

George Fox's words were recorded shortly before his death in 1691, "I am glad I was here. Now I am clear, I am fully clear...all is well; the seed of God reigns over all and over death itself. And though I am weak in body, yet the power of God is over all, and the seed reigns over all disorderly spirits."

Our first hymn is green #124, "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

Our first reading is from the advices and queries of Britain Yearly Meeting, "Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness. Approach old age with courage and hope. As far as possible, make arrangements for your care in good time, so that an undue burden does not fall on others. Although old age may bring increasing disability and loneliness, it can also bring serenity, detachment, and wisdom. Pray that in your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love. Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them."

A Second Reading comes from the poet Rumi:

When I die
when my coffin
is being taken out
you must never think
I am missing this world

don't shed any tears
don't lament or

feel sorry
I'm not falling
into a monster's abyss

when you see
my corpse is being carried
don't cry for my leaving
I'm not leaving
I'm arriving at eternal love

when you leave me
in the grave
don't say goodbye
remember a grave is
only a curtain
for the paradise behind

you'll only see me
descending into a grave
now watch me rise
how can there be an end
when the sun sets or
the moon goes down

it looks like the end
it seems like a sunset
but in reality it is a dawn
when the grave locks you up
that is when your soul is freed

have you ever seen
a seed fallen to earth
not rise with a new life
why should you doubt the rise
of a seed named human

have you ever seen
a bucket lowered into a well
coming back empty
why lament for a soul
when it can come back
like Joseph from the well

when for the last time
you close your mouth
your words and soul
will belong to the world of
no place no time

Finally, from Corinthians 15: 51-55 “Listen, I tell you a mystery:
We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the
twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will
sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be
changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the
imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the
perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal
with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:
“Death has been swallowed up in victory”. Where, O death, is your
victory? Where, O death is your sting?”

Our second hymn is #120 in the Green book “Fairest Lord Jesus”

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—We are all, in essence, a matter of life and death,
but in the arc and cycle that is life and death, let us recognize the
waystations, the havens, the relays for life where we hand off the
batons to the next bearers. While each individuality may have
clear temporal bounds, we also live collectively as families, as
communities, as Friends, as relations and neighbors chosen and

found, as members and citizens. These transcendent identities last longer than a day, a life, and our contributions to each other, our love, can endure, can multiply, can empower, can inspire. We pray that our hearts lean into love, that our minds dwell in the eternal communities and collectives of peace, integrity, and a hope and faith as we are the enactors of what will come, even as we know of our individually limited time. Let us testify and represent the realities of the many thousands gone, let us honor and remember and heal this broken world. Let our lives be our liturgy and our love be our song as we gain comfort from one another, as we share the journey and dwell in the serenity of our mutual support. Amen.

Our next hymn is green book #152 “This is Holy Ground”

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other.

Message: Dear friends—Some time in August, the light changes, and it becomes late summer. The time of growth begins to lean towards the time of harvest. The fruit begins to fall, before the leaves change. It is a fullness. Somehow the light becomes a little bit thicker, a bit richer, more golden. In some ways it is the absolute fullness of summer, but it is also the cresting of the hill, the downward accelerating slope of the year that fills the barn, before the cold. We’re not yet at the nostalgia of autumn, but we know that we are making the memories, completing the projects, getting ready to savor the last rounds of picnics and swims and cuts of hay. The sun, earth’s only sun, God’s only son, shines.

Early August is also a time of commemoration, a serious time as we think of the terrible power unleashed by the atom bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Only this year did I pay attention to the upcoming faithful candlelight vigil held for the last 43 years in Avon, New York, and coming up again on August 15th. In these years when the last of the living hibakusha can testify, those Japanese survivors, we must not give up the faithful Quaker

testimony for peace and against these most destructive of weapons. I read the other day about the elementary school closest to ground zero in Nagasaki, where the children are learning to inherit the stories of the survivors. They will be physically gone, but their love and dedication to the human race will live on. We commemorate death in support of life. We stand in the succession of moral affirmation and faith that the witness will be honored. Our lives speak in memory and the now.

Each summer, I often read a fictional series, and this year I've just finished the trilogy of *A Wrinkle in Time*, *A Wind in the Door*, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* by Madeleine L'Engle. I once read *A Wrinkle in Time* as a child, and loved its mix of science and transcendent spirituality, but I did not know that there were two other books in the series until recently. They encompass the universe and faith and quantum concepts with elements of the sacred, all in the shadow of the nuclear age. One of its concepts is that we are all actors in all times for all places, that all possible consequences of every action are always possible. For the Religious Society of Friends, this can translate to the ways in which the ways and presence of the Spirit are always imminent, always possible in every person at every time, and wherever any of us are, holds that of God in that place and time. These days as I worship between several meetings, I am more conscious that the two or three are always gathered at some point somewhere in the world—that we are a continuously worshipping community from place to place and time to time. I like being part of the many. It is a responsibility and a relief in that there is always backup, and that what we are doing has an impact, is a reinforcement of faith. We live both completely in time and completely outside time.

Many of you know that my mother died earlier this year and that her memorial service was in July, and her burial will be later this month. Some of you knew her from my parents' time of living in Ithaca and occasionally coming to this meeting, the Shepherd's

Play, and other events. At the Memorial Service, we used the bulletins, the order of service, that she had selected and planned back in 1985. Somewhat regularly, on visits, she would remind us that those bulletins were in her lower left hand desk drawer. No one of her parents or siblings had lived past 70 years, so it was a surprise to her to have reached 87. When Craig and I would leave from a visit and note when we next expected to see her, she would typically say, “If I’m still alive”. We were then alarmed last July when, instead of this usual semi-morbid farewell, she told us that she expected to make it until Christmas, and she did.

On her dresser was a photo of her mother and a group of her beloved cousins laughing, and that was her vision of heaven—the photo was there long after everyone in the photo had died to let her see who she would join every morning. That’s where she was going, to that circle of love. She was a bright and friendly woman, and not morbid, but she accepted death and was comfortable with it, and did not want us to be troubled by it. Thirty five years ago, she and my father planted on their cemetery plot and at their home two identical dogwood trees. The cemetery plot dogwood is visible from a main road in their countryside, and they and we could not help but note the landmark all these years, each time we drove past. Their home is in a woods, and so that dogwood has grown a bit tall and scraggly just in front of the house, a silent, subtle, regular reminder, while the sunny location of the cemetery plot has yielded a full and round more perfect dogwood. They nurtured both trees, a pair and a succession.

The day before her final stroke, she mailed Craig his birthday present for this coming week. May we all have such confidence in our succession of love and friendship. We live in hope, not fear, in love, and not despair. Bear witness to that. As humans we are bounded in time, but we are grounded in that of God, in the eternal.

Our closing hymn is Red #174 “Love Divine all Loves Excelling”

Closing: I am glad I was here. Now I am clear, I am fully clear...all is well.