

## Life Demands – NUF May 2017 Meditation – by Rev Tony McNeile

Life demands and we obey. The world turns at one speed but life runs faster. The world clock ticks in days and seasons, we rush by in seconds and less than seconds. Tomorrow's needs bury the memories of yesterday. Tomorrow makes today a little irrelevant and pushes it to one side. So relentless is the speed of life. The bends become tighter, the roads narrower, the horizon shrinks to a tunnel filled with greyness and then ..... well, what might happen.?

This is not meant to happen.

The world is calling back, there is healing in the slow speed of the world. There is peace in the slow drift of time. There is stillness in the pace of the long seconds. There is stillness within movement.

My tree stands by the river like a statue. I think of the tree having its own spirit, calm, even when the breeze comes rustling. Branches dance and stretch. Young leaves flutter but the root is firm, the trunk is firm. The spirit is not afraid of the breeze.

I found this tree when walking. Funny how it's energy of slow time makes it strong. Many years and many seasons of leaves budding and unfolding and turning to gold in autumn and then sleeping in winter, goes on and on through the ages and through lifetimes. Stretching into the sky.

When I stand before the tree I feel the strength that comes from it. Strength that feels like the fading echo of a bell that hums on and does not stop.

The shape is perfect but not perfect. Within the perfect shape there have been many changes. There have been slow bursts of growth and hesitations but overall it is right.

I can speak to my tree and think to my tree and like to feel it is absorbing what I say and slowing my thoughts. I speak in thought and my breathing slows. My eyes stop their darting from branch to branch, leaf to leaf, but linger in study and concentration.

My tree is a living miracle, a silent sentinel absorbing sunlight without effort, lifting streams of water and breathing them out from every pore of every leaf. Giving back the oxygen I steal from the air.

I have made a bond with my tree. To be unashamed before it and honest before it. To respect its great age.

I have my precious moments before my tree. When I am apart from it, I can still imagine its presence. I know of others who find peace for themselves beside a tree. There may be many others who stand before my special tree. If they do, I feel linked to them. They are my brothers and sisters and cousins. They are of my world.

In the frenzied world, interacting, negotiating, speaking, listening, manoeuvring, I try to keep in my mind the image of my tree. I try to radiate its peace into my fast world. It keeps me calm. I hope it spreads from me in the same way.

The tree is my portal to life as it should be. No need to drop out of the world, just keep the sap of wisdom flowing through my veins, and change what is damaging to something we can all share and breathe.

I told a friend about my tree and she drew one for herself and then painted another and she said it was her tree of life.

We seem to agree on one thing about our different trees. That the spark of divinity exists in them both, and when we look beyond our trees we see that spark everywhere.

I wish you the peace of being near a tree.

I am Tony McNeile, the minister to the National Unitarian Fellowship and of the Earth Spirit Network.