**Contemplative Service for Wednesday,**

**January 3, 2024**



*Photograph from the HOPING Foundation*

**First readings:**

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Psalm 55:14

We who had sweet fellowship together then walked in the house of the Divine One together.

**Music:** “Something Inside So Strong,” by The Spirituals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkwzl8J5nWU>

**Second Reading**: from *Inciting Joy* by Ross Gay

[On planting an orchard to supply fruit for his community] Though I didn’t yet have the words for it, planting that orchard—by which I mean, you know this by now, joining my labor to the labor by which it came to be—reminded me, or illuminated for me, a matrix of connection, of care, that exists not only in the here and now, but comes to us from the past and extends forward into the future. A rhizomatic care I so often forget to notice I am every second in the midst of. By which I came to be, and am, at all.

**Music:** Bobby McFerrin with choir and audience singers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTzmxNgPnS8

**Time of Silent Contemplation**

***O God, we thank you for this universe, our great home; for its vastness and its riches, and for the abundance of the life which teems upon it and of which we are part.  We praise thee for the arching sky and the blessed winds, for the driving clouds and the stars on high.  We praise thee for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills, for the trees, and for the grass under our feet.  We thank you for our senses by which we can see the splendor of the morning, hear the jubilant songs of love, and smell the breath of the springtime.  Grant us, we pray, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty.  Save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thorn bush by the wayside is aflame with the glory of God.***

***Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our little brothers and sisters, to whom you have given this earth as their home in common with us.  May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life just as we do, and serve thee in their place.  When our use of this world is over and we make room for others, may we not leave anything ravished by our greed or spoiled by our ignorance; but may we hand on our common heritage fairer and sweeter through our use of it.  And then, may our bodies return in peace to mother earth who for so long nourished them.  Amen.***

***—Walter Rauschenbusch***

**Communal Blessing**

Holy Word, what you reveal to us, we share. Your presence in our midst becomes more and more elemental to our being. Your word being spoken again and again, we become community and enlarge you. Epiphany is a revelation, and revelation is a conversation. So many words, may we bless them, revealing us to ourselves within your revelation of love. Amen.

**Music**: Rise Up, by Andra Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBuIBaDSOa4>

*Peace be with you.*

*May your peace be a hand that reaches out to grasp another hand.*