



# The Quaker Heron

11th Month 2006

The Journal of Patapsco Friends Meeting

## A 10th BIRTHDAY COLLECTION

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### From the Editor

To Build A Swing  
You carry  
All the ingredients  
To turn your life into a nightmare—  
Don't mix them!  
You have all the genius  
To build a swing in your backyard  
For God.  
That sounds  
Like a hell of a lot more fun.  
Let's start laughing, drawing  
blueprints,  
Gathering our talented friends.  
I will help you  
With my divine lyre and drum.  
Hafiz  
Will sing a thousand words  
You can take into your hands,  
Like golden saws,  
Silver hammers,  
Polished teakwood,  
Strong silk rope.  
You carry all the ingredients  
To turn your existence into joy.  
Mix them, mix  
Them!

Hafiz,  
translated by  
Daniel Ladinsky

The first hint of what would become my leading to have a Meeting in Howard County came to me while I was sitting on a folding chair under palm trees in the small garden of Sherman Crumlish, a Key West Friend. There five of us gathered for Meeting for Worship: three local Friends and Jim and I. Jim and I had walked to Sherman's garden from a B&B three blocks away and, as I sat in the silence, I found myself thinking about that five-minute walk and about the half-hour drive to and from Sandy Spring Friends Meeting Jim and I made each First Day. I thought how blessed we were that these three folks had made a place close by for us to sojourn, and how we might make a place for sojourners in Howard County. That was in December of 1994.

For nearly two years I pondered this leading and I talked with folks at Sandy Spring who had been involved in an earlier attempts to found a meeting in Howard County.

Then, at Sandy Spring in September of 1996, a meeting to discuss having a worship group in Howard County was called, and it became clear that I was not the only one who had been pondering and talking. If I remember correctly, it was John Buck who called that meeting. He shared his leading and found the support that opened the way to the planting of Patapsco Friends Meeting here in Howard County 10 years ago.

*The Quaker Heron* arose out of Diane Reynold's leading to take on the task of editing a newsletter for what was then Patapsco Friends Preparative Meeting. She told us of her commitment at our first weekend retreat in September 1999, at the New Windsor Retreat Center. The name of the newsletter also arose out of the retreat. When Jerry Girbach likened the Meeting to a blue heron "we move gracefully when it is time to move, rest patiently when it is time to wait, and act swiftly and surely when it is time to act" a murmur went around the room: "We think we've found a name for the newsletter." The first issue appeared in November, three months later. In her letter from the editor, Diane wrote: "As I put together this first issue, I am very thankful to the people who contributed articles and moral support."

Diane laid down her task after editing six wonderful issues. This anniversary issue makes our 10th. You will find here a selection of articles published in the first nine issues, and new contributions from Friends reflecting on their experience of our Meeting. I, too, am grateful to all of you who have contributed to our journals. (*Editor, page 16...*)



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### ON COMMUNITY 11th MONTH, 1999

#### What is Community?

by John Buck

A community is a number of individuals who share a common interest. Is that true for a spiritual community? What is the common interest of the Patapsco Preparative Meeting community? Or is a spiritual community defined by more than common interest? I would like to thresh these queries over the next few months and do so again at least every few years. Being as clear as we can about “why we are” can help us discern right priorities and right decisions. The following are my personal responses to the queries, derived from as much Light as I can scrape together.

First, it does seem that a spiritual community is a bit different than just any secular community. The phrase “common interest” implies rationality and intellect, the potential subject of a cost-benefit analysis and not the focus of inspiration or commitment. I am drawn to the Patapsco Friends Community by what I can only call oceanic, deep feelings. My intellect (which worries about such things as common interest) is only a raft floating on the currents. For me choosing a spiritual community is on a par with other major life decisions such as choosing a career, a spouse, to have children, to oppose a war, and so on. Spiritual communities typically have a common belief and ask their members to sign up to some credo summarizing that belief. We Quakers slip away from prescribed beliefs by posing queries and offer instead a common form of worship. It is an empty form that one can decorate with beliefs if one so chooses. At the retreat, our group that shared life stories turned out to include a Protestant Quaker, a Jewish Quaker, a Hindu Quaker, and a lapsed-agnostic Quaker, whatever that is. I quite enjoyed the exercise of sharing life stories. It felt so satisfying to share our humanness, and I felt the essence of our community: sharing human/divine Spirit.

I feel connected also to our history. Around 1650 a large community in northern England called “Seekers” invented a new kind of religious meeting. They had rejected contemporary churches and thought they were trying to recreate the original form of the Church in the days of the Apostles. I think their invention was, instead, profoundly original. They often held their meetings in silence for they did not want to speak unless they were sure God gave them something to say. From the silence these “Waiters” or “Seekers” received a message that a prophet-like person would soon come to lead them. Right on cue, George Fox showed up with the message that they could now be Finders and Possessors. George Fox died, but the “Children of the Light,” the Religious Society of Friends of Truth, carried on.

Our lives today are more fragmented and disjointed than ever in history. We sit mere feet from each other in traffic and do not speak or wave. Spouses no longer share economic production or the same social networks, as they did in farming communities. Children know little of their parent’s day-to-day lives. Neighbors live for years near each other hardly knowing each other’s names. In this confusion of secular communities, the gift the Children left us, a form of worship and light-centered activity that lets disconnected lives come together to pool their spirits and share their spiritual journeys, is an especially precious gift.

The core of the Quaker tradition is a way of inward seeking which leads to outward acts of integrity and service. Friends are most in the Spirit when they stand at the crossing point of the inward and the outward life. And that is the intersection at which we find community. Community is a place where the connections felt in the heart make themselves known in bonds between people, and where the tuggings and pullings of those bonds keep opening up our hearts.

Parker Palmer, 1977



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### ON SIMPLICITY 4th MONTH, 2000

#### Inner Simplicity

by Scott Garrison

Living a simple life does not seem to come easily for us. Even with a sincere desire for simplicity, we are faced with many competing goals and impulses. Does owning a car—or multiple cars—complicate my life or simplify it? Does buying inexpensive imported goods undermine domestic labor standards? What if my career or community seems to call for dressing or entertaining in a manner which conflicts with my efforts to simplify?

Why should simplicity be so fraught with complexity? Everyone I have spoken with who has tried to simplify their life has remarked on the struggles they have faced. And continually confronting these conflicts over and over again, many of us abandon the effort to achieve simplicity.

I am coming to believe that we need to distinguish between an outward simplicity and an inner simplicity. What I wear, what I eat, how I speak, how I spend my time and money, are all outward signs of who I am. Hopefully, these outward signs are all tending towards simplicity. But if I am in constant inner turmoil over how to manifest simplicity, I have not achieved any measure of inner simplicity.

So long as we try to define our goal of simplicity by its outward signs we can only attain an image of simplicity. Buying a broad-brim hat and suspenders and addressing all as thee or thou, by itself, will not bring me inner simplicity—it would just be play-acting in an image of simplicity. Likewise, shopping at thrift stores, raising all my own food or joining a monastic order would not, by themselves, produce inner simplicity. Adopting one or more forms of outward simplicity as a discipline may help me simplify my life, but it might also distract me from the goal of inner simplicity.

A number of years ago, I heard something on the radio that has significantly influenced my thinking about simplicity. It was an interview with one of the few remaining Shakers, and the conversation had touched on the Shaker belief that the end of the world was imminent, and the simple beauty and utility of their handcrafts. The interviewer then asked this old Shaker why, if he believed the end was at hand, was he taking such pains to make such fine joints on the chair he was building. The Shaker replied, if the world is about to end, what is the point of rushing the job?

To me, this is a profound example of a life lived fully in the moment. The man builds a chair because a chair is needed. If you need a chair, let its design be economical and without ornamentation, because the end may be at hand. But build it to the best of your ability; because this moment is the moment you have devoted to chair building, there is nothing more important to do with your time.

The way I see it, this Shaker's belief in the imminent end of the world served as an organizing principle that produced a life of marked simplicity. It produced an inner simplicity that in turn naturally and effortlessly manifested itself as simplicity in outward ways. To me, this inner simplicity is the truly important simplicity; the outer simplicity is merely a consequence of the inner simplicity.

It seems to me that the inner simplicity must be essentially a matter of spirituality. I find that all of the convincing exemplars of simplicity ground their simplicity within their spirituality. I conceive of spirituality here as the alignment and harmonization of one's spirit with a coherent set of fundamental beliefs.

Only when you bring your spirit fully in line with your beliefs can you "walk it like you talk it." Only when your simplicity is a natural outgrowth of simplicity of spirit is it truly simple. What I want to achieve for myself is simplicity of spirit that effortlessly produces unmistakable outward signs of simplicity.

*So do not worry, saying, 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'what shall we wear?' (Matt. 6:31)*

#### In a Word

Quiet

Silence

Simplicity

Justice

Equality

Simplicity

Plain Dress

Plain Talk

Simplicity

Truth

Openness

Simplicity

Mindfulness

Peace

Simplicity

In a word,

Simplicity

Jim Rose



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Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but occupies all our time. And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.

Thomas Kelly,  
*A Testament of Devotion,*  
*"The Simplification of Life."*

I'm not entirely sure how to achieve this inner simplicity, but I think that the mindfulness exhibited by this old Shaker is an important ingredient. If I decide that it is good for me to build a chair, then I want to be fully engaged in the building of that chair. I don't want to let myself be distracted by thoughts of what else I might be doing with my time, or dividing my attention unnecessarily. If something more important arises, then I should leave off building the chair and become fully engaged in the new matter. And when my end comes, I want to rest easy knowing that I was fully engaged in whatever was most important at that moment, be it work or play. At that level of mindfulness, it seems to me that every act becomes a sacrament.

Such mindfulness is difficult in our culture of busy-ness. I read while I eat. I listen to the radio while I drive. My mind wanders while playing with my son. I listen to my voicemail while scrolling through my e-mail. I multi-task proudly. But every now and then I act mindfully, giving my best unstintingly, living fully in the moment. And that, to me, is the virtue of simplicity.

## ON PEACE 9th MONTH, 2000

### The Peace Testimony: Transforming Power

by Susan Rose

*Note: All Bible quotations are from the Gospel of Matthew, The Revised English Bible.*

Jesus called us to be transformed. He said:

"You must not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword . . . a man will find his enemies under his own roof. No one is worthy of me who cares more for father or mother than for me; no one is worthy of me who cares more for son or daughter; no one is worthy of me who does not take up his cross and follow me. Whoever gains his life will lose it; whoever loses his life will gain it."

Jesus asks nothing less than a complete abandonment of self-service in order to serve God. And how are we to serve? Jesus explained:

"Do not resist those who wrong you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other also. If anyone wants to sue you and takes your shirt, let him have your cloak as well. If someone in authority presses you into service for a mile, go with him two. Give to anyone who asks; and do not turn your back on anyone who wants to borrow. Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the innocent and the wicked."

"Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal."

"Consider how the lilies grow in the field; they do not work, they do not spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendour was not attired like one of them."

The way of Christ is followed not by those who would be mighty and powerful, but by those who would serve. His peace for the world will be won by those who follow him in repentance and willingness to forgive.

London Yearly Meeting, 1854



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### A Fragile Web

Peace is like gossamer—  
 Vulnerable, yet indestructible:  
 Tear it, and it will be rewoven.  
 Peace does not despair.  
 Begin to weave a web of  
 peace:  
 Start in the center  
 And make peace with yourself  
 And your God.  
 Take the thread outwards  
 And build peace within your  
 family, your community—and  
 in the circle of those you find  
 it hard to like.  
 Then stretch your concern  
 Into all the world.  
 Weave a web of peace and do  
 not despair.  
 Love is the warp in the fabric  
 of life:  
 Truth is the weft:  
 Care and integrity  
 together—  
 Vulnerable  
 But ultimately indestructible.  
 Together they spell peace.

Kate Compston

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged.”

“When Jesus had finished this discourse the people were amazed at this teaching.”  
 I guess so!

Here are teachings that go against ordinary prudence; that go against what most of his listeners then and now believe ordinary human beings can do. Making this move is not easy. Jesus calls for us to take up our cross and follow him. Shown the way to God, we are set at war with ourselves, our ordinary needs and desires, and set at war with others who think we are crazy or naive or irresponsible. But Jesus is unequivocal: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and Money.”

Yet through his message runs what has been called cosmic optimism, cosmic carefreeness:

“Do not ask anxiously, ‘What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What shall we wear?’ These are the things that occupy the minds of the heathen, but your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your mind on God’s kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well.”

“So do not be anxious about tomorrow; tomorrow will look after itself. Each day has trouble enough of its own.”

“Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, those who seek find, and to those who knock, the door will be opened.”

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to wear, my load is light.”

We are invited into the heavenly kingdom where we will find rest. We will come out of the jangling and contention of this world into the Light of God’s kingdom, where all things are made new, where *we* are made new, where our eyes are sound and we have light for our whole body. It is from *this* place that we will live “in virtue of that life and power that [takes] away the occasion of all wars...and strife.” It is from *this* place that we, “the light for all the world,” bear witness to the power of love, our spiritual sword, and with George Fox and other Friends say,

“We . . . utterly . . . deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. . . . The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as to once command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for any kingdoms of this world. . . .” (*A Declaration to Charles II*, 1660)

It is from *this* place that we will, with George Fox’s cosmic cheeriness, sing and rejoice, as “children of the Day and of the Light, for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, . . .” (Epistle 227)



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ON EQUALITY 1st MONTH, 2001

### *A Gathered Community*

*by Jim Rose*

It is so difficult to write about normative issues such as equality, justice, truth, just because they are so dependent on context. And context, or our perceptions of that context, is what wars are made of. Assertions of inequality or injustice are dependent on commonly held axioms or principles or convictions. Deny but one of those axioms, slightly distort an accepted principle, question a conviction and the assertions are revealed in a new light.

So instead of discussing assertions of equality, what if I focused on equality as an icon, a metaphor, as an example, an instance of icons in general. "All men are created equal" is not a conclusion of some scientific investigation, it is not deduced from a set of more primitive assertions, nor is it inferred from our observations about the real world. It is, itself, an axiom upon which we have based our politics, our legal system, our national creed.

The Quaker insistence that there is that of God in everyone is a fundamental restatement of the equality icon: it is axiomatic to Quaker tradition and Quaker theology. It is so firmly engrained in our traditions to appear as dogma. Indeed, to question this one axiom is, in my own mind, to question the essence of Quakerism.

This axiom of equality has little to do with the relationship among men. We are all unequal in our genetics, our talents and abilities, our culture, our awareness. That there is that of God in each of us is *not* a statement that we all have equal access to God, but that God has equal access to each of us.

Indeed, each person has a different perception of the Light: each person comes from a different context, each person filters events through their own sieve wrought of the joys and pains of their whole lives. Yet underlying our individualistic interpretation of the Truth is the one and same light which has equal access to all of us.

Equality is not something which is owned or endowed, nor does that equality endow us with rights and privileges. To the contrary; the equal light shared by all puts on each of us the obligation to listen to that light by listening to everyone. While awareness is often fostered by revelation, knowledge of that spirit is learned by listening. As each of us are equally accessible by the Light, and each of us filter that light through our own accumulation of experiences, fears and hopes, what surfaces from any individual is a glimmering, fogged, distorted. But as that same Truth makes its way through many individual filters, a resonance is created and true clarity can be revealed.

Discernment and clarity have been explicit challenges for all Quakers. Revelation, a glimpse of the Light, must be recognized as something which I have already filtered through my personal sieve. I am obliged to seek clarity, to find how my truth resonates with the truth as seen by others. And there are few better places to seek that clarity than in a meeting where each of us ministers vocally from our own awareness of that same truth.

Our way of worship is not just an historical accident; it is a corollary from our conviction concerning the universal Light of Christ. Believing that in every worshiper, regardless of age, learning, sex, or any other human label, the promptness of God's spirit are at work, Friends meet together in entirely unprogrammed meetings, worship in silent prayer, opening themselves [to the Spirit]. . . . In such corporate worship . . . we are led into a depth of communion with God and with one another that is deeply meaningful and spiritually refreshing.

L. Hugh Doncaster  
*The Quaker Message*  
 Pendle Hill Pamphlet 181



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Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world.  
You may say I'm a dreamer,  
But I'm not the only one.

John Lennon, *Imagine*

With that obligation to listen, to seek resonances of the light, arises a corresponding obligation I have to speak in meeting—or at least an obligation not to resist speaking from the light. For how am I to test the veracity of my vision without the benefit of the visions of others? Indeed, how can the resonance shine clearly without the contribution of many visions?

Speaking in meeting itself acquires obligations: to attend to what has already been spoken; to reflect on the import of those messages; to meld those words into my own context; to cast those meldings into the pool of light as I see it. And if the reflection of that casting can be expressed in words, they must be spoken. Only thus can the light itself be illuminated.

If that attention, sensitivity, and resonance is consistently sought at a meeting, if that attention results in repercussive sparkles of sympathetic illumination, I become immersed in a gathered meeting. A gathered meeting where messages spring from messages, where truth struggles to create a shining resonance that each of us can recognize as meaningful in our own context.

Imagine a gathered meeting grown large. Imagine a gathered community. That is equality at work.

## ON INTEGRITY 8th MONTH, 2001

### *Personal Integrity Is A Choice*

by John Farrell

Integrity is one of those ideas that is tough to pin down and define, yet we all have an idea of what it is—and what it isn't. Integrity has a 'feel' to it. It is strength and authenticity (emanating from the Author or Creator). It is health, especially of spirit, and wholeness. It is harmony, safety and security. It is power. It is making and keeping promises. And it goes beyond keeping your word—it is actually *being* your word. It is your word as your essence and spirit. It is spirit. Integrity is truth. It goes beyond telling the truth to Being the Truth, your own unique expression of the Light and Word. Integrity is responsibility. It is where you make a stand for who you really are.

Speak of integrity, especially as it relates to one's self or others, and you will probably stimulate conversation and thought. An opinion on the matter of integrity, it seems, is generally not too hard to find. Suggest that I'm not acting with integrity and my thought processes will definitely be stimulated and a form of defensiveness and justification of my actions or behavior is likely to follow. Consider this: if a response to criticism of one's behavior moves from simple, straightforward explanation and clarification to defensiveness and justification, or even worse to shaming and blaming the accuser, then perhaps there may be a breakdown of integrity involved somewhere in the transaction.

I believe we all know when we are acting with integrity and when we aren't. We know when we are telling the truth and when we aren't. We know when we are 'walking the walk AND talking the talk.' We know when we say what we mean and mean what we say. We have all experienced the empowerment that accompanies being our word. That's all in the realm of integrity.

Above the flood of daydreams  
Swims this whisper:  
Lie not  
Let live  
Be Light  
Shine.

Jean Pfefferkorn



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Remember, O my soul, that the Prince of Peace is my Lord, that he communicates his unmixed wisdom to his family, that they, living in perfect simplicity, may give no just cause of offense to any creature, but may walk as he walked.

John Woolman

We really don't have to look very far to find evidence of loss of integrity. And maybe that is the problem. Perhaps we shouldn't even be looking beyond our selves at all. I submit that plenty of evidence for the loss of integrity can be found very close to home.

“. . . How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye', when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matt. 7:4 RSV)

Integrity goes beyond 'doing the right thing' because the definition of 'right' is left to the interpreter and the one judging another's actions. Doing the right thing, for me, has something of the ring of situational ethics and the belief that the end justifies the means. If 'doing the right thing' emanates from your own 'right thought' then the chosen course of action that follows will naturally be characterized as having integrity. So what is 'right thought' and 'right action'? From a Christian perspective right thought and action comes from the Bible and especially the teaching and example of Jesus. Check out the Sermon on the Mount for a quick refresher course.

Considered impractical for modern life by many, some Christian traditions (Anabaptist, for example) have always taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously as a model and guide for conducting one's personal, social and business life. This scripture contains an essential source and guide for daily life. The Sermon calls us to live our lives with self-awareness and mindfully, to consciously make choices in our thought and actions. To live one's life consciously in self-awareness and mindfulness is to live one's life responsibly with integrity.

William Shakespeare put it another way:

This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

*Hamlet*. Act 1. Scene. 3

## ON CHARITY 2nd MONTH, 2002

### *On Giving Charity*

*by Sherri Morgan*

A bone to the dog is not charity.  
Charity is the bone shared with  
the dog, when you are just as  
hungry as the dog.

Jack London

### **First Thoughts**

Charity has a certain smell: The smell of old clothes being unfolded and dusty rooms of unused furniture; the smell of vintage fur coats and well-used boots. These smells invite discovery. Who used to wear these things? Why did someone think anyone would ever wear this again? What kind of wood is that table made of? Why don't they make things that way anymore?

Charity also has certain feelings: Suspicion—"Didn't that family come for help just two days ago?" Pity—"How sad, those children are looking so

*God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him. (1 John 4:16)*





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*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up,*

*Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

*Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

*Charity never faileth: . . .*

*I Corinthians 13*

unkempt.” Annoyance—“Why do people keep expecting us to rescue them?” Self-satisfaction—“I feel so worthy when I’m ‘doing good’ for others.” Humility—“There but for the grace of God, go I.” Fear—“If I lose my job maybe I’ll need to get help here too.” Exhaustion—“The needs never stop!” Contentment—“I’m right where I should be, doing exactly what I should be doing.” Gratitude—“Thank you, Lord, if any of my work helps another person in spite of all my mixed feelings and those of the receivers.”

### Looking Deeper

To behave charitably is to overcome a first impulse to respond to another with mistrust and skepticism. I have behaved charitably when I recognize that my emotions are rushing to a negative judgment of another without giving that individual the benefit of the doubt. The act of overcoming my own selfish narrowness and responding to another as I think God would have me requires an act of will. When I choose to respond in such a manner, I say that I was “charitable.”

Interpersonal charity thus becomes, to some extent, a measure of both my own rough nature as well as my self-awareness and self-control in directing my behavior to a more positive end. As one grows in the Spirit and loving responses become more natural, less “charity” is required. Genuine loving-kindness replaces the need to act “as if.” Sometimes this tender openness to others is also called charity.

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## ON MEETING 2nd MONTH, 2003

For, when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed. . . .

Robert Barclay, 1678

## The Presence of the Light

*by Bob Rhudy*

How does one begin to discuss *On Meeting*?

Why do I go to Meeting? What *is* Meeting? What happens there? What do I do? What do my Friends do there? What does God do there? What is the ‘Light,’ and how do you find it? How does Meeting help? Is there a difference between meetings and Meeting?

In my work, I have lots of meetings, and I’ve never really thought about the concept before of what a meeting is. At a meeting, people come together for some common purpose. We usually discuss that purpose. Perhaps a central part of the meeting, particularly if it is the first meeting in a potential series of meetings, is to begin to establish an agreement, a consensus, on what is our shared purpose or intent for our meetings.

At Meeting, Friends come together (I will conjecture as our shared central purpose) to search for a closer meeting with God or the ‘Light’ or the ‘Light of



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A Friends' meeting, however silent, is at the very lowest a witness that worship is something other and deeper than words, and that it is to the unseen and eternal things that we desire to give the first place in our lives. And when the meeting, whether silent or not, is awake, and looking upwards, there is much more in it than this. In the united stillness of a truly 'gathered' meeting there is a power known only by experience, and mysterious even when most familiar. There are perhaps few things which more readily flow 'from vessel to vessel' than quietness.

Caroline E Stephen, 1908

God,' and we share a belief that there is a value in doing so as a community of seekers. While we may not consciously discuss it, I think we vaguely agree that searching for God (who is within us all) is helped through sharing the lights and visions of Friends, that the 'sightings' and 'soundings' of a Friend may help stimulate our own vision.

Unlike many of my other meetings, which center on conversation, my Meetings with Friends place great focus on shared silence. We learn together to look within to discern the Light. What I find fascinating is that the lesson of that silent inner quest in community applies very well to my other meetings, enriching my entire personal and communal life.

What does God do at meeting? He reveals himself. (I am conscious of the gender of pronoun selected here, a problem avoided by using 'Light' rather than 'God.') Occasionally at our Quaker Meeting, there is a stirring of the Spirit through our Meeting.

We do indeed become a gathered Meeting, a centered Meeting—no, more than those terms convey to me, I (and I believe, we) sense the presence of the Light moving through us. It becomes a central mystery of our Quaker experience. I will set it beside the central Catholic mystery where the wine becomes blood and the bread the body of Christ—the Spirit moves among us! I leave the Meeting understanding that the Spirit is always in and with us, even though not so constantly felt, by the wondrous and joyous experience which we have shared.

## ON THE LORD'S PRAYER 4th MONTH, 2004

The Lord's Prayer has been part of my being for as long as I can remember. Over the years I have joined with others to repeat the words in joy, and also in deepest grief. I have heard the prayer delivered with eloquence, sung with beauty, whispered with love. Now in my 80's, a certain dementia scatters my thoughts and slows my memory, but prayer continues in wordless appreciation of the goodness of God . . . and the glory forever.

Ruth Butcher

### A Bridge Inward

by Diane Reynolds

When I first began attending Quaker meeting I had trouble filling the silence. I would often find the Lord's Prayer, a weekly fixture in my old church, floating through my mind. It became a bridge between my old form of worship and my new.

In Quaker meeting, I found I had the time to think about the words of the prayer and what they meant. The words are very simple. We are asking that God's will be done and God's kingdom established. This is the opposite of using religious practice to try to bend God, "the gods," or nature to the will of human beings. Jesus is very clear that the form of worship he is trying to communicate is not a magical manipulation of God to gain what we want. Instead, it is an attempt to discern and enact what God desires on Earth. This is the essence of Quakerism.

The Lord's Prayer acknowledges our physical needs and tells us to expect that God will meet those needs. This brings peace.

The prayer tells us that when we act first to reconcile ourselves with others who have wronged us, we will find peace from our own wrongs. This is congruent

. . . one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, . . . (Luke 11:1)



## A 10th Birthday Collection

*“Draw the spaces.”*

*Advice given to me by my instructor in life drawing class, 1963.*

*Our Father which art in Heaven,  
What is the space between God and me? When  
I'm thinking of God not at all, Heaven is beyond  
my ken. The space between us is without form.*

*Hallowed be Thy Name.*

*But when I turn my attention to God a space  
begins to form and as I deepen my focus the  
distance between God and me narrows.*

*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.*

*Is this the Kingdom coming: that as I pay  
attention to God the space between us  
narrows, grows thin? Is this His will: that I pay  
attention to Him? Is my attending bringing His  
Kingdom to earth, right here, right now?*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*Why “daily”? I need bread today but tomorrow  
as well. I can bring tomorrow close, so close  
that it fills today with plans and provisions.  
But while I'm attending to the future, I cannot  
attend to God. The Kingdom moves away,  
beyond my ken.*

*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.*

*Where is the space where the blindfolded  
Goddess holds the scales of justice? Where is  
Golgotha, the place of retribution?—They are  
not here. This space of forgiveness is where God  
dwells in me, where His law of love is written on  
my heart. The moment of forgiveness is a  
moment of supreme mindfulness, the moment  
when he who forgives looks his tormentor in the  
eye. The moment of forgiveness is a moment of  
supreme willfulness. One cannot be coerced into  
forgiveness; one can only freely consent to it.  
The moment of forgiveness is a moment of  
supreme willlessness, a moment of complete  
surrender of our will to God's. Here no distance  
at all separates God from His child.*

*And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*

*Draw me up to you, dear Lord.*

Susan Rose

with Jesus' core concept that if we love our enemies, good will follow. Jesus communicates this counter-intuitive information as a fact, not a fancy.

The prayer asks for protection from evil and from the temptation to act out of our own wills. It does not assume that living in the world is easy.

I was much taken with a comment in meeting that the Lord's prayer is a communal prayer. We pray to “our father,” ask for “our daily bread,” petition for “our sins to be forgiven,” that “we not be led into temptation.” This has led me to ponder the communal nature of Christianity.

Recently, I had an opportunity to write about a Wiccan family. Despite (or because) I am a deeply Christ-centered person, I was touched by how they try to live their faith in every aspect of their lives. I was also struck by how easy it was for them to be in constant touch with their gods. They burned incense in the kitchen to ward off evil. Statues of Thor or Osiris could be pulled off a shelf in a flash. Spellcasting occurred in the home, around the kitchen table, performed within the family.

Quakers do not burn incense or worship statues in the home. The work we do and the life we live becomes our prayer—a prayer easily eroded without the support and fellowship of other Quakers.

Christianity, as I have experienced it, has been public and communal. Worship takes place in a central building, open to all. “The Church” as an entity is greater than any one person or family.

Even in periods of persecution, Christians have insisted on public witness. For example, George Fox made a point of worshipping openly when he knew arrest was inevitable.

In a society that has become less communal and much more private, family-oriented and individual, I see a deep need to preserve the communal structure of Quakerism, but also to add more individual worship into my home. I feel the domestic need because I see communal religious institutions becoming peripheral, rather than central, to people's lives. In my own life, I am more willing to skip meeting for work than work for meeting. I thought of this as I missed a peace march because I had to work. This privileging of work is so commonplace that we no longer question it.

There has doubtless never—or only in brief flashes, such as described in the book Acts or the early Quaker movement—been the kind of collective faith and intensity the Lord's Prayer seems to call for. But the call to community is clear.



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### ON QUERIES 12th MONTH, 2005

#### Why Queries?

by Ramona Buck

##### ARE WE THE GOOD NEWS?

There is something sacred in each person. How we relate to people is what we actually believe about them. Words are not the thing, relationship is all. We are the epistles, we are the texts, the manifestations of God. How we treat others is our personal statement about God. If enquirers want to know what Friends are about, they will read the books—perhaps—but they will also read us. My query for “Christocentric” Friends would be: Are we Christs, one to another? Do we walk as those anointed and sent to do the work of the Spirit, however much we fail, as fragile and vulnerable human beings? My query for “Universalist” Friends would be: How much of the universal light do we show even in our rejection of particular understandings of the Spirit? All else is, as Friends say, a mere notion, however convincingly theoretical our arguments may be. At the end of the day it does not matter whether we are Christocentric or Universalist. That debate is sterile, not intellectually but existentially. My query for all Friends is: ARE WE THE GOOD NEWS OR ARE WE NOT?

Harvey Gillman  
From *Spiritual Hospitality*,  
Pendle Hill Pamphlet 314

The format of the queries is a wonderful device for promoting self-examination, both for individuals and for the Meeting, as a whole. There is a profound difference between a statement and a question. If I say, “You should come to Meeting with your heart and mind prepared,” that has a totally different feeling from the question, “Do you to come to Meeting with heart and mind prepared?” The question requires me to think about what I shall answer which puts me into a self-reflective mode. It requires an active response while the “should” statement does not require any response from me at all, other than either acquiescence or non-agreement. The statement doesn’t require me to measure myself against this “should” concept, so it really lets me off the hook. The feeling of the query is at first deceptively mild—then, as the query is further considered, it burrows into my mind and bounces around for a while, gathering other thoughts.

The question format of the queries reminds me of some of the responses that a mediator may make. Rather than saying “You need to find a way to end the conflict between the two of you about the boundary line between your two properties,” a mediator might instead ask, “Do you want to try to find a way to resolve the conflict between the two of you?” That puts the choice for seeking to find a solution with the parties themselves—not imposed upon them. Later on in the mediation, instead of saying, “I think the solution to your problem is . . .” the mediator might say, “Would you like to brainstorm some possible ways to resolve this issue?”

People have a difficult time being told what to do. This is true for adults as well as children. When we are given rules and/or laws, we do strive to follow them, but it may be with a feeling of resentment. Also, the rule or law may obscure the underlying reason that the rule or law was created. It would be interesting to consider the effect of having some queries on the highway — maybe in addition to the posted speed limit. How would we react, I wonder, if every so often, there were a query flashing at us, “Are you going the speed that is safe for you to drive under the current conditions?” “Are you driving as you would want your children to drive?” “Are you being attentive to the drivers around you, some of whom may be tired or distressed?” “Should you pull over for a brief rest?”

Choice of words is carefully considered in the writing of a query. That is probably why committees work so long and hard to find the best wording. Consider the New England Faith and Practice that includes in its query on the Meeting for Worship, “Do both silent and vocal ministry arise in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit?” Baltimore Yearly Meeting’s comparable query instead asks the questions, “Are Friends encouraged to share spiritual insights? Are special gifts of ministry recognized and encouraged?” One can

*They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, . . . what sayest thou? (John 8:4-5)*



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### Some queries

Has he who gave me a being attended with many wants unknown to brute creatures given me a capacity superior to theirs?

Has he shown me that a moderate application to business is proper to my present condition?

Has he shown me that this moderation, attended with his blessing, may supply all outward wants so long as they remain within the bounds he has fixed, and no imaginary wants proceeding from an evil spirit may have any place in me? . . .

Do I, walking in uprightness, delight in every person's happiness?

From John Woolman's *Journal*,  
edited by Susan Rose

imagine the long discussion that went into the writing of either one of these two approaches. People on the committee to rewrite the queries might have considered their own query, "Is it better to focus on what actually happens in the silent and vocal ministry, or is it better to focus on how the Meeting supports such ministry?"

People are often surprised to hear that Quakers don't have a creed. "Does that mean that Quakers don't believe anything?" they may ask. We counter by saying that we believe there is that of God in each person. And, we have our queries. If we truly respond honestly towards those queries and use them to reconsider our intent and our actions, the effect could be as significant to the parts of society that we touch as the queries are to our minds and hearts.

## FOR OUR BIRTHDAY 11th MONTH, 2006

### Only Breath

Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu, Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion or cultural system. I am not from the East or the West, not out of the ocean or up from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not composed of elements at all. I do not exist, am not an entity in this world or the next, did not descend from Adam and Eve or any origin story. My place is placeless, a trace of the traceless. Neither body or soul. I belong to the beloved, have seen the two worlds as one and that one call to know, first, last, outer, inner, only that breath breathing human being.

§

There is a way between voice and presence where information flows.

In disciplined silence it opens.

With wandering talk it closes.

Rumi, translated by Coleman Banks

### Wings to Fly

by Bethanne Kashkett

The first time I visited Patapsco Friends Meeting was in the winter of 2002. Our son Daniel was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. As a part of that process, we encouraged him to attend a variety of services. The idea was to expose him to as many different faiths as possible. Our hope was that experiencing a variety of faith communities might open his heart to the universal truth that there are many paths to God. During that year we visited a Hindu chanting center, a Unitarian Church, a Protestant Church, a Buddhist Meditation Center, an orthodox Jewish service and a Quaker Meeting.

On that particular Sunday morning Daniel and I went to Hebron House to attend Quaker Meeting. As we walked in, we were greeted warmly by Jim Rose. Shortly after, we settled into the space and silence. I felt an immediate sense of peace. At the end of the meeting, Ken Stockbridge encouraged new visitors to stop by and ask questions. He called himself "the Quaker in the corner"!

When I think back to that first morning at PFM, what comes to mind is the sense of warmth and acceptance I felt. This was truly a unique religious experience. When it was time to leave, Daniel and I walked back to our car.



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### Wind Traffic

Crows cross above  
where we walk. A baby dragonfly  
catches in my eye.

Later, Ken stays  
with our sick dog. I back my car  
down the driveway. En route  
to Mount Hebron House,  
Friends Spring Retreat, a cardinal  
in full flame lunges near the  
windshield, flies away.

After Qi Gong, but before the sharing  
from a Baltimore activist more than  
twenty times jailed, I sit with  
fellow crafters at a table: origami  
peace cranes at one end,  
prayer beads at the other.

Seeing folded wings  
I remember the cardinal,  
relieved that it stopped short  
of the blinding glass.

A hush settles on the room.  
I string blues and greens,  
reds in between, these smaller than  
a robin's heart  
or a drop of Jesus' blood.

The beads touch one another  
like sun on a breeze  
through the open Quaker window.

Kathleen Adcock,  
inspired by the Patapsco Friends  
Spring Retreat: "Creating Peace  
in our Personal and Public Lives,"  
May 20, 2006

"So, what did you think?" I asked.

Daniel is a person of few words, so he just shrugged.

"You know, Daniel, I thought these folks were so kind and welcoming."

His next response was a classic combination of sarcasm and annoyance--clearly I had, once again, missed the "obvious."

"Duh, Mom," he said. "Why do you think they call them FRIENDS!!"

And that was my introduction to Friends! I continued to attend PFM regularly from that point on. Having spent many years searching for the right spiritual "fit," it was a relief to be welcomed by a group of people who were un-phased by my spiritual questions and doubts.

For me, PFM has been a place where I am free to define myself as a Quaker AND celebrate Hannukah and Winter Solstice. It's been a place where the rigid walls and beliefs of past religious experiences suddenly became permeable.

In short order, PFM became a home, where following a leading, ignoring cultural norms, and speaking from the heart were honored and cherished. PFM is a community that nurtures integrity, not perfection. I have come to feel gently guided to make my outer life more congruent with my inner life.

In the company of Quakers I have been blessed to find a true spiritual home. This poem sums it up in such a lovely way:

"When you come to the edge of all that you know,  
you must believe one of two things:  
there will be Earth to stand on, or you will be given wings to fly."

PFM has given me wings to fly.

### Bread for the Spirit

by Kathleen Adcock

What moved me six months ago to meet with Patapsco Friends was a huge hunger over many years to find a spiritual home with non-aggressive believers and seekers. In the silence of worship, in learning (and reading) about Quakerism through the 101 series, in the company of gentle Friends, in the call to social action, I have found a spiritual nourishment that keeps me coming back. Also, I was inspired by two Montgomery County poets who speak only praises for the Quakers.

Among many precious moments, some words shared in recent meetings come to mind: Susan's "the lion does not know what the antelope feels when it is about to be devoured"—on using our imagination to put ourselves in the shoes of slaves (and other oppressed people); and Terry's "the building, the bridge and the seedling in the cup"—how each of these represent a kind of stillness we can apply to spiritual development, the plant as it slowly and naturally grows if nurtured, the building and the bridge that may stand rock-steady from foundation on up after much labor. Also, I remember after one summer meeting when the kitchen was unusually warm, that Bethanne set before us hungry Friends a pan of her cold and delicious blueberry treats. My most memorable day was the spring retreat, which inspired a poem, *Wind Traffic*.



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### On Children in Meeting

by Roger Reynolds

Children come and sit in Meeting for Worship for the first fifteen minutes of the meeting, then leave to go to First Day School. What happens during those fifteen minutes? The smaller ones fidget in their seats and whisper audibly to their parents “Is it almost over?” We have a group of middle-school aged boys who have invented an elaborate sign language that permits them to wordlessly plan whatever mischief they have in mind that day for after meeting. We have a few kids who sit in meeting and read books, or fiddle with whatever contraband happens to be in their pockets. And we have some who sit and listen expectantly for the small still voice. The silent Meeting is in some ways like a corked bottle, striving to contain the energy of so many small people. So it is no surprise that when the signal is given to go to FDS, they almost literally explode out of the room. Sometimes I feel like we need one of those orange traffic signs to post it on the meeting room door—you know, instead of “Men at Work,” “Children in Meeting.” Look out!

*In that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”*

*Jesus called a little child to himself, and set him in the midst of them, and said,*

*“Most certainly I tell you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*“Whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

*Matt. 18:1-4*

We are blessed to have over 20 children that attend First Day at least semi-regularly. We need their energy to keep the meeting vital and young, and the kids need the meeting too, as a place where they can feel accepted, and where they can learn first hand about Quaker values. We try to engage the middle schoolers in activities that make them think concretely about how Quaker principles might apply in their lives. The elementary kids learn about famous Quakers in history, and read Bible stories about the prophets and Jesus. The littlest ones learn Quaker principles of simplicity, integrity, and equality from Dr Seuss. Everyone participates in the plays we stage for the meeting at Christmas and Easter.

By the time they reach high school age, the kids are helping to teach First Day School classes, serving on committees, and organizing their own activities through Junior Monthly Meeting. These have included camp-outs, movie trips, and rock climbing trips. I think one of the greatest things about the kids we have is that they have bonded and formed a distinct identity, based around the Meeting.

I think that being a Quaker is a process of discovery. This is true for everyone but it is particularly true for our kids, who may know what the testimonies are but are constantly testing them to see what their worth is in their own lives. Independent of whatever we teach them in FDS, I think they are trying to figure out this “Quaker thing” on their own. In this sense, the meeting becomes a laboratory. How the meeting lives up to the Quaker values it espouses becomes an integral part of this “figuring out” process. So, ultimately, children in the meeting help us to live up to our principles. We teach them early on that the whole of the Bible can be reduced to two precepts: Love God, and Love others. Adults and children, in meeting together, help each other to live up to those words.

*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:14).*



## A 10th Birthday Collection

### Are We Held

Space-time in Einstein's universe  
Bends like a roof above our head,  
And underneath our restless feet  
Curves like runners on a sled.

It seems we cannot wholly fall  
Through sudden rents in outer space;  
Space-time would toss us lightly back  
To bounce into our destined place.

The heart has inner solitudes  
As vast as telescopes can scan;  
The world beyond the Milky Way  
Are not more lonely than a man.

Yet through this inner universe  
Move constant stars with names we  
know,

And many suns and smaller moons  
Within its darkness gently glow;

And is this inner space-time curved  
Like circling arms below, above,  
And are we held, and cannot fall  
Through holes within the web of love?

Winifred Rawlins, from *Dreaming Is*  
Now, Golden Quill Press, 1963

### Patapsco Friends Meeting

Mt. Hebron House  
2331 Calvin Circle  
Ellicott City MD 21042  
Tel: 410-465-6554.  
Web: [www.patapscofriends.com](http://www.patapscofriends.com)

### Meeting for Worship and First Day School.

Sunday, 10:30 AM at Mt. Hebron  
House, followed by Simple Meal.

All are welcome!

### Editor...

Over the years, many of us have shared with the meeting our commitment to follow a leading "as the way opens" and the support of others has opened the way: to prepare a meal once a month for Grassroots, to vigil silently in remembrance of all who die in war, to support a Quaker fellowship at the Maryland Correctional Institute at Hagerstown, and most importantly to meet together in silent worship; for, it is out of our mutual leading and supporting each other in that place that all else grows.

George Fox asked, "What canst thou say?" Quakers have a long history of keeping journals. In them is a record of their travels in the world, but more importantly, their travels in their hearts. These reports "from the center" are a rich spiritual heritage. The reports we have published in *The Quaker Heron* have become part of that heritage. It has been a joy reading our Journals over again, and what I read there took me off into forays into the Bible, Quaker books and websites, and my own journals. It also took me into the folders on my computer where I have stored files related to *The Quaker Heron*. This led to some discoveries that I filed under "Lost and Found." Two of these are to be seen in this issue: John Farrell's article on integrity and my meditation on the Lord's Prayer. Neither was used in its original journal. John sent me his article in plenty of time, but when I opened his attachment I found a mysterious code. As I searched the main directory this week, I saw a file called "Farrell\_Integrity.doc" and there was John's article as pretty as you please. It must have come to me after that issue went to press; for, I surely would have used it.

I began my meditation, *Draw the Spaces*, while preparing the issue on the Lord's Prayer. I struggled with it for a long time, but could never quite get to the end; so it languished in the file. Then, thinking about Tom Fox's witness for forgiveness, words came to me that seemed true. I urge you to read the original Journals from which the ones in this collection were drawn and forgive me if you wonder at my choices.

We have not done a journal on children in Meeting. The article you find under that heading here gives you some sense of the gifts our children bring to our Meeting. Jesus says unless you become as a child you will not enter his Father's house. What is he asking of us?

My spiritual journey began 14 years ago when I found Friends at a Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Marriage. Unlike Bethanne Kashkett and Kathleen Adcock, who write in this issue of their seeking and finding their spiritual home, I had lived quite comfortably apart from the Church, a place where minds were made up and all that was asked of me was to "believe." I guess I never imagined that such a space as Friends create ever existed. In this space I have discovered the true Bread that feeds my Spirit and friends who truly delight to build God's community right here on earth.

In these past 10 years I feel we really have been "building a swing in our backyard for God," a place of love and joy. Our Meeting here in Howard County has gathered friends who have gifted us with their many talents and, I trust, will continue to do so for many years to come.

Susan Rose