

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation :

Good morning.

Harriet Lindeman:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. My name is Harriet Linderman and I'm a Master of Divinity candidate at the Divinity School and the seminarian here at Memorial Church. I will be speaking this morning. Please rise in body or in spirit for responsive reading of Psalm 126 found in your black Appleton psalter book.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

Congregation :

Then was your mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathern, the Lord hath done great things for them.

Harriet Lindeman:

"The Lord hath done great things for us, where of we are glad."

Congregation :

Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.

Harriet Lindeman:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Congregation :

He that goeth fourth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him..

Harriet Lindeman:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(Singing)

Harriet Lindeman:

A reading from A Chair For My Mother, by Vera B. Williams. If you want to see the picture, it's a beautiful picture. "The first day we moved in, the neighbors brought pizza and cake and ice cream and they brought a lot of other things too. The family across the street brought a table and three kitchen chairs. The very old man next door gave us a bed from when his children were little."

"My other grandpa brought us his beautiful rug. My mother's other sister, Sally had made us red and white curtains. Mama's boss, Josephine brought pots and pans, silverware and dishes. My cousin

brought me her own stuffed bear." So I've loved A Chair For My Mother since I first heard it read aloud by my kindergarten teacher and I still get drawn into the simple, aching story of resilience and community and familial love and the bright flowy illustrations.

When my parents got me my own copy at home as a kid, I would linger over this page, finding each gift mentioned in the picture as the neighborhood comes together to help this family rebuild after a fire destroys their home. Part of my role as a seminarian at MemChurch is helping lead the children's program on Sunday mornings. And for these next few weeks, we will be learning about loving our neighbors.

We talk about how love is not just a feeling, but a daily practice and actions we take. And I look forward to sharing this book with the kids and this image of the neighborhood loving each other through crisis. And in our Cambridge neighborhood recently, I've seen the action of loving our neighbors take the form of slowing down and grieving alongside them.

This month, while I know many of you were likely away visiting other homes, there has been loss that has been shared in our community here. And I would like to take some time this morning to read part of the statement from the parents of Sayed Faisal, a young man, just 20 years old, who was killed by the Cambridge Police early this month while experiencing a mental health crisis. He was a student nearby at UMass Boston and a part of the local Bengali community. His parents shared this statement through the Council of American Islamic Relations. Let us take a moment to listen to their voices.

"Our only son, Sayed Faisal, who we lovingly called Prince is no longer with us nor in this world. We are completely devastated and in disbelief that our son is gone. Prince was the most wonderful, loving, caring, generous, supportive, and deeply family oriented person. He loved to travel, create art, and play sports with his friends. He expressed his feelings through gifts. He never forgot special occasions and always made sure that those around him felt appreciated."

"He loved his friends and had deep relationships with them, his family members, his cousins and community members. He treated everyone with love, respect, and loyalty. We want to know what happened and how this tragic event unfolded." There's no way to fix this unfixable loss, and we have so much to do to love our neighbors in and through and beyond this moment. As we know, our lives and so often our deaths are embedded in structures and power and policy that value white bodies and what we can need and what we can offer our grieving neighbors through this time will look different depending on our own identities and experiences.

I think of A Chair For My Mother and the way each person from the elders to the child offering her own stuffed bear. Find something that is theirs to share when their neighbors have faced loss and are in need of healing. What is ours to give? Attention and care, presence at vigils and protests, financial support to this family, visioning and supporting those working towards crisis response alternatives like Cambridge Heart. Or maybe for you, it's just giving yourself space to breathe and lean on others.

In grief, we name and honor that which we love. And today in this case, we slow down and lift up the sacred life of our neighbor. We can make sure to continue to say Sayed Faisal's name and that his family and friends do not hold this grief alone. Will you pray with me?

Oh, loving God, we know that you are with us on this day as we sit side by side with our neighbors here in this chapel. Help us to be open to one another's griefs and pain, along with the joys and hopes we carry this morning. Help us to practice loving one another daily, a simple call made complex in this messy world. Finding what it is we have to share and moving together towards a world that keeps each of your children's seats. Amen.

Congregation :

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise in body and spirit. And now we pray as Jesus taught us saying, our Father who art in heaven, hallow 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 and the power and the glory forever and ever, amen. Please join in singing the hymn, Now Thank Thee All Our God, number five.

Congregation:

(Singing).

Harriet Lindeman:

And now 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. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation :

Amen.