

Favorite poems

by [Walt McDonald](#) in the [October 5, 2004](#) issue

This simple happening dazzles me, like most of this former marine lieutenant's poems. "Laying On of Hands" is about a random encounter with a stranger caring enough to touch "a plain woman" who was "weeping/on a bus bench." I wondered at first, Is that...could that be an angel? Enough clues are here--"the stranger," "flight," "unfolding wings," even the title, but I can't prove it. The poem itself doesn't insist, and that's OK. And which of the two is an angel, if either? Faith says strangers might be angels, even if we're unaware (Heb. 13). The facts are that someone almost unnoticed reached out and somehow released a plain, despondent woman--one of "the least of these"--into joy. I like poems that shock and jostle, that offer the passion of wild and exactly right insights.

[Laying on of hands](#), by Robert A. Fink