



FROM THE CEO, DREW DYSON

Hope for Better Days Ahead

Dear Friends,

With April just around the corner, signs of spring are bursting forth all around us. The earth's renewal is a sign of hope and promise for what is yet to come. Amid the trials of war, a strained economy, and the ongoing pandemic, spring emerges with the hope that there are better days ahead. For many, this hope is intertwined with faith traditions that provide the basis for such confidence in the future.

This spring, people all over the world will mark festivals and religious celebrations, grounding their hope in this promise of renewal. For many others who do not ascribe to particular faith traditions, but find their source of the divine in nature or in their encounters with others, spring celebrations such as Earth Day usher in a similar sense of hopefulness. For still others in the recovery community, their experience of a "Higher Power" is often found in the "rooms" of AA, NA, Naranon, and other such communities of hope and possibility.

This season of divine celebration kicked off with the Hindu celebration of Holi on March 18. Holi is an ancient Hindu festival that celebrates the eternal and divine love of Radha Krishna. Holi heralds the arrival of spring after winter and signifies the victory of good over evil. Holi is celebrated as a day of thanksgiving for good harvest and of spreading happiness and love to others.

For Muslims, the celebration of Ramadan is a month-long time of intensified worship, study of the Quran, prayer, and fasting that commemorates the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad. This joyous celebration for Muslim people helps believers purify their hearts, renew their faith, seek forgiveness, and increase self-discipline.

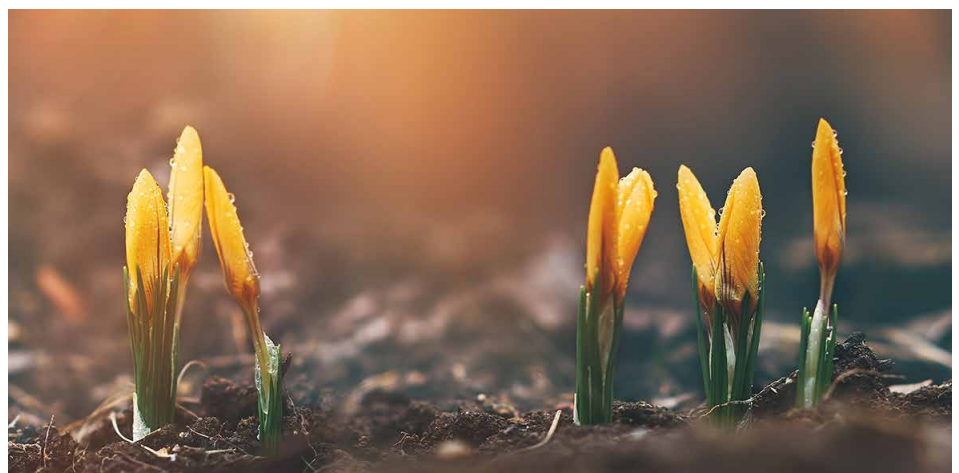
Jews celebrate Passover, a

celebration of liberation, marking the exodus from bondage of 220 years of slavery in Egypt. "Passover," notes Rabbi Levi Greenberg from Chabad Lubavitch in El Paso, "reflects a message of hope, faith, and freedom amid hardship.... Passover really illustrates the idea that God has got your back; things won't be easy all the time; you won't understand everything all the time; there are problems, but always remember that God has our back."

For Christians, Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a reminder that God is ultimately the source of our hope and the promise of new life. For pastor and theologian Gordon Linney, "Easter is a declaration of hope in a troubled world...a living hope, a hope that is contemporary and real for the present moment."

What inspires me in the midst of our troubling days, is that all of these faith traditions, as well as the belief in the divine that draws meaning in the natural world or the rooms of the recovery community, is that there is a telos that beckons individuals to think beyond themselves and their present experience in order to seek justice, liberation, and healing for all of humanity and of nature.

Ilana Levinson of Cherry Hill, New Jersey captures this poignantly, writing: "On Passover, we



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look inward at the struggles we have endured that have brought about our liberation; but we are also challenged to look outside of ourselves. Just as we take on the bitter burden of remembering our own oppression, we are also challenged to stand with those who still seek justice – for we too know the plight of the oppressed.”

Toward that end, I would like to invite you to a moderated conversation with an esteemed panel of interfaith clergy on Monday, April 25 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Please join me for this important conversation with Rabbi Ben Adler (Adath Israel Congregation, Lawrenceville), Imam Quareeb Bashir (Islamic Center of Ewing), and Rev. Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez (District Superintendent, Greater NJ United Methodists). The topic for this panel will be: [“Faith Seeking Peace and Justice”](#) and will focus on the important role that the Abrahamic

faith traditions have in peace-making and justice-seeking.

This month, I also want to invite you to reflect on your own experience of the divine spark in the world — whether through your faith tradition, your experience of nature, your encounters with others, or your exploration of the cosmos. As you do, ask yourself what my mentor and dissertation advisor describes as the “so what?” question. *What difference does this make in your life? What hope is needed in the world that you can bring forth? In what way will you work for the liberation of others — or the healing of our planet?*

All the Best,
Drew A. Dyson, PhD
Chief Executive Officer