

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to morning prayers here in Appleton Chapel. We welcome you this morning. Our speaker this morning is Abby McElroy, who is a undergraduate student senior. We're so grateful that you'll be speaking for us today. All who are able, please stand for our responsive reading found in your black Psalter. Psalm 98 will be the reading today. Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has worked wonders. His right hand, His holy arm, has won Him victory.

Congregation:

The Lord has manifested His victory, has displayed His triumph in the sight of the nations.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

He was mindful of His steadfast love and faithfulness toward the house of Israel. All the end of the earth beheld the victory of our God.

Congregation:

Raise and shout to the Lord for all the earth, ready to enjoy his songs and praise.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Sing praise to the Lord with the Lark, with the Lark and melodious song.

Congregation:

With the trumpets and the blast of the horn, raise a shout before the Lord with the king.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

Let the sea and all within it thunder, the world and its inhabitants.

Congregation:

Let let the rivers talk in hands, the mountains sing joyously together.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

At the presence of the Lord, for He is coming to rule the earth. He will rule the world justly and its people with equity.

Congregation:

(Singing.)

Abby McElroy:

A reading from Thich Nhat Hanh's 2018 poem, Walking Meditation. "Take my hand. We'll walk. We will only walk. We'll enjoy our walk without thinking of arriving anywhere. Walk peacefully, walk happily. Our walk is a peace walk. Our walk is a happiness walk. Then we learn that there is no peace walk, that peace is the walk. That there is no happiness walk, that happiness is the walk. We walk for ourselves. We walk for everyone, always hand in hand. Walk and touch, peace every moment. Walk and touch, happiness every moment. Each step brings a fresh breeze. Each step makes a flower bloom under our feet. Kiss the earth with our feet. Print on the earth your love and happiness. Earth will be safe and we feel in us enough safety."

Good morning. As I wondered what to speak about today, I went through a long list of options. I can talk about my dad, about the love between Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman, about a magical sync from high school, the joy of secrets. But as I pondered these, I felt stress and excitement rising in my body and I found myself singing, moving my feet to the words, using them to breathe deeply. And so I decided I wanted to talk about the songs and chants that have meant so much to me over the years. This walk will be a peace walk. The poem I read to you today, I first heard as a song recorded by a member of Thich Nhat Hanh's meditation community, Plum Village. Freshman year, I walked around the yard with this song rolling at the soles of my feet. What does it mean to walk peacefully, to walk a happiness walk?

The beautiful melody helped me to understand, slowed my breathing, brought a smile to my face, but the story doesn't quite start there. The first chant I ever learned, like so many, was gifted to me in community. In my first year, I went on a Harvard meditation retreat, and that first night they announced that we would sing ourselves a lullaby before bed. That lullaby was a loving, kindness meditation set to song, may I be happy? May I be free from pain and suffering. May I live in peace and well-being? May I be free? With each verse, expanding these wishes to wider and wider circles of beings. The practice meant so much to me that I sang this song each night with my friends and on my birthday that year, we sang the song, as we called it, around my cake and candles instead of happy birthday. Something about the song struck me so deeply. My music, especially chance, has been a root in my spiritual practice ever since, even as I've ebbed and flowed as a floaty little blob in my religious traditions.

Come together, learn the flowers, go light. I was gifted this chant in a moment when I didn't know what to do. I just felt hurt and lost and angry. A friend who is here today asked, "Do you want to sing?" She taught me rounds and together we sang in a small chapel, these words bringing me to the present moment, to the room, to the love of the people in it, to my body. She is the one who introduced me to a group of people who love to sing short, repeated words, who collect them and share them like flowers. Thank you. So many of these chants and songs are connected to people, to moments, to the feeling of an AirPods in my ear and my feet on the ground and the breath in my belly. You don't have to know the way, the way knows the way.

Loosen, loosen, baby. The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy. I will be gentle with myself. As the future feels uncertain, these words singing in my ear, offer reassurance. I walk with them, sing my heart out in my bedroom, in the kitchen, and remember to breathe. These songs help me to walk a peace walk, a happiness walk, to kiss the earth with my feet. They span religious traditions, languages, styles. I sung them alone on the tops of mountains and sitting on the ground with friends. I'm so grateful for their gifts. Will you pray with me? I draw my words for a bouquet of chants. Beloved, God, help us to walk through our days and be present, to rest our hearts in each other, return to love, and know we are not alone. Show us the words we need and bring us the people to sing them with. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

All who are able, please stand and let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples saying, our Father.

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvon Jones:

Now, let us sing together, hymn number 141, The Glory of These 40 days.

Congregation:

(Singing.)

The Rev. Dr. Calvon Jones:

Now as you leave this place, but never away from God's presence, walk the happiness walk, walk the peaceful walk, and may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.