

Psalm 13: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, “I have overcome him”, and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for God has been good to me.

Our first hymn is green book #243, “Love Will Guide Us”

Our first reading is from Luke 12:22-34 “Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not be worried about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow nor reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to their life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will God clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after such things, and your Parent knows you need them. But seek God’s kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Parent has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no

thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

A Second Reading From the Advices and Queries of London
Yearly Meeting: “Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak.”

Finally, from John Bellers, a Friend who inspired Karl Marx (born two hundred years ago yesterday) and who wrote in 1714, “Is not therefore Inward Light or Divine Irradiation (how weakly or uncautiously soever, some may have explained it) a Doctrine that plainly results from the Necessary Omnipresence of God, and the Intellectual Nature of Humane Souls?”

Our second hymn is #126 in the Green book “The Lord Into His Garden Comes”

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Let the Spirit of God, the Life Force, the eternal well spring enter our gardens, feed our roots and bring us all to blossom. Let Light shine in and through us, uniting us and bringing us a harvest of blessing to share, a ripening through time and love. Let us hear our inner songs singing all around us and guiding us on our way through shade and light, the blessing of rain and of sun, for the clouds and the brightness are both necessary to growth, to life. Help us all to be able to shed the worry that haunts us in times of anxiety, to know that hope and heart are coming, and that there is an inevitability to reaching home, not so much as an individual place, but with each other, as Friends, as a Society of Friends, as a Religious Society of Friends. As seekers, we find each other on the paths, and the way is ours, it is us, so let us embrace the way in love, in oneness, with confidence. Amen.

Our next hymn is green book #260 “Here I am Lord”

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other.

Message: Dear friends—Yes, here we are. We are the treasure where our hearts are, we are the treasure that will not be exhausted and that will not wear out. As individuals, we will, of course, but together, in the Light, we do not need to be afraid, and if we are truly together, we cannot be afraid. When we let the Sacred in, when we open ourselves to love, the drought ends, the light shines, and we bloom. Life is our path, not our destination, and here, we are companions with each other and with the ravens and the lilies, with the birds and the flowers, as we all consider each other.

This year, our season seems to have changed suddenly, a real burst of spring that has also been something the insects are especially enjoying. Any morning, any day, any week or year can be a surprise, whether rapid or steady, all is change, even within the repeating cycles we recognize. So, when in doubt, we must turn to love, unfailing love as the psalmist says, or else we can find ourselves in despair, feeling surrounded by competitors, feeling forgotten and trapped in our thoughts.

This past week, I had a student come to me who was feeling lost and unable to do his schoolwork because of the death of a friend at home. He had been hoping to first finish up the semester and then think about it and face his grief. He thought he could avoid burdening his campus friends during the busiest point of their year, but this tactic was not working. In isolating himself, he was making his burden heavier. He asked me if I had ever lost anyone close to me, since this was a first time for him. As many of you know, I lost my mother this past March. I spoke to him about the need to be with people and not to stay in his room. We talked about the tradition of wakes and of bringing people food and of

sitting with people at funerals, where you don't even have to talk about anything, but just be together. When you lose someone, you need more human presence as the bandage, as the healing salve. Flowers, a card, "thinking of you", are actually all helpful, with no need for more profound words, or for any particular advice, just a need for presence. As John Bellers points out, we remind each other of God's presence just through the omnipresence of the divine, which therefore must include the heart and soul as well as the physical places. While one absence cannot be filled by another, we are not talking about replacement, but reinforcement. In a balanced life, we must be able to both provide and ask for spiritual resources. Those resources are in seen and unseen places.

Some of you know my brother, Stephen, who lives in Ithaca. He signed up for a book group this spring and they read a book that he really liked that was about a resilient man who goes through a lot of despair. When we heard from another one of our brothers, who has been the chief care-giver for our parents, about his own struggle with despair since my mother's death, Stephen decided not to go to the book group because it seemed like too much despair. I mentioned to him that, in fact, it was an opportunity to talk about things, even if indirectly, because he would not have to "bring up" despair, it was already going to be a topic. He could be together with caring folks, whether those people knew or not about our mother or about our brother. He wouldn't have to disclose in order to benefit from community, from presence, from the divine within those folks in the book group. Our positive interactions can share burdens without our knowing, can be the source or reminder of unfailing love even when we don't know the exact topic.

This spring is continuing to be a time of transitions and decisions in my personal and family life as we sell the home and farm we built in Michigan, prepare for my mother's memorial in July, and as I prepare to start a new job at a distance while keeping our home base here in this loving community. Each of these large things is

not fully done yet and there are a lot of unknowns, and as the processes go on and I take each particular step, I find strength and comfort in so many of you, and in the sharing of these words and this music. As I am with you, I need not worry.

In the readings, I shared the advice from London Yearly Meeting about living adventurously and letting your life speak, both towards the fullest opportunity of sharing one's gifts. I've always liked the way the phrase "Let your life speak" is formulated, where you don't make your life speak, but to let it happen, you must be close to others. Similarly, to answer that of God in others, you must be close enough to know what conversation you are having. That there is always a metaphysical conversation going on, an unseen exchange of deep feeling and understanding, is a comfort, a blessing, a place far beyond words. An omnipresence.

Two weeks ago, someone shared with me a poem by Paul Williams called "How to Tell the Truth" that opens with these lines: "When you just have to talk, try being silent. When you feel reluctant to say anything, make the effort to put what you're feeling into words. This is a place to begin. Pushing gently against the current of your own impulses is an effective technique for dislodging and discovering your truth." The poem closes with the line, "Listen as if love mattered." What I know is, it does.

Our closing hymn is #215 in Green, "The Great Storm is Over"

Closing: Lorna Marsden, a British Friend, wrote in 1986, "Our testimonies arise from our way of worship. Our way of worship evokes from deep within us at once an affirmation and a celebration, an affirmation of the reality of that Light which illumines the spiritual longing of humanity, and a celebration of the continual resurrection within us of the springs of hope and love; a sense that each of us is, if we will, a channel of power that is both within us and beyond us."