

# **Southeastern Yearly Meeting 2021 Gathering**

## **Worship Sharing**

### **Guidelines Quotes & Queries**

Worship Sharing is an opportunity for small groups to deepen their understanding of life in the Spirit and get to know each other on a deeper level, through listening to each others' experiences and insights in a worship-grounded setting. In a covering of silent worship, Friends share their responses to a query that provides a focus for the group. We listen deeply to what is shared, without discussion. Worship Sharing may last an hour, or less, depending in part on the size of the group.

### **Guidelines for Worship Sharing**

- We wait in silent worship, in union with each other, and share gleanings from our spiritual journeys.
- Our purpose is to search together in silence for God's truth and inspiration. We also hope to draw closer as a community by sharing deeply our spiritual experiences.
- No Friend is ever required to speak. Be a better listener than a speaker, but if you do share speak up and speak clearly for those who may be hard of hearing.
- In order to allow the space for each of us to share, be mindful of the length of one's offering. Typically each Friend shares only one time until all others have spoken.
- Listen fully to each person's words. Please do not interrupt or comment upon what another Friend has shared.
- Allow ample worship between sharings. Hold the gift that each person offers in the Light, without judgment.
- Try to speak from your own experience, rather than speaking of the experience of others or of abstract ideas.
- Avoid commenting on, or responding directly to, what someone else has said. One may, of course, share on themes or concerns raised by another as they apply to one's own life.
- Please do not repeat elsewhere what you have heard. Please respect the confidentiality of what is shared in the Worship Sharing session.
- Worship sharing depends on our respecting and honoring each other.

## SEYM Gathering 2021 • Worship Sharing • Thursday, April 1st, 10 am Eastern

### Quotes and Queries 1 – *To Do the Work in Love*

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”* Psalm 51:10

“...to be prophetic at a time of political division within our country and across the world...means confronting evil: that which opposes God’s desire for the world. It means taking the deepest understanding of our testimony of equality and resisting the radical restructuring of government that favors people who are wealthy and white over everyone else. It means holding fast to our peace testimony and making our elected leaders accountable for the human rights violations and deaths of civilians that our country is complicit in. It means caring for the earth God created to nurture and sustain us as we bear the consequences of the planet’s changing climate and its effect on millions and millions across the globe. It means listening for, speaking to, and acting on Truth.”  
---Diane Randall

“People who treat other people as less than human must not be surprised when the bread they have cast on the waters comes floating back to them, poisoned.”  
----James Baldwin

“My heart is moved by all I cannot save: so much has been destroyed  
I have to cast my lot with those who age after age, perversely,  
with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.”

---Adrienne Rich

“Loving, liberating God, grant us eyes to see past destruction and courage to repair the breaches in our societies. Help us center not just the stories but also the leadership of marginalized communities and people. Empower us to join hands, hearts, and heads with other visionaries despite theological and political categories. May the sword of your Spirit conquer all wickedness in high places and your light of hope shine bright.”  
---Sekinah Hamlin

“For the love of God can’t we just have a little bit of heart and compassion in this world for someone who doesn’t look or live exactly like you.”  
---Sen. Patty Murray

“We are not going to get the racism out of us until we start thinking about racism like we think about misogyny. Until we consider racism as not just a personal moral failing but as the air we’ve been breathing. How many images of black bodies being thrown to the ground have I ingested? How many photographs of jails filled with black bodies have I seen? How many racist jokes have I swallowed? We have been deluged by stories and images meant to convince us that black men are dangerous, black women are dispensable, and black bodies are worth less than white bodies. These messages are in the air and we’ve just been breathing. We must decide that admitting to being poisoned by racism is not a moral failing—but denying we have poison in us certainly is.” -  
---Glennon Doyle

“If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy...be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

---Philippians 2:1-5

### Queries

1. How do I lean into my faith to do the work to which God calls me?
2. What “poison” still resides within me and how does it manifest? How do I purge it from me?
3. In what ways do I “cast bread upon the waters” that is less than loving? Can I recognize not only when, but why?
4. How can I deepen my ability to “listen for, speak to, and act on Truth”?
5. How are we led as individuals or as a meeting, to join with others to “...reconstitute the world”?

## SEYM Gathering 2021 • Worship Sharing • Friday, April 2nd, 10 am Eastern

### Quotes and Queries 2 – To Witness As God Wants

*“Here I am; send me...”* Isaiah 6:8

“If you are trying to transform a brutalized society into one where people can live in dignity and hope, you begin with the empowering of the most powerless. You build from the ground up.”

---Adrienne Rich

“The duty of the Society of Friends is to be the voice of the oppressed but [also] to be conscious that we ourselves are part of that oppression. Uncomfortably we stand with one foot in the kingdom of this world and with the other in the Eternal Kingdom. Seldom can we keep the inward and outward working of love in balance, let alone the consciousness of living both in time and in eternity, in timelessness. Let us not be beguiled into thinking that political action is all that is asked of us, nor that our personal relationship with God excuses us from actively confronting the evil in this world. The political and social struggles must be waged, but a person is more and needs more than politics, else we are in danger of gaining the whole world but losing our souls.”

---Eva I Pinthus

“Because I believe love wins everywhere and every time. Through it all my faith has lifted me up especially in the darkest hours. Right now it can feel like the world is pulling us apart. A deadly virus keeping us separate. And political divisions that feel impossible to bridge...But I’ve seen what’s possible when we make room at the table for everyone. That’s why I choose to keep an open heart and keep pushing for progress rather than backing down.”

---Jasmine Beach-Ferrara

“The great social movements of our time may well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and justice and equality which are part of our religious tradition are often the focus of debate. But we cannot simply immerse ourselves in these activities. We need to develop our own unique social witness, in obedience to God. We need to listen to the gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our lives into greater harmony with heaven.” -

---Deborah Haines

“There must be always remaining in every life, some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathless and beautiful.”

---Howard Thurman

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

---Audre Lorde

“Two sins have my people committed; they have forsaken me, a spring of living water, and they have hewn themselves cisterns, cracked cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jeremiah 2:13). I know of no better description of the world we live in than that. We have forgotten that we need the life-giving water of the holy spirit if the material element of the world in which we live is not, sooner or later, to turn into dust and ashes; and we have developed social institutions which cannot hold or channel the life-giving water anyway...”

---Roger Wilson

### Queries

1. How open am I to listening, loving, and transforming first myself, and then society? Am I willing to do the work as God wants?
2. How does keeping “the inward and outward working of love in balance” affect a witness?
3. How do we make room for everyone at the table if we don’t know who’s missing? How does not seeing where seats are denied play a part in the oppression of others?
4. How can I recognize a moment that takes my breath away as a gift from God that feeds my spirit and thus sustains how God works through me in relationship and ministry?
5. What new cisterns (social institutions) can we build that will channel life-giving water?

## SEYM Gathering 2021 • Worship Sharing • Thursday, April 8th, 10 am Eastern

### Quotes and Queries 3 – The Truth is Continuously Revealed

*“So shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth...” Isaiah 55:11*

“We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another  
We seek harm to none and harmony for all  
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:  
That even as we grieved, we grew  
That even as we hurt, we hoped  
That even as we tired, we tried”

---Amanda Gorman

“Evils which have struck their roots deep in the fabric of human society are often accepted, even by the best minds, as part of the providential ordering of life. They lurk unsuspected in the system of things until [people] of keen vision and heroic heart drag them into the light, or until their insolent power visibly threatens human welfare.”

---William Charles Braithwaite

“Whichever sphere of activity we are involved in, we have to be responsive to the Spirit’s leadings and try to put into practice our deepest beliefs, for our faith is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week faith, which is not excluded from our workplace, wherever that may be. Everything in the end can be distilled to relationships – our relationships with each other and the earth. Our work must benefit our relationships rather than damage them, and we must ensure that neither the earth nor other people are exploited. Caring, not exploitation, is the key.”

---Jane Stokes

“Personality, sex, race, culture and experience are God’s gifts. We need one another and differences shared become enrichments, not reasons to be afraid, to dominate or condemn. The media have increased our knowledge of the world, but we need greater self-awareness if our actions are to be changed in relation to the information we receive. We need to consider our behaviour carefully, heeding the command of Jesus that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves.”

---Meg Maslin

“[Prophets] remind us of God’s love for human beings, God’s grief at the destruction that humans cause, and God’s desire for us to pay attention to injustice. In modern parlance, prophets call us to “stay woke”: to see what is wrong and name it. Prophets name morality and righteousness; they call out good and evil. And it is up to all people—the beloved children of God—to listen and act.”

---Diane Randall

### Queries

1. How do we as Friends step into our charge of prophetic witness, loving God and neighbor enough to seek change and speak Truth to power?
2. How can we, despite our grief, hurt, and weariness seek to bring harmony and peace to a broken world?
3. What can we do to strengthen our hearts enough to “drag into the light” those evils that “lurk unsuspected in the system of things”?
4. How do we need to view the information we receive every day from news, social media, or other forums, and shape it into loving actions? Are we careful to test our responses against our sense of the Divine?

## SEYM Gathering 2021 • Worship Sharing • Friday, April 9th, 10 am Eastern

### Quotes and Queries 4 –How Does the Truth Prosper?

*“Do not be conformed to this world...” Romans 12:2*

“Fear is a terrible friend. Keeps us up at night. Seems to call at weird times. Doesn’t care if we are too busy or too sad. Prevents us from making any good decisions during the day...When there is not much we can control, why not try something which is absolutely for no reason. When the stakes are so low, it becomes all about you and the beautiful stupidity of caring. So maybe today, you need permission to do something for no reason whatsoever. Because even when fear threatens to swallow us whole, we will not be consumed. Ask yourself, what is possible today? Then do the thing...for no reason whatsoever.”  
---Kate Bowler

“We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in...our hearts were knit unto the Lord and one unto another in true and fervent love, in the covenant of Life with God; and that was a strong obligation or bond upon all our spirits, which united us one unto another. We met together in the unity of the Spirit, and of the bond of peace, treading down under our feet all reasoning about religion. And holy resolutions were kindled in our hearts as a fire which the Life kindled in us to serve the Lord while we had a being, and mightily did the Word of God grow amongst us..., And thus the Lord, in short, did form us to be a people.”  
---Francis Howgill

There is a lot to learn from stories of God working within and through faithful people in our midst. But just like the narratives in the Bible, we often miss the stories of unnamed and overlooked people, particularly women, who have the greatest things to teach us about the kingdom of God. These stories taught me that while God can certainly work through those with power: kings and leaders and miracles thereof, the most powerful aspect of the kingdom of God is that—like the mustard seed—it comes from small, unassuming things.  
---Kat Armas

“[Dig] deep, ...carefully cast forth the loose matter and get down to the rock, the sure foundation, and there hearken to the divine voice which gives a clear and certain sound.”  
---John Woolman

“...To get to the promised land, we must voluntarily, faithfully, and courageously release everything that feels safe and comfortable: not to immediately change everything (for that would just waste energy), but to put all of our traditions and habits into the category of “could be changed” and then listen to God (and each other) intently. And in this letting go of habits, we must acknowledge the grief that comes with change and walk alongside each other through it.”  
---Emily Provance

“Optimism and hope are not the same. Optimism is the belief that the world is changing for the better; hope is the belief that, together, we can make the world better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It needs no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to hope. The Hebrew Bible is not an optimistic book. It is, however, one of the great literatures of hope.”  
---Jonathan Sacks

“Storms make trees take deeper roots.”  
---Dolly Parton

### Queries

1. What fears keep us immobilized? How can we give ourselves permission to do what needs to be done regardless of fear that “threatens to swallow us whole”?
2. As Friends, what is being “kindled in our hearts as a fire”? Are we faithful to being “a people” formed?
3. How can we listen more clearly to the “divine voice” so that our every thought follows from our rootedness in the “sure foundation” and our every action “is transformed by the renewal of [our] mind”?
4. How are we able to find hope and purpose in the small seeds planted to create change in our hearts, faith, and society?
5. How can we step out of what is comfortable and onto the holy ground of being able to “listen to God and each other intently”?