

SOUL FOOD

reflective moments



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

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Generosity

Opening Music

GENEROSITY

To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

—*Bahá'u'lláh, from the Baha'i writings*

Among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing consists in this, that one should not prefer oneself to others, but rather should sacrifice one's life and property for others. But this should not be introduced by coercion so that it becomes a law which man is compelled to follow. Nay, rather, man should voluntarily and of his own choice sacrifice his property and life for others and spend willingly for the poor.

—*Abdu'l-Baha, from the Baha'i writings*

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.

—*Leviticus 19:9-10, from the Bible*

THE ETERNAL VIRTUE

Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

—*Buddha*

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

—*Winston Churchill*

He who cannot give anything away cannot feel anything either.

—*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Love is when the other person's happiness is more important than your own.

—*H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*

The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving.

—*Albert Einstein*

The wise man does not lay up his own treasures. The more he gives to others, the more he has for his own.

—Lao Tzu

Be generous with kindly words, especially about those who are absent.

—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.

—*Leo Tolstoy*

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

—*Anne Frank*

One would give generous alms if one had the eyes to see the beauty of a cupped receiving hand.

—*Johann von Goethe*

If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one.

—*Mother Teresa*

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

—*John Wesley*

Musical Reflection

THE PROPHET

Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving.

And he answered:

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. For what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow? And tomorrow, what shall tomorrow bring to the over-prudent dog burying bones in the trackless sand as he follows the pilgrims to the holy city? And what is fear of need but need itself? Is not dread of thirst when your well is full, the thirst that is unquenchable?

There are those who give little of the much which they have – and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome. And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty. There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward. And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism. And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue; They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space. Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding; And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving. And is there aught you would withhold? All you have shall some day be given; Therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors.

You often say, “I would give but only to the deserving.” The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture. They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish. Surely he who is worthy to receive his days and his nights is worthy of all else from you. And he who has deserved to drink from the ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from your little stream.

And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity of receiving? And who are you that men should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that you may see their worth naked and their pride unabashed? See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving. For in truth it is life that gives unto life – while you, who deem yourself a giver, are but a witness.

And you receivers – and you are all receivers – assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives. Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings; For to be overmindful of your debt is to doubt his generosity who has the free-hearted earth for mother, and God for father.

—*Kahlil Gibran*

GENEROSITY IN ACTION

Generosity is expressed in these and a thousand other ways:

Paying attention to what someone needs, not what you think they need.
Always giving the benefit of the doubt.
Taking responsibility.
Not blaming.
Being courteous.
Bringing beauty to all tasks.
Letting your mistakes go.
Giving more than is necessary.
Appreciating your dependence on others; appreciating their dependence on you.
Not keeping tabs on what you have given or what you are owed.
Allowing others to give to you.
Receiving gracefully.
Not using power to wound, undermine or abuse.
Giving others emotional and physical space for their sake, not for yours.
Curbing your demands.
Taking an interest in others' interests.
Making room at your table and in your home for any guests, however unexpected.
Giving extra attention to avoid a feeling of hurt.
Giving all the time you have promised – and more.
Honouring your obligations as a privilege of relationships.
Treating a new experience as a new experience – and not an affront.
Paying attention to who is feeling left out, and redeeming that situation.
Refusing to pass on hurtful gossip.
Praising lavishly.
Expressing gratitude.
Letting past hurts slip away.
Welcoming compromise.
Giving something up for the sake of someone else.
Doing without what is acquired at another's cost.

Generosity is a subversive virtue. It undermines solemnity. It allows connections to be made between the most unexpected people. It lends itself to small gestures as well as large. It flies in the face of greed, arrogance, and desire, and can undo them all. It does not depend on learning, privilege, status or riches. It is ignorant of nationality, class, colour and gender. It is as vital in the boardroom as it is in the kindergarten. It is impossible to manufacture, measure, sell or waste. It springs from a conscious intention for good and it involves the body and mind as much as the spirit. Generosity can be shy or assertive, memorable or fleeting. Without its presence, we would scarcely know what love feels like or looks like; how love smells or sounds; how love survives and what miracles love allows.

In every impulse that restores or celebrates our faith in humankind, there generosity is. In all our finest moments, our most transcendent, tender or illuminating moments, it is also present. And so it is when disaster strikes at our communities, and we face it together.

If every one of our lives is to be worth living, and if we are to come to realize in time that our planet is worth saving, it will be because we have allowed ourselves to discover the radiant power and ease, magic and beauty of generosity: the spaciousness of it, the joy of it, the infinity of it.

—*Stephanie Dowrick*

There are three kinds of givers - the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it. And then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

—*Anonymous Author*

Musical Reflection

THE GIVING TREE

Once there was a tree, and she loved a little boy. And every day the boy would come and he would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and when he was tired, he would sleep in her shade. And the boy loved the tree very much. And the tree was happy.

But time went by and the boy grew older. And the tree was often alone. Then one day the boy came to the tree and the tree said: 'Come, Boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy'. 'I am too big to climb and play', said the boy. 'I want to buy things and have fun. I want some money. Can you give me some money?' 'I'm sorry', said the tree, 'but I have no money. I have only leaves and apples. Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in the city, then you will have money and you'll be happy'. And so the boy climbed up the tree and gathered her apples and carried them away. And the tree was happy.

But the boy stayed away for a long time, and the tree was sad. And then one day the boy came back and the tree shook with joy, and she said: 'Come, Boy come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy'. 'I am too busy to climb trees,' said the boy. 'I want a house to keep me warm,' he said. 'I want a wife and I want children, and so I need a house. Can you give me a house?' 'I have no house' said the tree. 'The forest is my house but you may cut off my branches and build a house. Then you will be happy.' And so the boy cut off her branches and carried them away to build a house. And the tree was happy.

But the boy stayed away for a long time, and the tree was sad. And when he came back, the tree was so happy she could hardly speak. 'Come, Boy' she whispered, 'Come and play.' 'I am too old and sad to play.' said the boy. 'I want a boat that will take me away from here. Can you give me a boat?' 'Cut down my trunk and make a boat,' said the tree. 'Then you can sail away and be happy.' And so the boy cut down her trunk and made a boat and sailed away. And the tree was happy.

And after a long time the boy came back again.

‘I am sorry, Boy,’ said the tree, ‘but I have nothing left to give you— My apples are gone.’

‘My teeth are too weak for apples,’ said the boy.

‘My branches are gone,’ said the tree. ‘You cannot swing on them’

‘I am too old to swing on branches,’ said the boy.

‘My trunk is gone,’ said the tree. ‘You cannot climb’

‘I am too tired to climb,’ said the boy.

‘I am sorry’ sighed the tree. ‘I wish that I could give you something, but I have nothing left. I am just an old stump. I am sorry...’

‘I don’t need very much now’ said the boy.

‘Just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am very tired.’

‘Well’ said the tree, straightening herself up as much as she could, ‘well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, Boy, sit down and rest.’

And the tree was happy.

—*Shel Silverstein*

And Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all, out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

—*Luke 21:1-4, from the Bible*

A gift is pure when it is given from the heart to the right person at the right time and at the right place and when we expect nothing in return. But when it is given expecting something in return, or for the sake of future reward, or when it is given unwillingly, the gift is of the Rajas, impure. And a gift given to the wrong person, at the wrong time and the wrong place, or a gift which comes not from the heart, and is given with proud contempt, is a gift of darkness.

—*The Bahagavad Gita, from the Buddhist writings*

When you hammer a nail into a board and accidentally strike your finger, you take care of the injury immediately. The right hand never says to the left hand “I am doing charitable work for you”. It just does what it can to help – giving first aid, compassion and concern ... We do whatever we can to benefit others without seeing ourselves as helpers and the others as helped. This is the spirit of non-self.

—*Thich Nhat Hanh.*

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

—*Bahá'u'lláh, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Finale

join us for the next program

Sunday the 18th October, 11am
Radford Auditorium,
Art Gallery of South Australia