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### A SEASON OF CELEBRATION BY ELIZABETH THOMPSON

*(The following excerpt originates from a speech given by Elizabeth Thompson at MCPC's Thanksgiving celebration.)*

This evening I have chosen in trite fashion to talk about thanks. "We have much to be thankful for," the banality, which yearly resurrects in the fumes of steaming turkeys and pulverized potatoes. Thankful, yes, we must be. Thankful for the walls around us, roofs above our heads, time shared together, our families and for health. We are thankful for our victories, but also our defeats. We are thankful for the support of our communities, families,

and friends who edify us amidst disheartening and taxing experiences.

It would be ignorant for us to say that the failures or challenges are solely from class work or arduous schedules. Our eyes are not only on Temple and MCPC, but on Grantham, Harrisburg, and everywhere we have called home. Other communities and our families still require our attention, our devotion, and our love. We are thankful for these extensions of ourselves and for how time in Philadelphia will sift and strengthen them.

The question arises in Philadelphia: what can we

make of our time here, in this occasion of corporate and national thankfulness? Privilege would be the H-O-T-T manner of describing our auspicious predicament here at Messiah. We have indeed been given a tremendous privilege in our education, as students at the Philadelphia Campus, and at Messiah College.

I have mulled over this concept of privilege. Are the privileges that we have been given in this place wrong? I will simply say, "No, they are not." Our privilege is not wrong, however, what *is* the sin of humanity is that we have been stratified between those who have and those who have not. The fact that

academic and social privilege is not afforded to the masses, the fact that everyone does not have the opportunity for education, fair wage, and safe home, this is immoral. Our days in Philadelphia have certainly made this more apparent in our minds and hearts.

So how can we be thankful and celebrate what we have when our brothers and sisters globally, nationally, and locally go without? I submit that we do not have any stake in celebrating a privilege donned to the few. However, we have every license to recognize and celebrate the responsibility we now have. To whom much is given, much is required. Our privilege opens doors and windows that will allow us to travel anywhere and be anyone. In

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### RIDICULOUS REACTIONS TO POLITICAL DEFEAT BY ELIZABETH COON

I planted myself in front of the television at 6:30 p.m. on election night. I had my computer and a bag full of homework, none of which would get done, but November 4, 2008 was an historic night. I refused to miss one second of election coverage. I was still completely undecided as to who I thought should win, having

been unable to vote due to a mix-up with my absentee ballot. As the earliest polls closed, I came to a decision. I agreed with his policies, yet I was most intrigued by Senator Obama's image. His charisma and his call for bipartisan change in Washington painted a picture of a man who could unite a growing political and parti-

san nation, leading us through extremely tough times.

Although my evening in the TV lounge started out alone, I was quickly joined by fellow students, as Senator Obama's victory seemed to become inevitable. Reneging on my promise to watch every second of the coverage, I retreated to the

quiet dining room, to work on homework. Not tonight, however. People were crowded in front of the window, watching the antics of the already celebratory crowd. I retreated to Facebook, seeking mindless stress relief. Even there I could not escape! Facebook's home page was election-themed, right down to a counter of how many people on Facebook had voted. Looking over

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## CELEBRATION

this opportunity, let us be willing to be shaped into servants. Servants, with sober and heavy hearts and minds, concerned for our neighbors in Sudan, our neighbors in Iran, our neighbors in Nepal, our neighbors in the U.S., our neighbors in Philadelphia, and our neighbors on West Diamond Street.

This is not a burden to civilize the uncivilized or to convert the unconverted, for civilizations and conversions

have become bastard progenies of imperialism, prejudice, and corruption. This is not a burden to save the damned, for damnation is not written on the soles of our shoes or the palms of our hands. But this is a burden for justice, a burden for equality, and a burden for peace.

And this is what makes me thankful! This education that we are receiving is not only for our own benefit but for the benefit of our friends, our

family, and our global community! The responsibility that we have demands much from us, but in this moment, let us celebrate the beauty apparent in servitude—living, working, and breathing for the other. When we are functioning in this respect, then not only are the communities in Grantham, Harrisburg, and beyond parts of us, but our global community becomes an extension of ourselves through loving, gorgeous, and flawless justice. This is music for our ears, and peace for our hearts.

So let's move on, celebrating as the community we are today and will be in the future, thankful for our education and mindful of our responsibility. Our time at Messiah, Temple, or other imminent academic haunts is the beginning of a new season of celebration, the privileged kneeling as servants to a Christly ethic of serving the needy, feeding the hungry, and encouraging the neglected. We will all be servants in different ways, some

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Image courtesy Beaker Press

## RENOWNED POET, MARY OLIVER, TO READ IN PHILADELPHIA

BY CHARLEY WILKINSON

*"Pay attention.*

*Be astonished.*

*Tell about it."*

These lines taken from a poem entitled "Sometimes" offer a brief picture of the method Mary Oliver employs in her honest, observational

work. This poem is part of her 12<sup>th</sup> and latest book, *Red Bird*, a collection of work that delves into the true essence of humanity, mortality and the natural world that surrounds us. "I believe in the holiness of the world," Oliver said during a lecture at Syracuse

University. "If you love something, you pay attention to it."

Mary Oliver's neo-transcendentalist style evokes a sense of place and meditation, which permeates her work. Poet Stanley Kunitz says, "Mary Oliver's poetry is fine and deep; it reads like a blessing. Her special gift is to connect us with our sources in the natural world, its beauties and terrors and mysteries and consolations." Once called "an indefatigable guide to the natural world" by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Maxine Kumin, Mary Oliver has continued to devote herself to the challenges of rendering the natural world through language, kindly carrying the themes and characters of its ecology into her poems.

A Pulitzer Prize winner herself, Oliver was born in Midwestern Ohio where she would learn to acquaint herself intimately with her natural surroundings, an aspect of life she has cherished even until now in her Provincetown, Massachusetts home. Compared to writ-

ers such as Whitman and Thoreau who struggled to capture the essence of nature, Oliver candidly writes of her medium, "Poems speak of the mortal condition; ... about the tragic and glorious issues of our fragile and brief lives." Her work, created out of her lifelong work in love, observation and nature, serves as a vehicle for communing with the natural world and the purpose of our lives.

Mary Oliver will be bringing her poetry to Philadelphia in person for a special reading this Tuesday, November 25. This event, held at the Free Library of Philadelphia, is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the beauty of the season with a woman who has spent her life capturing its very spirit. Come join Mary Oliver on this evening of poetry at 7:30 pm on 1901 Vine Street, so that we all may learn to pay attention, to be astonished, and to tell about it.

## CELEBRATION

with our hands, our film, our pens, our music, or our voices. It is, and will be, beautiful.

For this last month in Philadelphia, let's continue to be thankful for this place and for each other. This season is still pregnant with opportunities to grow together as friends, as a community, and as servants. Let's be careful not to leave Philadelphia before it is time. Through these next few weeks, we will learn what we need to learn; we will create what we need to create; we will be where we need to be; and then we will go where we must go. Over this time, let's keep thanks continually on our lips and in the grace of our steps.

## NINA SIMONE SAID MARRIAGE IS FOR OLD FOLKS

BY VICTORIA BROSSY

Why do so many Christian couples rush to get married? The answer: to have sex, of course! Okay, okay, I know that this is not the only reason these couples rush to the altar, but it does appear to be a deciding factor in the "Ring by Spring" phenomenon. This ring phenomenon usually occurs the spring semester of a girl's senior year of college. Girl secures a glitzy ring and the promise of marriage to a handsome prince. Oh wait, I think that the last part is from a fairy tale. Back to the point: marriage should not be used as a means to have sex. Getting married to have 'legal' sex in

God's eyes stems from either a lack of physical self-control, or the false belief that at age twenty-one you are ready for married life. Sexuality is a fact of life, therefore, it needs to be addressed. Everyone experiences sexual desire, but it is what we do with these desires that matters. Getting married to have sex is taking the easy way out of a celibate life. Wouldn't it be amazing if more people showed maturity and admitted craving sexual attention? And then showed an even higher level of maturity by admitting that at age twenty-one they were not ready to get married? One might even propose asking, "If I was 'allowed' to have sex right now, would I still

want to get married?" If the answer is "yes," then all the more reason to bring on that ring! But, if the answer is "no," and I hope that at our age it would be, there are some issues that need to be discussed. The most important issue being how would having sex outside of marriage impact my life? My faith? The answer to each question will differ from person to person, but wrestling with these questions is the first step to making an informed decision about whether or not marriage is right for you at this point in your life. Just remember, you have the rest of your life to be married, don't screw it up by walking down the aisle too early!

## REACTIONS

updates on friends' profiles, one person's status caught my eye. "[I] give it 48 hours for Biden to be president." Excuse me?

I quickly clicked the link and read the following comments: "I agree!" "I'm glad! If no one does it soon, im [sic] already getting together a group to go on a mission: assassinate him." Thankfully, that comment did not go without a warning response, "I know you're joking, but be careful saying that stuff in a joking manner, some people are really sensitive and will report that you threatened him seriously."

As the night progressed, par-

ticularly after Senator McCain made his concession speech, I witnessed similar comments expressing disdain over the outcome of the election. Many were extremely derogatory towards Senator Obama. One event listed on Facebook was titled, "america's funeral" (i.e. Inauguration Day). The details page encouraged "on Inauguration Day everyone should wear black for the funeral of the United States of America" and the profile picture displayed the Constitution in flames.

Such hateful language is inflammatory, arrogant and foolish. Censure and criticism of a candidate's policies remains acceptable; however, a picture of Obama's face with the words "Hitler gave great

speeches too..." is infuriating, and yet such comparisons are all over the Internet. In many parts of the world, this election might have been accompanied by bloodshed. To slander the freedoms we have been granted through name calling and derogatory language is to completely lose understanding and appreciation for sacrifices made for our freedom.

The most disappointing aspect of this invective was that much of it was coming from professed Christians. How can any person ever reconcile such language with the mercy and love of Christ? I understand that people get passionate about politics. I understand that we are free to criticize presidents for mistakes or faults that may make them

unfit to lead our country. However, name calling from both ends of the political spectrum is shameful. No matter our political preference, as Christians, we are called in Micah 6 to "act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly..."

Reverend Bradford, of Liberti Church, reminded his congregation on November 2, if the candidate they supported met defeat, it wasn't because God fell asleep on his throne. I don't know whether I can trust in President-elect Obama's policies. However, the election of any candidate does not release us from the gracious image of Christ that we must portray as his followers. When Obama gained the 270 electoral votes necessary, he became our leader, deserving of respect.

Hitler Gave Great Speeches Too...



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Coon