



“I have come to have a deep faith in grief, have come to see the way its moods call us back to soul. It is, in fact, one of the voices of the soul, asking us to face life’s most difficult but essential teaching: everything is a gift, and nothing lasts. This is a painful truth. To accept this fact is to live on life’s terms and not try to deny the simple truth of loss, what the Buddhists call impermanence. When we acknowledge grief, we acknowledge that everything we love, we will lose. No exceptions.”

**Francis Weller**, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*

# *The Invitation...*

When talking about death is a “...weighty damn thing that we’re used to avoiding,” what are we called to do when we gather in community (to belong to one another)?

**We are asked to hold this space together.**

**We are asked to make a little stretch towards courage.**

**We are asked to hold the complexity of our humanity.**

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“Establishing a relationship with grief, developing practices that keep us steady in times of distress, and staying present in our adult selves are among the central tasks in our apprenticeship with sorrow. This is the hard work of maturation. ...In the language of soul, this is the work of becoming an elder. An elder is able to touch grief deftly and is able to craft sorrow into something nourishing for the community. Teacher and grief specialist Stephen Jenkinson says, ‘Hold your sorrow to a degree of eloquence, whereby everyone around you will be fed by your efforts to do so.’ Becoming skillful at digesting our grief makes us a source of reassurance and stability for the wider community.”

Francis Weller, *Wild Edge of Sorrow*

# Schedule

- 10:00 \* *Creativity tables open*
- 11:00 *Welcome and invitations, Michelle and Marc*
- 11:10 *Grounding and Prayer, Tender and Elsa*  
*Some things worth knowing: logistics*
- 11:25 *Variety Show: Mixtape Side A, Etta*
- 12:15 *Break*
- 12:30 *Variety Show: Mixtape Side B*
- 1:20 *A CareForce moment, Ti*
- 1:25 *Song: Most Beautiful Sky*
- 1:30 *Hanna's Words: You Are Who I Love*
- 1:45 *Closings Etta, Erika, Ti, Marc*

\* Times are approximate. There's the plan, and there's what happens.



***Show Your Feelings!***

# ***Note to Self...***



*Vibes on Vibez*, Sheba Gittens

*Music improv for Hanna*, Missy and Nick of High Scores

*What you taught me*, Linjie Deng

*Where is Hanna?* Hilda Bezuidenhout

*Dancing across this dream*, Ben Graham

*When we fly*, Lainy Carslaw

*Hanna in the Bardo*, Karuna Das

*Wilderness hearts*, Olivia Robinson and Meredith Maloney

*Family*, South Africa family and friends

*Bridging worlds*, Lauralee Alben

*Family adventures*, Seth, Otto and Early

*A love letter*, Katherine Anderson

*Music, Shann and Jamie, The Lucky Valentines*



“I want to write rage but all that comes is sadness. We have been sad long enough to make this earth either weep or grow fertile. I am an anachronism, a sport, like the bee that was never meant to fly. Science said so. I am not supposed to exist. I carry death around in my body like a condemnation. But I do live. The bee flies. There must be some way to integrate death into living, neither ignoring it nor giving in to it.”

**Audre Lorde**, *The Cancer Journals*

*Closer to Fine*  
The Indigo Girls

I'm trying to tell you something about my life  
Maybe give me insight between black and white  
And the best thing you've ever done for me  
Is to help me take my life less seriously  
It's only life after all  
Yeah

Well darkness has a hunger that's insatiable  
And lightness has a call that's hard to hear  
I wrap my fear around me like a blanket  
I sailed my ship of safety till I sank it  
I'm crawling on your shores

I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains  
I looked to the children,  
I drank from the fountains  
There's more than one answer to these questions  
Pointing me in a crooked line  
And the less I seek my source for some definitive  
(The less I seek my source)

Closer I am to fine (Fine, yea)  
Closer I am to fine (Fine, yea)

And I went to see the doctor of philosophy  
With a poster of Rasputin  
and a beard down to his knee  
He never did marry or see a B-grade movie  
He graded my performance,  
he said he could see through me  
I spent four years prostrate to the higher mind  
Got my paper and I was free

I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains  
I looked to the children,  
I drank from the fountains  
There's more than one answer to these questions  
Pointing me in a crooked line  
And the less I seek my source for some definitive  
(The less I seek my source)

Closer I am to fine (Fine, yea)  
Closer I am to fine (Fine, yea)

I stopped by the bar at 3 a.m.  
To seek solace in a bottle or possibly a friend  
And I woke up with a headache  
like my head against a board  
Twice as cloudy as I'd been the night before  
And I went in seeking clarity

I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains  
I looked to the children,  
I drank from the fountains  
Yeah we go to the doctor,  
we go to the mountains  
We look to the children,  
we drink from the fountains  
Yeah we go to the Bible,  
we go through the workout  
We read up on revival  
and we stand up for the lookout  
There's more than one answer to these questions  
Pointing me in a crooked line  
The less I seek my source for some definitive  
(The less I seek my source)

Closer I am to fine (Fine)  
Closer I am to fine (Fine)  
Closer I am to fine (Fine, yea)



*Group singalong*, Eric Lipsky

*Hanna and the whale fall*, Lizzie Anderson

*A message for Hanna*, Dipuo Matena

*Love letters*, Carolina Loyola-Garcia, featuring Hanna

*One day we danced*, Michael Richter, video by Iram Arontes

*A poem for Hanna*, I Medina Jackson

*Re&R*, Deborah Alden and Lawrence Abrahamson

*Teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago*, Pamela Steiner

*Teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago*, Pamela Steiner

*Old ones (for Hanna)*, Marijke Hecht

*Theater of the oppressed for Hanna*

Liz Foster-Shaner, April Daras, Beth Sondel,

Gretchen Givens Generett, Michell King, Ti Wilhelm

*World's rest*, Scott Boylston

# ***Doodle with Me!***



*Most Beautiful Sky*

Jennifer Levenhagen

Most  
beautiful  
sky  
I  
see  
how  
you  
change  
each  
day  
and  
each  
day  
remain.

Source: [thebirdsings.com/most-beautiful-sky](http://thebirdsings.com/most-beautiful-sky)

## *Homegoing Prayer*

from *Black Liturgies* by Cole Arthur Riley,  
adapted for the very much alive Hanna du Plessis

God Who Knows Death,

We come before you with an ache we can't articulate. The knowing of a void soon to come. This imminent passing will alter so much of what we know and remember—Mayday parades and birthday parties, good night stories and workshops, chicken births, and kitchen talks. Malcolm sitting, breaking bread and impromptu dancing. As we grieve the soon departure of one we love, help us to feel what we feel, be it sadness or anger or nothing at all. Remind us that grief has many faces and no timeline. Grant us both patience and honesty. Keep us from idealizing or demonizing Hanna in death, but protect our memory that we will recall her for who she truly is to us, and honor her and all of her complexities. To lose you, Hanna, is to lose a world. Everything that will remain in your absence so too will be altered. The familiar becomes strange. Even those who are ready to pass may still weep at death's door. Death hurts.

And as we honor Hanna and the tragic mystery of mortality, show us that this void is not a void, but a portal. Grant us solemn imagination for new forms of being after death, and comfort us as we give thanks for her life, offering up gratitude with these shared words:

### **Call and response**

*When you hear the words Breath to Breath please respond with,  
May rest welcome you home.*

We honor you, Hanna. Who you are to us – trouble maker, friend, sister, daughter, aunt, niece, student, plant lover, comrade, sweetheart, parent, artist, collaborator, teacher , neighbor, center of our care force. We hold space for you in particularity, knowing that each of us know and love a distinct

*Homegoing Prayer*

part of you. Some of us cry with you, some of us dance with you, some of us formed you, all of us learn from you. Comfort us in the particularity of each bond.

*Breath to breath—*

*May rest welcome you home.*

We honor your humor – every joke, however, corny, every wordless smirk and side eye. The way you tease us and still love us. The moments we rock back with laughter, so fierce, no sound could escape.

May the joy that finds you in life be magnified in your death.

*Breath to breath –*

*May rest welcome you home.*

We honor the full contents of your life, Hanna, including the pain. The people you grieve. Every insecurity or fragment of self-hatred. Your suffering, spoken and unspoken, those secret heartaches that we will never know. And we ask that any injustice you endure that has not been righted in this life will be made right in your death. That any honor withheld from you in life will be met with an unabated affirmation of dignity in death.

*Breath to breath –*

*May rest welcome you home.*

As we acknowledge your full humanity, so do we hold memories of your flaws. For apologies never spoken, may you find remorse. For wrongs not forgiven, may you find self compassion.

*Breath to breath –*

*May rest welcome you home.*

## *Homegoing Prayer*

We honor your visible and invisible labor Hanna. You've invited hundreds of students into new ways of being, relating, and creating. Years later they tell us how much that mattered. You've touched leaders, teams, whole organizations and communities. You worked joyfully year after year in uncertainty and overwhelm, changing the way people work to move from fracture to belonging, stuckness to creativity. Your faithful commitment to belonging in a world fraught with injustice inspires us.

We honor your poem mouth. Your poem hands. Your poem eyes. We thank you for your continued service, for the things you choose to do out of care for the vulnerable, unconcerned for how it might profit you. We honor every choice made that honors the dignity of others.

*Breath to breath –  
May rest welcome you home.*

God our maker, may the one we grieve find peace soon. Comfort us as we seek peace ourselves. May we learn how to continue living in your —soon to be— absence may we uncover new forms for your presence. Let Hanna's approaching death remind us of our own mortality, that we will live and love with an awareness of the gift of each unpromised day. And as we stare into the portal of this passing, may we find beauty in our ending, however, solemn that beauty may be.

*Ase*



'Tis a fearful thing  
to love what death can touch.

A fearful thing  
to love, to hope, to dream, to be—  
to be,  
and oh, to lose.

A thing for fools, this,  
and a holy thing,  
a holy thing to love.

For your life has lived in me,  
your laugh once lifted me,  
your word was gift to me.

To remember this brings painful joy.

'Tis a human thing, love,  
a holy thing, to love  
what death has touched.

Selections from

*Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved*<sup>\*</sup>  
Gregory Orr

I've known grief.  
I don't Take it lightly. Know how  
It gnaws your bones hollow  
So you're afraid to stand up,  
Afraid the lightest wind will  
Knock you over, blow you away.  
But maybe the wind is supposed  
To blow right through you;  
Maybe you're a tree in winter  
And your poem translates  
That cold wind into song.

\* \* \*

Tears and laughter—  
Weighing them out,  
One against the other.  
Sobs and love-sighs:  
Trying to separate them,  
Putting each in the scales.  
What a job! The Book's  
No help. Clarification,  
Catharsis, coherence:  
Every poem in the Book  
Aspires to these ideals,  
But to no avail.  
It's all there, but  
Hopelessly jumbled  
And muddled.  
Tossed in the same sack.  
You want to sort it out  
And come to some conclusion  
And instead  
You're tossed in, too.

\* \* \*

Sometimes happy, sometimes sad.  
Or the old parable my wife  
Likes to tell: "Good luck,  
Bad luck? Who knows?"  
We're deep in the mystery of it  
And it's deep in us.  
Loss behind. The unknown  
Ahead. Lifting up  
The light of the poem  
Like a lantern. Stepping out  
Bravely into the dark.

\* \* \*

The river has a single song,  
Which is itself.  
The tree has a song.  
The bird also.  
The heart knows all  
These songs  
And a million of its own.  
Neither the river  
Nor the bird can write.  
The tree moves  
Its branches against  
The sky all day  
As if it's thinking  
About inventing  
Its own alphabet,  
But nothing comes of it.  
So it's still up to us.  
We're supposed to bring  
Them into the Book,  
Make a place for them in our poems.

\* \* \*

<sup>\*</sup>Orr refers to "the Book" to represent the sum of all experience of life, now and through history (that's the short way to say it). Marc and Hanna often read from this book aloud together.



*Illustrations by Hanna*

You may have heard of this community called "Careforce."

*As you are able, stand or raise your hand.*

*If you are on Zoom, use the raise hand feature.*

If you helped make the Oasis where Hanna is living

If you have ever done caregiving for Hanna, whether for an hour, a week, or many many times.

If you've ever brought a meal, donated funds, sent gifts or supplies.

If you sent a card, drew a picture, sent a text, sent an emoji.

If you provided care for someone else.

If you have given yourself care.

You are ALL part of CAREFORCE!

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# Where Do We Go From Here?



## Follow Hanna's updates

Subscribe to updates on Hanna's life, health, and work at [okaythen.net/hanna](http://okaythen.net/hanna)



## Stay connected with Hanna through her writings

Subscribe at [okaythen.net/voices/hanna-du-plexis](http://okaythen.net/voices/hanna-du-plexis)



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