

Greeting: Ramadhan Mubarak! The blessings of Ramadhan to all of you as it begins tonight at sundown for all the followers of the prophet, Jesus, or Issa as he is known in Arabic. This is a time for reflection and right-ordering of life, of self-control and conscious living. It is being observed now by 1.6 billion people, over 22% of humanity.

In 1923, the great Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote in the poem "An Extraordinary Adventure Which Happened to Me":

"Shine always,
Shine everywhere,
To the depths of the last days!
Shine—
And to hell with everything else!
That's my motto—
And the sun's!"

Our first hymn is set to the familiar tune of the Tallis canon, in the green book 320, "Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race". We'll sing all four verses, and then go back to the first verse to sing it as a round in four parts.

Thank you. In a round or canon, we each contribute our part at different times, supporting each other in harmony, not doing the same thing at the same time. The words are a prayer that we be a meeting ground, a bridge of care, have steely resolve, and be a table spread. In every case, more will happen beyond us in the moment--as is true in our first reading, in which Walt Whitman writes in the final stanza of "Song of the Rolling Earth" from 1856:

“The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as
before,
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they then?
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they
then?)
I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that
tells the best,
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects
shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and
encloses all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that
you are not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them.”

The second reading today is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians
in Chapter 4, with the same theme of communal strength:

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Source of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But, to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people” What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended hither than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into the one who is the Head, that is Christ. From there, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work....

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.....For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of

light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth, and find out what pleases the Lord... Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Our second hymn is “Love Will Guide Us” no. 243 in the green book.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Let us know the blessing of a fully integrated and connected community, of being truly friends, where we can sing the round of balance and strength, filling the gaps when those among us feel weak or burdened. Make our interactions fitting and harmonious as we add our unique voices, as we flesh out the larger body. Let us shine when those among us find themselves in a dark place, and help us see the light of others when that dark place is our own. Help us know and accept that no one of us will complete the full work of time, but that our contributions are collective and continuous. Let love be our guide to light. As cousins in faith to a common sacred sense of God, as fellow people of the book, let us feel the blessing of Ramadhan around us. Let us receive that light as our light shines in love and blessing. Amen

Our third hymn is often thought of as a lullaby, but let us think of it as a general song of comfort and reassurance in today’s context. As Paul wrote, we will no longer be infants tossed by waves. It is green book No. 213, “All Through the Night”.

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other, to nurture each other in lessons and play in community.

Message: Dear Friends—Through the night, all through the night, there is that hope of light, and that comfort that we are loved and that the surrounding love that will guide us is present in our community, in our hearts, in our interactions with each other. Our opening hymn asked that we all become a meeting ground, a bridge of care, a table spread, with the strength to resist the storm, to not be daunted when chasms open, or when injustice manifests itself. We live troubled lives in a troubled world. Situations are painful and bleak, not just personally, but also when we look at how so many must live, and how so much is often denied. We now face a season of harsh public rhetoric. We see a sacred earth defiled, and constant praise and admiration for greed and power. Yet we also have light in this darkness.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Russian poet who chose to shine, was seen as an enemy of the state and suffered in the gulag. Walt Whitman saw the worst of war, nursing the gruesome wounds of the 1860s, Paul was writing to the Ephesians from prison, Thomas Tallis was an English court musician for the Tudors in a time of chaos and torture and intrigue. All of their messages for today are related. They all adapted not to an acceptance, and not to a denial or resistance, but to an integrated transcendence. And this transcendence happened because it was for others, not for themselves. They rose above the terrible not because of their own strength, but because of their deep connection to the strength of others, to the strength of all. I think of the Syrian refugees—especially as Paul uses metaphors of the infants tossed back and forth on the waves, blown here and there by the wind, and the many refugees of our time—those who walk to our own community from far to the south. It is an appeal to others, to us—it is, in fact, an act of faith in us and in humanity. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, along with many others, has 20 meetings working together to

educate others and host Syrian refugees. Yasmeen at FCNL is acting as well to coordinate in this crisis. We see the Greek fishermen literally become fishers of men. Among us also are refugee hearts, seeking shelter.

This inner light, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. We find Light together, we share Light as Friends. And we need not be private or shy about it. We share the night as well, and we make it through the night with love and support. There is, in fact, enough for all not only in our own community of Friends, but enough to spill out and over, where we can answer that of God in those all around us, build up courage, seek support. When Whitman writes that we leave the best of faith untold, it is really that there will only be more light coming, more community, more love, in this rolling earth under the endless and beautiful heavens. And in the heaven, every day, there is the sun, the beginning and end for us all.

Worship

The final hymn is number 180 in the Green book, "There is Nothing I Can Give You" in which we sing to each other about the ways in which our mutual strength and support lead us all to community and perseverance in the face of despair.

Closing: "Shine always,
Shine everywhere,
To the depths of the last days!
Shine—
And to hell with everything else!
That's my motto—
And the sun's!"

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts