

SOUL FOOD

reflective moments



community = common unity



*Community
renewal*

Proudly presented by the Baha'i community of Adelaide

The Baha'i Faith celebrates the unity and diversity of the human family,
the essential harmony of all religions and the oneness of the Universal Creator

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Opening Music

THE BAHA'I COMMUNITY

The Baha'i community comprises some three to four million people, drawn from many nations, cultures, classes and creeds, engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs of the peoples of many lands. It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles and cherishing equally the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Baha'i experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study.

— *from the Baha'i writings, "The Promise of World Peace"*

PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNITY

The strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation should be one uniting working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds.

— *Abraham Lincoln*

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

— *M. Scott Peck*

Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— *Margaret Mead*

When they are alone they want to be with others, and when they are with others they want to be alone. After all, human beings are like that.

— *Gertrude Stein*

What cannot be achieved in one lifetime will happen when one lifetime is joined to another.

– *Harold Kushner*

The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place.

– *Marian Wright Edelman*

The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen. Together, our vision widens and strength is renewed.

– *Mark Morrison-Reed*

We were born to unite with our fellow men and to join in community with the human race.

– *Cicero*

Fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake ye do them.

– *John Ball*

COMMUNITY CREATURES

We human beings have often been referred to as social animals. But we are not yet community creatures. We are impelled to relate with each other for our survival. But we do not yet relate with the inclusivity, realism, self awareness, vulnerability, commitment, openness, freedom, equality and love of genuine community.

It is clearly no longer enough to be simple social animals, babbling together at cocktail parties and brawling with each other in business and over boundaries. It is our task - our essential, central, crucial task - to transform ourselves from mere social creatures into community creatures. It is the only way that human evolution will be able to proceed.

– *M Scott Peck.*

Musical Reflection

WORLD COMMUNITY

A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together. This is a great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house, a great world house in which we have to live together, black men and white men, easterners and westerners, gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Hindus. A family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn somehow, in this one big world house, to live with each other.

And this is our great challenge. This means that more and more, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. We must now give an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in our individual societies. This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighbourly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing, an unconditional love for all men.

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Yes, our greatness as a nation has depended on individual initiative, on a belief in the free market. But it has also depended on our sense of mutual regard for each other, of mutual responsibility. The idea that everybody has a stake in the country, that we're all in it together and everybody's got a shot at opportunity. Americans know this. We know that government can't solve all our problems - and we don't want it to. But we also know that there are some things we can't do on our own. We know that there are some things we do better together.

– *Barak Obama*

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

– *George Bernard Shaw*

Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on the earth. I said then and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free...

Now my friends, I am opposed to the system of society in which we live today, not because I lack the natural equipment to do for myself but because I am not satisfied to make myself comfortable knowing that there are thousands of my fellow men who suffer for the barest necessities of life. We were taught under the old ethic that man's business on this earth was to look out for himself. That was the ethic of the jungle; the ethic of the wild beast. Take care of yourself, no matter what may become of your fellow man. Thousands of years ago the question was asked; "Am I my brother's keeper?" That question has never yet been answered in a way that is satisfactory to civilized society.

Yes, I am my brother's keeper. I am under a moral obligation to him that is inspired, not by any maudlin sentimentality but by the higher duty I owe myself. What would you think me if I were capable of seating myself at a table and gorging myself with food and saw about me the children of my fellow beings starving to death.

– *Eugene V. Debs*

THE FARMER'S SON

There was once a farmer with several sons who could never agree among themselves. He often told them how foolish they were to be always quarrelling, but they kept on and paid no attention to his advice.

One day the father called his sons before him and showed them a bundle of sticks tied tightly together. "See which one of you can break this bundle in two" he commanded. Each son in turn took the bundle in his hands and tried his best to break it. They all tried, but in vain, for the bundle was so strong that not one of them could even bend it. At last they gave it back to their father saying "We cannot break it". Then the father untied the bundle and gave a single stick to each of his sons. "Now see what you can do" he said. Each one broke his stick with the greatest of ease. "My sons," said the wise father, "you, like these sticks will be strong if you stand together; but once you quarrel and become separated you are destroyed".

– *from 'Thoughts: Education for peace and our world'*

Musical Reflection

THE DYING ORDER

There was once a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great Order, now all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

In the woods surrounding the monastery was a little hut that a rabbi stayed in occasionally. Through their many years of prayer and contemplation, the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hut. “The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again” they would whisper to each other. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot to visit the hut and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. “I know how it is,” he exclaimed. “The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore.” So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. “It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years,” the abbot said, “but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?”

“No I am sorry,” the rabbi responded. I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is the Messiah is one of you.”

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, “Well what did the rabbi say?” “He couldn’t help,” the abbot answered, “We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say just as I was leaving – it was something cryptic – was that the Messiah is one of us. I don’t know what he meant.”

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi’s words. The Messiah is one of us? Could he have possibly meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that’s the case which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes if he meant anyone he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light.

Certainly he could not have meant Brother Eldred! Eldred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Eldred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean brother Eldred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't have possibly meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant centre of light and spirituality in the realm.

– *Ancient folklore*

THE SMITHY

Once words ran high in a Blacksmith shop.

The furnace said, "If I cease to burn, the smithy must close."

The bellows said, "If I cease to blow, no fire, no smithy."

The hammer and anvil, also, each claimed the sole credit for keeping up the smithy.

The ploughshare that had been shaped by the furnace, the bellows, the hammer and the anvil, cried, "It is not each of you alone that keeps up the smithy, but ALL TOGETHER."

– *P. V. Ramaswami Raju, Indian Fables*

Musical Reflection

THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Love your brother like your soul, guard him like the pupil of your eye.

– *Christian writings*

Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

– *Jewish writings*

Pay homage to God ...and be good to your parents and relatives, the orphans and the needy and the neighbours who are your relatives and the neighbours who are strangers, and the friends by your side.

– *Islamic writings*

Unity of heart and unity of mind, freedom from hatred, do I procure for you. Do ye take delight in one another, as a cow in her new born calf!

– *Hindu writings*

Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.

– *Baha'i writings*

Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each of us individually. Peace, for example, starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us.

When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighbouring communities, and so on. When we feel love and kindness towards others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace. And there are ways in which we can consciously work to develop feelings of love and kindness. For some of us, the most effective way to do so is through religious practice. For others it may be non-religious practices. What is important is that we each make a sincere effort to take our responsibility for each other and for the natural environment we live in seriously.

– *The Dalai Lama, The Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1989*

When Humanity is in chaos like it is now, the simplest teaching given by the
Aboriginals is to respect each other.
Nobody is better than anybody else.
Love one another.
Especially in these times of chaos.
And I don't just mean the love between husband and wife.
I mean the humanity love as well.
And just the caring towards each other.
No discrimination
No racism
Everybody is equal.
And this is what God wants us to do.
You see, we believe there is God in heaven,
Just like everybody else.
But we believe that God is pure illuminating light of love.
It's a Being. God's not a man or a woman.
It's a beautiful Being of love.
And all humanity should know that and love each other.
That's the ultimate aim of the above and the below.
That's the ultimate aim of humanity.

– *Australian Aboriginal elder: Lorraine Mafi Williams*

How good it is if friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand
together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of
reality from the Sun of the world of existence, united in adoration all the
worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace,
gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore
must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set
free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in
the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

– *Abdu'l-Baha, from the Baha'i Writings*

Musical Finale

join us for the next program

Sunday the 16th August, 11am
*Radford Auditorium,
Art Gallery of South Australia*