

The Persian Sufi mystical poet Hafiz wrote: “I am a hole in a flute that the Christ’s breath moves through—listen to this music. I am the concert from the mouth of every creature singing with the myriad chorus. I am a hole in a flute that the Christ’s breath moves through—listen to this music.”

1st hymn: green book #237, “When in Our Music God is Glorified”

Our first readings come from prayers written for the contemporary Poor Peoples Campaign, a national call for moral revival led by Rev. William Barber II of North Carolina:

Creator of All (to whom you hold sacred) we give thanks to the source of life that connects all of us as brothers and sisters that you created out of the sanctity of love. Guide us in creating a world beyond a consciousness of war against humanity that is of profit/greed and power/fear/genocide based over the care of humanity and planet. Show us the way to make reparations with those we have violated and to bring forth healing and just, peaceful resolutions that we will honor. Open our eyes to see you in everyone and for all of us, especially those in government (and all those who vote) to gain moral clarity on militarism and the economic system that perpetuates all corrupt, unjust, non-humanitarian policies and practices within our current social construct. Creator, lead us from a world of violence and death to a world of sacred love and life. Amen, and a second prayer:

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;

a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, Lord. Amen.

And from the Bible these important verses in Samuel and Psalms:
"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor." 1 Samuel 2:8 ~ "The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." Psalm 9:9~ " Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise, says the LORD, I will protect them from those who malign them. " Psalm 12:5 ~ "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Psalm 82:3-4 ~ "I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy." Psalm 140:12

Rumi, another Sufi mystic like Hafez, from a century before him, whom Hafiz studied and valued, wrote: *Only Breath*

Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu
Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion

or cultural system. I am not from the East
or the West, not out of the ocean or up

from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not
composed of elements at all. I do not exist,

am not an entity in this world or in the next,
did not descend from Adam and Eve or any

origin story. My place is placeless, a trace
of the traceless. Neither body or soul.

I belong to the beloved, have seen the two
worlds as one and that one call to and know,

first, last, outer, inner, only that
breath breathing human being.

Second hymn green #25 “Almighty Creator on Earth and Above”

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—At this time of high blessing at the end of the holy month of Ramadhan on Tuesday evening, we join with all who call for the blessings of God, all of our common people of the book. The blessings we seek are for the most vulnerable and for our own insight and renewed moral commitment to this world, to each other, to love. Make us instruments of peace and blessing as we hope to be ready for Christ’s breath to elicit the music of all singing, the harmony that comes from the breath of life in us, in others, in this world, in the beyond. Our joys and concerns may be particular to this place and this life and this congregation, but our hopes and aspirations, the light we seek and know, goes far beyond, and heals the many corners of this universe and these times. Be with us in our love and light, raise us higher, move us beyond difference to the oneness of all. Amen.

Our third hymn is Green book #22 “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other.

Message: Dear Friends—we opened with a beautiful quote from Hafiz, a Persian poet of the 1300s who was Ralph Waldo Emerson’s favorite poet. Emerson said of Hafiz: "He fears nothing. He sees too far, he sees throughout; such is the only man I wish to see or be. Hafiz is a poet for poets." Goethe felt similarly and both he and Emerson did translations of Hafiz’s work. Brahms

set his poetry to music, Arthur Conan Doyle has Sherlock Holmes quote him, and Queen Victoria found solace in his writing. Seeking the advice found in his poetry, guidance for the soul, is a tradition in Persia, Iran, to this day. His ecumenical love has him invoking Christ even as we live in a narrow time of threatening his faith and his homeland. "I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through—listen to this music".

*Once a young woman came to Hafiz and said,
"What is the sign of someone knowing God?"
And Hafiz became very quiet, and stood in silence
for nearly a minute... lovingly looking deep into the
young woman's eye, then softly spoke,
"My dear, they have dropped the knife. The person
who knows God has dropped the cruel knife most
so often use upon their tender self – and others."*

His wisdom is to see that cruelty and violence begin with the self and towards the self, and that forgiveness and love also begin first with the self. Let us drop the knife, the judgment, the critical voice in order to know God. In our own time we have prophets, both among ourselves here at Poplar Ridge, as well as in our larger culture. One of those is Rev. William Barber II, who led the Moral Mondays movement in North Carolina and now is active nationwide in the Poor People's Campaign. This activist organizing of people of faith for social justice is grounded in reflection, just as the month of Ramadhan, and emphasizes the cause of the poor, a major tenet of Islam. As we relate these truths to our faith and lives, so the great Muslim Sufi poets of the 13th and 14th centuries, Rumi and Hafiz, wrote of the truths of Christ. In them and so many others, the many paths and metaphors of the inner light are both distinctive and converge.

As Quakers, we are exhorted to let our lives speak, to reflect our faith and convictions in our actions, and this also implies that we

should be ready to recognize, see, and understand and value the ways that the lives of others are speaking as well. We not only let our lives speak, but let our hearts hear the lives of others. The moral demands and imperatives and hopes and dreams of the many of the earth are not just speaking in the language of the Religious Society of Friends, but in the many faiths and convictions and realities and moralities found in all places and cultures. At the time of this most important holiday of the Islamic calendar, the celebration of Idd at the end of Ramadhan, we want to catch the mutual blessings and the joy and the obligations of service.

Idd al-Fitr often lasts a few days and is a time of family gatherings and gifts for children, wearing one's best clothes and putting up lights at home, a big family meal, and a celebration of peace on earth and good will towards all. One is supposed to forgive on Idd, especially old grudges, and to make donations for the poor and to share, as well as send greeting cards and express thanks. For those of us with a Christian background, there are many things about it that sound familiar, including a month of anticipation leading up to it in Advent for Christians and Ramadhan for Muslims. This week, the anticipated day is coming! A few years ago, I attended a conference that included an Iftar breaking of fast for all attendees, and then the sharing of family stories from several Muslim participants. It was great to learn of our common heritage. We live in a time where it is important to find those links with our neighbors, with the immigrant, the refugee, the poor.

We also profit by looking for the morality, for our responsibility in a time when it is easy to become cynical and to critique and condemn, rather than build and act. Rather than lamenting about what is lost or what is going wrong, we are called by this world to respond, to expand the scope of love, to enact the moral. One such testimony is seen in the Poor Peoples Campaign, though there are many others to inspire us, to unite us, to be found in the many traditions and interpretations of this mysterious life that is ours for

a time, that makes us God's for now and forever, that dwells in the sacred that is found most, both here and among the least, in the world and in our eternal hearts, in Light.

Closing hymn is green #255 "Valiant for the Truth"

Rumi also wrote:

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.

Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.

Don't go back to sleep.