

Readings for September's Unity Theme

“Anyone’s Ministry”

Gordon McKeeman

Ministry is:

*A quality of relationship between and among human beings
That beckons forth hidden possibilities. Ministry is:*

Inviting people into deeper, more constant,
more reverent relationship with the world
and with one another. Ministry is:

*celebrating the triumphs of the human spirit
the miracles of birth and life
the wonders of devotion and sacrifice. Ministry is:*

witnessing to the life-enhancing values
speaking truth to power
standing for human dignity and equity
for compassion and aspiration. Ministry is:

*all these and much, much more than all of them, present in
the wordless, the unspoken, the ineffable. Ministry is:*

speaking and living the highest we know
and living with the knowledge that it is never as deep,
or as wide or as high as we wish.

*Whenever there is a meeting that summons us to our better selves, whenever
Our lostness is found, our fragments are united or our wounds begin healing,
Our spines stiffen and our muscles grow strong for the task.*

There is ministry.

“Shoulders”

Naomi Shihab Nye

A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world’s most sensitive cargo
but he’s not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boys’ dream
deep inside him.

We’re not going to be able
to live in this world
if we’re not willing to do what he’s doing
with one another.

The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

“September afternoon at four o’clock”

Marge Piercy

Full in the hand, heavy
with ripeness, perfume spreading
its fan: moments now resemble
sweet russet pears glowing
on the bough, peaches warm
from the afternoon sun, amber
and juicy, flesh that can
make you drunk.

There is a turn in things
that makes the heart catch.
We are ripening, all the heard
green grasping, the stony will
swelling into sweetness, the acid
and sugar in balance, the sun
stored as energy that is pleasure
and pleasure that is energy.

Whatever happens, whatever,
we say, and hold hard and let
go and go on. In the perfect
moment the future coils,
a tree inside a pit. Take,
eat, we are each other’s
perfection, the wine of our
mouths is sweet and heavy.
Soon enough comes the vinegar.
The fruit is ripe for the taking
and we take. There is
no other wisdom.

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn't make any sense.

by Rumi

“Things Commonly Believed Among Us”

We believe that to love the Good and to live the Good is the supreme thing in religion;

We hold reason and conscience to be final authorities in matters of religious belief;

We honor the Bible and all inspiring scripture, old and new;

We revere Jesus, and all holy souls that have taught people truth and righteousness and love, as prophets of religion;

We believe in the growing nobility of Humanity; We trust the unfolding Universe as beautiful, beneficent, unchanging Order; to know this order is truth; to obey it is right and liberty and stronger life;

We believe that good and evil invariably carry their own recompense, no good thing being failure and no evil thing success; that heaven and hell are states of being; that no evil can befall the good person in either life or death; that all things work together for the victory of the Good;

We believe that we ought to join hands and work to make the good things better and the worst good, counting nothing good for self that is not good for all;

We believe that this self-forgetting, loyal life awakes in people the sense of union here and now with things eternal - the sense of deathlessness; and this sense is to us an earnest of the life to come;

We worship One-in All -- that life whence suns and stars derive their orbits and the human soul its Ought, -- that Light which lights the way of every one that comes into the world, giving us power to become the children of God, -- that Love with which our souls commune.

William Channing Gannet 1894
(adapted)

I began with Things, which were the true confidants of my lonely childhood, and it was already a great achievement that, without any outside help, I managed to get as far as animals. But then Russia opened itself to me and granted me the brotherliness and the darkness of God, in whom alone there is community. That was what I named God then, the one who had broken in upon me, and for a long time I lived in the antechamber of God's name, on my knees. Now, you would hardly ever hear me name God; there is an indescribable discretion between us, and where nearness and penetration once were, now distances stretch forth, as in the atom, which the new science conceives of as a universe in miniature. The comprehensible slips away, is transformed; instead of possession one learns relationship, and there arises a namelessness that must begin once more in our relations with God if we are to be complete and without evasion. The experience of feeling God recedes behind an infinite delight in everything that can be felt; all attributes are taken away from God, who is no longer sayable, and fall back into creation, into love and death. It is perhaps only this that again and again takes place, this ascent of God out of the breathing heart, so that the sky is covered with God and God falls to earth as rain. But saying even this is already too much.

Rainer Maria Rilke

“Daybreak”

On the tidal mud, just before sunset,
dozens of starfishes
were creeping. It was
as though the mud were a sky
and enormous, imperfect stars
moved across it slowly
as the actual stars cross heaven.
all at once they stopped,
and as if they had simply
increased their receptivity
to gravity they sank down
into the mud; they faded down
into it and lay still; and by the time
pink of sunset broke across them
they were as invisible
as the true stars at daybreak.

Galway Kinnell

We busily guard ourselves
from the full implication of love--
that all people under the sun,
regardless of time
and death,
and the space between the stars

are one kin,
flesh of our flesh,
bone of our bone,
bound together in inescapable unity,
destined to the same end,
bound together in a mystic oneness
the origin of which we may never know;
the reality of which we can never escape.
We guard ourselves against the radical truth
that it is our separateness
which is the great illusion.

- Rev. David Bumbaugh (UU minister)