

**Date: Sunday, February 26th, 2023**  
**Delivered: UU Church, Waterville, Maine**

**Theme: “Roses in Winter”** The world can be a harsh and lonely place. Perhaps felt more so in New England’s cold winter months. Loving friendships are essential antidotes to bleak winter days and to warding off any foreboding sense of desolation we encounter in our hearts when we forget that we belong to one another.

**Thought for contemplation :**

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.”  
– Edith Sitwell

**Call to Worship/Opening Words:** “Alone” by Maya Angelou

**Reading:** “You Will Always Mean Something to Someone” from *Watering the Soul* by Courtney Peppernell (page 133)

**Message: “Roses in Winter”**  
**Theme: “Roses in Winter”**

*When a friend calls to me from the road  
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,*

*I don’t stand still and look around  
On all the hills I haven’t hoed,*

*And shout from where I am,  
“What is it?”  
No, not as there is a time to talk.*

*I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,  
Blade-end up and five feet tall,*

*And plod:*

*I go up to the stone wall*

**For a friendly visit.**

These words in **Robert Frost’s** poem “A Time to Talk,” paint for us a picture of a day interrupted.

Something we can easily relate to as we, too, have household tasks, yard work, and seemingly

a million little and large things,  
that take much of our time and effort,  
resources and focus.

Yet, he presents, *an example* of how to prioritize  
and make room for friendship  
when the opportunity presents.

“Friendship”  
defined as:  
the emotions or conduct of friends;  
the state of being friends;  
*a relationship* between friends;  
and  
a state of mutual trust and support.

**Friendship**, in the best of times is sought after,  
as we humans, for the most part,  
cherish shared-experiences.

So, when embarking on adventures,  
participating in creative activities,  
or muddling with *finding deeper understanding and meaning*  
as we reason our way through topics  
and **social and political** issues of our day,  
we find  
**our friendships matter.**

Who our *friends are to us*.  
Who **we are to them**.

Having friends to have fun with is essential  
to experiencing the fullness of life.

Having friends as companions to be with us  
when life is hard, heart-breaking or harrowing,  
can be life-saving.

Friendships are fostered through intense  
*and mundane* experiences.

To Australian actress and poet, **Gillian Jones**,  
“**A Friend**” is:

A person who will *listen* and not condemn  
Someone on whom you can depend

They will *not flee* when bad times are here  
Instead they will be there to lend an ear

They will think of ways to make you smile  
So you can be happy for a while

When times are good and happy there after  
They will be there to share the laughter

Do not forget your friends at all  
For they pick you up when you fall

Do not expect to just take and hold  
*Give friendship back*, it is **pure gold**.

**Naomi Shihab Nye**, multi-award-winning poet born in St. Louis, Missouri. Her father was a Palestinian refugee and her mother an American of German and Swiss descent. Naomi spent her adolescence in both Jerusalem and San Antonio, Texas. She had this to say about cultivating friendship, in her poem entitled,

***Red Brocade***

*The Arabs used to say,  
When a stranger appears at your door,  
feed him for three days  
before asking  
**who he is,**  
**where he's come from,**  
**where he's headed.**  
That way, he'll have strength  
enough to answer.  
**Or**, by then you'll be  
such good friends  
you don't care.*

*On Friendship*, Lebanese-American poet and philosopher,  
**Kahlil Gibran**, relayed this  
When asked to Speak about Friendship:

*“He answered, saying:  
Your friend is **your needs answered**.  
He is your field which you sow with love  
and reap with thanksgiving.  
And he is your board and your fireside.  
For you come to him with your hunger,  
and you seek him for peace.”*

Further down in a lengthy characterization of Friendship,  
he continued by stating

*“let there be no purpose in friendship  
save the deepening of the spirit.”*

He knew and shared that friends, friendships and being a friend, are *integral*  
aspects of our human lives. **We need them.**

We need them for the love and comfort *they can offer*.

We need them for the love and comfort *we can give*.

**Andrew Gold’s** iconic lyrics, turned theme-song for  
***The Golden Girls* television series**,  
“Thank You for Being a Friend” echos in many of our  
hearts and minds as the epitome  
of what friendship **is** and can be:

*“Thank you for being a friend;  
Traveled down a road and back again;  
Your heart is true,  
you're a pal and a confidant”*

Its ensemble cast of  
Bea Arthur, Betty White, Rue McClanahan, and Estelle Getty

Portraying their respective characters:  
Dorothy Zbornak,  
Rose Nylund,  
Blanche Devereaux,  
and Sophia Petrillo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voNEgCKzves>  
"Thank You For Being A Friend" from the album 'All This and Heaven Too' (1978). "Thank You For Being A Friend" was covered by  
Cynthia Fee for the theme song of the television show 'The Golden Girls.'

In hilarity, fun-filled antics,  
sprinkled with drama and poignancy  
*centered entirely on **themes of friendship**.*

Friendships in harmony.

Friendships in disharmony.

Friendships over-coming trials.

Friendships meeting each other at milestones,  
thresholds and transitions in life.

Indeed, the theme of **friendship** may match,  
if not exceed, the theme of *romantic love*,  
when it comes to what has been channeled through  
The Mystics and Poets and Songwriters  
throughout the ages and into our modern time.

Yes, friendships bring with them a lot of benefits.  
So often, roles in friendships can be framed in  
what we get out of them.

Companionship. Cheerleaders. Volunteers for our social endeavors. Mirrors to  
bounce our feelings off of.

To ward off loneliness, and to affirm our existence in the places and positions we  
hold in the world.

Friendship is for laughter *and for comfort*.

Our Thought for Contemplation by **Edith Sitwell**  
is worth repeating, given the season:

***“Winter is the time for comfort,***  
*for good food and warmth,*  
*for the touch of a friendly hand*  
*and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.”*

There are many ways we can bring laughter and comfort  
to each other.

Especially in wintertime, circled around warm fires.  
Kindling friendships,  
Doing activities together,

Singing songs,  
Playing board games and cards,  
Telling stories,  
*Talking - and talking more.*

Going snowshoeing and ice-skating.  
Having coffee and tea and meals *together*.  
Even sitting in silence reading together.

I encourage following the Hygge (**“hoo-guh”**) example  
of the Danish culture.  
Creating atmospheres of coziness and comfort  
and relaxation when you gather as friends.  
Such can instill a sense of welcome and openness  
that can naturally deepen friendships.

Making efforts, too,  
to connect with those friends  
whom we know are *homebound*,  
or don't travel much on winter roads.

Yes, there are many ways to cultivate friendship  
and share fellowship - *even in winter*.

At the heart of every healthy friendship,  
is not *as much* about what we get out of a friendship,  
or even, really, what we give to a friendship,  
individually,  
but, rather,  
why we care to be part of the friendship at all.  
And, how it builds mutually, *beneficially*,  
builds each friend in the friendship up.

**Courtney Peppernell** words we heard earlier  
in her poem *“Watering the Soul”*:

**“You will always mean something to someone”**  
is a wonderful way to consider friendships.

Good friendships instill in us a sense of Belonging.

**Some Signs of a Good Friendship:**

**A Friend Is There For You.**

Consistently.

You can trust that they will  
stand with you,  
be by your side,  
recognize you for who you are.

**A Friend Listens To You.**

They are someone you feel comfortable  
talking with and sharing your authentic  
thoughts, feelings and beliefs.  
And, you do likewise for them.

When you are in a Good Friendship  
**You Feel Good When You're Around Them.**

You generally enjoy each other's company  
and look forward to spending time together.

**Are Empathetic Towards Each Other.**

Good friends are not judgmental,  
nor dismissive of each other.

**Good Friends Are Able To Apologize And Forgive Each Other.**

Even in the best of friendships,  
disharmonies and disagreements can arise.  
Good friends are able to  
apologize and forgive each other.

**Good Friends Each contribute to Nurturing the Relationship.**

Good Friendships are not one-sided,  
but, rather *Mutual*.

And each friend in the friendship is  
mindful about fostering respect, compassion,  
appreciation and love.

In this faith tradition, one of the most familiar  
and heart-warming songs portraying  
the depth of what a friendship can be,  
is **Carolyn McDade's**,

*“Come Sing a Song with Me.”*

The sentiment well encapsulated in the very heart-full reasoning of **why** one wanted to spend time with one’s friend,  
“that *I* might know *your* mind.”

While Carolyn wrote it in 1976, it lay dormant for a long time.  
Not being included in her singing groups’  
song books for many years.

She said of this, that

*“I don’t like sweet songs.”*

And

*“It’s **so**, so sweet,”*

*So I left it beside the side of the road to languish.  
I didn’t even leave it **a pot of water**.*

**‘There you go, out the window.’ (I said to it)**

*Years later, what did I see coming down the road toward me  
but this sweet little song?*

*Other people had found it,  
loved it, cared for it,  
and it **had a life**.”*

Carolyn speaks of her songs as **her** teachers.

And, the **story behind the story** of “Come, Sing a Song”  
had a sort of time-delayed *teaching* for her.

The chaplain of the women’s state prison in Framingham, Massachusetts in the 1980s, invited Carolyn  
to offer a music program at the prison.

She accepted the invitation and  
brought **“Come, Sing a Song”** with her as part of  
her program - mainly because it was *easy to learn*.

Yet, something magical happened.



When the prisoners sang it, they did so in a way  
she had never heard before.

The experience was so moving,  
she had to stop singing herself  
So she could just **listen**  
to those women singing it.

She realized that her sweet song,  
to be especially meaningful,  
needed **context**.

It needed to be **felt**, embodied even.

*‘I’ll give you hope, when hope is hard to find’*

The prisoners, incarcerated,  
desperately needing hope,  
Yes, they, **they** had context to bring to it.

Carolyn said the song, well *“It went from sweet to **profound**.”*

#### Citations:

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/carolyn-mcdade-spirit-life>  
<https://www.carolynmcdademusic.com/bio.html>

I plant my songs where women seek to lean strongly, confidently, passionately into their love of life, knowing that it is our essence to create.  
Generativity is a natural state of life. Living our lives in ways that heal and uplift, that bring our human family to right relationship and reverence,  
is deep and beautiful purpose.

When we bring context to why we need our friendships,  
When we acknowledge our inherent **need** for our friendships,

When we affirm with appreciation  
*the value* of being able to share our  
Songs and dreams and fears and hopes within  
**the haven** of our friendships,

Our friendships transform to even deeper levels.

Founded in the kind of trust that is built **with love**.

As Bell Hooks tells us,  
“The word ‘love’ is most often defined as a noun,  
yet we would **all love better** if we used it as a verb.”

I think we all know that.

And for our friendships to flourish, we each need to be **active, loving** participants in our friendships.

Gloria Jean Watkins pen name: bell hooks - All About Love: New Visions  
William Morrow Paperbacks (January 30, 2018)  
Publication date : January 30, 2018

Within Lesson 67 of ***A Course in Miracles***,  
it states that

“Everything is either *love* or a call for love.”  
This is certainly true of our friendships.

It could be said as well, that the interactions  
within friendships is  
“*Hope*, or a call for Hope”

For hope and love are intertwined.

How we *bring hope* and *bring love* to our friendships  
is unique, and in direct response  
to that which is called for.

***Of “love”*** Mother Teresa says,  
“Do not think that love in order to be genuine  
has to be extraordinary.  
What we need is to love without getting tired.  
Be faithful in small things  
because it is in them that your strength lies.”

Yes, we must give energy to our friendships,  
Yet not to the point that we are depleted.

Friendships work, and can be sustainable,  
when the energy of giving,  
and of receiving,  
Flows both ways.

Honoring our friendships by providing them with  
the needed time to flourish, with compassion  
that opens paths to understanding  
and *being understood*  
by each other.

**We need our friendships!**

We need our friendships in times of celebration.  
To share our joys.  
And for everyday conversations.

The world can be a beautiful and magical place;  
Experienced even more so  
within the embrace of friendship.

We need our friendships when life is hard  
And challenges are present.

The world can be a harsh and lonely place.  
Perhaps felt more so in New England's cold winter months.

Loving friendships are essential antidotes  
to bleak winter days, and to warding off  
any foreboding sense of desolation  
we encounter in our hearts  
when we forget that **we belong to one another.**

We belong to one another.  
In friendship and in love.  
Being ***Roses in Winter***, as needed.

Come, sing a song with me,  
Come, dream a dream with me,  
Come, share a rose with me,  
that I might know your mind.

And I'll bring you hope  
when hope is hard to find,  
and I'll bring a song of love  
and a rose in the wintertime.

May it be so.