

## **Memorial Service for Meagan Anna Margerum-Leys**

### **Prelude by Sarah**

### **Family comes in**

### **Violin solo (begins at 2:00)**

### **Opening Words** (from In Memoriam, p.27)

Ken Phifer

A human life is sacred.  
It is sacred in its being born.  
It is sacred in its living.  
And it is sacred in its dying.

The sorrow and joy of life weave of a tapestry of our individual lives as death gathers us once again into a blessed community. We gather to bid farewell to Meagan Anna (Ah-nah) Margerum-Leys, whom we have known and loved. We gather to search for life's deepest meanings. We gather to seek the comfort and healing that we can offer to one another. And we gather to say "yes" to life's greatest expression – love. Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Today we are united with the wisdom and customs of people in all ages. We are gathered as a group of family and friends, but we also feel the embrace of the ageless human community. Though we are just a few people gathered in one place, our strength and resources are great, for they come from the deep well of all humanity. And in this spirit we join our individual feelings and thoughts as well as the faiths that sustain us separately into a harmony of remembrance and affirmation.

We shall celebrate Meagan's living and we shall grieve Meagan's dying because we know the truth of William Blake's words:

Joy and woe are woven fine . . .  
Under every grief and pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine.  
It is right it should be so  
[We were] made for joy and woe.

Though our grief is strong and we must mourn, we will not let the shadow of death obscure the joyful, creative, loving person that Meagan was who touched us many times, in many ways, filling our lives with memories, meaning, and love.

So we have come together.  
It is good that we have come together,  
Because we need each other in empathy and consolation,  
And because we need each other in courage and wisdom:  
To face Meagan's death,  
To celebrate Meagan's life,  
And to show our love and support for Jon, Julie, Emma, and all of those  
Who knew and loved Meagan well.

It is good – right and fitting – that we have come together,  
Because a human life is sacred in its being born,  
In its living,  
And also in its dying.

### **Chalice Lighting**

Julie Margerum-Leys

Spirit of Life—Eternal God—Be with us now

Be with us now and help give us clarity and light in our minds and memories.

Let us feel your compassion and be compassionate with others as we mourn,

Share with us great love to help our hearts to heal, and help us stay connected to you and to each other, for in these connections is the strength of stone.

Spirit of Life, of Love—be with us, stay with us, sing with us, cry with us as we remember and celebrate Meagan's life.

*Al Shlosha D'Varim*

Ann Arbor Youth Chorale

**Reading from Kahlil Gibran**

Peggy

*When you are sorrowful look again in  
Your heart, and you shall see that in truth  
You are weeping for that which has been  
Your delight.*

**Reflections on Meagan's Life**

Peggy and Ken

- - - - - FIRST FIVE YEARS - - - - -

**Peggy:** The CANDLES for the first five years of Meagan's life will be lit  
by: Jon Margerum-Leys, Emma Margerum-Leys, Dave Margerum, Jennie  
Margerum, and Theo Parker

(They light candles)

Meagan Anna came into our world on a chilly day in mid March at a small  
hospital in Lebanon New Hampshire. Shortly after, she was taken home to  
Vermont where she spent 18 wonderful months being adored by her parents and  
neighbors and wearing all manner of hats because she had so little hair.

Meagan spent the next five years in the central coast of California—growing,  
playing, working, learning. She loved to pick lemons off the tree and taste their  
tartness. She was observant, careful, persistent—she loved being read to and had  
great joy in learning to read. She had a wonderful teacher at her Montessori  
school—where she liked making bead pattern pictures; she loved puzzles, tea

parties, dancing. Most of all, she loved her baby sister, Emma, who she saw born at home and ran to bring her a baby toy within an hour of birth. She taught Emma to clap, helped her walk, taught her the fine art of tea parties, read to her, played with her.

- - - - - SECOND FIVE YEARS - - - - -

Peggy: The CANDLES for the second five years of Meagan’s life will be lit by: Kelsey Brown, Lisa Teshima, Marilyn Leys, Tony Leys, and Emma Kennedy (They light candles)

Just before 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Meagan’s family moved to Northwood V family housing at the University of Michigan. She made many friends in family housing and at Northside School. She was excited to take a bus to school, was delighted with discovering the seasons—especially Halloween in family housing. There, she liked having a corner of woods to transform into a ‘house’. She joined the junior choir at church, started learning recorder, and many other lessons came, too:

Swimming, dancing, horseback riding, ice skating. Meagan loved learning and reading, reading, reading, loved her 2<sup>nd</sup> and third grade teacher, Mrs. Teshima, and her special reports on everything from cougars to Picasso.

Meagan was quite organized in her work and play. She and Emma created Beanie Baby family weddings and Meagan wrote out the family trees and made Beanie Baby clothes. She had to be in control: of herself, and yes of Emma too. She

vowed every year to be ‘less bossy’ and in this she did slowly improve. Meagan had a balanced, even mind and many subjects came easily to her: spelling, writing, math, science. She was incredibly self-motivated in her learning. On a road trip to Tennessee, she sat in the back of the van and taught herself to cross stitch; then she taught Julie and Emma.

One thing didn’t come easily right away: She was distraught with her first ice skating lesson to find it did not come easily, but she went on and worked through all her basic 8 badges.

- - - - - THIRD FIVE YEARS - - - - -

**Ken:** The CANDLES for the last five years of Meagan’s life will be lit by:  
Christina Surfus, Cindy Wilson, Ben Hykel, Liz Kennedy, and Julie Dybdahl  
(They light candles)

Meagan was balanced in her temperament and was fairly easy-going even as a tween and teenager. She never held on to anger long and was able to laugh at herself. She wasn’t a passionate person—only rarely did we see her get really excited or adamant about something. One thing she did get excited about, though, was auditioning and being accepted to the UU Children’s honor choir to sing at the General Assembly in Nashville. She was thrilled to be singing challenging music with other UU children from the U.S. She was excited, too, when she and her best friend sang together in the Ann Arbor Youth Chorale Concert Choir. Singing was

not so much a passion but a natural extension of herself. Music was in her soul, would run through her head, and then out it would come. (We finally had to make a rule about no singing at the table.) We loved singing rounds together in the car, and Christmas carols—Meagan loved Christmas carols and would sing them any time of year.

Another occasion of excitement was getting her bicycle and going up to the bike camp near Empire, Michigan. She was positive she wanted to go, trained well for it and indeed, counted the two times she went as highlights in her life. She felt strong, powerful, and free on her bicycle.

After being diagnosed, Meagan was adamant that she would finish her 8<sup>th</sup> grade project, be well enough to go on her 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip and attend Rudolf Steiner High School. All this she did—her 8<sup>th</sup> grade project was a book about the voices of poetry, including over 30 poems of her own. She participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade whitewater rafting trip just weeks after finishing radiation treatments. She loved her high school, loved wrapping her mind around literature, algebra, history, and Spanish and letting herself flow with art, music, and drama. One of the things she loved about the Steiner High School was that everyone got along with each other, without the cliques and hierarchies that sometimes exist at larger schools.

Meagan was good company, able to be respectful and listen as well as add her own observations and stick to her own opinions. In the last year and a half of her

diagnosis, recovery, and return of illness taught us all many things: That it is really okay to be yourself, appreciate a glass of water, love your hands and do not take them for granted, have your own style, embrace life, and find the beauty in every day.

The week before she passed, Meagan was still drawing and writing poetry—now left handed, working on selecting books for the high school book project, and still observing the colors and beauty every day.

**Ken introduce: Video**

Jon and Julie have created a short compilation of photos and video which will be shown on the screen at the front. It will also be available for viewing after the service in the board room. The instrumental music accompanying the video was written specifically for Meagan: The vocal performance was recorded by the Ann Arbor Youth Chorale while Meagan was a member

**Ken introduce: Poem by Meagan: Gibbous Moon** will be read by several Friends of Meagan: Emma Paul, Adrian Lyjak, Lance Wagner, Cassie Vachon

**Personal Remembrances**

**Ken:** Meagan's uncle, John Margerum offers these reflections, which will be read by Eric Margerum, one of Julie's cousins:

When I remember Meagan  
She comes back to me  
Not as a single person  
But as a beautiful jumble  
Of all her ages and all our time.

The young woman who hugs me  
Is the child holding my hand

That is an infant  
In my arms.

In these memories of Meagan  
I find I remember  
(and those who knew her will not be surprised to learn)  
That she was nearly always  
With a smile, a laugh  
And a gentle kindness.

These memories of Meagan  
Of walking along a winter beach  
Of playing at Charades  
Of holding this baby  
In my lap,  
They are among  
The most prized of my possessions.

These memories of Meagan  
Of her sitting next to me  
At Thanksgiving dinner  
Of reading her a bedtime story  
Of her reading her poem  
To me,  
Astound me with great joy  
And terrible pain.

The grief and sadness that we share  
In her loss  
Is really a testament  
To the love she  
Engendered in us all.

These memories of Meagan  
Who I loved  
Who I love  
Who I will always love,  
I will hold her  
Next to my heart  
Till the end of my days.

**Marilyn Leys, who is grandmother of Meagan, will also speak**

**Laura Spencer, this congregation's Director of Religious Education, has these reflections to share:**

I am sorry that I am not able to be here in person. I am deeply saddened by the loss of such a bright and shining star.

Meagan was an active participant in our church's Religious Education program. I met her when her family moved to the area and began attending our church when she was an elementary school student. She was always a cheerful, friendly, and welcoming girl who had many friends. She was also a thoughtful person who was able to find the heart of a matter and help others to see it too. While her friends were important to her she held tight to what she believed in and was not easily swayed by peer pressure. I was deeply touched by the way her friends and classmates rallied around her, and offered support, love and prayers during her illness. I know she will be missed by our high school youth group.

Meagan was a participant in our eighth grade Coming of Age program. Just before her illness was identified the group attended a meaning of life activity at Hospice. This extremely powerful and moving experience was difficult for her. After her diagnosis she continued to be an active participant. She completed the program and shared her credo or belief statement along with the other participants as a part of our Religious Education Sunday service. Her words were a beautiful reflection of the person Meagan Margerum-Leys was. I was very impressed by her perseverance and determination not to let her illness prevent her from getting the most out of her experience. Her participation was a vital part of

the 2002-2003 Coming Of Age group.

My daughters and I will miss Meagan. I will miss seeing her bright smile on Sunday mornings. I feel blessed to have been touch by her shining light of love. I wish to express my heart felt sympathy to the Margerum-Leys family and all of you for whom Meagan was special in your lives. May we continue to feel her spirit of love, acceptance, and honor surrounding us.

Blessed Be.

**Ken invites others forward who wish to speak, then closes at the end**

**Remember Me Singing**

*Ann Arbor Youth Chorale*

**Silent Meditation** (introduced by Peggy)

We gather together from various faiths which sustain us separately, but we come together in a harmony which acts across all creeds and assures us that goodness, and love, and life continue on.

Let us now gather in a time of meditation and prayer. May we each in our hearts now offer our private prayers of remembrance – in honor of who Meagan was and the many ways her life touched yours. In silence, let us reflect on what Meagan has meant to each of us, and offer our silent prayers. Then I will invite us to sing together.

[Silence]

*From You I Receive* Hymn #402 3 or 4 times – words shown on screen

**Prayer**

Peggy

Gracious God, Spirit of Life, Spirit of Love,  
By many names we know you.

As ancient scriptures testify, you are stronger than death.  
You flow in our tears and in our embraces.  
You flow in our memorial heartbeats  
and in our hopeful openness to all that is to come.

You wrap your strong arms around us on lonely nights with thankfulness for every day that we knew Meagan.

You help us to learn to live with faith that there is somehow meaning even in what we don't understand,

You help us trust that life continues on in a new form for Meagan, and in new ways for us.

You comfort us and strengthen us when we face death and sorrow.

And you show your love every time we reach out to each other with respect, tenderness, and care.

We have come together as a community of family and friends. We have suffered a tragic loss this week. With this service, we have begun to relieve the hurt and to acknowledge the loss this week has brought forth. As we make room for the sadness brought by Meagan's death, may we also feel the joy of a life well-lived. For then, our memories of Meagan are enriched.

With sadness and joy, then, we give thanks for the life of Meagan Anna (Ah-Nah) Margerum-Leys. And we give thanks for the ways that she made this world a better place to live.

We give thanks that Meagan was – and is – a part of our common life. The truth of her life endures, for it is woven into the fabric of the larger Life of which we are all a part.

Gracious God, Spirit of Life and of Love,  
As we say a final farewell to Meagan, may we be confident and trusting that human life is full of meaning and purpose, even in death. Amen.

Peggy: Let us sing together the hymn "The Sun that Shines" which Meagan learned and enjoyed with the Jr. Choir here at this congregation.

### ***The Sun that Shines Hymn #19***

#### **Closing Words**

Peggy

From a Jewish prayer book for the High Holy Days

When I die  
If you need to weep  
Cry for someone

Walking the street beside you.  
And when you need me  
Put your arms around others and give them what you need to give me.

You can love me most by letting  
Hands touch hands, and  
Souls touch souls.

You can love me most by  
Sharing your Joys and  
Multiplying your good deeds.

You can love me most by  
Letting me live in your eyes  
And not on your Mind.

And when you think of me  
Remember what you have been taught,  
Love doesn't die  
People do.  
So when all that's left of me is love  
Give Me Away.

### **Instructions**

When the service is over, you are invited to stay for the reception that will be in various rooms of the church, and under the tent outside. You are also welcome to come forward to view the photos and displays on the tables here, or to go to the board room to view the video again.

### **Benediction and Chalice Pau**

Peggy

Spirit of Life be with us  
Giving us the peace of acceptance and understanding  
And the assurance in those things that never die—  
Those things that pass from person to person  
Through the generations into eternity—  
Especially love.  
In the spirit of Love we have gathered.  
In the spirit of Love we depart.

**Peggy and Ken greet family, then dismiss congregation**