

# Bobby LeFebre Poems

April, 2020

The poems include here were written by Bobby LeFebre and shared with his kind permission. Learn more about Bobby and his work at <https://www.bobbylefebvre.com/>.



These poems by Bobby LeFebre were performed by Bobby in First Universalist Church of Denver's worship service for April 5, 2020. Watch the video recording of the service at <https://vimeo.com/channels/firstusundays>.

In the service on April 5, Bobby said,

"The poet, when effective, is a cultural worker, a healer, a conductor and a conduit of a world begging us to see and celebrate our relationship to it. The poet is more than a writer, the poet is more than literature, the poet is a cultural translator, a humble prophet, a communal visionary, a steward and servant of humanity and emotion, a dreamer and realist, and inseparably entwined, a truth teller who takes responsibility for the visions that live within the possibilities that live within.

We are in unprecedented times right now and as poet, I feel a deep calling and a responsibility to respond to these times. These...poems are about what we are all living through."

In addition to several poems performed in the April 5 service, Bobby LeFebre sent a few additional pieces to share with the First Universalist community.

Contents:

1. An Exercise in Ritual
2. Covid-19
3. Love in the Time of Corona
4. Adobe
5. Ghazal for Spring
6. Nothing Left
7. Let Us Pray
8. On Justice and Us
9. The Table
10. Wind Chaser

## **An Exercise in Ritual**

We gather here together in this sacred circle like we always have.  
Here, around this fire that has always burned.  
The same fire that lives in our bellies and makes an inferno of our hearts.

This spirit we summon.  
This beauty we conjure.  
This inventiveness we invoke.

What is a vessel but a carrier of the coveted?  
A transmitter of quintessence.  
A conduit of culture.

Come and meet us at the place where ritual is given a body.  
Where ceremony is given a face.  
Where our existence transfigures into a song we warble in unison.

For he who sharpens his imagination is a visionary.  
She who gives shape to intuition is a prophet.  
They who hone mortality beseech the immortal.

Look at what we are building together.  
We, the masons of reimagining.  
The architects of metamorphosis.  
The repositories of our collective consciousness.

Blessed be the makers.  
The ones who set themselves ablaze willingly to warm the masses.  
The ones who traverse the unknown giving life to the unseen.  
The ones who examine, assemble, distill, and reckon.

Join us as we turn ourselves inside out.  
Watch as we illuminate what kindles inside our bones.  
Marvel as we paint with colors that yet not exist.

These places where we find and lose ourselves at the same time.  
These messages we devise with purpose  
These aesthetics we mold from the supple clay of our minds.

Join us at these holy places of abandon.  
These playgrounds of ingeniousness.  
These geneses of more-inspired tomorrows.

For who does not admire a flower unfolding?  
Who does not feel the warmth of the sun shining boldly upon their face?  
Whose feet do not move at the coaxing of the drum's sound?

Here, where we live, boundaries and the impossible do not have a name.  
Here, fear and failure suffocate under the weight of creation  
Here, convention is an earth-covered tombstone rotting in the wind.

Blessed be the creatives.  
The ones predisposed to questioning.  
The ones with an immoderate hunger for understanding.

Come and meet us at a new juncture where expression devoid of consciousness is merely decoration.  
Where art is an insistent incubator for justice.  
Where equity and access are an altar we decorate with the flowers of promise and purpose.

For what is it to highlight the margins but to attempt to balance the scales.  
What is a raised fist, but a war cry in the language of the purposely silenced.  
What is dissent, but an innate aversion to the confines of the status quo.

Art and culture is a communal land that does not know borders.  
A common language we are all born speaking fluently.  
A right that has been paraded around as a privilege for far too long.

Come and help us rip the esoteric from the sky.

Let our hands reach for the stars,  
grasp them,  
and share their tangible glow with anyone drawn to their light.

Come and explore with us our insatiable thirst for wonder.  
Let us allow untamed bewilderment to be our guide.

And here, we will all shine and wander together.  
Here we will eradicate all of the man-made barriers we impose upon one another.  
This beautiful burden we carry.  
This responsibility tethered to our pens, our paint, pirouettes, percussion, and performance.

This work.  
This digging.  
These hands unearthing the truth.

This joy.  
This beauty.  
This struggle.

These songs.  
These testaments.  
These heirlooms.

These markers of humanity that remind us that we are here.  
That we are alive.  
That we always have been.  
And that we will always will be.

## **Covid-19**

The sirens are sounding  
The screams are loud

The virus has packed its bags;  
World traveler without a passport

Borders are man-made  
Walls cannot contain life on the move

But that's another story

Asian businesses were empty before streets  
Racism

The toilet paper is gone  
Panic begets panic

My 3pm meeting is now an email  
Tom Hanks is raising his hand

Let's talk about the poor  
30 million uninsured

Ends meet, public transportation to get there  
Self-quarantine. Privilege. Paradox

Blue collars can't work remotely  
Hourly wages side-eye the salaried

Go ahead and cancel school  
Child care is a killer too

Industrialized without a heart  
Developed without a conscience

Capitalism gaslights  
Blames our bodies instead of broken systems

Wash your hands, cough into your sleeve  
Plutocracy lampooning Universal Healthcare

Call on your God or whatever  
Just don't touch your face when you make the sign of the cross

## **Love in the Time of Corona**

Today, my love,  
let the crackle of the world burning outside our door  
be the music we slow-dance to.

Let us unclench our raised fists to make space for each other's hands;  
run with me until we no longer see the smoke.  
When we arrive at this imaginary place, there, where nothing else is,  
we will experience what no one else can.

This beautiful fiction.  
This escape from all that is imploding.

There, let me taste the warmth of sun's rays on your lips.  
Let me float lazily like driftwood,  
losing myself along the river in your eyes—  
as the butterflies flutter and the hummingbirds hum,  
let me braid honeysuckles into your hair.

Lay your head upon my heart.  
Let the pillow pitter-patter promises to you in a language  
only we are fluent in—  
may the songbirds serenade us while the peacocks prance.

When the sun begins to take its daily bow,  
let us try and convince it an encore.  
For in the distance,  
the flames are still flickering, the bullets are still flying,  
and soon, my love, we will smell the smoke

## Adobe

We have forgotten from whence we came  
Confused deities for God  
Forgotten about the earth  
How we sprung from her  
How creator molded us from her clay  
How that makes us her children

We have forgotten the holiness of her soil  
How it is a sacrament  
The way it feels between our fingers.  
How she always gives more than she takes

We have forgotten how her mud can make a home  
a village  
a community  
A heart

## Adobe

Sacred architecture  
Bricks and walls fashioned by bronze hands left to hardened in the sun  
Here in the southwest  
Where the rivers run  
And the *ristras* hang  
And the valleys speak  
And the bones of the indigenous rest beneath our feet

We stand

We stand here a library of collective memory  
Stewards of the land  
Where nature nurtured us  
And our grandmothers endured

We,  
A people before borders  
Old as the wind

We, with stardust on our tongue  
And moonlight in our eyes

## Adobe

A tradition before machines

A ritual before desecration  
A ceremony of the innate  
A liturgy of the elemental

Adobe

Take me back  
Sing with me a requiem to our past  
These notes of inventiveness  
These refrains of ingenuity  
This *mezcla* of organic matter standing like an immovable testament to time.



## ***Ghazal for Spring***

For now, let us hang our pain and worry on the closest hook  
and admire the quiet snow falling like balm outside, it is spring.

If you will, turn off the news and be still for a moment,  
listen to the loud sound of silence that sings, it is spring.

They said the dolphins and swans returned to the canals in Venice,  
the water is clear and the fish are swimming, it is spring

*La Madre Tierra está derramando lo viejo como una serpiente, curando heridas abiertas,  
mostrándonos el amor en sacrificio y crecimiento; qué hermoso, ¿verdad? Es primavera*

Mother Earth is shedding the old like a snake, self-healing open wounds  
showing us the love in sacrifice and growth; beautiful! It is spring.

Chase the smile welling inside you, even if you feel that it's fleeting,  
it is proof the sun always has your back, it is spring.

Do not walk around the promise of new beginnings as if tomorrow will  
foolishly repeat the mistakes of yesterday; seeds are sprouting, it is spring.

Forget not, there is a warm body in front of each shadow,  
a heart beating, a mind conspiring, a spirit opening—it is spring.

This morning, entangled bodies made love as the cold rain fell softly outside,  
physical distance morphing into metaphor; climax, equinox, it is spring.

The wind is howling outside, the hood is a siren that's not sounding,  
I'm contemplating what will blossom from all of this, it is spring.

## **Nothing Left**

And when there is nothing left to do but live,  
let us retire the noise,  
and build a home inside the stillness.

Grab a wrench and unfasten the parts of you  
that have become mechanical;  
rest your weary limbs in the bed of anomaly.

Outside,  
the machine is powering down.  
You can hear the birds when the gears aren't grinding.

When there is nothing left to do but live,  
make a vacation of your body;  
each part explored, a stamp on your passport.

Begin with your heart, maybe?  
Crawl inside and sightsee,  
ask difficult questions about who it is, and why.

Outside,  
the machine is powering down.  
You can hear yourself when the gears aren't grinding.

When there is nothing left to do but live,  
simply show up;  
that has always been enough.

And together in this sudden strangeness,  
radical imagination will run wild;  
tomorrow being built today.

## **Let Us Pray**

This morning,

I turned to the east and stared at the rising sun

That snuck upward against the sky

as though summoned

As the orange mixed with the blue of morning

a smile broke upon my face like a ripple in still water,

and for a moment ,

the ominous crackle of the world burning outside our door,

was calm.

For a moment the homeless man on the corner of Colfax and

Speer,

the one with the tired eyes and the dirty bedroll sitting loyally

like a puppy at his feet,

found shelter in the company of a stranger who bought him

breakfast,

and for a moment, there was peace.

How beautiful it is to inhabit these bodies.

How difficult it is to inhabit these bodies

This road we travel

This journey we seek

This path we walk with promise  
On our best days we are chapels filled with everything the world  
knows as sacred  
Our smiles glow majestic like sun through stained glass  
Our steeples write our names in the sky to remind the universe  
that we are here  
On our best days we are love and compassion and  
understanding.  
But on our worst days,  
On our worst days  
We are abandoned homes and broken glass  
Doors that seem to lead to nowhere  
We are splintered spirits aimlessly wandering desolate hallways  
There is nothing but shadows here  
On our worst days we are hate and intolerance and mercilessness  
But on our best days,  
On our best days we are oceans filled with potential  
Our hearts anchor us confidently like boats atop the waves  
Inside of us life swims vibrantly to and fro.  
We are coral reefs shining brilliantly beneath the embrace of an  
unending sun  
On our best days, we are ambitious, benevolent, and fearless

But on our worst days  
On our worst days we are deranged circuses  
Animals in captivity trapped under the big tent of life.  
We permit clowns to parade around as men.  
We're an audience too enamored by the Ring Leaders' routine to  
realize we are lions taking commands  
On our worst days we are pacified, submissive, and languid.  
But every day we are all nothing more than human  
A patchwork of bone and flesh and dust sewn together clumsy,  
but perfect  
We are voices trying to scream loud enough so the world will  
remember our names  
What will our legacy be?  
What sound will our existence make  
What sound will our work manifest as.  
I read somewhere once that in theory the energy created  
by a sound wave never really disappears—it simply  
spreads itself so thin and wide that it becomes inaudible  
and is absorbed into the world around it.  
That means that somewhere out there everything that has ever  
been said ripples across the waters of empty space  
Every bit of our elder's advice and every heart-felt  
compliment hang like A+ report cards on Orion's

refrigerator door.

Every insult, war cry or racist joke sticks like gum to the  
bottom of god's desk.

Slurs pollute the sky as oil does ocean

There are stories all around us.

The sun is a recorder that chronicles our life's moments  
then shines onto us in playback so that we may grow

The moon is a bow pulled against the bridge of the earth  
the waxing and waning of the tides are movements.

It is an old song,

An old song.

One we forgot we know the words to but always sing along

Our lungs rise and fall with the music.

Will your sound make the heavens swoon?

Or will you resound like missed notes, bent into off key  
time signatures.

When you speak when you act, do it with intent.

The universe will remember even when we won't

Every gentle breeze is a prayer,

Every syllable is permanent,

We are permanent.

What will this world inherit from you?

We are building our legacy right now. These words are  
our bricks. Our work, our mortar  
This moment, our foundation,  
We live in the most beautiful of times

We live in the most challenging of times  
So we must never forget how to dance amid the smoke.  
To celebrate through the pain  
To smile through the sadness  
To love through all the hate

Let us pray

Let us pray  
That we, the living, be drawn to our own light  
That we dig into the deepest parts of ourselves and find our  
buried treasure.  
That we open these sacred boxes and always give more than we  
take

Let us pray  
That we grow compassion in the gardens of our hearts  
That our words sprout legs and our actions grow wings  
That our minds be open like tulips in the spring

Let us pray

That we learn the difference between the bootstraps and the  
bootless

That we use our hands to lift each other up

That we dismantle the manmade borders we impose upon one  
another

May we always be courageous

May we be transformed and reborn each day

May we live free and with abandon

May we grow and dream and love

May we be unapologetically us

May we never stop fighting for justice and peace

And today, may we prove that this great world lives up to its  
reputation

That its heart is as big as its oceans and that its arms are long  
enough to

embrace all of the people who call this house their home.

---



## On Justice and Us

There are sweet bells of justice ringing righteously in the distance.  
From where we stand, the sound is faint, but unmistakably beautiful.  
From where we stand, faith convinces us to listen to what we hunger to one day see.

These recondite sounds, majestic as the *quetzal's* coo.  
These recondite sounds, soothing as the lullaby  
the sunset sings as it slow-dances across the horizon.

And we,  
we run with hope and abandon in the direction of the chimes.  
Traverse an American landscape that has made winners of some  
and bullseyes of others.  
Traverse an American landscape that has been stolen, enslaved  
and entered with bones and blood.

Even still,  
we run feverishly toward the bells.  
Because on good days, we know the ideals that live where the music is,  
promise equality.  
Promise prosperity.  
Promise liberty and justice for all.

Our hearts are compasses that point in the direction of freedom.  
Our hands, shovels unafraid to dig into the dirt.  
Our voices, keys we use to open doors not meant for us to walk through.  
Our minds, luscious playgrounds where dreams  
and better tomorrows marry in the chapel of perseverance.

For in the distance,  
maybe just outside our reach,  
balanced scales beseech to be seen.  
In the distance,  
the sword lady justice wields in her right hand is not slashing disproportionately;  
in the distance,  
her blindfold has not yet slipped from her eyes.

Beneficent is the red road we have traveled.  
Dignified, the path we have carved with promise.  
We are the fruit our ancestral roots dreamed into existence.  
Flowers cultivated in the garden of hard work and sweat.

Over a lifetime, the human heart beats more than two billion times without stopping.  
This means, we have two billion reasons to stretch our wings.  
To fly in the face of adversity.

To dance amid the smoke.  
To love through the all the hate.  
May boundaries be nothing more than invitations for exploration.  
A starting line from which we sprint in the direction of the uncharted.  
A catapult that launches us in the direction of the fruition of our dreams.

May justice prevail.  
May it be not a fleeting allusion only pursued,  
but a beacon of virtue we attain tirelessly and justly together.

For in the distance,  
the bells are still ringing,  
promise is calling,  
and we will not stop running until we all arrive.  
Until we all are free.

## **The Table**

Come, all of you and gather around the table.  
Bring with you the heavy luggage society has unfairly packed for you,  
the bags overflowing with barriers you have somehow ingeniously figured out how to navigate.

Or if your bags are a bit less heavy,  
or are filled to the brim with privilege passed down like an heirloom,  
bring them too.  
Do not fret if you feel your cup is empty  
or if your china is encrusted with gold,  
for today, we'll treat this table as an equalizer.  
Today, honest conversation and selfless action will be the food that nourishes us.

Before we sit, let us pass our stories around like bread.  
Take a piece for yourself, but always be conscientious;  
ensure there is enough to go around,  
for some know,  
there is not always enough to go around.

Or maybe there has always been enough.

Maybe in the back,  
in the rooms where the food is prepared,  
there is a surplus of things tucked away from the grasp and eyes of the peering.  
Stockpiles of things cannily sharing a wall with moaning scarcity.  
Maybe the meal was designed this way.  
Where some are intentionally invited to the helping,  
and others intentionally left off the guest list--  
No seat pulled out or given up,  
no place setting bearing their name.

If you are not invited to the table,  
it is possible you are on the menu.  
And those without seats,  
those of us tired of being consumed,  
have this collection of your ugly we have been saving.

Saving for moments just like these.  
Boxes filled with old bones and new blood.  
Attics packed with epithets and mason jars full of scars.  
Cedar chests stacked with broken treaties and the nooses tied around our forefather's necks.

We keep, under our beds, the sting of your water hoses  
and the, "No dogs or Mexicans" signs  
that flew proudly like flags.  
Buried in lock boxes beneath our fruit trees is the barbed wire of your internment camps;

the bars of the prisons you built, salivating with us in mind.  
We have, next to the extra Virgin Mary candles in our closets,  
the gods ripped from our grandmothers;  
the languages you choked out of our throats.

We have albums thick with snapshots of history our DNA refuses to forget.

We store, in file cabinets, next to broken olive branches, the names family and friends deported,  
the names of our family and friends banned.

You wonder why we grimace when we taste apple pie?  
Why the sweetness you savor, is too bitter for us to swallow?  
You wonder why we kneel when your flag is raised?  
Why our balled fists still punch holes in your pretty blue sky?

We know, that what the machine hasn't already swallowed,  
it will most definitely be coming for.  
Tractors with growling bellies and flesh between their teeth.  
This disease that runs rabid through them.  
This unquenchable thirst for things that are not theirs.

Your tables are not new to us.  
These tables you made us fashion but refused us to sit at.  
Our hands and feet and hearts know them well.  
This perk of being the builder.  
This perk of baptizing the wood with our sweat.

In your rear-view mirror, you can see us coming.  
But we are not coming for your head.  
We are aiming for the humanity that lives somewhere in the basement of your heart.

Our very existence is ceremony.  
This struggle sewn into our being.  
This survival radiating from our resilience.  
This joy we make space for despite the sting.  
Do not be surprised if we ask why the invitation was late.  
If we show you we've built a table of our own.  
One we fashioned out of necessity when we realized yours wasn't large enough to hold us.

Do not be surprised if we hand you a wrecking ball before we do our voice.  
If we ask you to dismantle the comfortable place you sit at as we watch.  
And when you are finished, pass the wrecking ball to us.  
We, too, will break down the silos we have built.

Then, when we are both left standing in the rubble of what used to be,  
let us weigh our pieces until the scale is balanced.

For it is not enough to merely have a seat at the table;  
one must be the designer of it.

So, let us destroy to rebuild anew.  
Let us unpack our bags, lend each other our ears, and gift each other our hearts;  
for listening and loving are foundations to understanding,  
and conflict does not have to be combat.  
Conflict can be a supple garden that change grows in.  
So, let's grow things together.

Let us sit at this new inclusive table, pass our stories around like bread,  
eat,  
be fed,  
be healthy,  
be valued,  
and truly be heard.

## Wind Chaser

There is a madman  
on the loose  
who insists  
on chasing  
the wind

He runs  
from one end of the earth  
to the other  
arms and eyes wide open  
moving in the same direction as  
dancing leaves  
and pollen escaping  
the clutch of  
the cottonwoods

This invisible kiss  
that bends the necks  
of tulips  
and men

This kiss that coaxes  
the song out  
of hollow chimes

He hunts this magic  
anxiously  
like a wolf  
that's never tasted  
the blood of its prey

This quest for  
something fleeting  
something unwilling to  
be immured for too long

But the madman chases the wind

Gallops and dashes  
in every direction the grass  
sways and the tumbleweeds  
roll

When he tires  
he rests his weary body  
upon battleground

Allows the elusive breeze  
to cool his  
sweat-beaded brow

Allows the breeze  
to caress his wounds  
by moving  
in  
through  
and around  
him

These unseen fingers  
caressing the softest  
and most callused parts  
of him.

This ephemeral altar  
he prays to

This lover  
of transience  
that always  
knots his mind

When the man is still  
his repose is not peaceful  
for the swirling wind  
soon abandons him  
as he rests

There is a man chasing the wind.

It's path as curious and  
uncertain as a  
fluttering butterfly's

There are things  
in this world  
built to belong to  
nothing or  
no one

Forces so wild  
the earth  
often feels  
like a cage

Existences that feed off  
of freedom  
and open roads.

But there is a man who chases the wind.

His legs  
have become weathered boats  
with broken sails

He paddles to the shore  
to enter the house  
he built for two

The house is cold

It has no windows  
and the candle on the table  
burns low

The wind  
pours herself  
into the space  
visiting the man  
briefly

As she  
extinguishes the  
candle in passing  
he knows that she is there

That she has always been  
That in some ways she will always be

But this time  
he accepts that she  
cannot stay

For the wind  
is a wanderer



whose only home  
is wherever  
she happens  
to be.

He walks her to the door  
kisses her goodbye for the last time  
and tomorrow

he  
will not  
run.