



## Community Voices - Why Poetry ?

Someone asked - why poetry and spirituality? And why come to a poetry reading when I can open a book?

In looking ahead to our upcoming *Evening of Poetry with Steve Garnas-Holmes*, we asked several friends to describe with words something that likely reaches beyond words. We hope you'll join us as we continue to explore the question and as we gather in light-filled Trinity Cathedral on **Thursday, November 18 at 7 pm**. Take a little time for nourishing calm, music and poetry well before Thanksgiving week begins! All are welcome to attend in person or via Zoom.

At the Retreat House, often we begin our conversations with a poem and in many settings. We enjoy savoring weekly *Pause* readings for time-out and centering. We listen to poetry in community - in *Day's End* on-line meditation each weekday; in *Wisdom Cafe* each Monday at noon; and in our circle meetings that almost always begin with a poem or a psalm. This summer, several friends created a Haiku as an expression of gratitude inspired by visiting the grounds and resting in the beauty of nature. Each unique instance of listening can help bring a clarity that fosters being rooted in the present. And yet, there is more.

Francie Thayer shares that - "Poetry tells it slant."

"In our humanity, frequently it is too hard to hear the truth straight on. "No, you can't have candy before dinner." "You're fired." "He's dead."

Jesus knew this, so he taught us in stories and parables, pointing us toward lessons and truths for our lives. We all need guidance and teaching; sometimes those things are just hard to hear. Emily Dickinson speaks this truth most eloquently:

*Tell all the truth but tell it slant—  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind.*

There can be a gentleness to poetry, a way to be dazzled gradually. Debra Donnelley-Barton reflects on why she writes poetry - "... because I cannot say how beautiful the world is—how poignant—how scarred—how sacred. I will use words slanted into a sunrise or a shadow - and make a holy space for you to enter. And there to sojourn with the Beloved."

There's that word "slant" again. An invitation awaits to enter a sacred, gentle space through an opening that may not be in plain sight. And by simply listening, we might see with new eyes. Suzi Foehl shares that "God invites us into deep reflection through poetry. Poetry is the latch on the gate—an opening to unrealized and infinite gifts. Often, God's invitation to love is through poetry." One of our favorite poets, Mary Oliver, says: "Poetry is a life-cherishing force. For poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry." Somehow poetry nourishes us. More recently, Pádraig Ó Tuama shared: "[O]ne of the things I love about poetry is that it can speak to you at different ages of your life...And there's a kindness, I think, in the way poems too can offer some kind of parenting and some kind of support to you, as you're trying to look out to the world and observe what you can observe."

Come and listen for that sacred invitation, that kindness, that fire for the cold, or even bread for the day's hunger. We hope you'll join us in person (or via Zoom) in Trinity Cathedral to share an evening of poetry with Steve Garnaas-Holmes. For more information, please email [info@retreathousehillsboro.org](mailto:info@retreathousehillsboro.org) or visit our website at [retreathousehillsboro.org](http://retreathousehillsboro.org).

