

First Unitarian Church of Baltimore
April 12, 2009 Easter Sunday
A Celebration of Spring and Song
Reverend Lyn Oglesby, Ph.D.

Sometimes I wish spring would last forever. Every day I walk in my neighborhood and notice how the flowers have grown, blossomed and begin to fade. How the cherry blossoms fade from brilliant pink to snowy pink, and how when they fall they fill the gutters with blossoms. I check every day to see how high the peonies have sprouted. Spring is a wonderful time for poets and continues to inspire them. I hope you enjoy some of my favorites.

It's Time for Spring Bobbi Katz

My sweater's tight and itchy.
My snow pants are too small.
Last week I lost a mitten.
I can't find my scarf at all!

My woolen socks have lost their toes.
My boots have lost their tread.
And I have lost the love I had
For words like "skis" and "sled"!

But . . . my fishing rod still fits.
And . . . my baseball bat still hits.
I have a kite that wants to fly.
So . . . winter, call it quits!

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909)
Atalanta in Calydon (1865)

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

Daffodils

by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud□
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,□
When all at once I saw a crowd,
□A host, of golden daffodils;□
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,□
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.□□
Continuous as the stars that shine□
And twinkle on the milky way,□
They stretched in never-ending line□
Along the margin of a bay:□
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,□
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.□□
The waves beside them danced, but they□
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;□
A poet could not be but gay,□
In such a jocund company!□
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought□
What wealth the show to me had brought:□□
For oft, when on my couch I lie□
In vacant or in pensive mood,□
They flash upon that inward eye□
Which is the bliss of solitude;□
And then my heart with pleasure fills,□
And dances with the daffodils.

I Meant To Do My Work Today by Richard Le Gallienne

I meant to do my work today, □

But a brown bird sang in the apple tree, □

And a butterfly flitted across the field, □

And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land, □

Tossing the grasses to and fro, □

And a rainbow held out its shining hand-- □ So what could I do but laugh and go?

The Lake Isle Of Innisfree **William Butler Yeats**

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Plant a Garden by Edgar Albert Guest

If your purse no longer bulges
and you've lost your golden treasure,
If at times you think you're lonely
and have hungry grown for pleasure,
Don't sit by your hearth and grumble,
don't let mind and spirit harden.
If it's thrills of joy you wish for
get to work and plant a garden!
If it's drama that you sigh for, □

plant a garden and you'll get it □

You will know the thrill of battle □

fighting foes that will beset it □

If you long for entertainment and □

for pageantry most glowing, □

Plant a garden and this summer spend □

your time with green things growing.

If it's comradeship you sight for, □

learn the fellowship of daisies. □

You will come to know your neighbor □

by the blossoms that he raises; □

If you'd get away from boredom □

and find new delights to look for, □

Learn the joy of budding pansies □

which you've kept a special nook for.

If you ever think of dying □

and you fear to wake tomorrow□

Plant a garden! It will cure you□

of your melancholy sorrow□

Once you've learned to know peonies,□

petunias, and roses,□

You will find every morning□

some new happiness discloses.

A Prayer in Spring by Robert Frost

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;

And give us not to think so far away

As the uncertain harvest; keep us here

All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,□

Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;□

And make us happy in the happy bees,□

The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird□

That suddenly above the bees is heard,□

The meteor that thrusts with needle bill,□

And off a blossom in mid-air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,□

The which it is reserved for God above□

To sanctify to what far ends He will,□

But which it only needs that we fulfill.

Late Spring (Primrose) Robert Frost

Push away last year's wet clogging leaves,
long dead□tulips already shoulder their way up□somewhere
deep down, a bud
today clouds tumble playfully and scud□
tempting to scoop some earth, release a potted primrose□
with roots outgrowing sterile nursery compost

but the forecast is for
frost's□sweet showers instead are cruel snowflakes□
pull on a winter coat

yesterday is come back like a sore throat□
even the chill cannot be felt through woolen sleeves□
it seems I misinterpreted a promise

Spring Has Sprung

Robert Frost

Spring has sprung, the grass has ris',
I wonder where the birdie is?
There he is up in the sky, □

He dropped some whitewash in my eye!

I'm alright, I won't cry, □

sI'm just glad that cows can't fly!

How can we not love Spring? Robert Frost

How can we not love spring? The darkness has lifted, the breezes sporadically but progressively turn warmer and warmer.

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

The Sun by Mary Oliver

Have you ever seen
anything
in your life
more wonderful

than the way the sun,
every evening,
relaxed and easy,
floats toward the horizon

and into the clouds or the hills,
or the ruffled sea,
and is gone--
and how it slides again

out of the blackness,

every morning,
on the other side of the world,
like a red flower

streaming upward on its heavenly oils,
say, on a morning in early summer,
at its perfect imperial distance--
and have you ever felt for anything
such wild love--
do you think there is anywhere, in any language,
a word billowing enough
for the pleasure

that fills you,
as the sun
reaches out,
as it warms you

as you stand there,
empty-handed--
or have you too
turned from this world--

or have you too
gone crazy
for power,
for things?

This one by Emily Dickinson

A little Madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King.

Loveliest of trees A.E. Housman, A Shropshire
Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough

Ode To The Artichoke by Pablo Neruda

The artichoke
With a tender heart
Dressed up like a warrior,
Standing at attention, it built
A small helmet
Under its scales
It remained
Unshakeable,
By its side
The crazy vegetables
Uncurled
Their tendrills and leaf-crowns,
Throbbing bulbs,
In the sub-soil
The carrot
With its red mustaches
Was sleeping,
The grapevine
Hung out to dry its branches
Through which the wine will rise,
The cabbage
Dedicated itself
To trying on skirts,
The oregano
To perfuming the world,
And the sweet
Artichoke
There in the garden,
Dressed like a warrior,
Burnished
Like a proud
Pomegrante.
And one day
Side by side
In big wicker baskets
Walking through the market
To realize their dream
The artichoke army
In formation.
Never was it so military
Like on parade.
The men
In their white shirts
Among the vegetables
Were
The Marshals
Of the artichokes
Lines in close order
Command voices,

And the bang
Of a falling box.

But
Then
Maria
Comes
With her basket
She chooses
An artichoke,
She's not afraid of it.
She examines it, she observes it
Up against the light like it was an egg,
She buys it,
She mixes it up
In her handbag
With a pair of shoes
With a cabbage head and a
Bottle
Of vinegar
Until
She enters the kitchen
And submerges it in a pot.

Thus ends
In peace
This career
Of the armed vegetable
Which is called an artichoke,
Then
Scale by scale,
We strip off
The delicacy
And eat
The peaceful mush
Of its green heart.

Ode To The Onion by Pablo Neruda

Onion,
luminous flask,
your beauty formed
petal by petal,
crystal scales expanded you
and in the secrecy of the dark earth
your belly grew round with dew.
Under the earth
the miracle
happened
and when your clumsy

green stem appeared,
and your leaves were born
like swords
in the garden,
the earth heaped up her power
showing your naked transparency,
and as the remote sea
in lifting the breasts of Aphrodite
duplicating the magnolia,
so did the earth
make you,
onion
clear as a planet
and destined
to shine,
constant constellation,
round rose of water,
upon
the table
of the poor.

You make us cry without hurting us.
I have praised everything that exists,
but to me, onion, you are
more beautiful than a bird
of dazzling feathers,
heavenly globe, platinum goblet,
unmoving dance
of the snowy anemone
and the fragrance of the earth lives
in your crystalline nature.

I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You by Pablo Neruda

I do not love you except because I love you;
I go from loving to not loving you,
From waiting to not waiting for you
My heart moves from cold to fire.

I love you only because it's you the one I love;
I hate you deeply, and hating you
Bend to you, and the measure of my changing love for you
Is that I do not see you but love you blindly.

Maybe January light will consume
My heart with its cruel
Ray, stealing my key to true calm.

In this part of the story I am the one who
Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,
Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood.

Love Sonnet XVII by Pablo Neruda

I do not love you as if you were a salt rose, or topaz
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
So I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

There is another sky by Emily Dickinson

There is another sky,
Ever serene and fair,
And there is another sunshine,
Though it be darkness there;
Never mind faded forests, Austin,
Never mind silent fields -
Here is a little forest,
Whose leaf is ever green;
Here is a brighter garden,
Where not a frost has been;
In its unfading flowers
I hear the bright bee hum:
Prithee, my brother,
Into my garden come!

Weekend Glory by Maya Angelou

Some clichty folks
don't know the facts,
posin' and preenin'
and puttin' on acts,
stretchin' their backs.

They move into condos
up over the ranks,
pawn their souls
to the local banks.
Buying big cars
they can't afford,
ridin' around town
actin' bored.

If they want to learn how to live life right
they ought to study me on Saturday night.

My job at the plant
ain't the biggest bet,
but I pay my bills
and stay out of debt.
I get my hair done
for my own self's sake,
so I don't have to pick
and I don't have to rake.

Take the church money out
and head cross town
to my friend girl's house
where we plan our round.
We meet our men and go to a joint
where the music is blue
and to the point.

Folks write about me.
They just can't see
how I work all week
at the factory.
Then get spruced up
and laugh and dance
And turn away from worry
with sassy glance.

They accuse me of livin'
from day to day,
but who are they kiddin'?
So are they.

My life ain't heaven
but it sure ain't hell.
I'm not on top
but I call it swell
if I'm able to work
and get paid right
and have the luck to be Black
on a Saturday night.

When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd. Verse 1, by Walt Whitman

WHEN lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd—and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;
Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven by William Butler Yeats

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Petals by Amy Lowell

Life is a stream
On which we strew
Petal by petal the flower of our heart;
The end lost in dream,
They float past our view,
We only watch their glad, early start.
Freighted with hope,
Crimsoned with joy,
We scatter the leaves of our opening rose;
Their widening scope,
Their distant employ,
We never shall know. And the stream as it flows
Sweeps them away,

Each one is gone
Ever beyond into infinite ways.
We alone stay
While years hurry on,
The flower fared forth, though its fragrance still stays.

As we celebrate this Easter Sunday, we are called to nourish the seeds in our hearts with poetry and song. We are called to look for beauty in every direction. Let the love and the blossoms that grow and rise up from our hearts fill the air with the fragrance of compassion, humility, and mindful purpose.

In the name of all that is sacred, Amen.

Benediction

Rev. Oglesby

May your life be like a rosebud, gentle, velvety, and fragrant. May you grow and blossom, and keep your thorns under control. May you continue in happiness and hope and love, in the blessedness of this community.

Amen