-10 singers is about average, and many of those choirs aren't sure a tenor is going to show up on Sunday. This collection is meant to be a resource for those choirs to sing beautiful, well-crafted, accessible music that actually sounds like the faith we proclaim.

Volume 1 of this series set texts by a variety of authors, and included pieces for major holidays and seasons of the church year. Volume 2 includes 8 pieces designed to pair with a call to worship by the Rev. **Gretchen Haley**, senior minister of Foothills Unitarian in Ft. Collins, CO. Only one of the pieces, *Come, Let Us Worship*, is a direct setting of her text. The others are lyrical adaptations of Gretchen's words, done with permission of the author. Each piece could be used in conjunction with the call to worship that inspired it, but they also work just fine as stand-alone pieces.

The Rev. **Gretchen Haley** has an audacious ambition for the liberal church, believing in its capacity to transform lives and our world by way of hyper-local relationships and partnerships that inspire the unleashing of courageous love. Her ministry is infused with her relentless curiosity about most things, especially the big stuff of theology, the beauty of creation, the magic of collaboration, and the joy of pop culture. She moved to Colorado from Washington state over 20 years ago for grad school in theatre, and knew immediately that she would never leave. She and her amazing partner, Carri, have 2 kids, Gracie and Josef, who both relish and resent being PKs, and who keep her grounded, frustrated, inspired, and humbled, everyday. She is basically obsessed with her dog, a large-sized mutt, Charlie.

## **Come, Let Us Worship**

Whatever you have come in  
anticipating  
Whatever you expect  
Or worry  
For our world,  
for the future  
For our lives -  
let it go  
make space in your heart  
in your heart  
to be surprised  
Make room  
in your soul  
for a new story to take shape  
Be for this time,  
astonished  
at this life  
this life  
that remains  
A miracle  
make space  
in your heart  
for still this dreaming  
together  
this being hope for each other  
and courage  
to believe  
in this new day  
dawning  
For us all.  
Come, let us worship  
Together

## **Even Now**

For all the promises we make  
We never promise  
That your heart will not break  
That your heart could be  
Brave,  
Bold  
bursting open  
And be saved  
from the ache  
That sweeps over all of life

We can only hope to bolster  
That bravery  
Quiet  
That ache  
Hope to be a community that listens your story  
Into being  
Becoming  
Whispering  
It's not the end  
Even now  
The day breaks  
For us all

So let us gather, friends  
With our restlessness  
our release  
our risk  
Grieving the pain  
Praising the good  
Giving thanks  
That we dare still  
wade into the waters  
of love  
and longing

That we keep moving  
and laughing  
sighing,  
and singing  
Holding the silence  
For this time  
Come, let us worship, together

### **Learning to Believe**

Let's put delight on our to-do list today  
After all, there is not enough time in this life  
for all this beauty:  
for spring that is here, and then gone  
for red buds on brown trees, suddenly everywhere  
for singing together, out loud, and in public  
for this noticing of life, and death, this paying  
attention and  
for this chance, to begin  
again  
We are  
already past due on this party  
this praising of everything big, and small  
for this hour, let's get to work  
at wonder and joy  
so big the ancestors feel it  
we are healing backwards, and dreaming forward  
Opening our hearts wide, like the sky  
Letting ourselves be loved, for no good reason  
Learning to believe it's possible  
to receive love  
like a gift we already have  
to not turn away  
and to rejoice like breath  
for this gift of life that keeps flowing  
in, and out  
Come, let us worship together.

## **The Promise of the Holy**

We have already missed too much beauty  
Our minds so mixed up with multi-tasking  
Toggling back and forth  
between hope, and fear  
worry, and wonder  
The sun rises with an insistent light  
and the morning breaks  
with the promise of the holy  
disguised as babies gurgling,  
and dogs groaning,  
snow covering up the just-shoveled walk  
and the flame that is kindled week upon week  
with promises to love, and to serve,  
and to dwell together  
in peace  
All that this day asks  
is that we risk showing up  
with our eyes open  
that we might bear witness to the whole of life  
the stories we ourselves carry  
the things we have tried to forget  
the times we have been wrong,  
or, we have been wronged  
To let in this much love, this much grace  
to know ourselves a part of this possibility  
to remember and to forgive,  
to heal and to be better.  
Come let us worship, together.

## **Roll Away the Stone**

Roll away the stone  
of your hesitant heart  
Let the light shine  
on all the sleeping shadows

Awaken to this day  
That offers itself to you  
And to all  
with a great extravagance.

Awaken to this gift,  
this beauty, this chance  
That we might still begin again, and anew  
That we might be changed by the in  
and out  
of breath

That we might still burst forth  
Like the crocuses  
That we might still surprise  
this earth with a new song

Sung together  
Calling us all in,  
And then sending us back out

And know it all  
As a blessing

Come, let us worship, together.

## Still Rising

When you've reached  
the end of your patience  
for fires that rage  
like your heart,  
and will not be put out,  
but only keep whipping up  
winds, making everything  
so much harder to see  
Through the fog  
there persists this enduring struggle  
those who will not concede the possibility  
of resilience and re-birth  
Everyone here knows how it feels to  
want to throw up your hands  
in surrender and defeat  
But here we remind each other  
of roller coasters  
That invite us to that same motion -  
and the sweet thrill  
of risking release  
into joy  
Annie Dillard used to say  
Church should come with crash helmets  
Because here we  
know that life is not done with surprises  
and for this we come  
with praise, and thanks  
Like the phoenix, and the butterfly,  
And the Beloved Community  
still rising -  
let us be a part  
of this startling  
beauty.  
Come let us worship together

## **This Hope That We Make**

Life comes for us  
In a thousand different ways  
Undoes plans and upends traditions  
Knocks down the doors of our defense  
In a moment  
Every expectation releases  
Like the in and out of breath  
Life is urgent and also, unbearably slow  
And does not take well  
To our fantasies of control.  
We gather here to practice  
Surrendering to the waves  
of grace and grief  
In song, in silence, in story  
We come to remember the possibility  
Of a larger call,  
That we might offer our gifts  
with a surprising generosity  
That we might release ourselves  
From the needing to know  
That we might simply be present  
To this beauty, these partners,  
This hope that we make  
Together  
Come, let us worship  
Together.



## **You Are Loved**

For this one moment  
Know only that you are loved  
That you are safe, and whole and loved  
Know that you belong here  
Here among us, here upon this earth  
In your body  
However tired, or broken  
Your heart may be  
Whatever fear, disappointment, anger  
you carry  
For this hour know you are not alone  
Feel the presence of others  
Surrounding you,  
Breathing beside you, and with you,  
Discovering together the way our voices rise, and fall together  
In harmony, in hope  
Claim here a resilient freedom  
The choice for love, for light, to live with joy  
and gratitude and praise  
as a form of resistance  
Already we are organizing  
Come, let us worship, together

## **Music Notes**

General note – from time to time throughout these pieces there will be splits in the soprano and baritone parts. The upper soprano and lower baritone are always optional. If you have enough people to cover it, just having one person sing the split will work fine. Of course feel free to add more for balance if you have the resources to do so.

## **Come, Let Us Worship**

This is the only piece in Cycle 2 that is a direct setting of Gretchen's words. Keep the text light, delicate, and crisp. Remember that you are telling a story, and inviting people into a moment of transcendence. Make the long phrases/held notes musical – pay attention to swells and dynamics. And keep the unisons as pure as possible.

## **Even Now**

After the gentle opening, this one really needs to dance and sway starting at m. 29. Just let it grow and move and build organically. Don't pound the eighth notes – just emphasize the pulses. Note how things shift, harmonically, in mm. 57-60. Do not let singers hold the last note any longer than written – the "ks" of "breaks" should sound just as the piano plays the final arpeggio.

## **Learning to Believe**

Singing fast means getting out of your own way, text-wise. Keep the consonants light and quick, and stay on top of the beat. Let it soar!

## **The Promise of the Holy**

A three part round at the start, with lots of drama for each section. Be sure to keep the tempo in check – don't let it speed up! The character of the sound should really shift with the alto entrance at m. 40. Warm and inviting, with an easy smile.

## **Roll Away the Stone**

The first choir entrance will feel like it comes out of nowhere. You may want to give their starting pitches before the piece begins. This piece is all about excitement and drama (it's an Easter anthem, after all!). The congregation should see that in your singers' faces. Despite the big, high notes at the end, the altos have the most important part! Be sure to bring out their moving line.

### **Still Rising**

Do NOT take this faster than marked! It's a soulful R&B groove, and percussion will really help hold it together. You'll want to have lots of scoops and soloistic singing on the verses. Pay attention to the marked articulations – lots of space between “still” and “rising” once the groove starts, but not clipped short. I like to think of it as a “fat” staccato. Really full, but with separation before the next note. This is one where the choir should move kind of freely. Stiff bodies will produce stiff sounds!

### **This Hope That We Make**

The opening solo can be any voice part, but make sure they can really bring out the tenderness and care of the line. Long notes need to have lots of musical interest and direction one way or another. Don't just sit on them! Note that the piano gives everyone the D they sing in m. 38. There's a spaciousness between phrases at the top of page 6, but no ritard. Just keep it flowing. Singers should not need to look at the music once you get to the last page. All eyes up for the cutoff!

### **You Are Loved**

After the last collection came out, someone asked me if I ever write anything “classical.” Well, I'm not sure those labels really mean much anymore, but I did take the challenge and started this piece as though it were an etude for a student pianist. Which, of course, turns into a bluesy, gospel-inflected piece at the end. What can I say?

Once that final section starts, be sure to note that improvising pianists can feel free to go to town here. Add the layers as marked (unison melody until the congregation is carrying it, then SAB parts, then the soprano soaring over the

top). If you have vocal improvisers who can really take it to church, great. Adding a tambourine or even bass/drums here would be great too. I like to get the congregation looking each other in the eye and singing this to everyone around them. Don't let it end until the whole room is convinced that they are safe, whole, and loved!

### **Final Note**

These pieces were not intentionally designed to go together. But it turns out that if you sing them in alphabetical order, and use Gretchen's calls to worship as introductions to each piece, they work really well as a music-filled worship service. I hope you'll explore that possibility!

Thanks so much for purchasing the print license and for singing this music. I welcome your thoughts on the pieces, and any suggestions/ideas you might have for Vol 3 (coming in 2020...).

-- Jason