

Memorial Service for Mary Lee Powell Burrus

4:00 pm Central Time, Sunday, November 8, 2020

Prelude with slides

Adam Cicchillitti, guitar

Johann Sebastian Bach, "Prelude" from Partita in E Major (BWV 1006)

Invocation

Laura Mayo

Reading

James Burrus Kelly

Rainer Maria Rilke, "I Live My Life in Widening Circles"

I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one
but I give myself to it.

I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?

Music

Evan Hendrix Burrus, clarinet

W. Ferling, "Etude No. 3 in A Minor"

Reading

Kathleen Cook

Kathleen Cook, "Together"

Gather in the words
Bright white peonies
Vivid scarlet dianthus
Velvety yellow roses

Arrange them in artful phrases
Sadness with joy
Celebration with mourning
Now with then

Carry them in handfuls
To places of hope
Set them with care
Say the names

The lost and
The living

Together.

Remembrances

Joe Powell
Virginia Burrus
Charlie Burrus
James Burrus Kelly
Mary Burrus Kelly
Evan Hendrix Burrus
Claire Hendrix Burrus

Music

Eric Avera, vocal solo; Patrick Parker, piano

Vassar Miller, "Without Ceremony" (music, Thomas Avinger)

Except ourselves, we have no other prayer;
Our needs are sores upon our nakedness.
We do not have to name them; we are here.
And You who can make eyes can see no less.
We fall, not on our knees, but on our hearts,
A posture humbler far and more downcast;
While Father Pain instructs us in the arts
Of praying, hunger is the worthiest fast.
We find ourselves where tongues cannot wage war
On silence (farther, mystics never flew)
But on the common wings of what we are,
Borne on the wings of what we bear, toward You,
Oh Word, in whom our wordiness dissolves,
When we have not a prayer except ourselves.

Reading

Laura Mayo

Psalm 90: 1-6

Homily

Laura Mayo

Music

Carol Hendrix Burrus, vocal solo
Charlie Hendrix Burrus, guitar

"What Wondrous Love Is This"

Remembrances

Steven Rudy
Jay Leach
Barbie McKittrick
Sidney Burrus

Reading Mary Burrus Kelly & Claire Hendrix Burrus

Mary Lee Burrus, "On Being Introspective"

Dance Nita Lindley & Linda Phenix

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, "Alleluia"

Benediction Laura Mayo

Postlude with slides Charlie Hendrix Burrus, piano
Charlie, Carol, Evan, & Claire Burrus, James and Mary Kelly, vocals

"Amazing Grace"

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Open Sharing

After the ceremony, all those present are invited to share their memories and thoughts about Mary Lee.

Notes about the Participants

Laura Mayo is pastor of Covenant Church in Houston, Texas. She is also a dear friend of Mary Lee.

Kathleen Cook is a poet and a dear friend of Mary Lee, a member of both Covenant Church and one of Mary Lee's book groups.

Eric Avera is a member of Covenant Church. Mary Lee, who knew him all his life and admired his voice, expressed a desire that he sing at her memorial service. The lyrics to the song that Eric performed were written by Vassar Miller, a poet who was a member of Covenant Church and a dear friend of Mary Lee; the music was composed by Thomas Avinger, whom Mary Lee also knew through musical and church circles.

Steven Rudy is a dear friend of Mary Lee, who worked with him in the 1970s; she and Sidney spent many happy summer vacations with Steven and his wife Sandra in Crested Butte, CO, and Santa Fe, NM.

Jay Leach was the pastor of Covenant Church in Houston from 1990 – 2000. He and Mary Lee worked closely together during that decade and established a cherished connection of love and trust. Since 2003 he has been the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Community of Charlotte.

Barbie McKittrick is a dear friend of Mary Lee, a member of both Covenant Church and two of Mary Lee's book groups, and a fellow resident at Brazos Towers.

Nita Lindley and **Linda Phenix** are members of Covenant Church. Mary Lee especially enjoyed and admired their dancing. It was one of Mary Lee's wishes to have liturgical dance at her memorial service. In designing the altar and performing the dance, Nita and Linda incorporated items reflective of Mary Lee's life—her shawl, books and ipad, a sculpture titled "Company of Readers," her passport and voter's registration card, a collage made by a young Gini, photos of her dancing with her brother and of the "four Marys" (her mother, herself, her daughter, her granddaughter), and more. Sunflowers were among Mary Lee's favorite things, as was Mozart's "Alleluia."

The rest of us are family!

Sidney Burrus is Mary Lee's husband of sixty-two years. He is also the Maxfield and Oshman Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering and former Dean of Engineering at Rice University. Along with Mary Lee, he has been a member of Covenant Church since 1965.

Virginia Burrus is Mary Lee's daughter. She is also the Bishop W. Earl Ledden Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. Her husband, **Glenn Peers**, is Professor of Art History at Syracuse.

Charlie Hendrix Burrus is Mary Lee's son. He also teaches math at Bellaire High School in Houston and plays music in the folk band Traveler, along with his wife **Carol Hendrix Burrus**. Carol is Director of Religious Community at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston.

James Burrus Kelly is Mary Lee's grandson. He is also founder and CEO of JBK Media. He lives in Chicago with his fiancée, **Anastasia Barbarov**.

Mary Burrus Kelly is Mary Lee's granddaughter. She is also an Investment Banking Associate at Morgan Stanley and lives in New York City with her canine companion **Milo**.

Evan Hendrix Burrus is Mary Lee's grandson. He is also a jazz musician, recently returned to Houston, with a side career as a barista.

Claire Hendrix Burrus is Mary Lee's granddaughter. She is also a Research and Evaluation Analyst at the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition in Austin, where she lives with her partner **John Morgan**.

Joe Powell is Mary Lee's brother. He's known her longer than any of us. He lives in McKinney, TX, with his wife **Babsie Powell**.