

## One Common Interest--Message for 12 July 2015

Greeting: Dear Friends--Every time we worship here at Poplar Ridge, and whenever we look deep to the Light in ourselves and in others, we connect to all our brother and sister communities who all shine with similar Light. Just six degrees link us to all directly, and many of us are thinking of our own connections to many outside this room. Today we are aware of a more direct connection with those we know who are in San Pedro, El Salvador. We will sing a bit in Spanish, both mindful of those there and of our Spanish-speaking neighbors here who attend meeting in this room some Thursdays.

First Hymn, no. 284 in the green book "Cuando El Pobre" with the first verse in Spanish, and then all four English verses.

**John Woolman** wrote in "A Plea for the Poor" in 1763: Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all creatures. Tender mercies are over all works; and so far as Love influences our minds, so far we become interested in the Creator's work and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable—that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

From **Lamentations 3**: I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord." I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for one to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For all are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of mankind.

**John Courneidge** wrote in the British publication *The Friend* in 1998: Poverty will persist and deepen while the present economic system continues, however much it is manipulated. Through the mechanisms of rent, dividend and interest, the work of the poor currently accumulates in the bank accounts of the rich—to the physical hurt of the poor, and the spiritual hurt of the wealthy. And, moreover, the present system keeps us all in insecurity.

The word economics derives from the Greek, *oikonomos*, for which the best translation seems 'care of the household', and this translation gives us new light. A new economics based, not on these mechanisms of exploitation and violence, but on the collected values of friendship and love, would serve us all well—the currently rich and poor alike.

The time has come, Friends, when we must witness for money to be a public service rather than a public menace. It is time for us to speak out, in love, to put money in its proper place here in this part of God's house, this Earth.

2<sup>nd</sup> hymn "Not Only Acts of Evil Will" no. 289 in the green book.

## Joys and Concerns

Dear Friends—We pray today in one common interest with all in El Salvador, in Greece, in Iran, in South Carolina, in our lovely Finger Lakes, and in our hearts. Let everyone know convincingly that God still goes that road with us, let us believe it ourselves and for those who make up our hearts. Lighten the heaviness of empty hearts by filling them. Let us truly live the gospel we proclaim by approaching all with intention, seeking and seeing the connection of universal love, of daring, deep, determined love. Let us act on that love and in those intentions whenever we are able. Let us be blessings to each other. Amen.

Third hymn is no. 256 “Enviado Soy de Dios” in the green book. We will sing once in Spanish and once in English—note that the first line is repeated.

Children are free to head downstairs in community of youth.

Message:

Dear Friends—The news lately seems transforming. A Latin American pope visiting Latin America speaking truths about global systems, preaching in prisons, honoring indigenous survivors, while we carry out our own visits and hospitality to neighbors here and in San Pedro, and in our nearby prisons. The nation of democracy’s birth defying debt, cruel austerity, and the dictates of finance in solidarity by vote, if not by final result, just as we here resist the corporate power that seeks by finance and contract to store their liquid greed beneath precious waters. The long suffering faithful of South Carolina, who like the long-suffering in our reading from Lamentations, by their sacred act of forgiving love were not forgotten in their

great faithfulness, but inspired the capitulation of a prideful public symbol of hate, just as we face the same symbol now on 34B and in the signs denying the instantiation of the Cayuga nation. The national extension of the Constitution's equal protection for the families of all, which Craig and I celebrated with many others this past Thursday in Ithaca. Yes, transformations both newsworthy and here at home, many to be celebrated, things many thought could not happen in their lifetimes.

But living in the Light is not about events, as important as those events may be. When we listen to the promptings of love it is a constant call. We do not visit a sister community only once, nor think that all justice has been achieved when one hurt is removed. The signs and wonders of recent days let hope and strength within us rise, but that arc of the universe is long as it bends towards justice. We are blessed when we see that curve, that far and subtle horizon. Our faithfulness is not to causes or history or to struggles with systems, but to the sacred Truth as we can discern it. That is our one common interest with all of creation.

A friend of mine in graduate school, an international student from Spain who shared many of my social justice passions and commitments at the time, approached me once about my faith. He noted to me that though he himself was not religious, it was evident to him over the years that those activists who stayed in the struggle, who did not seem to burn out like others, were those who had a religious faith. When justice and peace seem far away, as is noted in Lamentations 3, it is because of great love that we are not consumed. As Woolman noted, Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable—that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

It is such an interesting choice of words that Woolman makes in the phrase “the business of our lives” as in the everyday concerns, the orderly pursuits. All of our hymns today speak of that injunction, that common pursuit of love and connection, not only to purses and chocolate and coffee in the back of the room, though Woolman certainly knew the power of the products of commerce in his testimony, but to the people, the creation, this part of God’s house, this Earth.

There are rules and conventions, common accepted practices of traditional symbols and ideas of heritage, or trade and labor relations, or business and loan practices, or families and legal relationships. The Light within, the still small voice, the tremendous force of Truth and the sacred, demand that we view these all in a balance with universal love and weigh them with and in our hearts in one common interest.

Worship

Closing Hymn: no. 291 “O Holy City, Seen of John” green book

Closing: Dear Friends—The signs and wonders, the holy city, the daily faithful call of all to each and each to all that brings us to the one common interest in universal love—tune our ears and position our hearts so that it becomes the business of our lives in this meeting house, in El Salvador, and in the world.

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts

Postlude