

Stephanie Paulsell: Friends, good morning.

Congregation: Morning.

Paulsell: And welcome to the first service of morning prayers of the term. We're so delighted to see all of you. We'll begin this morning with our responsive reading number 157, on page 80 of the black Harvard Psalter. Would you stand?

Paulsell: For wisdom moves more easily than motion itself. She pervades and permeates all things, because she is so pure.

Congregation: Like a fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty.

Paulsell: She is the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God, and the image of his goodness.

Congregation: She is but one, yet can do everything: herself enchanting, she makes all things new. Age after age, she enters into holy souls and makes them God's friends and profits.

Paulsell: For nothing is acceptable to God, but the man who makes his home with wisdom.

Congregation: If riches are a prize to be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things?

Pastor: If prudence shows itself in action, who more than wisdom is the artificer of all that is?

Congregation: If virtue is the object of man's affections, the fruits of wisdom's favors are the virtues. Temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, these are the teaching, and in the life of all there is nothing more valuable than these.

Pastor: You may be seated.

Choir: (singing).

Lawrence Bacow: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Lawrence Bacow: I thank you all for being here to begin the academic year in the spirit of reflection and contemplation. What a wonderful reminder of the commitments that bring us together as a community of learners. I've learned much about Harvard since I last delivered morning prayers a year ago. Before my selection

was announced, I felt confident that I understood parts of this university quite well after having been a student here, having been a teacher here, having been a member of the corporation here, but I must say there's nothing like being president to get to know an institution well.

Lawrence Bacow: This past year brought this extraordinary place's strengths and weaknesses into sharper focus for me, and I wanted to share today with you an area in which I think we are at risk of failing one another and failing this university to which all of us belong.

Lawrence Bacow: There's a story that is told about the great Rabbi Hillel, for whom the organization on our campus, and on many other campuses, is named. He was confronted by a skeptic who demanded that Rabbi Hillel teach him the entire Torah, known by Christians as the old Testament, while standing on one foot. His response, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others." The rest is commentary.

Lawrence Bacow: How can we profess to be seekers of veritas, seekers of truth, if we shame and shun those who disagree with us? How can we urge forbearance and generosity in others, if we are unwilling to practice it ourselves? How can we have any hope for the wider world, if we cannot model in our community the reasoned debate and discourse we wish to see elsewhere?

Lawrence Bacow: Yes, the issues that we are confronting today as a university, as a nation, and as a planet, need our urgent attention. Yes, they are deserving of our thoughtful consideration. Yes, they are worthy of impassioned argument. But we cannot allow them to create in each of us a righteousness that abhors concession or compromise. When we succumb to the lure of moral certitude, when we stifle disagreement in our community by ignoring and ostracizing dissenters, we lose our ability to make meaningful change.

Lawrence Bacow: In the year ahead there will be many opportunities for our community to rise to the challenge of turning individual commentary into collective action. Personal conviction into public statement. Fortunately, the weakness I just described is still outpaced by one of our great strengths. Bringing people together, as we are here today, who care deeply about the search for truth, and who want to sincerely improve our world. May we all see one another in that light as we embark on this important journey once again, and may we all remember the important words of Rabbi Hillel. Thank you.

Paulsell: Would you pray with me? God of life, you have brought us in safety to this new day. May we receive it with joy and move through it with attention and compassion, seeking to join you in ways both large and small, visible and hidden, in the work of loving and repairing this world. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Paulsell: Now would you join me in the Lord's Prayer, which is printed on the reverse side of your order of worship?

Congregation: Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paulsell: Would you stand for our hymn number one?

Choir: (singing).

Paulsell: President Bacow, we thank you for your challenging message to us this morning. President Bacow has released his beginning of the year letter, it's all in our email boxes, I believe, on some significant issues, and hope you'll have the time to read that today as well.

Paulsell: Thanks everyone for being here. We are here Monday through Friday, every morning at 8:30, and would love to see you again. And now may the movement of God's spirit enlighten us, transform us, and lead us into life. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.