

Iris Ewing, Memorial Service

Order of Worship

Welcome

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength

A very present help in trouble

Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,

Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea

Though its waters roar and foam

Though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Be still and know that I am God!

The Lord of hosts is with us

The God of Jacob, Rachel and Leah is our refuge and strength.

It's a gift to be with you.

We gather today people of many faith traditions or no faith tradition. Our prayer is that in the particular language of this Christian church and service that you may also hear in it a language that seeks to make room to hear a word of hope and assurance, however we come.

We know how central music was to Iris's life. What a gift that music carries us as it takes us to the place that is beyond all words which is what a time of grief and memory is – a wordless space. What a gift to have the music in this service that will carry us.

What a gift to be here – to remember Iris – our connections to her and her family. These are times of deep remembering. Eric and I met in high school and met Iris then. I have had the privilege of being present with Eric's family through many joys and sorrows over the years. It is a gift to be here today.

We gather here in the protective shelter
of God's healing love.

We are free to pour out our grief,
release our anger,
face our emptiness,
and know that God cares.

We gather here as God's people,
conscious of others who have died

and of the frailty of our own existence on earth.

We come to comfort and to support one another
in our common loss.

We gather to hear God's word of hope
that can drive away our despair
and move us to offer God our praise.

We gather to commend to God with thanksgiving
the life of Iris Ewing
as we celebrate the good news of Christ's resurrection.

For whether we live or whether we die,
we are held by the love of God that will never let us go.

Brenda sang to her mother this song.

Hymn: Be Thou My Vision

Prayer:

You have breathed your breath of life into all of creation.
Thank you for the life of your child Iris.
Thank you for all who have been part of her life.
Rest your tender hand upon us now,
Hold us firm in your grace,
As you held and hold Iris this day,
Bind this body together in your healing love that never lets us go.

We pray in the name of the one who shows us your face and way
of love, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray:

Scripture Readings –

For generations upon generations, people have drawn comfort in
times of grief and loss from the companionship of friends and
family and by the words of scripture that meet us in the various
places we are in our lives. Sometimes it is hard to see the joy that
is here amidst the sorrow as well. The sustaining wellspring of life.
Iris knew something of seeing in such a way. The psalmist knows
as well.

Psalm 100

Words of Remembrance –

How do we remember a life of 91 years? One that saw more changes in life than any generation before.

How do we remember a life the fullness of a life, the seasons of changes in a life?

We stumble into remembering and sharing some words in the hope that these words might be a wellspring of deep remembrance for us all.

A gift to have family share some words of remembrance...

How do we remember a life? I remember meeting Iris in the summer of 1979 and I think back over the years of connections I had with Iris' family – at their home in New Jersey, with all of her family sitting out on the porch at their home on Camano Island, visiting here at Emerald Heights. I think of all the particular relationships and stories that have been our connection to Iris and her family.

It is a gift when someone share some words for us to hear at a time like this. Iris shared those words, shares them with us now, "I loved life, and life loved me." What an amazing gift of six simple words. I loved life and life loved me. What would it be to live in such a way that we too might say and know what Iris knew?

I think of what I knew and heard of Iris' life. I think of what kind of strength we have when we don't cling to what was but let go into what is yet to be. I think of her own movements from career to family from joys to sorrows that her life and ours hold. What it is to be in the present so deeply and move into the future.

I think about what it is to be curious about what is next and what will next unfold versus being afraid and clinging to the memory of what was.

I think of having such an expansive holding of love that knows that love knows many seasons and ways. Love is known in joy, yes, and love known and experienced in grief which knows that great love has been there.

I think about how central music was to Iris's life and how life is like a song - lived best in the rhythm of all that is life. The stormy crescendos and sweet pianissimo. Perhaps we saw that in Iris, yes. How in her life she flowed with all of life, loved life and let life love her. Love her through the losing that is life – the death of her son Bob, the death of her husband, Walter. The deaths of so many family and friends. The finding and making of new friends. An openness of spirit that brought her into the rhythm of connections with many people of many walks of life from the salmon cannery to the concert hall. A life that could rejoice in what was, and live in expectation of what is yet to be. Iris's life was a song, full of beauty, joy, grief, sweetness and bitterness and peace. A song beautifully sung.

I have the gift of living in a place where I can see out onto the water. The other morning I sat on my porch and watched a little boat take off and leave behind it a wake of rolling waves. I think how all of our lives are perhaps like such little boats, how we too will come to the time when we will reach the edge of the horizon of what we have called our life and pass over into death. I think of what remains and I think of that wake.

We ride, all of us, ride on the wakes of those who have gone before us. And I think of the wake that Iris leaves and what a wake, what a gift it is.

I think of the faith, the hope, the promise that sometimes we perhaps know is true, that when we pass over into death that indeed there is something that holds and lasts and stays. No one put it better in my mind than the Apostle Paul who wrote at the conclusion of the 8th chapter of his letter to the church at Rome.

“What can separate us from the love of God?” he asks. And he answers his question with what is the bedrock of his faith. “I am certain,” he writes, “that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor heights nor depth nor anything else in all of creation can separate us from the love of God.” A love that Paul saw in Jesus who he saw his Lord, a love that we see in this gathered community and the beauty of this day. A love that is known in countless ways, that holds, lasts and stays.

A love that can never let us go.

In this day, this season and time of grief and all the griefs our life holds and will, may we hold to the promise that indeed there is a love that holds, each and every one of us, always, and can never, will never let us go. Thanks be to God for the life of Iris Fribrock Ewing. Amen.

Music

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We gather now to do again what we know not how to do, to let go. We live between those two places -- of letting go and holding on.

Maybe the only way we can let go is in the hope and prayer that we are being held on to as we let go.

Just take a moment, I invite you to close your hands, to hold onto one thing you want to remember about Iris.

I invite you to open your hands, releasing something that needs release and offer it into the grace, forgiveness, love of God that holds us all.

And so friends, sure that God, hand beneath all hands, is in this place, let us join hands one with another and come together to let go again of Iris into God's eternal care and mercy and love.

We give you thanks for thy healing presence within each of us.
for the uplift of love, care, concern and prayer,
for the support and comfort of families and multitudes of friends.
For your presence with us through all the seasons of life.

With faith in your great mercy and wisdom,
we entrust Iris to your eternal care.

We praise you for your steadfast love for
her all the days of her earthly life.
We thank you for all that she was to those who loved her.

Loving God, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening
comes and the busy world is hushed and the
fever of life is over with our work done.
Then, in your mercy grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Iris – singing (recording of O Mio Babbino Caro)

Let's keep singing....Hymn – How Can I keep from Singing.

Benediction

Life is short and we don't have much time to gladden the hearts of those who walk the way with us. So let us be swift to love and make haste to be kind and may the blessing of God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit be within you and always before you from this time forth and forever more. And, as we remember Iris, we go forth to live our own song. Amen.

Postlude