

Greeting: "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry.

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Our first hymn is the first hymn in the Blue Book, #1, "Dearly Beloved Friends" which is sort of the overarching "advice" in reference to the traditional Quaker Advices and Queries about our lives and actions. You can see the quote from 1656 in the fine print at the top of the page. We can give each other advice and support, but in every case, the unique and profound advice and support for each of us comes to each directly from the Spirit.

Our first reading is Psalm 146: "Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord, O my soul.
I will praise the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
Do not put your trust in leaders, in mortals, who cannot save.
When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that
very day their plans come to nothing.
Blessed are they whose help is the God of Jacob, Leah, and
Rachel, whose hope is in the Lord their God,

The maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them—the Lord who remains faithful forever.
God upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind,
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but God frustrates the ways of the wicked.
The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord.”

The second reading I have for today is Walt Whitman’s poem “Reconciliation”:

“Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time
be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly
softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I
draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in
the coffin.”

And finally, a reading from Rumi, remembering that the rose is a desert flower with origins in ancient Persia, modern Iran:

“Come, come,
The roses are in bloom!
Come, come,
The Beloved has arrived!

Now is the time to unite

the soul and the world.
Now is the time to see the sunlight
dancing as one with the shadows.

Laugh at those faithless men
who boast with loud voices.
Weep for that friend
who has turned away from the Friend.

The whole city is trembling with fear
now that the madman
has broken from his chains.

What a day!
What a day!
A day of upheaval!
A day of revolt!
Perhaps the scroll
that records every deed
is falling from the sky!

Beat the drum,
Speak no more—
The heart has gone,
The mind has gone,
The soul, too, has gone
to the Beloved.

The seeds of His love blossom in every heart.
The sounds of His flute fill every celebration.
Everyone thinks that they sing and dance
But no—
He is the only one singing,
She is the only one dancing.”

Our 2nd hymn is “Let There be Light” no. 255 in the red book.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—May the joys we find around us sustain us in the times of concern. May each spill into the other to balance and fill our cup of life. It is ultimately a sacred cup, our cup of life, a divine and mystical encounter with all that is. In the midst of the chaos we see, let us find comfort. Let us not be paralyzed nor despondent, nor find ourselves overwhelmed in a season of intense and disturbing news at home and abroad. Keep the images and words of violence, so pervasive now around us, always answered in the context of Light. Help us reserve and preserve the space in our hearts that can face the demons and not despair. Keep us acting and thinking in love, with responsible attention to the world, but even deeper spiritual focus on the truly essential. Amen

Our third hymn is green book No. 301, “Peace Prayer”.

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other, to nurture each other in lessons and play in community.

Message: Dear Friends—I was in a meeting at Cornell on Friday when one of the Associate Deans at the meeting just burst into tears and said that she is completely overwhelmed. As a woman of color with family members serving as police officers in Baton Rouge and a six-month old baby at home, the news is too much, it seems the world is too much with us these days. This soiled world. It needs the cleansing purity of Light.

I have not seen any of the video coverage of Nice or Turkey, of Dallas or Miami, of Baton Rouge or Minneapolis. I am not

avoiding the news—I know all about the incidents—but I know my own level of tolerance for such images. As an activist for justice and peace with FCNL, I value clarity and balance and prayerful consideration. I know that the cameras played an important role in the testimony for peace in Viet Nam, and they are playing an important role now. Yes, let us face important realities, and some of us need the images to fully understand or act on the situations. But overwhelming doses of fear and horror and suffering can block out Light. Constant exaggerated and extreme speech can obscure the Light. This is why we worship in expectant waiting on the Spirit with minds and hearts that must be clear for that encounter. These are sobering and serious times for our world—let us know that, and stay clearly connected to the needs of the world and the messages of the inner Truth. We ourselves are the connectors for our world in these times. We are the instruments of peace, we are the channels of love, we are the reconciliation, we are the consolation. We do that in many ways.

I get involved in primarily public political and social actions, as does our collective meeting, while Craig, my husband, gets involved primarily in serving individual personal needs, as does our collective meeting—while I'm working with FCNL, he is working with hospice. And we both support our work, the work that fits us individually and collectively, with our encounters with Light, both answering that of God in all whom we meet in the world, but also answering that of God in ourselves as it is revealed. It is the same Light, seen with different lenses and it is the same world, served through different talents. It is all of our differences that, shared, make the experience, the reality, more complete.

I like the notes to the Peace Prayer hymn we just sang, where the first verse is to be sung in unison, but is written with the

word “me” and the second verse is to be sung in harmony, with folks on different parts, but is written with the word “us”. Always a balance. That same balance is in the beautiful words of our second hymn, “Let There be Light” and Rumi’s depiction of the day of upheaval and revolt surrounded by the blooming rose and the sacred music.

The Religious Society of Friends emerged at a chaotic time of the Reformation and the English civil war from a group of people who were seekers, trying to make meaning from it all. In a way, it is a practice of complexity, of recognizing that every incarnation of human life is both unique and also profoundly connected. Our experience of the divine, of the sacred, cannot be adequately described, is mystical, and has a collective wholeness that may never be fully experienced by any one person. And yet every one person has full access to God, has that of God within, the same, and yet manifested in the individual context in unique ways. The patterns and examples that we may be for one another, are the outward glimmers of the inner light.

We are tempted to think of our time and this present as more dire or more demanding than other times. It may simply be that we are now more connected to the wide range of experience in the many facets of human situations. Times we might have regarded as locally settled or calm, were not so in other parts of the world, or personally for other individuals. Our simple and complex work is to tread that way of our life’s journey on the balance between this world and our time and the eternal oneness. The enemies of Spirit we might perceive are humans as divine as ourselves. We strive for that reconciliation while grounded in that of God, and while insisting on firmness in the right, as God grants us to see the right.

I believe the testimony of simplicity is the call for us not to clutter our path on an already complex way. As I already stated, these are sobering and serious times for our world—let us know that, and stay clearly connected to the needs of the world and the messages of the inner Truth. We ourselves are the connectors for our world in these times. We are the instruments of peace, we are the channels of love, we are the reconciliation, we are the consolation.

Worship

The final hymn is number 333 in the Green book, “Go Cheerfully!”

Closing: In this soiled world:

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and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts