

As we remember our theme, ***Pathways to Peace***, on our day of fasting and prayer on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, we remember International Women's Day as a global day to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. This prayer service honors women poets who gave voice to the fullness of life, faith, justice and peace.

Leader: We give thanks for the wisdom of the many women poets who have helped all humans to reflect deeply and to sing joyfully, to ponder and to praise. Their words are beacons to us as we move forward to co-create the kingdom of God in love and mercy. They are balms in suffering, they mother our souls so we may grow and flourish in grace.

Reader One: *Psalm 5: 8*
But I can enter your house because of your great love. I can worship in your holy temple because of my reverence for you, LORD.

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Two: *Psalm 49: 4-5*
My mouth shall speak wisdom, my heart shall offer insight. I will turn my attention to a problem; expound my question to the music of a lyre.

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Leader: We are grateful for all the women who have offered us wisdom and insight through their love of words and their love of God's world.

Reader Three: We are grateful for Lucille Clifton, the recently deceased African-American poet who felt the agony of racism, but who also reminded us of the promise of Easter: "The green of Jesus/is breaking through the ground/. . .The world is turning/ into the body of Jesus and/ the future is possible."

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Four: We are grateful for Denise Levertov, an American poet born in England with Jewish and Christian ancestors, who prayed through her poetry that, like a swimmer floating on water or a bird resting on an air current, "So would I learn to attain/ free fall, and float/ into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,/ knowing no effort earns/ that all surrounding grace."

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Five: We are grateful for the Native American poet, Linda Hogan, who reminds us of our ultimate spiritual unity as a human family; she reminds us of the Native American belief that in the time of sleep, "Neighbors, the old woman who knows you/ turns over in me/ and I wake up/ another country. There's no more/ north and south./ Asleep, we pass through one another/ like blowing snow,/ all of us,/ all."

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Six: We are grateful for the Mexican-American poet and writer, Sandra Cisneros, who has shared with us what she learned from traveling between her home in the U.S. and her relatives in Mexico: "There are no borders/ where love can connect us."

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Seven: We are grateful for the poet of the natural world, Mary Oliver, who reminds us what we can learn even from a small bird that sings in the night: "Oh



Lord, / what a lesson/ you send me/ as I stand/ listening/ to your rattling,
swamp-loving chat/ singing/ of his simple, leafy life--/how I would like to sing
to You/ all night/ in the dark/ just like that.”

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Reader Eight: *Zechariah 8:16*

These then are the things you should do: Speak the truth to one another; let
there be honesty and peace in the judgments at your gates.

All: **Her mouth shall speak wisdom, her heart shall offer insight.**

Leader: We are grateful for the poets whose words nurture us. We are also grateful
for the all the poets throughout the world who gave voice to the suffering of
their people and remind us of the continuing importance of speaking out for
justice and peace.

Reader Nine: For Nellie Sachs, the German-Jewish poet who wrote about the agony of
the Holocaust she witnessed;

All: **She has spoken truth and cried out for justice and peace.**

Reader Ten: For Anna Akhmatova, the Russian poet who spoke for all the mothers
whose children were imprisoned in the grim decades of Stalin;

All: **She has spoken truth and cried out for justice and peace.**

Reader Eleven: For the South African poet, Caroline Ntseliseng Khaketla, who gave voice to
her people in Lesotho struggling for their basic human rights;

All: **She has spoken truth and cried out for justice and peace.**

Reader Twelve: For the Chilean poet Marjorie Agosin, who has written poetry about the
mothers of Argentina’s disappeared and about the struggles and sufferings
of so many in Latin and South America;

All: **She has spoken truth and cried out for justice and peace.**

Reader Thirteen: For Suheir Hammad, a Palestinian-American poet, who reminds us of the
humanity of those who still struggle for their human rights in the Mideast and
in all countries.

All: **She has spoken truth and cried out for justice and peace.**

Reader Fourteen: For all the poets, such as Muriel Rukeyser and Adrienne Rich, who create
with words a possible world of peace and dignity for all.

Leader: As we celebrate International
Women’s Day, we remember
all these poets and all
women who seek to give
voice to the desire for the
fullness of life and for the
common good. May God
bless all these voices, and
may they be heard and
respected.

All: **May the voices of women
everywhere be heard and
respected.**

Amen.

