

Chapel Talk

Meaning, like the sacred, is present if you look for it, but absent if you do not.

Alison Hawthorne Deming

On April 21, members of our class will have a chance to share ideas about the religious and/or spiritual implications of Campus Ecology in the college chapel service. Together, we'll put together a set of songs and readings and ideas that allow the St. Olaf community to see connections that they don't normally see when they think about trash or recycling or low-flow shower heads or conserving energy. Like Mary Oliver, we'll get to ponder some important existential questions. Who made all this stuff? Is there a connection between spirit and nature? What's a prayer? What's the meaning of death—spiritually, naturally? How do our environmental ethics come from (or not) religious worldviews? What else should we have done? What do we plan to do with our one wild and precious life?

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?