

Thought for Contemplation: How we spend our days is, after all, how we spend our lives. --
Annie Dillard

INGATHERING CHIMES

WELCOME

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION 11:00 am

CHALICE LIGHTING reader: Zoe Johnson-Watters, lighter: Ben Stevenson

Chalice of light

open our hearts

lift our spirits

Help us welcome this day together.

Anita Farber-Robertson

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come in,

from wherever you have come and know welcome.

Come in,

with what joys and sorrows you carry and feel comfort.

Come with us,

From isolation to connection,

From distraction, to intention

From fragmentation, to wholeness.

Come, let us honor what is sacred in our lives.

Anita Farber- Robertson

HYMN *My Life Flows on in Endless Song* #108

CHILDREN'S TIME Rev. Anita 9:00am

Today we are going to play a game, a spiritual game. It's a game I like to play myself. It doesn't have any pieces or moving parts. You play it with

your imagination. It's not a competition. Everyone who plays is a winner, and the more you do it, the more of a winner you become.

First, have any of you ever seen what arrows are carried in, when a person goes off to shoot with bow and arrow? And it hooks on over your shoulder. It's called a quiver.

The first step in this game is to imagine you have a quiver, a quiver full of arrows. Can you do that? Now these arrows that you are imagining are special. They don't shoot hard arrow heads with points. They shoot balls of light.

And I want you to imagine a bow, any kind of bow you want, except that it can only shoot these arrows that you have in your quiver, these magic arrows that shoot only light.

Now I want you to imagine someone you love, and I want you to shoot that arrow of light at them, so that when it hits them, it bursts open and surrounds them with love and light. Can you do that? In your imagination?

Next, I want you to imagine someone you like. Take one of those arrows out of your quiver and in your imagination, shoot it at them. Watch how when it hits them, it bursts open and surrounds them with love and light. Can you do that? And don't they look lovely and beautiful when you do that, when you have surrounded them with light and love?

Next, I want you to imagine someone you don't know, or someone you don't know well. Take one of those arrows out of your quiver (oh, did I forget to tell you, this is a magic quiver- it never runs out of arrows), and shoot it at the person you don't know, or don't know well. Watch what happens when you have surrounded them with the love and light from your arrow. They change. You care about them.

Now, I want you to really concentrate. Think of someone you don't like, someone you'd rather not talk to or spend time around. Maybe someone with whom you just had an argument, or who won't share. Take an arrow out of your magic quiver and shoot it at them. Watch it explode covering them with love and light. Do they seem different now? Maybe not to be so angry with them now?

This is what I want you to do all today, and if you can, all this week. Keep that magic quiver on your shoulder- the magic bow collapsed down into your pocket. And I want you to whip it out, in your imagination, at all different times and places. Shoot that arrow of love and light at your parents. Shoot one at your sister or brother. Shoot them at people you see in the store. Shoot them at kids in your classes. Keep shooting arrows of light and love willy-nilly all over the place. It is what is called a spiritual practice- not because it changes those people, but because it changes you.¹

The children were then released to go through the congregation "trick or treating" for donations of canned/package foods to be distributed at the Food Locker, which we noted were a way to spread light and love to people we did not know.

Song (seated) Go Now in Peace #413 9:00am
(Children are invited to go now to their program)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION 9:00am

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

JOYS AND SORROWS

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

READING *Shoulders*, by Naomi Shihab Nye reader: Beth Millar 11:00am

A man crosses a street in the rain,

¹ Adapted from Anthony De Mello, *Spiritual Games*

stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.

We're not going to be able
To live in this world
If we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.

The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

ANTHEM

READING *Generous Ways* by Peter Marty

Bethany and Hannah Goralski are twin 25-year-old sisters who each donated a kidney to separate strangers earlier this year. Their dad died of kidney failure last year before they had a chance to donate to him. To honor his remarkable generosity with others, they elected to give life to someone else. Their decision triggered a chain reaction of anonymous kidney donations from friends of the people who benefited

from their gift, and then from friends of others who had new life thanks to the succession of donors. In the end, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, in Chicago, helped coordinate ten donors and ten recipients, with potentially even more to come.

OFFERING

SERMON

It's Like Paying It Forward

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson

Sometimes, I find, when driving, it can be difficult to merge, or make a smooth entrance onto a busy roadway. Has that happened to you?

I've noticed that it is always when I am most in a hurry, that the line of traffic goes on and on, and there does not seem a break in sight that will give me a chance to get in. Tension rises. And then, the miracle happens. Someone actually slows down, and lets me in. I feel a wash of gratitude. There *is* love in the world. I feel it.

And what do I do? I feel so much love, so much gratitude, that it spills over into altruism. When I see a car up ahead trying to get in, even though I am running late and, in a hurry, I slow down and let that driver in, because I had just been the beneficiary of such grace and kindness a few moments before. And my belief is confirmed. There *is* love in the world. I am a part of it.

Has that ever happened to you? It's kind of like paying it forward. Making sure that the good goes on. Maybe it was the time that you didn't have the right change and were flustered and embarrassed at the register, and the person behind you quietly reached forward and dropped the penny or the nickel for which you were looking, into your hand, or the hand of the checker. You feel a wash of gratitude. There *is*

love in the world. You feel it. And you want to share it. You look for an opportunity to do a kindness to someone else.

I remember riding on the bus from Swampscott, Massachusetts into Boston, when it stopped in Central Square in Lynn. A couple got on. They were older, but not elderly, and clearly struggling. They had difficulty getting up the steps. They had difficulty managing the shopping bags they were carrying. And they were having serious difficulty coming up with the bus fare. They had Charlie cards, but there was not enough money in the Charlie cards to cover the fare to their destination. They put down their bags and started searching through for what money they had- in pockets and pocketbook. The people on the bus, including me, sat and waited as we stayed at the bus stop, some making sounds of impatience, the driver allowing them to hunt for the money. They'd collected all the cash they could find on their person and it was looking like maybe it wouldn't be enough when from the very back of the bus a hip black adolescent boy in dreadlocks, jeans with holes and pants hanging down and earbuds in his ears sprang forward and handed the bus driver a couple of bills. The couple felt a wash of gratitude, which they expressed passionately. He nonchalantly walked back to his seat. There *is* love in the world. And I wondered why I hadn't done that- why I hadn't even thought to do it. Has that ever happened to you? Watched someone else help, and wondered why you hadn't?

It bothered me...that I hadn't thought to help when I could so easily have done so. When I got to Boston, I made it my business to find a way to be intentionally aware of and kind to people. There *is* love in the world. I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted the good to go on. Has that ever happened to you?

Peter Marty tells the story of 25-year-old Bethany and Hannah Goralski, the twin sisters whose father died of Kidney failure. They had been unable to help him. They wanted to honor their father and their appreciation of his generosity. The way to honor him, was to do something generous, as he would do, were he able. To keep that quality alive in the world, they decided to give life- they each donated a kidney to a stranger, that that person might live, in a way their father had been unable. And the story of their altruism, their generosity toward strangers, spread in the community, creating a chain reaction, a domino effect. Anonymous donations of kidneys by people to strangers soared. At the time of the article's writing ten donated kidneys had been transplanted into ten recipients and still more were expected to come.² One good deed inspiring the next. There *is* love in the world. They could feel it.

But what makes it possible- to spontaneously act altruistically? To act as if there is love in the world and we are a part of it? To act with the other's interest or wellbeing in mind?

Eva Fogelman had that question. She was a therapist who had worked extensively with Jewish survivors of the holocaust and with those who helped them. She begins her book with this story:

Simcha lived in a little Jewish village with his aunt and uncle and a crowd of other relatives. Life in Illya under the Russians was harsh, but not unbearable. Simcha got along well with his Russian supervisor and sometimes invited him home for dinner.

But within the past nine months, Ilya's fragile peace had been shattered by the Germans. ...one morning after the invasion, the Germans intercepted the Jews on their way to work and marched

² Peter W. Marty, "From the Publisher, Generous Ways," *Christian Century*, July 31, 2019

them all off to the village square. But the Germans missed Simcha. He had already left for work.

At 7 am that day, members of the German Gestapo burst into the bakery (where Simcha worked) searching for Jews who had slipped through their roundup. At that moment, Simcha happened to be screened from view by a large oven. “No Jews here,” his Russian supervisor told the Germans confidently. The soldiers left.

Without a moment’s hesitation, the Russian baker hustled Simcha up to the attic, locked him in and hid the attic ladder.³

Fogelman wanted to know, what was it that allowed people to take such risks, often for strangers? What was at the root of altruism, of compassion with the power to act? Or, as she named it in the title of her book, what was it that generated a conscience that also infused courage- the courage to act? She began her exhaustive research studying all different kinds of rescuers of Jews, from people like Stefnaia Bursminska, a Polish teenager who hid 13 Jews in her home, and Alexander Roslan, a dealer in the Black Market who kept moving his family to shelter three Jewish children, to the Russian baker who protected Simcha, and the woman who simply and silently snuck food to hiding Jews, or those who just never gave away what they knew of Jews in hiding. Fogelman interviewed all she could find, looking for the common denominator, that eluded her. The rescuers came from all walks of life, all religions, all socio-economic classes, all genders, all educational levels, and spanned the spectrum of unskilled to professionals. They were wealthy and dirt poor and everything in-

³ Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*, Anchor Books, 1994

between. They only had one thing in common. Every person who was a rescuer of Jews, whether it was something planned or something spontaneous, with Jews they knew or complete strangers, everyone of these rescuers had witnessed at some time in their growing up, an adult doing something altruistic.

I need to repeat that because it is so startling, so important, and so compelling.

What every person who was a rescuer of Jews, whether it was something planned or something spontaneous, with Jews they knew or complete strangers, what every person had in common, was that every one of these rescuers had witnessed at some time in their growing up, an adult doing something altruistic.

every one of these rescuers had witnessed at some time in their growing up, an adult doing something altruistic.

What does that mean? What does that suggest? It means that when we do something kind, or caring, or generous, when we are altruistic, we are not only helping the person or people who are the direct recipients, we are paying it forward in the most profound way. We are teaching our children how to do it- how to care and most importantly, how to have the courage to act on that care. Not just our children in our families, though certainly there. But these rescuers of Jews told stories of watching a neighbor do something altruistic, or a person in a shop, a relative or a stranger. It didn't matter. What had happened was that the possibility of action had been implanted in their experience, so that when the opportunity arrived, they could think of it and act on it.

A man crosses a street in the rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,

because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him.

No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.

Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing.

He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.

We're not going to be able

To live in this world

If we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.⁴

When we do what he is doing, for one another, we will change the course of history, because each time we do it, and someone sees that we did, that person's menu of options expands. Their conscience grows in courage, and there is more love in the world.

I think that's what we want. More love. More love.

Amen and blessed be.

CLOSING HYMN *There is More Love Somewhere* #95

BENEDICTION

⁴ Naomi Shihab Nye, *Shoulders*

CLOSING MUSIC (please remain seated)