

Greeting: "**The Work That Reconnects: 5 Vows** developed by Joanna Macy.

I vow to myself and to each of you:

To commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.

To live on Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products, and energy I consume.

To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth, the ancestors, the future beings, and my brothers and sisters of all species.

To support others in their work for the world and to ask for help when I feel the need.

To pursue a daily spiritual practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart, and supports me in observing these vows.

Our first hymn is #243 from the Green book, "Love Will Guide Us"

Our first reading is from the Gospel of Thomas in the Nag Hamadi readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is written in the style of the sayings of Jesus: "Jesus said, 'If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the children of the living God. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.'"

Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where did you come from?', say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord and established itself and became manifest through their image.' If they say to you, 'Is it you?', say, 'We are its children, we are the elect of the living God.' If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your God in you?', say to them, 'It is movement and repose.'"

Jesus said, "It is I who am the light which is above them all. It is I who am the all. From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

The second reading is from the writings of George Fox in November 1663 during the time of much persecution. "Sing and rejoice ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt; and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth."

Finally, a reading from the Britain Yearly Meeting Industry and Social Order Conference of 1958: "Incomparably the most important thing is that each one of us should be sensitive to the call of God to ourselves and not spend time in passing judgment on the lives of others. To some the call will be to adopt the witness of great simplicity, perhaps to live in an Indian village or a London slum. To others the most important thing will be to maintain our ancient testimony against the fightings with outward weapons for any end, or under any pretence whatever. But perhaps most will be called to the humdrum tasks of serving an employer supremely well, or running a house, bringing up a family, keeping the peace with difficult neighbors, serving the community in little things—

the tasks which, because they are simple, are in fact most difficult to do with dedication... Our duty is to be sensitive to what God is asking us to do, and not to dissipate our energies trying to be absolutists in several directions at once.”

Our second hymn is no. 203 in the Green book “There are Angels Hovering Round”.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Let us live in active hope, open to and ready for the transformation that God’s presence in our daily lives constantly provides. The Light and the All are with us, hovering around, in those who journey with us in life and when we are alone. Even when we perceive that thick night of darkness, let us also perceive the Lord at work, let us be part of that work in the world, valiant for Truth. Let us both provide and be given comfort as and when it is needed, and to inspire and be inspired with the quiet force of Spirit. Help us to know that we are all necessary parts of the whole. Bring us to the Truth that love and hope are found in many persons in many ways. Let us be the finders and the found. Amen.

Our next hymn is “Pass It On” on the handout.

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

Message:

I opened with a set of affirmations, commitments, or vows as Joanna Macy, their writer, calls them. She is a very inspiring, world-renowned teacher, scholar, activist, and long-time pioneer of Engaged Buddhism and Deep Ecology. The week before last I was in a workshop at a camp on Lake Huron based on the Active Hope concept that Joanna Macy calls the work that reconnects. We

explored the idea of our radical interconnectedness with all being, which is the central teaching of the Buddha, and sought to discover how this radical opening can brighten our lives and bring us courage and solidarity for healing our world. But the workshop also challenged us to honor our pain and face our grief about the current state of the world, about our fears for the world. When I returned here, I found that our men's spirituality group was planning to discuss our thoughts on the future this past Tuesday. That evening I observed that we had been invited to go all the way to the edge and look over—which can be a sober and frightening view. The only thing to do then in the face of fearsome prospects is to turn and love those around you. If we are indeed at another Great Turning of society like the one encountered at the start of Quakerism with the emergence of Protestant capitalism, we must stay close to the fundamentals, to the source, to the heart.

Some of you may know the term 'the Great Turning' as a metaphor for fundamental social change. When a large round thing turns, it is out at the perimeter that one is thrown the fastest and the farthest, while staying close to the axis provides the steadiest and most stable ride through the turn. Mark Link, a Jesuit writer of the late twentieth century who died this year saw Christ as the Still Point of the turning world, of the changing world. In the Book of Thomas, rather than looking all around for guidance, the words of Jesus call us to look within, to the Light. The message from Britain Yearly Meeting in 1958 advises us to attend to ourselves and not spend time judging the calling or behavior of others. There are many ways to be faithful, and the important thing is actually to be faithful to that still small voice, to the Light within us.

That is what we pass on—for once we live in light and love, we spread a possible life in light and love for those around us. The song "Pass It On" was a popular one from my youth, sung at many a camp fire. And so, it came back to me this week after a week at camp with friends old and new. Craig and I have gone back to this

particular camp for about fifteen years, and a number of the friends we have from that group we have known even longer, since they were the ones who brought us into the camp. At any rate, that sense of old friends, of old home, of reconvening with those you know deeply and well is an important sense in troubled times. That is what we try to be to each other in our meeting. A still point in a turning world, a place of recognition, where no one is a stranger. It is what we find in collective practice—that we are faithful friends among a tradition of hundreds of years of faithful friends, grounded in this place and in this practice. One comment from many who attend their first Quaker meeting is that it felt like coming home.

It is particularly interesting that what seems like something based on the repetitive and the familiar can be so transforming and can actually provide the ground for active hope, for transformative work. In the novel *Hannah Coulter*, Wendell Berry refers to a close group in a rural place who rely on each other in a tender reference as “the membership”. This past month we visited my parents in the place where I grew up and saw many other family members and old friends, I also attended a memorial service for the mother of an old high school friend whose entire family I have known well over the years, and we also went to that camp, and here we are back in this dear meeting. The return to loving circles, to those places where we are known and where we know is an outer manifestation of the comfort in the constant return to the Light. To knowing that we are of a membership, and to be part of making it clear to those around us that they are in the membership, too, that it is a membership without exclusion, because it is of the Light and of the All. This is what our active hope is built upon.

Change is the measure of time. The big hand and the little hand. The planets and stars in motion. The elegiac beauty of growing and aging in all living things and even in the objects that erode in the frictions of wind and rain, fade in the sun, or melt in protected

or neglected soil. It can be swift or slow, and we seem to be in a time where stakes are higher and change is faster for us. But not for the Light, nor for the All. Not for the membership, nor for love, nor in the Light. In our own transformations, internal and external, in movement or repose, let us move toward that Light and build an active and tangible hope. “Sing and rejoice ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt; and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth.”

Our closing hymn is number 253 in the Green book, “Walk in the Light”

Closing: Let us commit ourselves *daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.*

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To support others in their work for the world and to ask for help when we feel the need.

To pursue daily spiritual practices that clarify our minds, strengthen our hearts, and support us in observing these commitments.

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