

Trans Day of Remembrance, November 11, 2025

Offered at Hingham Congregational Church, 378 Main Street, Hingham, MA 02043 ||
Psalms of Lament; Poem Valley of Dry Bones; Songs; preaching by The Reverend Amy
Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

Dear Siblings in God our mother and father, tonight we come together bearing names. We carry them carefully, reverently—like candles cupped against the wind. We speak these names with tenderness, because too often the world did not. We speak them with sorrow, because these neighbors should be alive. And we speak them with defiance, because naming is an act of resistance against erasure.

Tonight's psalms offer language for this gathering that is not polite, not tidy, not resolved. "How long, O God?" "Why do you hide yourself?" "The helpless fall by their might." These ancient prayers give shape to the ancient ache of human suffering. And they teach us that lament itself is holy. They teach us that when we name the grief of a people, we do not stand outside of faith—we plant our feet in the very heart of it.

Transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people have been crying these psalms for generations. How long, O God, will our bodies be politicized and policed? How long will our gifts be overlooked or dismissed? How long will our youth be told they are too much, or not enough, or unworthy of belonging? How long will parents have to bury their children? How long will violence be justified by fear, and fear be excused as righteousness?

Tonight we join our voices in that holy lament, and then we speak the names.

Tiara. Blaze. Aurora. Kasí. Onyx. Phoenix. Spencer. Sam. Leah Jo. And dozens more—children, teenagers, elders; people of color, immigrants, students; beloved friends, dancers, artists, caregivers, siblings. Some were connected to

communities that cherished them. Others died alone. One name we cannot speak because the family has not released it—but God knows her. God knows each of the beloved children we've lost.

Each name is a story interrupted. A life with texture, complexity and promise. A human being with gifts and talents, jokes, frustrations, relationships, and dreams. Some of our siblings were just learning who they were; some had spent decades unlearning the lies others told them. Some were in college, standing on the threshold of adulthood. Some were parents. Some were unhoused. Some died by violence. Some died by despair—despair brought on by the relentless cruelty of a world that refused to make room for them.

Tonight we refuse to look away from that cruelty.

We are blessed with scripture tonight that acknowledges the cruelty but then cries out and insists –*“Rise up, O Lord. Lift up your hand. Do not forget the oppressed.”* Lament leads to action. Grief leads to clarity. Compassion leads to courage.

The world insinuates that these devastating deaths of our trans siblings are inevitable, but [thank God our] faith dictates something very different. Our faith tells us that each one of these lives is precious, unrepeatable, and made in the image of God. Our faith tells us that the breath of God animates every living body—not just those that conform neatly to entrenched expectations. Our faith tells us that the dry bones of despair are not the end of the story.

Avery Arden's poem reminds us of this truth with fierce beauty. The poet curls up among dry bones, waiting to die—not because she lacks faith, but because others have weaponized faith against her. And then the breath of God comes—not to punish, not to correct, not to erase, but to revive. To rebuild. To resurrect. To reveal the sacredness that was always there.

That is the God that unites us this evening, the God of the ever-expanding and reinvigorated life. The God who meets trans people not with condemnation, but with breath. Not with rejection, but with renewal. Not with death, but with life.

When we believe in the Divine as present and known to each of us, we are obligated – bound – morally, spiritually, daily—to reshape the world to honor this truth!

We are bound to make our churches, our schools, our homes, our communities places where trans and nonbinary people are not threatened but thrive; where young people do not have to choose between authenticity and belonging; where elders are honored; where parents of trans kids are supported; where violence is rejected and justice prevails.

We are bound to build a world where lamenting the premature death of a trans sibling is no more.

We cannot bring back Tiara or Blaze or Phoenix or Leah Jo. But we can remember who they were: a woman of faith; a gentle teenage boy; a Vermont college student organizing for the queer community; a Massachusetts-born woman who sought joy and dignity and found too little support.

We can remember that each death is not just a loss to one family or community, but a loss to all of us. A loss of art, of leadership, of beauty, of possibility. A loss of wisdom we will never hear, humor we will never share, change we will never witness, light we will never see.

Let us choose to live differently because of them.

To listen more carefully. To challenge hate-filled policies. To protect vulnerable youth. To speak up in rooms where prejudice or phobia is normalized. To create safety where danger has taken root. To insist that every body—every single body—is worthy of love, dignity, and joy.

This is our faith in action and it is our shared calling. And I invite us to embrace a shared commitment, because really, there can be no closure.

Our commitment tonight is to remember these names. We promise to honor their stories. We affirm that we stand with the living, and protect the vulnerable. We redouble our efforts to transform the systems and fears that led to the deaths we mark tonight and we promise to choose life—not only for ourselves, but for every trans and queer person struggling to believe that life is possible.

On this Trans Day of Remembrance, may God gather the ones we have lost into eternal light. And may God breathe into us the courage to become builders of a world where all God's children can live without fear, and die only in old age, fully themselves, surrounded by love. Amen.