This is a service of remembrance, where we have an opportunity to remember loved ones who are no longer with us in physical presence. When we have loved deeply, we also hurt deeply when the ones we have loved are no longer here with us in the way to which we had grown accustomed.

This is a time when together we can name the reality of loss and love, when tears may honour the ones we have loved.

Grief is a natural part of our lives. We all have some acquaintance with the landscape of grief, though we often discover even more layers of grief as we navigate our way forward into each new day.

And perhaps the COVID pandemic and separation has only exacerbated those feelings.

Here, we are in good company tonight. We can be reassured that we don't hurt alone. We are with others who know the experience of loss, and grief. Whatever you’re feeling right now, just notice it and allow it to be. We can allow ourselves time to re-member loved ones. Death does not have the final word. Henry David Thoreau said, There is no remedy for love but to love more.

Today, in all of our frailty and sadness, we find ourselves in God's presence - not lifted from what is human, but as we are. We are in the company of God, in which we find the comfort of a reasonable and holy and joyful hope of eternal reunion with those we love.

Poetry and music offer a way to reflect on emotions that are deep, and personal. We find something that resonates and reminds us we are not alone. Sometimes poems are the only words that can make any sense. Jan Richardson offered the following poem that speaks to the truth that life does go on, the living go on living, the heart goes on beating. Her own husband died suddenly and she has written many poems reflecting on loss. Perhaps in these words you will find some solace and comfort. Jan writes:

Let us agree for now that we will not say the breaking makes us stronger

or that it is better to have this pain than to have done without this love.

Let us promise we will not tell ourselves time will heal the wound,

when every day our waking opens it anew.

Perhaps for now it can be enough to simply marvel

at the mystery of how a heart so broken can go on beating,

as if it were made for precisely this -

as if it knows the only cure for love is more of it,

as if it sees the heart’s sole remedy for breaking is to love still,

as if it trusts that its own persistent pulse

is the rhythm of a blessing we cannot begin to fathom

but will save us nonetheless. *(Jan Richardson)*

May the love you have given to others return to warm you like a cloak of cherishing
and the gentle life that you have shared breathe over you too like a kindly companion. Amen.