

Spring Vesper Service

April 22, 2021

Musical Meditations - Instrumental medley of some or all of:

"All Things Bright a Beautiful" - #177 VT

"Abide With Me" - #502 VT

Intro & Prayers of Invitation: 5 minutes

"Veni Sancte Spiritus" - #298 HWB

Reflective Readings on Spring: 5 minutes

"O Blessed Spring" - #522 VT

Reflective Readings on Spring: 5 minutes

"Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory" - #504 VT

Prayers of the Community (interspersed with "O Lord, Hear My Prayer"
#685 VT)

Song of Response to the Prayers of the Community

"Nothing Can Trouble" - 604 VT, with English Taizé translation

Reflective Readings on the Close of Day: 5 minutes

Sending Hymn - "Now, on Land and Sea Descending"
(VESPER HYMN) - #503 VT

Benediction

Introduction

My name is Patrick Preheim, co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite Church. On behalf of Nutana Park Mennonite I extend a warm welcome to those who are gathering this evening virtually for an evening worship service which will include readings and music reflecting creation, the rhythms of the seasons, and the close of day. The idea for this evening emerged from several conversations with a few who grew up in this congregation and now find themselves living, studying, or working away from Saskatoon. They, like all of us, are sensitive to the needs of connecting amidst the guidelines of isolation and physical distancing. Earth Day, April 22nd, seemed an appropriate day to offer spiritual readings which speak to the good creation which God has brought into being.

Vesper and Evensong services are not a part of this congregation's tradition, or Mennonite communities more broadly, but there can be something quite moving about linking the close of day with a spiritual openness to our God who abides with us and watches over us through the morning, day, evening and night.

I would like to thank those who are assisting with the service this evening: Jeff Olfert and Don Froese at the a.v. posts, Stephanie Epp who is assisting with the readings, and Lynn Driedger who is leading us in music. We are also grateful to the many First nations and Indigenous communities which have stewarded this land for centuries and with whom we are community as we together live and worship in Treaty 6 territory. May Creator bless us as seek reconciliation among peoples and creation itself. Let us pray.

- Welcome to the service
- A brief history of Vespers
- Thank you to those contributing to th3 evening service

Calls to worship

O gracious Light, pure brightness of the everlasting God in heaven,
 Now as we come to the setting of the sun
 and our eyes behold the vesper light,
 we sing your praises, O Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy
 Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised...and to be glorified through
 all the worlds. Let our prayers be set forth in your sight as incense, the
 lifting up of our hearts and hands as the evening sacrifice.

- *Book of Common Prayer* from the Evening Prayer II section, adapted.

Richard Wagamese

There are motions of the heart that occur only in quiet rooms, in the
 splendour of solitude where nothing and everything exists at the same time.
 Being and becoming have the confluence in these moments of touching
 your essence. You feel yourself a part of the great wheel of creative,
 nurturing, loving, benevolent energy that is spinning around us all the time.
 This is what it means to be spiritual—to feel your spirit moving. Take to
 quiet places, then. Immerse yourself in them. Feel your energy merge with
 that timeless, eternal energy and be made more.

- Richard Wagamese in *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*, p. 30.

A Celtic Prayer

Stream of Knowledge, you have filled me with many experiences this
 Spring day till I am overflowing; now I enter the pool of your quiet
 patience— *sacred silence*— Refreshing my being in the living waters of
 universal love, I turn to consider the loving light that illumines the mystery
 of the night.

- Caitlin Matthews, *Celtic Devotional: Daily Prayers & Blessings*, p. 57

Richard Wagamese

ME: I've been waiting for messages from Creator.

OLD WOMAN: They always come. But waiting is not seeing. Expecting is not feeling. Demanding is not hearing.

ME: I didn't get it.

OLD WOMAN: I know. But those clouds are Creator's handwriting. That wolf track in the mud is Creator's touch. Those birds singing in the trees are Creator's voice. A drum beating or your own heart is Creator's Morse code. Children and elders and life itself are Creator's exclamation marks.

ME: I started to get the message after that.

- Richard Wagamese in *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*, p. 91.

Song: "Veni Sancte Spiritus" #298 HWB

Reflective Readings on Spring
Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

- "Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver in *Good Poems* (Garrison Keillor), p.222.

“When I Returned From Rome” by St. Francis of Assisi

A
bird took flight.
And a flower in a field whistled at me
as I passed.

I drank
from a stream of clear waters.
And at night sky untied her hair and I fell asleep
clutching a tress
of God's.

When I returned from Rome, all said,
“Tell us the great news,”

and with great excitement I did: “A flower in a field whistled,
and at night the sky untied her hair and
I fell asleep clutching a
Sacred tress...”

“When I Returned From Rome” by St. Francis of Assisi in *Love Poems From God*, p.32

“Lost” by David Wagoner

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here.
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you.
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

- in *Good Poems* (Garrison Keillor), p.219.

Richard Wagamese

In this stillness, I am the trees alive with singing. I am the sky everywhere
at once. I am the snow and the wind bearing stories across geographies

and generations. I am the light everywhere descending. I am my heart evoking drum song. I am my spirit rising. In the smell of these sacred medicines burning, I am my prayers and my meditation, and I am time captured fully in this now. I am a traveller on a sacred journey through this one shining day.

- Richard Wagamese in *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*, p. 30.

 Song: "O Blessed Spring" #522 VT

More Reflective Readings on Spring

From Rumi

When everyone has fallen asleep and
 the house is empty and still, it is time
 to enter the garden, pull the skirt of the apple closer to the peach, and
 whisper the rose's secret to the jasmine.

Spring, like Christ, murmurs spells that
 bring back to life the martyred plants.

They open their lips in gratitude and the soul
 becomes intoxicated with their fragrance.

From the glow emanating in the darkness
 from the face of the rose and the tulip

I can see the hidden light within them.

A leaf quivers on a branch and my heart trembles
 the wind stirs the leaves and beauty stirs my heart.

- In *Rumi's Little Book of Life*, p. 36

 Wendell Berry's *The Peace of Wild Things*

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 fore-thought
 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.

- "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry in *Good Poems* (Garrison Keillor), p.427.

Richard Wagamese

Remember. Remember that Creator is the wind on my face, the rain in my hair, the sun that warms me. Creator is the trees, rocks, grasses, the majesty of the sky and the intense mystery of the universe. Creator is the infant who giggles at me in the grocery line, the beggar who reminds me how rich I really am, the idea that fires my most brilliant moment, the feeling that fuels my most loving act and the part of me that yearns for that feeling again and again. Whatever ceremony, ritual, meditation, song, thought or action it takes to reconnect to that feeling is what I need to do today...Remember.

Richard Wagamese in *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*, p. 101.

Richard Wagamese

To be struck by the magnificence of nature is to be returned again, in all-too-brief moments, to the innocence in which we were born. Awe. Wonder. Humility. We draw them into us and are altered forever by the unquestionable presence of Creator. All things ringing true together. If we carry that deep sense of communion back into our workday lives, everyone we meet benefits. That is what we are here for: to remind each other of where the truth lies and the power of simple ceremony.

Richard Wagamese in *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*, p. 102.

Song: "Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory" #504 VT

Prayers of the Community

From Rumi in *Rumi's Little Book of Life*, p. 45

Ask God for love not for life
ask God for soul food not for bread.
The world of created beings is like

pure transparent water in which
 shine the attributes of God.
 Knowledge, justice, mercy
 reflect in that water as the stars of heaven.
 Generations upon generations pass, yet
 the moon is the same. Times and people change
 but the essence of wisdom and justice is the same.
 The beautiful ones mirror God's Beauty
 and to love beauty is to love Him.

In *Rumi's Little Book of Life*, p. 45

Song: "O Lord hear my prayer" #685 VT

Lord, we pray for the power to be gentle; the strength to be forgiving; the patience to be understanding; the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right.

May we put our trust in the power of good to overcome evil and the power of love to overcome hatred. We pray for the vision to see and the faith to believe in a world emancipated from violence, a new world where fear shall no long lead people to commit injustice, nor selfishness make them bring suffering to others.

Help us to devote our whole life and thought and energy to the task of making peace, praying always for the inspiration and the power to fulfill the destiny for which we and all were created.

- "Week of Prayer for World Peace" in *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, pp 78-79

Song: "O Lord Hear my prayer" #685 VT

Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations. Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows. Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly, so that we can see beyond labels, beyond accents, gender, or skin color.

**Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness,
so that we can share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbours.**

And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all people as
our neighbours.

**Let the earth, nourished by rain, bring forth flowers to surround
us with beauty. And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach
upward to heaven. Amen.**

- VT #1048

Song: "O Lord hear my prayer" #685 VT

For the night skies opening outwards
star upon star
expanse after expanse
thanks be to you, O God.
For the mystery of your presence
in and beyond all that can be seen
thanks be to you, O God.
Guide us further this night
into the inner universe of our souls
ever opening inwards
light upon light
new depth after new depth.
Guide us through strange and fearful spaces
towards the place of your eternal dwelling
and assure us again that in drawing closer to you
we draw closer to the heart of every living being;
that in drawing closer to you
we approach the heart of life.

- J. Philip Newell, *Celtic Benedictions: Morning and Night Prayer*, p. 68

Song: "Nothing Can Trouble" #604 VT

Reflective Readings on the Close of Day
Jane Kenyon, *Let Evening Come*

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the crickets take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

- "Let Evening Come" by Jane Kenyon in *Good Poems* (Garrison Keillor),
p.417.

Esther de Waal with a Celtic blessing

"The day would end with the "smoothing" or smothering of the fire, and again this would be done with a ritual which involved the laying down of the peats in the name of the Trinity and the saints and angels. This was always performed carefully, symbolically, with loving care, the first in the name of the God of life, the second the God of peace, the third the God of grace. Then covering them with ashes, sufficient to subdue but not extinguish the flame, in the name of the Three of Light, she would stretch out her hand and quietly intone a prayer, asking the sacred Three to save and shield and surround her household:

The sacred Three
 To save
 To shield
 To surround
 The hearth
 The house
 The household
 This eve
 This night
 And every night
 Each single night. Amen.

- *Carmina Gadelica* I, in Esther De Waal's *Every Earthly Blessing*, pp 2-3

 John O'Donohue

As I lay down to sleep,
 May the guardian angel
 Watch over me,
 Coaxing all my cares
 To unravel into peace.

As darkness within
 Is wed to darkness without,
 Freed from the weight of light,
 Let my eyes sleep,
 Relieved of all intensities.

Let my imagination
 Trawl the compressed seas
 To bless the dawn
 With a generous catch
 Of luminous dream.

May this new night of rest
 Repair the wear of time
 And restorer youth of heart
 For the adventure
 That awaits tomorrow.

- John O'Donohue, *Benedictus: A Book of Blessings*, p. 116

A Celtic Blessing

May you find the balance you desire and need
light and dark, spirit and body, mind and soul

May you recognize the gradual powerful
rebirth happening within you.

May you awaken to the potential and the
blooming of your own self

And like the wild geese,
May you find your way home.

- Fiona Lynne Koefoed-Jespersten

Sending Hymn: "Now on land and sea descending" #503 VT

Benediction

"In the Leaving" by Jan Richardson

In the leaving,
in the letting go,
let there be this
to hold onto
at the last:

the enduring of love,
the persisting of hope,
the remembering of joy,

the offering of gratitude
the receiving of grace
the blessing of peace.

- "In the Leaving" by Jan Richardson in *Circle of Grace*, p 166.