

*To Do Justice, to Love Kindness, to Walk Lightly*  
Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Sunday, January 17, 2016

**Reading #1: “Where Everything Is Music”** by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

We have fallen into the place  
where everything is music.

The strumming and the flute notes  
rise into the atmosphere,  
and if the whole world's harp  
should burn up,  
there will still be hidden instruments  
playing, playing

This singing art  
is sea foam.  
The graceful movements  
come from a pearl  
somewhere  
on the ocean floor.

Poems reach up like spindrift  
and the edge of driftwood  
along the beach  
wanting, wanting

They derive from a slow  
and powerful root  
that we cannot see.

Stop the words now.  
Open the window  
in the center of your chest,  
and let the spirits fly  
in and out!

-- Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (Jalalu'ddin Rumi, Maulana), 13th century Persian poet, founder of Mevlevi order / Whirling Dervishes of Sufi tradition. Translation by Coleman Barks.

**Reading #2: “A Song Is a Gardener”**

**A song is a gardener**  
A song is a seed

It is not derailed, discouraged, deterred  
by gated, guarded hearts.

It finds every shortcut, crack and crevice  
It flits, floats, meanders, winds, works its way in

**Wakes us up to what is  
and what can be.**

**It will knock down the wall**

**and fashion a bridge  
from sundered stone**

Enter the soul's secret garden  
Subtly scatter seed

A song will not change a policy,  
re-write the laws, topple dictators,  
End discrimination, stop deforestation  
House the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the land

The singing of songs, the piping of poems  
The drumming, dancing, delving,  
digging, delighting, daring,  
Beautiful boldness of art  
Will merely crack open the hard shell  
of the dormant heart

**and hearts awakened  
are unstoppable.**

*Excerpt from a poem by Sara Thomsen, founder/director, Echoes of Peace*

**Sermon: "To Do Justice, to Love Kindness, to Walk Lightly"** by the Rev. Suzanne Wasilczuk  
A song by T. R. Ritchie:

*Sung: People say to me, "Oh, you gotta be crazy,  
How can you sing in times like these?  
Don't you read the news? Don't you know the score?  
How can you sing when so many others grieve?"  
People say to me, "What kind of fool believes  
that a song will make a difference in the end?"  
By way of a reply, I say a fool such as I  
Who sees a song as somewhere to begin.*

A song is somewhere to begin.  
The search for something worth believing in  
If changes are to come there are things that must be done  
And a song is somewhere to begin.

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The American folksinger Pete Seeger died two years ago, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at the age of 94. From his youngest days Pete was immersed in music.

Pete's father Charles was [Harvard](#)-trained composer and musicologist and established the first musicology curriculum in the U.S. at the University of California-Berkley in 1913. Musicology is the scholarly analysis of, and research on, music. And, his father Charles was a key founder of the academic discipline of [ethnomusicology](#) – the study of music in its cultural context.

Pete's mother, Constance de Clyver (née Edson), was raised in [Tunisia](#), trained at the [Paris Conservatory of Music](#), was a concert violinist and later a teacher at the [Juilliard School](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

In 1912, Charles Seeger was hired to establish the music department at the [University of California, Berkeley](#), but was forced to resign in 1918 because of his outspoken [pacifism](#) during [World War I](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Charles and Constance moved back east, to Charles' parents' estate in [New York](#) [Charles came from an old, established family], northeast of New York City, their base of operations.

When baby Pete was eighteen months old they set out with him and his two older brothers in a homemade trailer to bring musical uplift to the working people in the American South.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete\\_Seeger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Seeger); accessed 10 January 2016.

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The title of this sermon comes from a more recent song – the words from Micah, chapter 6, verse 8. “And what does the Lord require of you?”

This song was written for Steve O’Neil. Steve was a county commissioner in the Duluth area; he was called the “Mother Teresa of Duluth” for his work with the homeless and poor. Steve, and his wife Angie Miller, lived their lives in the proud Catholic Worker tradition of Dorothy Day.

<http://www.larrylong.org/2013/07/in-honor-of-steve-o-neil/>; accessed 12 January 2016

### **Song of Micah** by Larry Long

Sung: *To do justice,  
to love kindness,  
to walk humbly with your God, with your God.  
To do justice,  
To love kindness,  
to walk lightly with your God, with your God.*

To fall in love, to not let go,  
to not stand above, to not stand below.

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Pete Seeger.

At age seven, in 1926, Pete’s parents divorced. And when he was thirteen, Pete’s father married his composition student and assistant Ruth Crawford. Ruth came to be considered one of the most important modernist composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She was also deeply interested in folk music. All four of Pete’s half-siblings became folk singers. Perhaps the best known is Peggy Seeger.

### **I'M GONNA BE AN ENGINEER**

*[written by Peggy Seeger in 1970]*

Sung: *When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy  
I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys.  
Everybody said I only did it to annoy  
But I was gonna be an engineer*

*Mamma said, "Why can't you be a lady?  
Your duty is to make me the mother of a pearl*

*Wait until you're older, dear  
And maybe you'll be glad that you're a girl.*

*Dainty as a Dresden statue, gentle as a Jersey cow,  
Smooth as silk, gives cream and milk  
Learn to coo, learn to moo  
That's what you do to be a lady, now.*

At age 17 Pete discovered the five-string guitar at a folk music festival in North Carolina. And joined the Young Communist League.

Eighteen, and Pete enrolled in Harvard. While there he became increasingly involved with politics and folk music. His grades suffered; he lost his scholarship; and dropped out of school the next year.

He thought about a career in journalism, took art courses, polished his performance skills at the private high school where his aunt was principal; spent a summer touring with The Vagabond Puppeteers.

At age 20 Pete took a job with Alan Lomax, a friend of his father's, and an American folk song archivist for the US Library of Congress. Lomax encouraged Pete's singing, and Seeger was a regular performer on Lomax's radio show with the Columbia Broadcasting Company, performing alongside folks like Burl Ives and Woody Guthrie.

In 1941 Seeger performed with a racially integrated cast at the White House, organized by Eleanor Roosevelt.

At age 21 Pete performed with the Almanac Singers – sea shanties, pioneer songs, but also songs with a decided progressive political slant [especially in an album called *Songs for John Doe*] It was war-time, and an adviser on domestic propaganda to the US military called the music “strictly subversive and illegal” and a “populist poison.”

The following year the Almanacs issued *Dear Mr. President*, an album in support of Roosevelt and the war effort. The title song, "Dear Mr. President," was a solo by Pete Seeger, and its lines expressed his lifelong credo:

Now, Mr. President, / We haven't always agreed in the past, I know, /  
But that ain't at all important now. / What is important is what we got to do, / We got to lick  
Mr. Hitler, and until we do, / Other things can wait.//  
Now, as I think of our great land . . . / I know it ain't perfect, but it will be someday, / Just  
give us a little time. //  
This is the reason that I want to fight, / Not 'cause everything's perfect, or everything's right. /  
No, it's just the opposite: I'm fightin' because /  
I want a better America, and better laws, / And better homes, and jobs, and schools, /  
And no more Jim Crow, and no more rules like /  
"You can't ride on this train 'cause you're a Negro," /  
"You can't live here 'cause you're a Jew," /  
"You can't work here 'cause you're a union man."//  
So, Mr. President, / We got this one big job to do /  
That's lick Mr. Hitler and when we're through, /  
Let no one else ever take his place /  
To trample down the human race. /  
So what I want is you to give me a gun /  
So we can hurry up and get the job done.

Seeger served in the US Army in the Pacific. Trained as an airplane mechanic, he was reassigned to entertain the troops with music. Later, when people asked him what he did in the war, he always answered "I strummed my banjo."

In 1950 the Almanac Singers were reconstituted as The Weavers. Probably their best known song was "Goodnight, Irene"

Sometimes I live in the country,  
Sometimes I live in town,  
Sometimes I take a great notion  
To jump in the river and drown.

Irene good night, Irene good night,  
Good night Irene, good night Irene,  
I'll see you in my dreams.

At the height of their popularity "the Weavers' performing career was abruptly derailed... when blacklisting - the practice of refusing employment to those suspected of having communist leanings - prompted radio stations to refuse to play their records and all their bookings were canceled."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete\\_Seeger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Seeger); accessed 10 January 2016.

"In the 1950s and, indeed, consistently throughout his life, Seeger continued his support of civil and labor rights, racial equality, international understanding, and anti-militarism, and he continued to believe that songs could help people achieve these goals." It was also at this time that Pete became disillusioned with the communist government in Russia and resigned from the Communist Party of America.

In 1955 Seeger was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, pled the Fifth Amendment [essentially saying his testimony would incriminate himself], and was sentenced to ten 1-year terms in jail [to be served concurrently]. The sentence was appealed and his conviction was overturned in 1962.

During these intervening years Pete kept singing [as a music teacher in schools and summer camps, and doing the college campus circuit]. In 1960, a school board told Seeger that "he could not play a scheduled concert at a high school unless he signed an oath pledging that the concert would not be used to promote a communist agenda or an overthrow of the government. Seeger refused, and the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) obtained an injunction against the school district, allowing the concert to go on as scheduled.

[Almost 50 years later, in February 2009, the San Diego School District officially extended an apology to Seeger for the actions of their predecessors.]

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete\\_Seeger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Seeger); accessed 10 January 2016.

Pete tells us: "A good song reminds us what we're fighting for."

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete\\_Seeger](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete_Seeger); accessed 8 January 2016

In the 50's Pete wrote music, like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"

**Where Have All the Flowers Gone**  
**Pete Seeger [Verses 4 & 5, Joe Hickerson] 1955**

Sung: *Where have all the flowers gone, long time passing?  
Where have all the flowers gone, long time ago?  
Where have all the flowers gone?  
Young girls have picked them everyone.  
When will they ever learn?  
Oh, when will they ever learn?*

And the 60s came, with a bit of a folk music revival.

**Turn Turn Turn** *Pete Seeger, 1962, Ecclesiastes, 3:1-9*

To Everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
And a time to every purpose, under Heaven

Sung: *A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep*

In 1963 Seeger toured Australia, singing a song written by UU Malvina Reynolds – “Little Boxes,” the number one hit in that country – a song about the suburbs springing up around urban areas.

Sung: *Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky tacky  
Little boxes, Little boxes, little boxes all the same.  
There's a green one & and pink one & a blue one & a yellow one  
And they're all made out of ticky tacky & they all look just the same.*

Pete continued to sing.

He sang for the earth: “God Bless the Grass” – again a song by Malvina Reynolds.

God bless the grass  
that grows through the crack.  
They roll the concrete over it  
to try and keep it back.  
The concrete gets tired  
of what it has to do,  
It breaks and it buckles  
and the grass grows thru,  
And God bless the grass.

And he sang for his beloved Hudson River, contaminated by General Electric & its dumping of PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls].

He sang for peace. In November of 1969, in Washington, DC, Seeger led a half million protesters in singing John Lennon’s song “Give Peace a Chance.”

Sung: *All we are saying  
is give peace a chance.*

Inspired by Woody Guthrie, whose guitar was labeled "This machine kills fascist," Seeger's banjo was emblazoned with the motto "This Machine Surrounds Hate and Forces It to Surrender."<sup>[72]</sup>

Pete continued singing.

In 2010, at age 91, Seeger co-wrote and performed the song *God's Counting on Me, God's Counting on You* with Lorre Wyatt, a comment on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Sung: *When we look and we see  
Things are not what they should be  
God's counting on me  
God's counting on you*

*Hoping we'll all pull through  
Hoping we'll all pull through  
Hoping we'll all pull through  
Me and you*

*And when drill, baby, drill  
Leads to spill, baby, spill  
God's counting on me  
God's counting on you*

What we do now, you and me  
Will affect eternity  
God's counting on me  
God's counting on you

As Pete Seeger tells us: "Participation - that's what's gonna save the human race."  
[https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete\\_Seeger](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete_Seeger); accessed 8 January 2016

The next year he sang at a solidarity march with Occupy Wall Street.

In 2012 he performed with folks like Harry Belafonte and Jackson Browne to bring awareness to the 37-year-long imprisonment of Native American activist Leonard Peltier.

*In July of 2013, at their family home, at age 91 **Toshi Aline Seeger**, an American filmmaker, producer, and environmental activist, died surrounded by her husband [of almost 70 years] Pete Seeger; and their children Daniel, Mika and Tinya.*

### **To My Old Brown Earth**

Sung: *To my old brown earth  
And to my old blue sky  
I'll now give these  
last few molecules  
of "I."*

*And you who sing,  
And you who stand nearby,  
I do charge you*

*not to cry.*

*Guard well our human chain,  
Watch well you keep it strong,  
As long as sun  
will shine.*

*And this our home,  
Keep pure and sweet and green,  
For now I'm yours  
And you are also  
mine.*

<http://www.lyricsondemand.com/p/peteseegerlyrics/tomyoldbrowneathlyrics.html>; accessed 7 February 2014.

Just a couple months later, in September of 2013 Pete sang with Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and others at a Farm Aid concert. [Farm Aid is an organization started in 1985 to help family farms.].

*Sung: As I went walking that ribbon of [highway](#)  
I saw above me that endless skyway  
I saw below me that golden valley  
This land was made for you and me.*

*This land is your land, this land is my land,  
From [Bonavista](#), to [Vancouver Island](#)  
From the [Arctic Circle](#) to the [Great Lakes](#) waters,  
This land was made for you and me.*

*I roamed and I rambled,  
And I followed my footsteps  
To the fir-clad forests  
Of our mighty mountains  
And all around me  
A voice was calling,  
This land was made for you and me.*

“When asked about his religious or spiritual views, Seeger replied: ‘I feel most spiritual when I’m out in the woods. I feel part of [nature](#). Or looking up at the stars. [I used to say] I was an atheist. Now I say, it's all according to your definition of God. According to my definition of God, I'm not an atheist. Because I think God is everything. Whenever I open my eyes I'm looking at God. Whenever I'm listening to something I'm listening to God.’”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete\\_Seeger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Seeger); accessed 10 January 2016.

In January 2014 Pete Seeger died, at age 94.

Talking about singing Pete said:

“Once upon a time, wasn’t singing a part of everyday life as much as talking, physical exercise, and religion?”

Our distant ancestors, wherever they were in this world, sang while pounding grain, paddling canoes, or walking long journeys. [and he asks us:]

Can we begin to make our lives once more all of a piece?

Finding the right songs and singing them over and over is a way to start.

And when one person taps out a beat, while another leads into the melody, or when three people discover a harmony they never knew existed, or a crowd joins in on a chorus as though to raise the ceiling a few feet higher, then they also know there is hope for the world.”

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete\\_Seeger](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/30113.Pete_Seeger); accessed 8 January 2016

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*Sung: People say to me, “Oh, you gotta be crazy,  
How can you sing in times like these?  
Don’t you read the news? Don’t you know the score?  
How can you sing when so many others grieve?”  
People say to me, “What kind of fool believes  
that a song will make a difference in the end?”*

*By way of a reply, I say a fool such as I  
Who sees a song as somewhere to begin.*

*A song is somewhere to begin  
The search for something worth believing in  
If changes are to come there are things that must be done  
And hope is somewhere  
And a dream is somewhere  
And a song is somewhere  
to begin.*

May it be so. May we make it so. Blessed Be. And Amen.