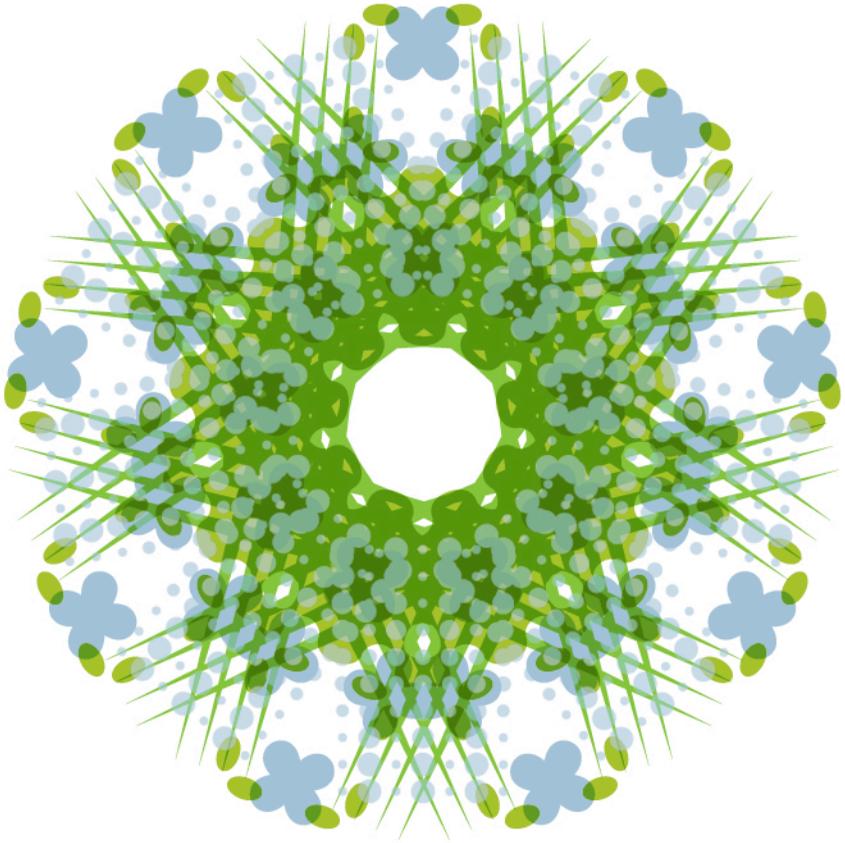


Soul Food

Time for Renewal



A Time for Renewal

This month's program will reflect on rejuvenation and transformation, and how these two principles affect our material and spiritual development.

Program

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**“How does one become a butterfly?” she asks pensively.
“You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up
being a caterpillar.”**

– Trina Paulus, *Hope for the Flowers*

01. **A New Year**

The time of Easter, Passover and Naw-Ruz – all reflective of humanity’s hope for renewal – is the season when people review their beliefs about life and immortality.

Today, when the world around us seems catching its breath in a sense of impending events, is surely a day for reflection and reassessment of our aims and aspirations.

Twenty centuries on, still the sacrifice of Christ and the wonder of the Resurrection is the deepest significance of Easter – a message of hope and joy.

The joy of Easter at the time of Passover, that commemorates the deliverance of Jewish people from oppressors, in the spiritual sense is implicit to all religions and traditions.

The hope of Easter is one of rebirth and renewal and its echo once again can be heard in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in memory of Naw-Ruz – the Bahá’í New Year on the 21st of March: It is New Year: therefore it is very blessed.

“I wish this blessing to appear and become manifest to the end that the old earth may disappear and the new earth appear. The new star shine and gleam: the new breeze blow. I desire for you that you will partake of this great bounty and that in spirit and heart you will strive and endeavour, until the world of war becomes the world of peace; the world of darkness the world of light; the ruined places become built up; the sword be turned into the olive branch; the flash of hatred became the flame of love of God, and the noise of gun the voice of the Kingdom; the soldiers of death the soldiers of life; all the nations of the world one nation; all the races as one race; and all national anthems harmonised into one melody”.

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *from the Bahá’í Writings*

02. **A Time for Everything**

Look to this day,
For it is life,
The very life of life.
In its brief course, lies all
The realities and verities of Existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendour of action,
The glory of power;
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday a dream
Of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore, to this day.

– *Sanskrit Proverb*

03. The Master said: ‘Wealth and rank are what men desire, but unless they be obtained in the right way they may not be possessed. Poverty and obscurity are what men detest; but unless prosperity be brought about in the right way, they are not to be abandoned.

If a man of honor forsake virtue how is he to fulfill the obligations of his name? A man of honor never disregards virtue, even for the space of a single meal. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it; in seasons of peril he cleaves to it.

– *The Analects, the sayings of Confucius*

04. Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banner of unity... and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. This is the time for growing, the season for joyous gathering...

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from the Bahá’í Writings

05. You
Are a part of the Great Spirit.
You
Are perfection.
Yet you have allowed others
To place limitations upon you.
Now is the time of awareness.
Now is the time for remembrance.
You have chosen this.
No other
Can choose it for
You.
Trust yourself.
Trust your own knowing.
Take it by the hand and follow it.
Listen and you will hear
The silent voice
That speaks to you
From your heart.
Follow it
And you will know
Great beauty.

– *From the words of Clear Water*

06. Many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintops of our desires.

It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

It is a fact of the human condition that each shall, like a meteor – a mere brief passing moment in time and space – flit across the human stage and pass out of existence.

– *Nelson Mandela, address to the Joint Session of the House of Congress, 26th June 1990.*

07. Do ye know in what cycle ye are created and in what age ye exist? This is the age of the Blessed Perfection and this is the time of the Greatest Name! This is the century of the Manifestation, the age of the Sun of the Horizons and the beautiful springtime of His Holiness the Eternal One!

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; the bounty is overflowing; the mercy universal; the rain is descending from the cloud of mercy; the brilliant Sun is shining; the full moon is ornamenting the horizon of ether; the great ocean— tide is flooding every little stream; the gifts are successive; the favours consecutive; and the refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the fragrant perfume of the blossoms. Boundless treasure is in the hand of the King of Kings! Lift the hem of thy garment in order to receive it.

If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?

—*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from the Bahá’í Writings*

08. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

— *St. Matthew, from the Christian Teachings*

09. **Wandering Around an Albuquerque Airport Terminal**

After learning my flight was detained 4 hours, I heard the announcement: If anyone in the vicinity of gate 4-A understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately. Well, one pauses these days. Gate 4-A was my own gate. I went there. An older woman in full traditional Palestinian dress just like my grandma wore was crumpled to the floor, wailing loudly. Help, said the flight serviceperson. Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be four hours late and she did this. I put my arm around her and spoke to her haltingly: Shu dow-a, shu-biduck habibti, stani stani schway, min fadlick, sho bit se-wee? The minute she heard any words she knew – however poorly used - she stopped crying. She thought our flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for some major medical treatment the following day. I said no, no,

we're fine, you'll get there, just late, who is picking you up? Let's call him and tell him. We called her son and I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on the plane and would ride next to her. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out, of course, they had ten shared friends. Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian Poets I know and let them chat with her. This all took up about 2 hours. She was laughing a lot by then. Telling about her life. Answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies, little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts out of her bag and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single woman declined one. It was like a sacrament.

The traveler from Argentina, the traveler from California, the lovely woman from Laredo - we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie. And then the airline broke out the free beverages from huge coolers, non-alcoholic and the two little girls for our flight, one African American, one Mexican American ran around serving us all apple juice and lemonade and they were covered with powdered sugar too. And I noticed my new best friend, by now we were holding hands, had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country traveling tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere. And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought, this is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in this gate, once the crying of confusion stopped, had seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women too. This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.

– *Naomi Shihab Nye*

**Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should
abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall
pass away and be no more.**

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

10. Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore, it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive... This is a century of life and renewal. Sciences and arts, industry and invention have been reformed. Law and ethics have been reconstituted, reorganized. The world of thought has been regenerated... Present exigencies demand new methods of solution; world problems are without precedent... Consider how the scientific developments of fifty years have

surpassed and eclipsed the knowledge and achievements of all the former ages combined. Would the announcements and theories of ancient astronomers explain our present knowledge of the suns and planetary systems?... Would the mask of obscurity which beclouded medieval centuries meet the demand for clear-eyed vision and understanding which characterizes the world today?... Shall man, gifted with the power of reason, unthinkingly follow and adhere to dogma, creeds and hereditary beliefs which will not bear the analysis of reason in this century of effulgent reality?

Creation is the expression of motion. Motion is life. A moving object is a living object, whereas that which is motionless and inert is as dead. All created forms are progressive in their planes, or kingdoms of existence, under the stimulus of the power or spirit of life. The universal energy is dynamic. Nothing is stationary in the material world of outer phenomena or in the inner world of intellect and consciousness.

–*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, address to a Unitarian Conference*

11. The master said,
At fifteen I set my heart upon learning.
At thirty, I had planted my feet upon firm ground.
At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities.
At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of heaven.
At sixty, I heard them with a docile ear.
At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart;
for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.

– *Confucianism, Analects 2.4*

12. **Slow Dance**
Have you ever watched kids
On a merry-go-round?
Or listened to the rain
Slapping on the ground?
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight?
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?
You better slow down.
Don't dance so fast.
Time is short.
The music won't last.
Do you run through each day
On the fly?

When you ask How are you?
Do you hear the reply?
When the day is done!
Do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores
Running through your head?
You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast.
Time is short.
The music won't last.
Ever told your child,
We'll do it tomorrow?
And in your haste,
Not see his sorrow?
Ever lost touch,
Let a good friendship die
Cause you never had time
To call and say, "Hi"
You'd better slow down.
Don't dance so fast.
Time is short.
The music won't last.
When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun of getting there.
When you worry and hurry through your day,
It is like an unopened gift..
Thrown away.
Life is not a race.
Do take it slower
Hear the music
Before the song is over.

– *Poem attributed to David L. Weatherford*

**Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth
is finished: If you're alive, it isn't.**

– *Richard Bach*

**I journeyed into time, I journeyed into space,
I journeyed into skies, I failed to see His Face.**

– Sri Chinmoy, from *Thirteen Teardrops*

13. To think that human nature cannot improve is a flawed conclusion.
Ghandi writes:

We do see men constantly becoming better under effort and discipline. There is no occasion for limiting the capacity for improvement. Life to me would lose all its interest if I felt that I could not attain perfect love on earth. After all, what matters, is that our capacity for loving ever expands...

I have no message to give except this: that there is no deliverance for any people on this earth or for all the people of this earth except through truth and non-violence in every walk of life without any exceptions.

I claim to be no more than an average person with less than average ability. I have not the shadow of a doubt that anyone can achieve what I have, if that person would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.

– Mohandas Gandhi

14. Everything is interwoven, and the web is holy;
none of its parts are unconnected.
They are composed harmoniously,
and together they compose the world.
One world, made up of all things.
One divinity, presently in them all.
One substance and one law -
the logos that all rational beings share.
And one truth...
If this is indeed the culmination of one process,
beings who share the same birth, the same logos.

– Marcus Aurelius

15. For the first time in history the dream of peace on earth is within the reach of the nations. Indeed, peace is the next stage in the evolution of this planet. Humanity has the choice of reaching peace after unimaginable catastrophes or achieving it by an act of will...

Many signs point to increasing cooperation among nations, while scientific and technological advances provide the means for the solution of humanity's practical problems...

The human spirit, whose essential manifestation is the mind, has created civilization and material progress. That same spirit also seeks transcendence, reaching toward the ultimate reality, the unknowable essence called God...

– *Summary of The Promise of World Peace, from the Bahá'í Faith*

16. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way.
I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty.
I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

17. **A Dedication for You**

I urge you to trudge not through life leaving ugly gashes,
to tiptoe not through life leaving half-formed impressions,
but to tread gently, lovingly and purposefully,
leaving graceful heart prints.

– *Unity Dow, High Court Judge*

18. Each moment is fragile and fleeting.
The moment of the past cannot be kept, however beautiful
The moment of the present cannot be held, however enjoyable.
The moment of the future cannot be caught, however desirable.
But the mind is desperate to fix the river in place:
Possessed by ideas of the past, preoccupied with images of the future, it overlooks
the plain truth of the moment.
The one who can dissolve her mind will suddenly have the Desert of the Tao at
her feet, and clarity at hand.

– *Lao Tzu, Hua Hu Ching*



About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes.

It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food's purpose is to inspire us to transform our lives, our neighbourhoods and communities, with actions that promote the unity and betterment of society.

Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

State Library of Victoria,
Village Roadshow Theatre
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St (Enter via La Trobe Street)

Time

11.00am – 12.00pm

First Sunday of every month

March 2nd
April 6th
May 4th
June 1st
July 6th
August 3rd
September 7th
October 5th
November 2nd
December 7th

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania or Western Australia please call 03 9415 6007 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

The Bahá'í community offers a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people. The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 03 9415 6007 or email soulfoodvic@gmail.com.

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org.au.

Supporters

Soul Food is proudly supported by the Baha'i Council of South-Eastern Australia.