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Worship Associate Script for November 27, 2022

This month's theme is Remembrance, and today's particular topic is "Becoming an Ancestor." Having just passed my 77th birthday, I am now officially OLD—and therefore, close to becoming an ancestor! And so, lately, I have been thinking about my legacy and what I could say this morning. I have come to realize that my **memories** are inextricably bound with the way I have lived and the decisions I have made. So when I started out, I hoped to live a perfect-ly ordinary life—in a middle class sort of way like my parents. As Madeline Miller said, "I am made of memories."

My parents were born poor and were raised by single mothers in very uncertain times, only achieving middle class status and financial stability in their 40's. They modeled financial independence, never needing the monetary aid of their children even into old age. So far, that's my plan and my hope—to remain financially self-sufficient.

My parents also promoted the importance of education and to them, reading was paramount. They joined a book club by mail, and I remember reading *To Kill A Mockingbird* shortly after it was published in 1960. And then there was *Forever Amber*, a more salacious and delicious choice, which I tucked secretly under my bed. My parents never said a word about the books I chose, whether it was about pirates in the 6th grade, or Native Americans, or the Holocaust and the Nazis. And so I, in turn, never interfered with my son's reading choices, supporting one of my son's interest in Dungeons and Dragons because of the vast amount of reading involved in playing

the game. As adults, they both read extensively for pleasure, including sci-fi, fantasy, and history.

My parents also inculcated the desire to stick up for the underdog, to support labor, to help and encourage people who work, and to **mistrust those with money and power**. I grew up on stories about my uncles who were longshoremen before they unionized and how tough that life was. I heard about my Uncle John who illegally shot a duck in the swamps of San Pedro so he could feed his family and got a ticket he couldn't afford to pay as a result. And after my father had a heart attack at 36, and he couldn't get a job in Walla Walla, the whole family drove down to LA in the wild hope that my dad could go to the main office of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, for whom he had worked during the war, and get a job. He was desperate! They wouldn't even talk to him. Finally my mother's cousin's husband got him a job with Jewel T—in Amarillo, Texas.

My mother, too, worked variously as a hairdresser, a wig maker, a waitress, a cook in a school cafeteria, a salesclerk at a department store, a home sales representative for our tract developer in Texas, and finally a medical secretary. She was ultimately fired from that job, over the phone, just before her 60th birthday, by the doctor for whom she had worked for 20 years, claiming they had a personality conflict, when he really just wanted to disqualify her from receiving a \$10,000 retirement benefit he, mistakenly, thought she would no longer qualify for.

My job history is not so varied and uncertain because my parents gave me a leg up and sent me to college, a fact that enabled me to

become a teacher of language and literature—which I was for 32 years.

Responsibility, reliability, commitment, and trustworthiness were all hallmarks of my parents' lives and so they have been primary in my life as well. Both as a high school teacher and as a parent, I encouraged these traits in my students and my sons.

Today, my sons are loving, supportive, and committed husbands and fathers. They are financially and emotionally independent, and they take good care of themselves and their children. So I feel I have carried the baton through my generation and have successfully handed it off to the next.

I want to close with something my 16-year-old granddaughter Evelyn, who suffers mightily from anxiety, recently told my son. She said, “When I retire, I want to be like Grandma, happy, living in a nice little house, looking out at the sea, and doing whatever I want—and maybe even, I would have a dog.” I love that version, that vision of myself.