

Message 06/21/2026
Suzanne H. O'Hara

This I believe

Prelude - Claire Howard

Welcoming

Welcome to poplar ridge meeting for worship. My name is Suzanne O'Hara and I will be bringing the message today. Claire Howard and Lizzy Simkin are our musicians. Rob Howard is our zoom host inside the meetinghouse. Julie and Scott Lockhart will be our remote hosts.

There are microphones distributed around the benches. Please use one if you choose to speak during meeting. These do not broadcast your voice inside this building, but allow our zoom participants and people wearing the headsets to hear you. Be sure that you slide the button on the side of the microphone up before you start speaking.

The headsets are located at the back of the room. All are welcome to use them.

Poem

What Do I Believe - by Jim Yerman

She crawled into my lap...her lips were quivering...
there were teardrops in her eyes
"Some kids say they don't believe in Santa...
they say it's all a pack of lies."

She looked at me with those innocent eyes...
that snowy Christmas Eve...
and asked me quite directly...

"Daddy! What do you believe? "

"Oh, I believe in Santa." I answered,
"As sure as I believe in you.
I believe in miracles and Karma
I believe fairy tales do come true."

"I believe in love and friendship.
I believe in kindness and family.
I believe in ghosts and fairies and angels
I believe in wonder and destiny."

"I believe a higher power created the planets...
the stars, the sky, the sun.
I believe in the spirit of love
I believe there's good in everyone."

"I believe we should listen to the animals
I believe there's magic in moonbeams
I believe that art is all around us
I believe there's beauty in your dreams..."

"As I looked down she was sleeping in my arms
which gave me some relief.
What do I believe? I whispered...
I believe I'm blessed...beyond belief."

Joys & Concerns

Now's the time for us to share joys and concerns.

- people may talk-

We will hold in the light all things that have been mentioned and
unmentioned.

Musical Duet - Lizzy Simkin & Claire Howard

Message

I have a short message today inspired by the radio show “this I believe” . The program was started in the 1950s by Edward R. Murrow to encourage people to write and share essays describing the core values that guide their daily lives. Over 125,000 essays have been written by people from all walks of life. I find listening and reading these essays inspiring.

Creating my own essays like these has become an important part of my spiritual life. I use this format to winnow down to my most basic beliefs. For instance, it is easy for me to say I believe in world peace, feeding the hungry or fighting for equal rights. It is much harder to find the tiny seeds that are the core of my beliefs. It takes me significant time and effort for me to identify one of these seeds, but each time I do I understand myself better.

The guidelines for creating an essay are very simple.

- **Tell a story about you:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.
- **Be brief:** Your statement should be about 600 words or less. That’s about three minutes or less when read aloud at your natural pace.
- **Name your belief:** If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than trying to write a list of your beliefs, consider focusing on one core belief.

- **Be positive:** Write about what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.
- **Be personal:** Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. It is recommend you review and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

The 'This I believe' project is no longer active, but you can find messages to read online, in books and in recordings.

The format of the project helps me to clarify and express my most basic beliefs. Perhaps it is something that you would consider exploring yourself. I will share a brief, simple statement of a belief I hold.

You are welcome to share one of your's if it comes to mind.

This I believe...

I believe in the importance of micro friendships.

Micro friendships are brief, positive interactions with strangers. They can be as simple as sharing a nod or smile while passing through a parking lot, telling a clerk they are doing a great job or giving a friendly wave while letting a car merge in traffic.

I find that taking a few seconds to look someone in their eyes and make contact matter. The key is that what I say or do must

be honest. These small, intentional interactions lift my spirits and make a difference in my life. I hope they do the same for the person I've greeted.

It is becoming harder for me to make these contacts. It is easy to not look up when passing people in public. It is easy to be distracted by personal electronics. I believe we are all more rushed and tend to be very focused on completing tasks. It is also easy to be afraid of contact with a stranger.

I will continue to try to develop micro friendships. I will smile at the people. I will make tiny conversations. I will pick up and return a dropped item. I will help someone get their grocery cart unstuck. I will do these things and more with a smile and a few friendly words. The lift I get when I receive a smile or brief conversation in return lifts my spirits and adds light to my day.

Musical solo - Lizzy Simkin

Ending Prayer

I Dream A World—Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head

And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!

Afterthoughts

We will take a pause before ending worship for any thoughts yet to be expressed.

Announcements

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you today.
Our worship is at an end.

Who is with us in meeting?

Now is the time for announcements.