

*FOR THE FUTURE is a setting of four poems written by the great American poet, Wendell Berry.
The work honors and celebrates Leslie Guelker-Cone's 20th year as Director of Choirs at
Western Washington University.*

All Poetry by Wendell Berry

**I.
THE REAL WORK**

"It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings."

*from **Standing by Words**
1983*

**II.
FOR THE FUTURE**

Planting trees early in spring,
we make a place for birds to sing
in time to come. How do we know?
They are singing here now.
There is no other guarantee
that singing will ever be.

*from **New Collected Poems**
2012*

**III.
WATCHING THE MID-AUTUMN MOON**

Young, we had not enough
respect for the changing moon
Then the days seem to pass
only to return again.
Now, having learned by loss
that men's days part from them
forever, we eat and drink together
beneath the full moon,
acknowledging and celebrating
the power that has bereft us
and yet sheds over the earth
a light that is beautiful.

*from **Sayings & Doings and An Eastward Look**
1990*

IV.
THE HIDDEN SINGER

The gods are less for their love of praise.
Above and below them all is a spirit that needs nothing
but its own wholeness, its health and ours.
It has made all things by dividing itself.
It will be whole again.
To its joy we come together-
the seer and the seen, the eater and the eaten,
the lover and the loved.
In our joining it knows itself. It is with us then,
not as the gods whose names crest in unearthly fire,
but as a little bird hidden in the leaves
who sings quietly and waits, and sings.

from **New Collected Poems**
2012