



## “Gabby and Gamez – Los Dias de los Muertos”

Rev. Greg Ward  
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### **Purpose:**

To show that death (not only physical death, but significant change) can bring about opportunity for growth as well as fear. Though we often try to cope with our fears by adopting a persona (a mask) that helps us imagine ourselves as stronger or more able, these masks can also keep us from seeing what we need to see and growing in the way we need to grow. .

### **Premise:**

The celebration of Los Dias de los Muertos, like the customs of Halloween, evolved with the influences of the Celtics, the Romans, and the Christian holy days of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. But with added influences from the Aztec people of Mexico.

### **Staging:**

The service will be in the round. There will be circular chairs and the stage will change from scene to scene. Mostly it will be very simple:

Scenes 1 and 2: Two chairs in the middle (close in scene one – across the room in scene two)

Scene 3: On a plane – have 4 rows of seats in twos. Enter from one end and find seats at another.

Scene 4: Mostly an open stage but at one end have an alter set up with lots of candles and pictures and flowers and a glass of water.

Scene 5: This scene will take some imagination. There will be a breakfast table (imagined) and a parade (imagined) and a long walk up a hillside (imagined) and a tree with two tombstones underneath (we can have the tombstones). Finally the alter from scene 4 will still be there.

### **Props:**

Butterfly mask, about 6 framed pictures, glass of water, 3 candles, bouquet of flowers, guitar pick, candies, couple oranges, skeleton cookies, colorful shirt

## MUSICAL PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP – “Let it be a Dance”

*Chorus:*

*Let it be a dance we do*

*May I have this dance with you*

*Through the good times and the bad times too*

*Let it be a dance.*

*Let a dancing song be heard*

*Play the music, say the words*

*Fill the sky with sailing birds*

*And let it be a dance, let it be a dance, let it be a dance.*

*Learn to follow, learn to lead*

*Feel the rhythm, fill the need*

*To reap the harvest, plant the seed,*

*And let it be a dance*

*Chorus again*

## STORY PART I

*(Begin by sitting in chairs about five feet apart, facing one another)*

**Storyteller:**

It was a long way to where they were going. It would take a good while to get there. And like the hardest journeys, the hardest part was in the beginning. Moving out of that place of discomfort and pain. That place that is so sad we want nothing more than to do with it but so familiar we can't imagine leaving.

**Gabby:**

“I don't understand why we have to go there!”

**Storyteller:**

Gabby said, almost screaming from across the room when her grandpa walked in. This was a fight they had been having for almost a week.

**Gabby:**

“I don't want to go. I want to stay here.”

**Storyteller:**

She stomped her feet on the ground and kept throwing her hands down in her lap. Tears streamed down her face from underneath her butterfly mask. The one she had been wearing since she heard of the trip.

Her voice was nearly horse from four days of tantrums, but she continued to look like a princess at a masquerade ball. She wore a bright butterfly mask which was, at one time, quite elaborate and decorative. Now, from years of being over-worn and occasionally slept on, it had lost some of its elegance. Still, she was as faithful to it as though it were the source of all her strength. She rarely could be found without it close at hand and wore it defiantly during the moments of particular angst and uncertainty. It was uncommon that she would allow someone else even to touch it – even if that someone was her Grandpa Gamez whom she adored. Every time he reached out to touch her face or to kiss her cheek, or sometimes even when he would lean over and say,

**Gamez:**

“I love you,”

**Storyteller:**

...she would pull away and put the mask on. No one really knew why.

The only thing that was certain was that the two of them shared a special bond. In the same way she loved her Grandpa Gamez, he loved her. He was always there for her, even now that she was nearly 12 years old. He got her up in the morning, helped her get dressed, walked her to school and was there when she got out, so that they could walk together for the ten blocks between school and home. On the way home they would talk about what happened at school, or the people he'd seen when he went to the grocery store, and what they were going to do that night. They would talk about everything. Well, almost everything. They would never talk about Roberto.

Gamez would always walk on Gabby's right side, both to and from school, which allowed them to hold hands. He always held hands with his left hand. Gabby knew enough not to try to hold his right hand. She knew that no matter how many times she reached out to take it he would carefully and patiently walk to the other side of her and reach out his left hand, grab hers, and they would walk that way. In his right hand he always held on to his guitar pick. An orange, tiger striped guitar pick. He was never without it.

Gamez had always played guitar. Since he was a little boy. He played in bands in the small village in Mexico where he grew up until the day he was discovered by important people in fancy suits who brought him to America to play on the radio. He played for many years, until Gabby came to live with him. After that, he didn't play so much anymore. But he still carried that old tiger striped guitar pick wherever he went. For the most part, Gabby and her Grandpa Gamez were very happy. Except at the moment when they weren't. It had been a week of tears since Grandpa Gamez had picked her up from school and showed her the tickets. The tickets she didn't want to see. The tickets that were for their vacation. The ones that were going to take them back to Mexico to the village where they had each grown up – forty years apart. Gabby didn't want to go back. And truth to tell, Gamez wasn't too sure either. But something in both of them was telling them it was time. For in a few days was an anniversary. And a celebration. It was the festival of Los Dias de los Muertos – the Day of the Dead.

**CHALICE LIGHTING**

**Service Leader** - *We light this chalice that we may see with honor the places from which we've come; with truth the places upon which we stand; and with vision the places to which we must go.*

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Service Leader:**

**HYMN – #95** “There is More Love, Somewhere”

**HAND OF FRIENDSHIP**

**MUSIC** – “Let it be a Dance”

*Every-body turn and spin*

*Let your body learn to bend*

*And like a willow in the wind*

*Let it be a dance, let it be a dance, let it be a dance.*

*A child is born, the old must die*

*A time for joy, a time to cry  
Take it as it passes by  
And let it be a dance*

*Chorus*

## **STORY PART II**

*(Still have an open stage with two chairs. This time they are about 15 feet apart)*

**Gabby:**

“Why do we have to go, Grandpa? Why?”

**Storyteller:**

It was now the day before they plane left for Mexico and the tantrums were coming much closer together. By now the tears had made the feathers on her butterfly mask clump together and it hung down on her face as she sat with her shoulders slumped forward and her hands wringing in her lap. She knew that this outburst – just like the twenty others before it – would be met by the same calm, stubborn response from her Grandpa Gamez. His head would fall forward. His eyes would get wider and start looking from his left shoe to his right and back. A tear might start to form. And then he would struggle to look up at her, to see her eyes from behind the mask, before he would begin stammering...

**Gamez:**

“It’s been seven years, Gabby. It’s time. There’s something there in Villa Rica. Something waiting. Something to see. And something that needs to see you. It’s been long enough. It’s not doing any good to put it off. You know that. Now why don’t you take off that mask and get ready to go. We have to leave very early in the morning.”

**Gabby:**

“I’m not taking off the mask! You can’t make me! And you can’t make me go!”

**Gamez:**

“We are leaving in the morning, baby. Mask or no mask.”

**Storyteller:**

Grandpa Gamez replied. And he shook his head as he sat down across from her.

**Gabby:**

“But why now? Why do we have to go now? Why not next month? Or for Christmas? Why do we have to go now?”

**Gamez:**

“You know, baby. This is the time of the festival. For sixty years someone from our family would always play at the festival. Now, for the last seven, no one. It’s time to go back.”

**Gabby:**

“Well, it’s a stupid festival anyway.” I don’t even know why they have such a dumb thing. Or why we have to be part of it.”

**Gamez:**

“Los Dias de los Muertos is not a stupid festival. It’s a great holiday, and we are lucky to have had it in our tradition. It’s the Day of the Dead – Mexico’s way of honoring the people who’ve have died. We did it every year, just like our ancestors did it every year for hundreds of years before us. Just like the people in the states do Halloween and the

Christian holy days of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. It's not a sad time, but a happy one. It's not a stupid holiday.

“Remember how the townspeople would dress up as ghosts and mummies and skeletons. And everyone would parade through the town carrying a big open coffin on their shoulders. And there would always be one of your uncles or cousins in the coffin smiling and waving, as they got carried through town. And everyone tossed oranges and flowers and fruit and candy into the coffin as he was carried down the street.

Remember at home we would decorate the altar by thinking of our relatives who have died and decorate it with all their favorite things: flowers and breads and fruit and candy and drinks. And we'd put out a cup of water that would symbolize the source of life. And we would take the pictures of our relatives from the walls and put them by the altar. Then, in the afternoon we'd light those special candles that would burn all night and encourage the good spirits of our relatives to come visit us

The next day everyone would go to the cemetery. And we'd bring hoes and picks and shovels. And we'd clean and weed their graves and rake the dirt smooth. Then we'd place flowers and candles around and spread out blankets and have a picnic. And the headstones would be scrubbed and the tombs swept. And then we'd take out our guitars and radios and we'd spend the whole night in the cemetery singing and eating and dancing.

Remember how you would love the chocolate skulls, the marzipan coffins, and white chocolate skeletons. And remember the special 'bread of the dead' decorated with candy bones that your Nana would make. You used to love all of that.

**Gabby:**

“But why do we have to go there? Can't we do all of that here? Can't we have our own festival at home? I don't understand! Why do we have to go back there?”

**Gamez:**

“You know why we're going, Gabby. Now why don't you go get your things together.”

**Storyteller:**

Gabby knew. She knew that even if her Grandpa had to drag her on the plane they were going. She even knew that Grandpa Gamez was a little afraid of going himself. But it wasn't going to stop them. They were going back to Villa Rica. And it had everything to do with Roberto.

So Gabby got up and straightened her dress. She wiped the tears that had been streaming down her cheeks. Then she pulled her mask down over her head and got ready to go face the place she thought she'd never have to see again.

## **JOYS AND CONCERNS**

**Service Leader:**

Now is the time in the service where the love that binds us together is spoken aloud. If you have something on your mind, that by sharing it with others might bring more strength or courage for you in the days ahead, we invite you to come forward, light a candle, tell us your name and your concern and know that we will carry you in our thoughts for the coming week.

## **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION – IMAGINING THE POWER OF OUR MASKS**

### **Service Leader:**

Let us join together in prayer.

Spirit of Life and love,

That which brings us strength to care and to carry on

Help us imagine what it is we might do to bring more strength, more courage, more love into our lives.

Help us to imagine what we can do to persevere through the difficult times.

To imagine what will help us make it even after we thought we'd lose it.

A mask that will give us superpowers

Like patience.

Like understanding.

Like the willingness to see the truth and not shrink back.

To face the hard things in our life with grace

What kinds of masks will help us with such things?

We pray for the wisdom to answer such questions

As they come to us.

Amen.

**MUSIC** – “Let it be a Dance”

*(There are 4 rows of 2 seats. Gabby and Gamez will walk into the circle, with Gamez holding onto Gabby's shoulders, and 'pass the stewardesses' and then walk up the 'aisle' to their seats.)*

### **Storyteller:**

Gamez held his hands on Gabby's shoulders as they boarded the plane. She still had on her mask which made all the flight attendants fawn over her.

### **(Storyteller in another voice):**

“Oh, what a beautiful butterfly! Will you help us fly this morning. Are you going to help us take off and find where we are going?”

But behind the mask, Gabby's eyes were sullen and a little puffy from crying and held just a tinge of resentment in them from being taken so far away from home. She didn't look up when the flight attendants knelt down in front of her and smiled.

### **Gabby:**

“No.”

### **Storyteller:**

*(Gabby imagines a stewardess speaking with her and scowls at her)*

...was all she said.

And she didn't let them touch her mask, turning away as they reached out.

### **Gamez:**

“Come on, Gabby. Let's find our seats.”

### **Storyteller:**

...was all Gamez said.

They found their seat which did little good since Gabby could hardly be kept in it. She would, at once, turn toward Gamez and plead with her eyes, then, realizing it was too late to change anything, she would turn swiftly turn her back to him and pout. And then the cycle would repeat again until it looked like she was attempting to be a slow moving, stubborn whirling dervish.

Gamez just watched her fidget, sighed, and put out his left hand for her to hold, which she took hold of, begrudgingly, and squeezed it hard. In his other hand, Gamez rubbed his thumb and forefinger along the tiger-striped guitar pick, which he held onto so tightly it appeared to be permanently bent out of shape.

Behind them, a middle aged man dressed in a bright, colorful shirt came into the cabin. He noticed Gabby turning in her seat and after he put her bags in the overhead bin, he stuck her head into the aisle and spoke softly to the young girl in the butterfly mask.

**Passenger:**

“You must be going back for Los Dias de los Muertos,”

**Storyteller:**

...he said. But Gabby did not respond... so he continued.

**Passenger:**

“What town are you headed toward?”

**Storyteller:**

...he asked. Gabby wheeled around and looked at him. She returned the man’s pleasant smile with a scowl and said nothing as she straightened herself and turned back to face forward and folded her arms in front of her.

**Gamez:**

“Villa Rica,”

**Storyteller:**

Gamez responded.

**Passenger:**

“Oh, how wonderful. That’s where I am headed as well.”

**Storyteller:**

But Gabby still didn’t respond.

**Passenger:**

“You must be excited to see the returning of the butterflies,”

**Storyteller:**

the man tried again. Gabby’s eyes opened a little wider and she turned her head halfway, not quite looking at the man, but no longer facing forward either.

**Passenger:**

“You do know about the butterflies, don’t you?”

**Storyteller:**

...he asked.

A sudden spark of recognition returned to Gabby as the man's comment registered in her memory. All at once her mind turned to flocks and flocks of butterflies flitting across the countryside. So stubbornly was she trying to forget the images of the Day of the Dead festival that she had completely blocked out the hundreds and thousands of butterflies that were so much a part of her memories. The butterflies that were so much a part of the festival and this time of year from her childhood in Villa Rica.

In her mind, Gabby remembered the butterflies and, for just an instant she saw them in mass. So many of them swirling through the air in a blanket of bright yellow over the Mexican countryside. She followed them in her mind for just a moment, before they dispersed and flew away, leaving her mind to focus on what was left. The one thing she was trying to forget: Roberto.

Roberto was Gabby's father. Roberto was also Gamez's son. It was exactly this time seven years ago, just at the beginning of the festival that he was killed in a car accident while driving to Mexico city. He was on his way to play guitar at the big festival there. After so many years of playing in the small village of Villa Rica, he had become well known and even played on the radio stations. The big festival in Mexico City is where Grandpa Gamez often went to play. But this time, wanting his son to know the thrill of playing for so many people, Gamez sent his son, Roberto, instead. But he never got there.

Gabby's mother had died when she was just a baby. She had never known her. That is why, after Roberto was killed, she went to live with Gamez.

Gabby remembered the day before her father left. They had walked up to the hillside where the big cemetery was. They had followed a large swarm of butterflies up to the top where a large grove of Oyamel fir trees stood. This is where the butterflies would roost. There were hundreds of thousands of butterflies there. That is where her father pulled, from the picnic basket they brought, a brand new, beautiful butterfly mask. Gabby did not remember why her father gave her the mask. But she loved it and she remembered feeling closer to him that day than she ever had. And the next day he was gone.

In remembering this, it suddenly became clear to Gabby why she dreaded so much the return to Villa Rica and the festival of the day of the dead. She was afraid of losing something more than she had already lost. She was afraid that if Gamez played at the festival, that something would happen to him as well. And then where would she go? That fear had been keeping her from going back. Keeping her from even wanting to think about it. And it was keeping her from remembering her father at all. And from moving forward in her life.

The man in the seat behind her continued and Gabby's memories faded.

**Passenger:**

“Every autumn Monarch Butterflies, which have summered up north in the United States and Canada, return to Mexico for the winter protection of the *oyamel* fir trees. The local inhabitants welcome back the returning butterflies, which they believe bear the spirits of their dearly departed relatives. The spirits to be honored during Los Dias de los Muertos. The Aztecs believed in an afterlife where the spirits of those who had died would return as butterflies. Even images carved in the ancient Aztec monuments show this belief - the linking of these loving spirits with the Monarch butterfly.”

**Storyteller:**



The man stopped talking and everything was silent for a minute. Something had changed for Gabby. Suddenly she wasn't as afraid as she had been. Suddenly it began to make a little more sense to her. She remembered a little more about Roberto and about the mask she wore. And why it was so important to her. And she even understood a little more about why Gamez was so insistent that they go back.

### **TOLLING OF THE BELLS**

#### **Service Leader:**

Once a year, we take time in our worship services to remember the people who have died in the recent past. The people who were dear to us for the love they showed and who remain dear to us, though we continue on without them. In a moment a bell will sound, after which, we invite you to speak the name of a loved one. After each name, we will toll the bell and in so doing, recall the spirit of those we love who we continue to carry in our hearts.

#### **READING – Kahlil Gibran**

From 'The Prophet' by Kahlil Gibran

Then Almitra spoke, saying, [would you now, tell us about death].

And he said:

You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart  
of life.

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond; and like seeds

dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.. Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden

the gate to eternity.

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose

hand is to be laid upon him in honor. Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he

shall wear the mark of the king? Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling? For what is it to

die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing,

but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountaintop, then shall you begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

## **HYMN – #8 “Mother Spirit, Father Spirit”**

### **STORY PART IV**

*(Starting with the 4 rows of two seats, Gabby and Gamez move from an open space to an imagined household where there is an altar set up at one end with pictures, candles, flowers and bread.)*

#### **Storyteller:**

By the time the plane touched down in Mexico, Gabby had fallen asleep. She awoke just long enough to grab her bags, get off the plane and watch the sun disappear over the October hillside. On the horizon she could see the golden brown fall colors separated by long streaks of sunlight. It was more beautiful than she was expecting. But her attention was seized by something else: stray butterflies. Everywhere, individual stray butterflies seemed to be streaming in from the northeast and, like her and Gamez, following the sun to the hillsides of Villa Rica. Once out of the airport, a blanket of orange and red draped briefly over the countryside until everything, even the flash of small golden wings, were hidden behind darkness. Gabby put down her suitcase long enough to pull the butterfly mask to the top of her head. As she peered out into the direction of Villa Rica, it was almost completely dark. It seemed just as mysterious as it did a few days ago. But for some reason, much of the uncertainty had left her. What lay in front of her did not feel as foreboding. It was almost as if something comforting were drawing her forward to the village. And back to everything she knew.

Once they got to the entrance of the village she knew the roads to take. She remembered the winding streets that led to her aunt’s house. She recognized the red clay roof and white stucco walls. And even the faces of aunts and uncles and cousins were familiar – if only a little older.

Gabby and Gamez were out of the car for no more than a second before they were swarmed by hugs and kisses from the many relatives that kept streaming out of the house. But all through the festivities of seeing old familiar faces, Gabby kept a hand on her butterfly mask, keeping it tied to the top of her head, while everyone around her smiled and remembered where she got it and reminded her how much she looked like her mother and father.

Indeed, Gabby did remember that she looked like her father. She had not really thought of it for the years she was away since she and Grandpa Gamez had taken down all the pictures of Roberto. But now she could see them for they were all up around the altar. Beside the bread and the candles and the cookies and the flowers and a full cup of water which was the symbol of life for the house – there was picture after picture of Roberto. Playing his guitar. With Gabby as a little girl. With her mother, Rosalina, who died shortly after Gabby was born. A picture of Gamez with the two of them on their wedding day. And a picture of Roberto – or, at least it looked like him – with someone who looked like her mother... in a beautiful dress. But it was hard to tell. Because this woman was wearing a bright, golden-feathered mask. A butterfly mask. It appeared to be the exact same mask which was fastened to the top of her head!

Gabby looked long and hard at the mask. And the woman behind it. And the picture next to it - of the same woman holding a little baby. A new mother. A woman with all the same features of an older version of herself

#### **Gamez:**

“You are every bit as beautiful as she was, Gabby,”

**Storyteller:**

...said a voice behind her. It was Gamez, who had been standing behind her watching her as she gazed, awestruck, from picture to picture.

**Gamez:**

“And your father was certain that the two of you – you and your mother - were the two most beautiful women in the world. He sometimes joked that he wanted you each to wear a mask so that no one could see how beautiful you both were. So that no one would try to win your hearts away from him. But he knew that you both loved him too much to stray. He actually gave you the mask for different reason. A more important reason.

**Gabby:**

“What was that, Grandpa Gamez?”

**Storyteller:**

Gabby asked.

**Gabby:**

“Why did he give Mama the mask? And then give it to me after she died?”

**Gamez:**

“You will find out. But not tonight. You have had enough for one day. I will tell you tomorrow.”

**Storyteller:**

And he took her hand and helped tuck her into bed.

**OFFERTORY**

**Service Leader:**

There are many ways that we give. But it is important to each of us that we do. That we are able, over time, to see that we are givers of what we have to all we love. That we contribute to well being of those around us. Though we are not always able to say what will be made of our gifts, it is important that we are generous – with out time, our talents and our money. We will now receive this morning’s offering for the work of the church within and beyond our walls.

**THANKSGIVING**

**Service Leader:**

For the work of this church, which is weaving a tapestry of love with our lives, we give thanks for this offering, and for the people who make it possible.

**OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

*We sing now together in joyful thanksgiving,  
acclaiming creation whose bounty we share.  
Both sorrow and gladness we find now in our living  
we sing a hymn of praise for the life that we bear.*

**MUSIC – “Let it be a Dance”**

Let a dancing song be heard  
Play the music, say the words  
Fill the sky with sailing birds  
And let it be a dance, let it be a dance, let it be a dance.  
Learn to follow, learn to lead  
Feel the rhythm, fill the need  
To reap the harvest, plant the seed,

And let it be a dance  
Chorus  
STORY EPILOGUE

*(Here the set up is open in the middle with an imagined table in the east side of the circle, a parade on the Westside, a tombstone on the northside and the alter, where it was, on the southside.)*

**Storyteller:**

The squeals of the children. The music out on the street. The smell of bread from the oven. No one could sleep. No one wanted to. Today was los dias de los muertos – the day of the dead.

None of the other children – and hardly any of the adults – could stay at the breakfast table any longer than they had to. A couple of pieces of warm bread with homemade jam and they were hurrying out the door. It was almost time for the parade. And as they all ran out of the house, Gabby quickly grabbed her butterfly mask and followed behind them.

Far down the hill, coming up with great noise of singing and dancing were hundreds of people dressed in colorful costumes. There were goblins and ghouls and ghosts of all sorts. There were dancing skeletons in sticks and people throwing candy to the crowds. There were people playing guitars and horns of all sorts. And there, in the back of it all, were a bunch of men carrying a large coffin on top of their shoulders.

As it got closer, Gabby squeezed her way to the front of the crowd. One of her cousins had given her an orange to try and toss into the coffin as it passed by and she wanted to get as close as she could to have a good shot. She could see, as it approached, that there was a man in the box, and he was smiling and waving. He had on a brightly colored shirt and he tried, frantically, to catch all the candy and fruit that was flying through the air.

Just as he passed right in front of Gabby she noticed something odd. It was the same man who had sat behind her on the plane. When he saw her, he stopped for a second. Then he reached down and pulled out, from the bottom of the coffin, a bright, golden-feathered butterfly mask. And he pulled it over his face. The crowd roared with laughter. Gabby stood there with her mouth hung open. So startled was she that she forgot to toss her orange. He waved at her as he passed and she, surprised and mystified, waved back.

Later in the day, everyone had grabbed their hoes and rakes and spades and set out to go to the cemetery. This was the part that Gabby was most unsure of. She had let Grandpa Gamez go ahead of her while she strayed behind with some of her cousins. And after a while she lingered so long that she was sitting by herself a few hundred yards from everyone else, who were already busy at work in the cemetery.

Then someone shrieked. And another. And she looked ahead and saw everyone running to the gate. They were all pointing at her. Or in her direction. She looked down on the ground and saw a large shadow creeping up to her. She couldn't tell what it was until she looked around to see the biggest – and most beautiful – flock of butterflies she had ever seen. There were hundreds! Thousands! Enough butterflies to almost fill the horizon and they were all headed to the groves surrounding the cemetery.

As they passed by she followed on behind them. Trying to catch up, trying to join them, she put her butterfly mask over her face and ran and ran. But, with the mask on, she couldn't see as well where she was going and kept having to lift it off her face to steer in the right direction. With only half her vision, she stumbled through the gates of the

cemetery and over to the farthest tree which hung over the rod iron gate. There, in that furthest tree, all the butterflies were roosting in the branches above. She looked up and she couldn't see any leaves at all. Just wings fluttering back and forth in the sun. So many she couldn't believe. She took off her mask and marveled. There must have been millions.

What an amazing place, she thought. Home of the butterflies. She looked down under the tree and noticed that there were two headstones. The rest of the graves were almost completely over on the other side of the cemetery. But these were away from the others, right under the butterflies. Or the butterflies were right over them. Either way Gabby walked over and felt her breath leave for a minute. There on the stones were the names, Roberto Gonzalez and Rosalina Gonzalez.

Gabby stood there for a moment until she felt a hand on her shoulder. A hand which slid down and took her own hand. It was Gamez.

**Gamez:**

“That’s what I was going to tell you. The mask wasn’t supposed to keep people from noticing how beautiful you are. The mask was given to you by your father so that if you ever felt lost - or unhappy, or without people who loved you – you would always be able to turn yourself into a butterfly and join in their return to this spot. For he knew they would always return you to this place. To where your mother was. To where he turned. To a place where he knew people loved you. And where you could feel at home.”

**Storyteller:**

Gabby was smiling and crying at the same time. She looked down, through the tears and noticed that she was holding onto Gamez’ right hand. And she looked up at him, surprised.

**Gamez:**

“I decided that I didn’t need that old guitar pick any more. Holding on to it was just keeping me from doing some of the more important things.”

**Storyteller:**

It was then that they looked over a few hundred feet from them was the man with the brightly colored shirt. The man who was in the coffin for the parade. He was cleaning a cluster of graves and decorating them with flowers. Gamez reached down and picked up the spade and the rake and the hoe he had brought. A bundle of flowers lay next to them. He handed the spade to Gabby and they got to work.

They spent the next few hours cleaning up the graves of Roberto and Rosalina under that oyemall tree. Then they laid out the flowers. And Gamez played the guitar. But when it came time to dance, Gabby said she would rather wait.

Later, when they arrived back at the house, they sat next to the alter, where, after a few minutes of thought, Gabby took the mask from her head and put it on the alter. She placed it next to a tiger stripped guitar pick engraved with the name, ‘Roberto’.

**Gabby:**

“I don’t think I need this anymore.”

**Storyteller:**

...she said of the mask.

**Gabby:**

“It’s keeping me from being able to chase the butterflies properly.”

**Gamez:**

“And keeping other people from seeing how beautiful you are,”

**Storyteller:**

Gamez replied as he touched her face. And they looked down, next to wear the mask and the guitar pick now lay, and noticed that the glass of water was only half full. And they also noticed how much more life there seemed to be in the room. And Gamez stood up, reached out his right hand, and asked Gabby if she was ready to dance. And they did.

**HYMN – #311 “Let it be a Dance”**

**PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION – RE-IMAGINING OUR MASKS**

**Service Leader:**

Spirit of life and love

Thou who knows love

And knows death

Help us to remember that Love is stronger than death

That death is simply change

Which can close the doors of our heart to love

But never kill Love entirely.

Help us remove those things we use to protect ourselves

But end up blinding us to what we need to see in order to grow.

Help us remember that after touching the river of silence we will still be able to sing.

After reaching the mountaintop, we shall still be able to climb.

And that after death claims the limbs of those we love, they still have the power to help us dance.

Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

**GO IN PEACE**

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**OUR PARTICIPANTS**

**Gerry Donnelly, Bob Gerold, Marc Levitt, Pam Levitt, Valerie Levitt, William Levitt, Emma Mulvaney, Maeve Mulvaney, Terra Shute, Sami VandenLangenberg, Kate Wolverton, and the children of UUCP**