On Passing On Message for 13th September 2026

Happy New Year, Rosh Hashanah. The marvelous poet and deep humanist Wendell Barry who recently died at 92 published this poem in 2025, The Loved Ones.—Wendell Berry
The loved ones we call the dead depart from us and for a while are absent. And then as if called back by our love, they come near us again. They enter our dreams. We feel they have been near us when we have not thought of them. They are simply here, simply waiting while we are distracted among our obligations. At last it comes to us: They live now in the permanent world. We are the absent ones.

First hymn is Green #253 "Walk in the Light"

Last month we sang about the life of Margaret Fell and learned some fun facts about this early Quaker leader. Here are some of her words: "Friends, deal plainly with yourselves, and let the eternal Light search you, and try you, for the good of your souls; for this will deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, lay you open, and make all manifest that lodges in you; the secret subtlety of the enemy of your souls, this Searcher and Trier will make manifest. Consider one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. And dwell in love and unity, in the pure eternal Light; there is your fellowship, there is your cleansing and washing. And the everlasting God of light, life, and power, keep you all faithful to your own measure; that so the resurrection and the life you may witness, and the living bread you may feed on, which, whosoever eats of, shall never die."

Here is a very short untitled poem by Wendell Berry, "The fragment of the earth that is now me is only on its way through me.

It is on its way from having been a tree, a school of fish, a terrapin, a flock of birds. It will pass through all those forms again."

Our final reading is from the substantial poem by Wendell Berry, **Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front**

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.

Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.

Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Listen to carrion – put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?

Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicos
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

Let us share our Concerns and Joys carried in our hearts this morning, voicing them into this community of loving Friends—

Let us hold these expressions from Friends together with those joys and concerns left unsaid in our hearts, and for the many near and far, in Light and love. (Musical Interlude)

Dear Friends—With death as our constant companion and common fate, let us practice resurrection, being remade and reborn with the eternal as our friend. Give us strength to be more than our daily existence and move beyond our mortal selves, deeply connecting those selves and our souls. Let us help one another to walk in the Light that outshines the temporary and illuminates beyond mere circumstances. Help us change life to Light as a daily practice in our brief passage along the corridors of time and consciousness into the permanence of the eternal universe. Amen.

Message hymn is Green #218 "God's Love is a Light". 3 times

Message: Dear Friends—That simple song, "God's Love is a Light" walks through transformative steps as the Light moves from external to internal—rather than shining on me, it shines through me. Similarly, in the reading from Margaret Fell, she is first talking about how the Light has profound effects on providing a clarity of understanding, but then moves into how collectively we generate the light that illuminates our lives to resurrection. And this is where Wendell Berry also ends up in his manifesto poem. Wendell Berry strongly asserted throughout his life that there be no separation or distinction from the spiritual and the material, that it made no sense to differentiate between body and soul. That what all comes together to make us in the universe, this convergence of atoms and structures and stardust and energy that I call me both physically and in my thoughts and hopes and dreams and through which I experience an inner Light, is something that is constantly converging and dissipating in the world. As his short, untitled poem states, "The fragment of the earth that is now me is only on its way through me. It is on its way from having been a tree, a

school of fish, a terrapin, a flock of birds. It will pass through all those forms again." And in Berry's construction, he has this as a fundamental truth bound with our mother the earth. But the earth, too, is a living organism on a different scale and is constantly receiving and using the energy from the sun, while meteors add their dust, and every once in a while something is ejected or escapes physically. These miraculous systems generate ourselves, along with our spirits and sense of the divine, and the incredible sense of wonder at the universe in its awesome scale of greatness may also be an internal scale of wonder and wisdom internally.

When we share the promptings of the spirit, we are meant to be sharing our souls, our innermost truths, things we may not exactly be used to facing or verbalizing. And, as Margaret Fell observes, as a group we are tapping into the eternal, we are stepping into the stream of life, light, and power. As she puts it, "Consider one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. And dwell in love and unity, in the pure eternal Light; there is your fellowship, there is your cleansing and washing." It is similar to Wendell Berry's observation at the end of his poem *The Loved Ones*, " At last it comes to us: They live now in the permanent world. We are the absent ones."

That blessed cycle of decay, of becoming the mulch and soil of new life, of being eaten by the birds, or disappearing in the fire, or dissolving in the earth. It is the way of the world, and perhaps of our spirits as well, however they, too, become one with the universe and step into the next chapter, nurturing what is to come. We know we live on in memories and words that are heard, or actions and accomplishments that perhaps are even recorded and influence what is to come. And we also mark and respect special places in nature or built as shrines and we watch animals and plants do the same as they migrate or remember, become tame or

find a spot to flourish and grow. Those of us with experience with plants and animals know how they enjoy a routine, the safety of predictability, the joy of greeting a familiar companion.

Yesterday morning, Saturday, I was writing this and facing the sunrise with its beautiful golden light growing, and watching the breeze move through the leaves in the trees and noticing the color over the top of the tassling corn and the bulk of the dark forest of trees behind it and our two elderly remaining sheep stepping out of the barn. Both a unique and predictable day. Much as watching the sunset on the shore can be done every day and is also always different. Each of us can behold glory—we share that in common and yet it is also always different, both by each day and each perceiver. The new year, Rosh Hashannah, is always new for each of us and every time.

The art of the weaver, the quilt, the artifact, the loaf of bread, the Sistine Chapel, the backyard garden, the nest, the web, the dance of cranes, the cunning of sharks. Today, this afternoon, here at the meeting house we will have another of the many hundreds if not thousands of memorial meetings that have taken place in this room. In those testimonies to life, we assert again that the meaning of life is life itself, is life lived--in spirit and patience among friends and community and in Light. Just as I wrote that line yesterday, the rising sunlight hit the windows I was facing with great and golden brilliance. A coincidence, of course. A profound one for me among all the coincidences and convergences that we notice and treasure. A brilliant light that revealed the smudges on the glass, the shimmering of dust and single strands of spider silk, and the little gap under the door. And now it has already faded to regular daylight as I write, or as I wrote then, just yesterday.

Closing hymn is Green #255 “Valiant for the Truth”

I close with a quote from the character Samwise Gamgee in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, “In the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.”