**Contemplative Service for Wednesday,**

**February 28, 2024**

****

*I have lived in the virtue of that life and power*

 *that took away the occasion of all wars…*

*I was come into the covenant* *of peace*

*which was before wars and strife were.*

*George Fox, 1651*

**First reading**: from William Penn, 1693

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it… It is as great presumption to send our passions upon God’s errands, as it is to palliate them with God’s name… We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.

**Music**: “Plainsong” by Fred Hersch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh7hNOHzGcY>

**Second reading:** from World Citizen Government

If we see people in need, people suffering, people facing oppression and violence, we must find a way to help them. It could be speaking up or speaking out, lending a hand, checking in, sending clothing, making a donation, offering a shoulder to cry on, sharing food, providing free medical or other support, offering a safe haven, etc. In other words, we should act towards one another non-violently.

The term “non-violence” defines an action or state of being by using the opposite of how we should act as part of the term. Because people should focus on what we need to do to achieve peace, rather than what we shouldn’t do, it is important to use a positive term to describe how we can effect change in our world, both as individuals and collectively. Encouraging people to “act peacefully” is no longer enough to achieve dramatic change in how humans interact. We must now compassionately insist upon peace in our own lives and in our collective interactions. I suggest we use the stronger term “peace insistence” instead of “acting peacefully” or “non-violence.”

Peace insistence\* is more than a commitment to acting non-violently. It is a question of ensuring that your interactions, your behavior, and that of others be conducted peacefully, that you consciously and consistently choose peace over aggression, and that you begin by finding peace in your own heart and mind.

The underlying elements of peace insistence are love, empathy, healing, and moving together and toward one another. Individual peace and world peace require us to move beyond non-violent action to peace insistence.

**Time of Silent Contemplation**

[*As love is union, it knows no extremes of distance.*](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/960630)

*—Juana Ines de la Cruz*

**Music**: “”So It Goes” by Billy Joel, performed by Fred Hersch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1c9sdn9UHM>

**Communal Blessing**

Holy Balance,

Lead us into imbalance when such risk will nurture peace.

Lead us into insisting on your reality over the delusions of violence and oppression.

Be with us in holy stubbornness as we hold out peace as your truth and your wholeness.

Amen.

**Music**: “Valentine” by Fred Hersch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEiT15WtT-A>

*The worshippers of the Holy One are they who tread gently on the earth,*

*and when the ignorant address them, they reply, “Peace!”*

*—The Qur’an*

**Special Program After Sunday Worship**

**Racial Wealth Gap Simulation**

As some of you are aware, at last June’s Annual Gathering of UCC churches in Northern California and Nevada, the gathered voted almost unanimously to encourage all of our Conference churches to consider becoming a Black Wealth Builder congregation. What we are asking congregations to do is to start learning about the background and causes of the significant gap between White and Black families in the United States.

As a great first step in this exploration, Rev. Barry Cammer (co-founder of the Black Wealth Builders Fund) will lead a Racial Wealth Gap Simulation this coming Sunday for members and friends of Orinda Community Church. This activity takes one hour. **We are hoping that a great many people who attend church this Sunday will grab a quick refreshment and come to the Fellowship Hall.** We’ll begin promptly 15 minutes after the end of worship.

Please make arrangements to stay an extra hour to participate in this Simulation. There will be a time for questions, reflections, and suggestions afterwards.

Historically speaking, Orinda was once a community where all home deeds specified that only White people could own the home. While the law has changed, the damage was significant. Come and learn how our own government put laws and policies into place in order to prevent the accumulation of weath by those in the Black community. Then, TOGETHER, we’ll ask ourselves what steps we can do to repair the damage.

Our prayer is that the process of choosing whether to become a Black Wealth Builder Congregation can be a movement by the whole congregation in the same way that OCC became an Open & Affirming Congregation.

See you Sunday,

Barry Cammer