

## THANKSGIVING 2017

Thank you for the wind and rain  
and sun and pleasant weather,  
thank you for this our food  
and that we are together. – Mennonite blessing

### **I Worried**

I worried a lot. Will the garden grow, will the rivers  
flow in the right direction, will the earth turn  
as it was taught, and if not how shall  
I correct it?

Was I right, was I wrong, will I be forgiven,  
can I do better?

Will I ever be able to sing, even the sparrows  
can do it and I am, well,  
hopeless.

Is my eyesight fading or am I just imagining it,  
am I going to get rheumatism,  
lockjaw, dementia?

Finally I saw that worrying had come to nothing.  
And gave it up. And took my old body  
and went out into the morning,  
and sang.

– *Mary Oliver*

Enveloped in Your Light, may I be a beacon to those in search of Light.  
Sheltered in Your Peace, may I offer shelter to those in need of peace.  
Embraced by Your Presence, so may I be present to others. – Rabbi Rami Shapiro

I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality. People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child--our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

-Thich Nhat Hanh, "Miracle of Mindfulness"

## Thanks

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you  
we are stopping on the bridge to bow from the railings  
we are running out of the glass rooms  
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky  
and say thank you  
we are standing by the water looking out  
in different directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging  
after funerals we are saying thank you  
after the news of the dead  
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you  
in a culture up to its chin in shame  
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you  
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators  
remembering wars and the police at the back door  
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you  
in the banks that use us we are saying thank you  
with the crooks in office with the rich and fashionable  
unchanged we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us  
our lost feelings we are saying thank you

with the forests falling faster and faster than the minutes  
of our lives we are saying thank you  
with the words going out like cells of a brain  
with the cities growing over us like the earth  
we are saying thank you faster and faster  
with nobody listening we are saying thank you  
we are saying thank you and waving  
dark though it is

W.S. Merwin

## Mindful

Every day  
I see or I hear  
something  
that more or less

kills me  
with delight,  
that leaves me  
like a needle

in the haystack  
of light.  
It is what I was born for –  
to look, to listen,

to lose myself  
inside this soft world –  
to instruct myself  
over and over

in joy,  
and acclamation.  
Nor am I talking  
about the exceptional,

the fearful, the dreadful,  
the very extravagant –  
but of the ordinary,  
the common, the very drab,

the daily presentations.  
Oh, good scholar,  
I say to myself,  
how can you help

but grow wise  
with such teachings  
as these –  
the untrimmable light

of the world,  
the ocean's shine,  
the prayers that are made  
out of grass?

-by Mary Oliver

## **For Dragonflies**

For dragonflies, butterflies,  
Caterpillars on leaves,  
Lizards, wild turkeys, and tigers and deer,  
We give thanks!

For sunset and seashells  
And starfish and sand,  
Octopus, jellyfish, and hammerhead shark,  
We give thanks!

For horses and kitties,  
Small bunnies and dogs,  
For babies and dogs,  
And knowing we're loved,  
We give thanks!

—Gail Forsyth-Vail and the children of the North Parish of North Andover, MA

## **The Sycamore**

In the place that is my own place, whose earth  
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,  
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.  
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,  
hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it.  
There is no year it has flourished in  
that has not harmed it. There is a hollow in it  
that is its death, though its living brims whitely  
at the lip of the darkness and flows outward.  
Over all its scars has come the seamless white  
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history  
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection  
in the warp and bending of its long growth.  
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.  
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.  
It is a fact, sublime, mystical and unassailable.  
In all the country there is no other like it.  
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling  
the same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.  
I see that it stands in its place and feeds upon it,  
and is fed upon, and is native, and maker.

- Wendell Berry

## **Garden Meditation**

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people.

For children who are our second planting,  
and though they grow like weeds  
and the wind too soon blows them away,  
may they forgive us our cultivation  
and fondly remember where their roots are.

Let us give thanks;

For generous friends, with hearts as big as hubbards and smiles as  
bright as their blossoms;

For feisty friends, as tart as apples;

For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers,  
keep reminding us that we've had them;

For crotchety friends, sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants  
and as elegant as a row of corn,  
and the others, as plain as potatoes and so good for you;

For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels sprouts  
and as amusing as Jerusalem artichokes;

And serious friends as unpretentious as cabbages,  
as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley,  
as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini  
and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter;

For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time,  
and young friends coming on as fast as radishes;

For loving friends, who wind around us  
like tendrils and hold us,  
despite our blights, wilts and witherings;

And finally, for those friends now gone,  
like gardens past that have been harvested,  
but who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter.

For all these we give thanks.

-by Rev. Max Coots

My thoughts shimmer with these shimmering leaves and my heart sings with the touch of this sunlight; my life is glad to be floating with all things into the blue of space, into the dark of time.

--Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*, #150

### **For The Future**

Planting trees early in spring,  
we make a place for birds to sing  
in time to come. How do we know?  
They are singing here now.  
There is no other guarantee  
that singing will ever be.

-by Wendell Berry

The food which we are about to eat  
Is Earth, Water and Sun, compounded through the alchemy of many plants.  
Therefore Earth, Water and Sun will become part of us.  
This food is also the fruit of the labor of many beings and creatures.  
We are grateful for it.  
May it give us strength, health, joy.  
And may it increase our love.

-- Unitarian Grace

### **Sunset**

Slowly the west reaches for clothes of new colors  
which it passes to a row of ancient trees.  
You look, and soon these two worlds both leave you  
one part climbs toward heaven, one sinks to earth.

leaving you, not really belonging to either,  
not so hopelessly dark as that house that is silent,  
not so unswervingly given to the eternal as that thing  
that turns to a star each night and climbs-

leaving you (it is impossible to untangle the threads)  
your own life, timid and standing high and growing,  
so that, sometimes blocked in, sometimes reaching out,  
one moment your life is a stone in you, and the next, a star.

-Rainer Maria Rilke