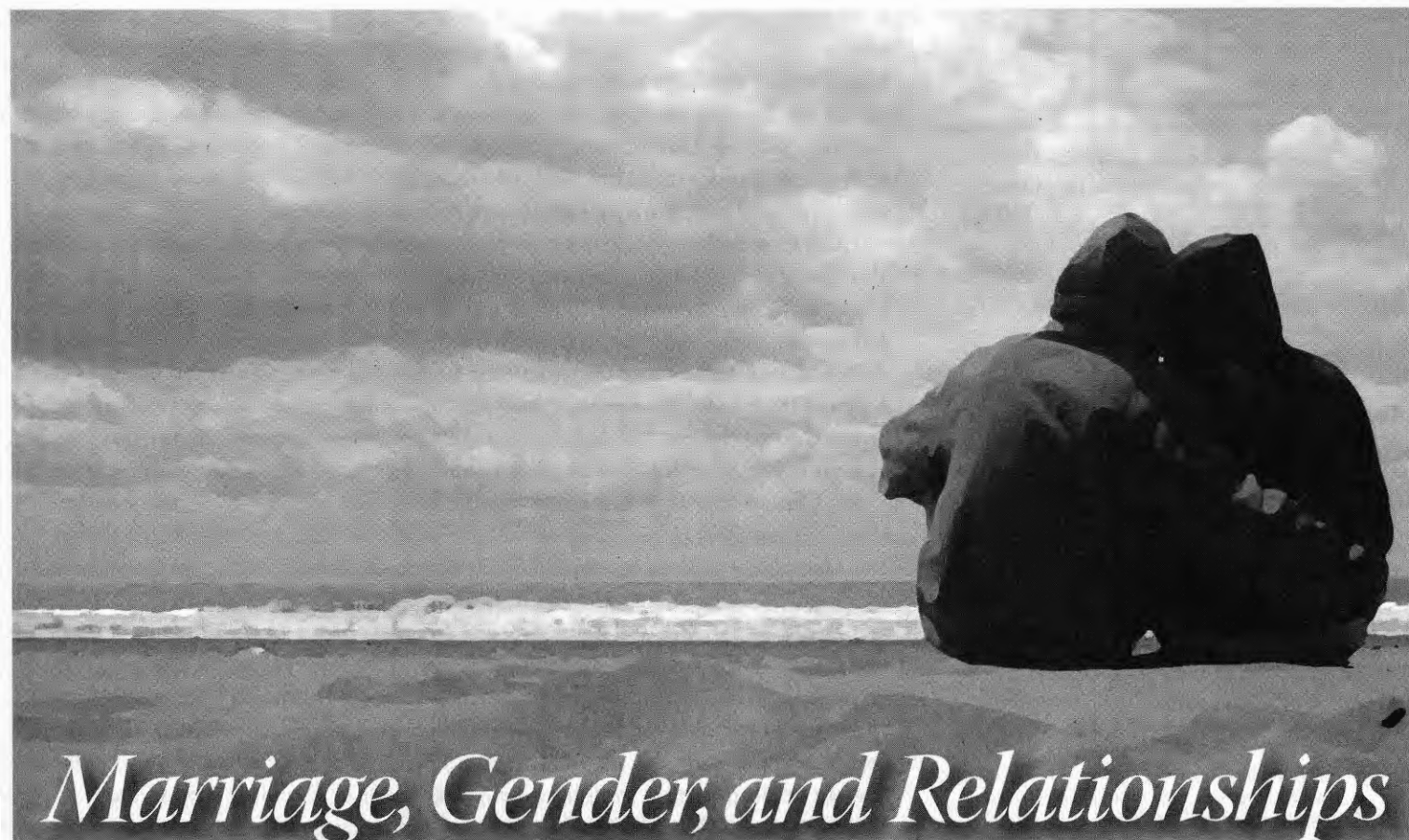


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FRIENDS JOURNAL

Quaker
Thought
and
Life
Today



Marriage, Gender, and Relationships

An
independent
magazine
serving the
Religious Society
of Friends



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■ AMONG FRIENDS

A Few Thoughts about Marriage

This fall my husband, Adam, and I will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. We were both wary survivors of failed marriages, neither of us wanting to repeat earlier insurmountable mistakes nor to discover ourselves making new ones. We'd been among Friends for several years when we were getting married, though we'd not yet joined our meeting. Marriage under the care of our meeting didn't seem possible, and we were not comfortable requesting it, given that we were attenders, not members at the time. Painfully aware of our earlier experiences, we opted for a process that took more than a year to complete. Using another couple's document as a starting point, we created a substantial written "contract" in which we worked through agreement on every possible area of impact we could imagine for our relationship, including times we hoped would come, such as parenting, and times we hoped would not, such as permanent disability for either of us. I used to say that we did all our fighting up front, since working through our differences in this way before making a lifelong commitment to the relationship really did eliminate a great deal of strife as the decades unfolded. And, yes, there have been some surprises along the way—but we'd built a strong base from which to meet them.

Quaker committees for clearness for marriage under the care of the meeting undertake a similar, if less prolonged, task: helping couples discern whether they are clear to make a long-term commitment to each other and are prepared for marriage. Different meetings will have somewhat different procedures, but queries play an important role, as does open discussion with members of the committee. In this issue, marriage and relationships are explored from a variety of perspectives, but each article explores the spiritual nature of love and commitment, and many reflect the importance our spiritual community plays in supporting, affirming, and tenderly holding these committed relationships.

In "Quaker Marriage: A Journey" (p.17), Paul Sheldon writes, "... the root of Quaker marriage is spiritual responsibility. The root of love is continuing revelation. You must accept spiritual responsibility in marriage for the continuing revelation of love. Although love is spontaneous, with mutual seeking a couple can construct the contexts that favor love's growth and development." Insights offered by a number of our authors in this issue give thoughtful suggestions on how to go about this. For instance, Ruth Peterson in "The Nurture of Quaker Marriages" (p.15-16) shares, "We wasted hours and hours in trying to establish who was to blame. ... [W]e learned that we could drop the blame, and each ask what we could do to correct the problem or even discuss how we might prevent it from happening again." Or in "Building the Marriage Sanctuary" (p.6), Ron McDonald observes, "The marriage crucible, as troublesome as it is, contains the necessary push that will help both [partners to] become the persons they were intended to be. ... There is a point even in good marriages where there needs to be a 'divorce,' though not a literal one. ... The couple needs a divorce from the old marriage patterns and a remarriage to new patterns and deeper intimacy."

Marilyn Dell Brady notes, in "Early Quaker Families, 1650-1800" (p.11), that "Early Friends did not believe that a priest or magistrate, or even a Quaker meeting, could perform a marriage. Only God could do that." Friends still believe that, and many meetings have come to clearness that all people are entitled to celebrate the bonds of love, with God as the author and witness to that union. It is our hope that this special issue will offer food for thought and helpful suggestions for individuals, couples, and meetings as they seek to affirm the gifts and challenges that loving intimate relationships bring.

Susan

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Julia Freeman-Woolpert

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Racial overtones

The March 2009 FRIENDS JOURNAL Forum included a letter, "Thank you, colonists," by Howard Fezell, with deeply disturbing racist content. Addressing the subject of European colonization on the African continent, the author promotes the position that white colonizers' intervention brought peace, safety, and improved quality of life to African peoples, who would otherwise have killed each other off in "bloody tribal conflicts." He cires contemporary immigration from Africa to western Europe as evidence of Africans' "respect for the cultures of their former colonizers." Every statement in this letter points back to an unapologetic assumption of white racial and Western cultural supremacy, and to a complete denial of the reality of cultural and physical genocide perpetrated by colonial domination.

While I respect the intention of FRIENDS JOURNAL to provide a range of perspectives, I am disappointed by the decision to print this letter. Its inclusion lends legitimacy to the hurtful, destructive lie that some people, some cultures, or some continents have more dignity and worth than others. As a Religious Society centrally concerned with divine Truth, let us not be in the practice of lifting up such devastating falsehoods.

Kody Hersh
Philadelphia, Pa.

What is more evil?

Howard Fezell's letter in the March Forum of FRIENDS JOURNAL, in response to David Morse's article "Nairobi: Impressions of a Newcomer" (FJ Jan.), quoted Albert Schweitzer from his book *My African Notebook*, 1937: "Without the white man they would no longer be in existence because they would have slaughtered each other or ended in the Pahouin (a cannibalistic tribe) cooking pots."

Dr. Schweitzer had a history of blindness dealing with people of color. We talk about cannibalism and how awful it is, but the practice of devouring countless lives through slavery and colonization is the true essence of evil.

Rosemary Bothwell
Jenkintown, Pa.

Money, love, and risk

Today's economy has me pondering life's instability. We save for retirement, pay our mortgages, only to have our plans collapse. Some cut their losses and pull out,

vowing future caution. Others hang on, hoping their luck will eventually improve. Institutions in which we place our trust prove faithless. It reminds me of love.

Sometimes, love is like a credit card: an endless stream of transactions. Chores, grades, respect, discipline, meeting of needs, gifts, holiday visits—there's a "push-pull" quality to family members' mutual responsibility. Every act of kindness is tallied, with interest due on late repayments.

Sometimes, love is like a mutual fund. We invest our time, energy, and patient listening, trusting that, as the five talents (Matt. 25:14-25) or the seed fallen on good soil (Matt. 13:8), our love will grow to many times what we've put in. Yet weeds choke tender roots, funds go belly up, and we may lose everything. In the backs of our minds, the possibility of loss was always part of the equation. We can cash in our chips and leave, or stay rooted, trusting our stake's inherent worth, despite our apparent loss. Both choices have value.

Sometimes, love is like a savings account. In my family, every hug, every dinner, every word of counsel or bailout in crisis was one more deposit into an enormous reserve of family love. No withdrawals were made, or even expected. Almost 30 years old now, I am rich beyond measure.

I don't know whether my family received their "money's worth" on this "investment" built up over 30 patient years. Trying to make repayment would miss the point. All I can offer is my consciousness of the vastness of the gift.

When we love, we fear for the future. We know the risks. Risk was what we signed up for.

Thomas
Lafayette, Calif.

Please include authors' email addresses

I was especially touched by the article by Pamela Haines ("Forgiveness: Giving Up All Hope for a Better Past," FJ Dec. 2008, Witness, p. 28). It quoted Desmond Tutu: "There can be no peace without reconciliation, no reconciliation without forgiveness, and no forgiveness without giving up all hope for a better past." I've mentioned it to several members of our meeting, who were also moved by these words. Wanting to thank Pamela Haines for including the quote, I mercifully found her name online and wrote to her.

The article by Burton Housman ("Listening to Lincoln," FJ Mar.) is incredibly well done and I would like to

drop him a note of appreciation. Mercifully his name is so unique that I did find only one entry for him. So, I think I will write to this address and hope for the best.

I request that you once again (I assume you've considered this before) include the email addresses for authors and perhaps other contributors.

Of course you may be concerned about privacy issues, but I think the authors should have an option to include this information. I was in charge of four periodicals for many years. In the 1990s, as email became popular, we decided to include email addresses of authors. We never had a single complaint by any author. What we did hear was that they usually heard from several people, sometimes former classmates or students or teachers who had lost track of them and were happy to learn of their whereabouts. Of course letters about their articles that came to the office were sent to them and considered for publication after they had a chance to see them. So, from this experience I would have to say that there was no downside to the inclusion of the email addresses. I would also suggest that you include email addresses for anyone who writes in the Forum. Perhaps you or others have had some bad experiences with this approach. Nonetheless, I hope you will consider this inclusion as a means of broadening and strengthening the community.

Harry Tunis
Reston, Va.

Note: We prefer that readers send comments to us directly to maintain the dialogue in the Forum. —Eds.

FRIENDS JOURNAL has made a difference

Before the Iraq War started, I had never heard of FRIENDS JOURNAL. Fortunately, at a peace rally in a small west Michigan community, I happened to meet two women who were from the same town I was, an even smaller west Michigan rural community; I was familiar with their names (easy in a small town) but had never personally met them. As we shared stories as to why we were at the same rally they mentioned they were Quakers and that they met twice a month in the homes of other Quakers in town. I was delightfully surprised when they invited me to join them the very next day. That was six years ago and, to make a long story short, my

Continued on page 57

June 2009 FRIENDS JOURNAL

Are We Christian?

by Newton Garver

In his book *Why Friends are Friends*, Jack Willcuts claims that the first thing to say about us Quakers is that we are Christian. That would not have occurred to me. I have no doubt that thousands of Quakers agree with Friend Jack Willcuts. These Friends identify themselves with the Christian tradition as opposed to other religious traditions, they accept some or most of the core beliefs spelled out in the Christians creeds, and they may believe that pastors have a special relation to God. But nothing revealed in the Light given to me leads me to such a sectarian identity.

When I ask myself whether I am Christian or not, I do so with an eye on what is studied as Christianity in universities and seminaries, not in the loose sense in which we sometimes say that an act was (or was not) "very Christian." In this sense Christianity: 1) is a religious institution dating back to about the third century CE, complete with ecclesiastical hierarchy and programs such as the Crusades and the Inquisition, 2) insists on and propagates distinctive beliefs about God, Jesus, salvation, and so forth (the "Creed"), 3) regards the Bible (Old and New Testaments) as holy, as the word of God, and 4) stands in opposition to other religious institutions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, paganism, and Islam. My sense of why I identify myself as a Quaker does not rely on any of these four distinctive features of Christianity.

Quakerism was indeed born in a Christian culture. George Fox was raised in a Christian home, he traveled among Christians, he sought out Christian leaders, and he disputed with them about Christian beliefs. None of what he heard struck him as the Truth. It was Jesus, not Christianity, that spoke to his condition. The truth that was opened to him is that Jesus is with us here and now in this eternal present, to teach his people himself. This opening, together with others that fleshed it out in the next year or so, led to a religion that, to my mind, rejects all four of the hallmarks of historical Christianity.

Some think it weirdly mysterious

that a person from the past can speak to us in the present, but it happens all the time with parents, siblings, friends, people we have admired or respected, and even fictional characters. Perhaps there is a bit of mystery, but such "speaking" is certainly part of our rich human experience. In this respect, the Jesus that George Fox knew remains human, not some utterly distinct creature, God's only begotten son. Jesus was, like some other humans, anointed by the Spirit, but his story loses its power and appeal if he was not really human. To my mind the insistence on the utter uniqueness of Jesus is one of the most distasteful and debilitating aspects of the Christian creed.

George Fox studied the Scriptures carefully and consulted them often. My own experience is that this is a valuable practice, which (like many other liberal Friends) I neglect more than is wise or healthy. The Gospels are particularly inspired. The histories, stories, hymns, proverbs, and parables reward study and contemplation. While the inspiration often seems divine, the writing is clearly human. Some stories seem more political or nationalistic than religious, while others, like the parables, require a lot of work to understand. Certainly the Bible we know in English is a human work, since it is not in the language in which it was originally written. Even in the original languages the text was at best human attempts to express the word of God. Elias Hicks may have exaggerated when he wrote that the Bible may well have done fourfold more harm than good, but I like his refusal to idolize the text.

So I doubt that it is correct to call George Fox a Christian. He listened to Jesus, not to the Christian tradition. In this context it is well to remember that Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian.

Christianity as an institution has been a source of violence and oppression, while the life and parables of Jesus model peace and equality. The liberating appeal of Jesus could never be entirely suppressed by the churches, and there are therefore inspiring writings of Christian theologians and ecclesiastics. But such inspiration is not exclusively Christian. I find myself often more in accord with Sufi Muslims, or Jewish writers such as Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel, or the fourfold way of Buddha, than

with dogmatic Christians. When I read John Bunyan's criticism of George Fox and other early Quakers, I admire his civil tone (more civil by far than the responses of Friend Edward Burroughs) but am put off by the rigidity of the dogma and his exclusion of the Inner Light. George Fox had a powerful and engaging sense of spiritual reality, but (unlike Bunyan's) it depended on experience rather than on theology.

No one need be a Realist in order to accept the hard reality of matter, no one need be a Christian to accept the presence of the Inward Teacher, and no one need be a theologian in order to accept guidance from God. I find that religious experience and fellowship regularly trump theoretical consistency and coherence.

I grew up in a Christian not a Quaker home. A. J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, and George Houser introduced me to the poverty of violence and the need for steadfast models of nonviolent alternatives. When I was sent to prison for refusing to register for the 1948 draft, the warmth and admiration of Quakers in Swarthmore and Philadelphia made me feel part of the Quaker fold. It did not matter that I was going to prison alone; fellowship in spirit took away the loneliness. I have felt a Quaker ever since, and have come to a deeper understanding through learning more about the history and traditions of Friends, and about individual Friends, as well as through working with Friends in NYYM and elsewhere.

Just as I went to prison alone without feeling lonely, I know that my thoughts will not be shared in every detail by other Friends. Just as we each lead our own lives, so we each cobble together our own thoughts—in both cases using light from others together with light from the Inward Teacher. Spiritual fellowship does not depend on our having identical ideas any more than it depends on our having identical lives. So my not being Christian does not isolate me from Quaker fellowship.

Newton Garver is a member of Buffalo (N.Y.) Meeting.

Building the Marriage Sanctuary

■
**The way we
love is by
learning what
it means to
let be.**
■

by Ron McDonald

Charles Dickens began *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." If I didn't know better, I'd think he was writing about married life. Marriage has within it the best and the worst.

It's never been easy to build a good marriage, but it's harder than ever now. Roles and expectations have changed so much that couples often enter marriages without much clarity about how to do it. We may begin with love, but there is labor involved that isn't always fun and easy. Taking a relationship from commitment to sanctuary—from decision and partnership to a place of peace, a haven from the storm, a renewal center—is filled with struggle. But the outcome can be heavenly. I speak from professional and personal experience. I have been married since 1978 and a pastoral counselor for couples since 1980. I can't say I've been happily married for every bit of those years, nor can I say I've helped every couple find bliss together. What I can say is that I've learned some things through the refining fires that might help create a home where peace and renewal are present and can be sustained.

Building a marriage sanctuary is not just a labor of love; it is very difficult work. It is not just about having good times together, and it is not about seeing bad times as a problem. In many ways the hard times in a marriage are what make us grow. Marriage, as author and marriage counselor David Schnarch says, is a "people-growing machine," making us grow and change in ways we never imagined.

Why do we fall in love with one another? One reason is compatibility. Early in a relationship there is a bond that develops that is almost unbeliev-

able. We find ourselves enamored with how alike we are. It's a nice experience, but almost all mature couples say, "We're a lot different than we thought we were early on." Still, it is important to remember how compatible we first were. Those memories are not just precious, they contain an important truth.

A second reason we fall in love is sexual excitement or sexual security. Some couples are excited and very turned on to one another from the start. Other couples experience sexual security—not so much dramatic sexual excitement as comfort. Either is okay, neither is inherently better or worse than the other, but some level of sexual attraction is important.

Early on, at an unspoken level, we recognize in our partner a person with similar problems, so if we can develop a truly healing relationship, we can find some of the healing in our lives that we need. Even though we sometimes think we do, we don't normally find a partner who is much more mature or immature than we are. "Water seeks its own level," is the commonsense phrase for this. We seek a partner with whom we can truly grow.

Why do we decide to marry? One reason is tradition: to conform to social and religious traditions in order to be accepted, and to legitimize sex and children. Another reason might be to save the relationship from a breakup. Couples who are worried about a particular problem may believe that marriage will make the problem go away or the stronger commitment of marriage will reverse the damage. Another is to celebrate spiritual togetherness—this is a more mature reason. When a relationship achieves a certain level of maturity, we begin to realize that we've created a successful relationship—not one that won't have problems later on, but one that is doing well now and worth celebrating. Finally, marriage allows the relationship

Ron McDonald, a member of Memphis (Tenn.) Meeting, is a pastoral counselor.

refer to themselves as married, have children together, and no one will complain when they want to be alone (and make love), or sleep in the same bed.

As we move along in our relationship there are two predictable crises. Initially we are fooled into believing that the bond we have, the deep level of compatibility, is evidence that we are with a person who is traveling in the same direction we are. It would be great to find someone moving in a parallel line with us, but that is rare. What is more common is to find someone moving in a non-parallel direction, so that we will cross and begin to move apart from one another. When we first cross paths, we are in the same place. That's when the bond happens, and it's wonderful. But as we continue on our individual journeys, we find ourselves moving apart. It is natural, but at some point one partner or the other, or both, realize that if they keep going in the direction they each are going, they will grow completely apart and lose touch with one another. This is the first predictable crisis. It's a crisis of decision.

We must do one of three things:

- The couple can *continue on their present paths*, not making any shifts, and consequently they will grow apart emotionally. The marriage might break up from the growing distance, or they might stray together living virtually apart from one another—different bedrooms, different sets of friends, etc. They might be cooperative, but there will be little true intimacy.
- Some couples decide to go back to the bond and *cling to one another*. They often display an enmeshment with one another, thinking that this will keep them from growing apart. The problem is that individuals usually find a secret way to seek their own personal enrichment, and one day these couples wake up to the fact that they have secret lives that are far

- Sometimes couples decide to *shift their journeys*, with one or both of them changing their individual direction and learning to move in parallel ways. Traditionally that meant that the woman shifted to move in her husband's direction. But even for heterosexual relationships, that's not work-

Gottman found that couples that fought over perpetual issues—issues that never really changed—would eventually distance themselves from one another and break up. Couples that stayed married would only tackle problems they could resolve together. Second, although all marriages include complaints, poor



Phil Landowski

ing as it used to. What tends to happen now is that both make adjustments, both shifting their directions. They won't experience the constant bond, but they can shift their journeys in such a way that they can easily move closer when desired and re-experience some of the joy of the early bond. This is a decision to develop mutuality. In this way they choose to travel parallel to one another.

You could say that these three options are independence, dependence, or interdependency. The couples that develop truly intimate and satisfying relationships create interdependency or mutuality.

John Gottman, a marriage counselor and researcher, suggests that there are clear predictors of whether or not a marriage will survive and become a good marriage. First, good marriages include the couple's *unwillingness to fight over*

marriages quickly descend into contempt while in good marriages couples use reconciling and respectful language—what Gottman calls “gestures of repair.” Contempt leads nowhere good, while respect and an attempt to make peace help keep couples together. Third, in good marriages the couple's “positive sentiments” outweigh the negative ones. Fourth, couples must know one another's “love maps”—how the other feels loved (e.g., touch, presence, being listened to, special gifts, etc.). The key to these predictors is openness and undefensiveness.

The second crisis in a relationship probably won't come before five years of marriage. David Schnarch calls it “the marriage crucible.” A crucible is a large caldron or pot in which rocks of iron ore are de-

slag floats to the top, and the remaining metal has great value.

Marriages are like crucibles; things get real hot. Problems that once seemed simple heat up. Couples get tired of one another. In the beginning, everything is new and exciting and it's relatively easy to negotiate our way through those difficulties, but later problems have more intensity and heat. This is a natural part of marital growth. It is what makes marriages a "people-growing machine" (Schnarch). During this time we discover much greater potential than we once could see. But it doesn't come easily. It gets real hot. Most marriage counseling begins with a couple stuck in a marriage crucible, needing extra help negotiating a way through the heat.

Phil Landowski One of the most important things that marriage counselors try to do with couples in a marriage crucible is to help the couple see the situation not as the problem but as the solution. The marriage crucible, as troublesome as it is, contains the necessary push that will help both of them become the persons they were intended to be. It is the point where people really become vulnerable to one another, forcing them to turn inward to find one's true identity and calling. In the process, they will learn who their partner truly is, and the relationship will be transformed.

I have come to believe that a good marriage is like several marriages in one lifetime. There is a point even in good marriages where there needs to be a "divorce," though not a literal one. The early relationship worked well for some time, but it won't forever. Maybe the children have pushed the couple to a different stage of development, maybe vocations have, or it could simply be personal growth. The relationship as it was, however, isn't working well anymore. The couple needs a divorce from the old marriage patterns and a remarriage to new patterns and deeper intimacy. In good marriages, these changes create a like-new marriage. It may occur more than once, too. In my experience, the new marriage is a lot better than the old one, too! It has so much more depth of love and understanding and strength of character. This makes marriages worth saving.

more positively with one another. Over the years, I've found that there is a place for helping couples with better communication techniques—like not using the words "never" or "always" in arguments (which escalate fights), or using the word "I" instead of "you." Most dys-



functional couples' or families' dominant word is "you." Families or couples that function well don't say "you" very often. They say "I": "This is what I think;" "This is what I want to do." Functional people use the word "you" in questions: "What do you want?," "What do you think or feel?" Dysfunctional families use the word "you" in accusations and criticism: "You are doing it again!" "Why don't you stop that?"

Communication techniques are important, but not as important as self-actualization and letting be. If there is a real purpose of a marriage, it is not to learn good communication, but to help us to be self-actualizing, individualizing people, and to learn how to love another who is also self-actualizing. The way we love is by learning what it means to let be. Letting be, according to theologian John Macquarrie, is love. Letting be is not letting alone, however; it is letting the other be who he or she truly is. It is a principle of relationship and self-actualization. Letting be in love helps people be who they truly can be. It calls us to another level of openness and caring. It is another aspect of marriage that makes it so special. This is similar to what Gottman means in pointing out that successful couples don't fight over unsolvable, perpetual problems. They let them be.

Second, it is about feeling touched and having orgasms. Often we think that having orgasms is the best part of sex, but I've come to realize that touch is the best part—especially naked touch. It is the skin-to-skin contact, the naked openness, that helps us connect. Orgasm is the end point, what sexual touch leads to, but touching is what sustains us beyond the orgasm. Touching, although not always leading to orgasm, often sets up orgasms, and it is more than just physical touch. It includes words and gestures that are emotionally touching. It includes seeing one another with acceptance and delight. As couples grow in maturity they become able to look into one another's eyes and see that of God within, that their partner is a child of God. They are even able to have orgasms while looking into one another's eyes!

Sex is also a place to be wild—a necessary part of life when most of our lives are caught up in being civilized and tame. It's hard to be tame; just watch children and you can verify that! Children are little wild things who have to be taught how to act civilized. By the time we become adults we usually have learned that pretty well. There are various outlets for our wildness, but one of the best outlets is in bed with our partner. There we can legitimately be wild, animalistic, and have great fun. It can be a place where our desires are truly accepted in ways that can keep us from having to seek illegitimate outlets for wild pleasures. It's very important that we be more civilized than wild in our public lives, but in our marital life, if we don't have a place to be wild together, it will slip out somewhere, probably in the wrong place.

Sex gives us a view of what's inside—not only of what's inside our partner, but what our partner sees inside of us. One of the main differences between sex seen from an immature perspective compared to that of mature adult perspective is that the immature person usually sees it as genitally centered or oriented. Mature adults can look deeply into one another's eyes, seeing the soul of the person. They are able to make love not just with a body, but with a person with a body and soul. Marriage of-

say that money is a primary cause for marriage problems. Indeed, money is important, for it is a symbol of our values, what we care for. When money is a problem, it may indicate that what we care for is in conflict. One question to ask about conflicts over money is what values are being represented. Getting those values in line with one another usually takes care of money problems.

On this matter, I have a recommendation. I think that having shared finances is important. Having "our" money helps couples develop mutuality, although there should still be a place for each person to have his or her own personal cash—"mad money" if you will. Each should have a reasonable amount of money to spend with no questions asked, without accountability to one's partner, but I think it helps to have the bulk of the family's finances in a shared checkbook. It forces the couple to work together and carefully define mutual values and plans. Money matters help us discover our true values—which couples need to learn about one another.

Drinking and drug use is a common marital problem. Although everyone has heard stories of the disabling nature of addictions, some couples fool themselves into believing that mild daily drinking to a slight high, smoking marijuana, or occasional recreational hard drug usage is not a problem. It may not create addiction-level problems or abuse, financial debts, or legal entanglements, but it inhibits development of the person. It numbs one to life. Marriages are inherently anti-numbing experiences. Good marriages simply don't tolerate the numbing effect of overuse of alcohol and drugs. If one partner gets high every day, the marriage will eventually be crippled, just as that person's development will be handicapped. Few marriages survive daily highs for long. If that's the spirit one is predominantly experiencing, it is the wrong spirit. There is a better spirit—one that offers a spiri-

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of the important experience of being known and still loved. We feel immense gratitude at being accepted in our wildness and our woundedness, to be loved not only at our points of strength, but also in our weakness. It is part of the spirit of the relationship. Its calls us into a high level of openness, and openness is the deepest meaning of faith. It is in that openness that we come to our realization of the Divine. It is often experienced in the depths of our relationship.

Prayer can be an important part of that. I recommend that couples hold hands in bed at night before going to sleep and pray, either in silence or vocally, gently squeezing one another's hand when completing the prayer.

There is a call to communion in our marriage that leads us to communities where we can be part of something larger than ourselves, where we can share meaning and values with others. This is especially true after couples have children, for the important task of raising children with good values and strong character deepens this need for community. I recommend participating in a meeting, church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, places where people are trying to be good people.

Building the family sanctuary is dif-

Spirituality is an aspect of marriage that flows from our sense of shared values. Spirituality begins from engagement, connection with another. Touch is the first way we experience our spirituality. We often think that sex is not part of our spirituality, but if that were so, why do we often exclaim at the point of orgasm, "Oh, God!"? There is a way that we know inwardly that the touch that brings us to this ecstatic loss of control is wonderful and sometimes even deeply transforming. This exclamation—"Oh, God!"—is how prayer is part of our marriages regardless of intent.

Spirituality is present in all points of appreciation of the other. It is part

a sanctuary is a place where you put your soul. A home is a place where you decorate the walls. A sanctuary is a place where those decorations represent who you are and what you want your family to be. A sanctuary is a haven from storms, a place of peace, a refuge from our travels. It is necessary in building such a sanctuary to close the doors from time to time to the family of origin's efforts to decorate it their way. Couples need to decorate it themselves in their own way.

Rituals that comfort and draw us towards love are important. How couples celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other holidays needs to evolve into rituals that feel unique and owned. A couple can take learned rituals into their relationship, but it should become the couple's own—changed, if necessary, to fit who they truly are.

A sanctuary doesn't stop just at home; it needs to send us out into the world with renewed strength. It sends us out on a mission, to not only be ourselves, but to be part of the larger community in a way that's filled with wisdom and surrounded by peace. From the peace and wisdom developed in our marriages, I pray that we might become sanctuary builders wherever we are.

How do we learn to build sanctuaries? We learn it at home. We learn it where the sanctuary of our marriage becomes a sanctuary for everyone who comes into our home. From such places we can become those who create better communities, for from the marital sanctuary come the builders of the sanctuary of our world. As you create a beautiful marriage, a beautiful home, and a true sanctuary, you will be making one little section of God's world a nicer place to live. There may be no calling higher than that. □

Early Quaker Families, 1650-1800

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**To varying
degrees,
Quaker family
life was
tempered
by the belief
in the spiritual
equality of all.**
■

by Marilyn Dell Brady

As the Religious Society of Friends emerged out of the chaos of the English Civil War in the 1650s, Quakers' actions and words challenged their society. Their speaking and writing used gender language in flexible and surprising ways. Women preached, taking on the persona of Old Testament prophets. Men described themselves "crying like a woman in travail." Both sexes sought nurture from the "breasts of God."

With their radical message, the first Friends sought the support of those who shared their beliefs. The Quaker community developed like a large extended family. In the 1660s, however, Friends sought to establish order for their community while continuing to honor "that of God" within each person. The practices and testimonies they developed helped unify Friends throughout the next century. Establishing procedures for marriage were among their earliest priorities, and families were essential to the order they created.

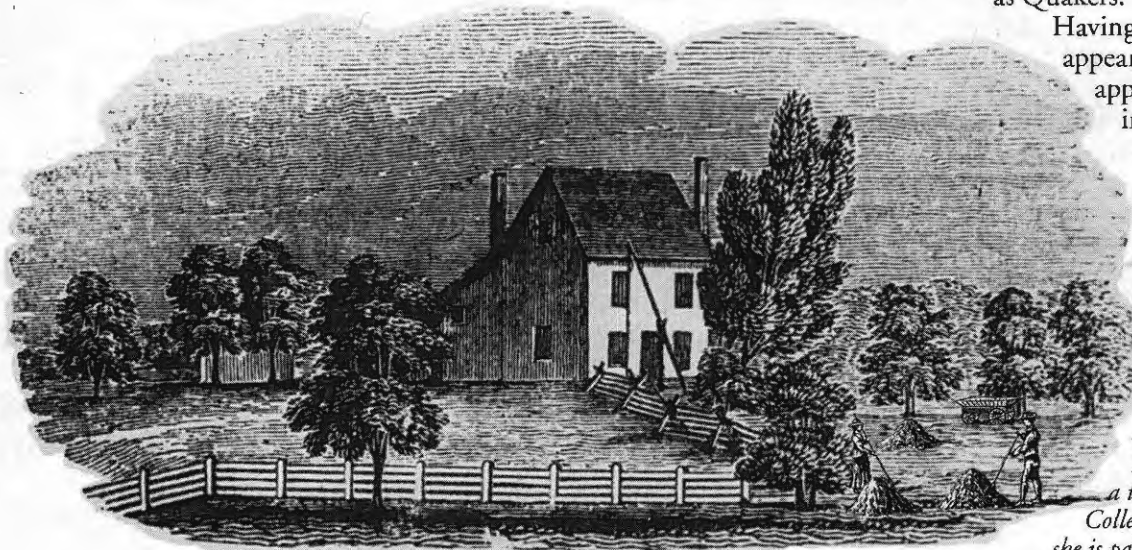
George Fox espoused radical ideas about marriage and gender roles. He proclaimed that those living in the Light had no need for the domination of husbands over wives. Once perfected by Christ, husband and wife could be equal "helpmeets," he proclaimed in his writings and practiced in his marriage to Margaret Fell. Not all Friends

agreed, and Quakers debated the issue in their pamphlets. In the surrounding world, male leadership was assumed, and some Quaker men advocated conventionally hierarchical marriages. To varying degrees, however, Quaker family life was tempered by the belief in the spiritual equality of all. More importantly, mothers, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers could gain the approval of their meetings to embark on long journeys of ministry. In response, the families they left behind changed and adapted to their absences.

Friends insisted that marriage existed in the context of Quaker meetings and was not something to engage in lightly or quickly. Men and women chose their own spouses, and parents could not force children into unions. Nonetheless, a man and woman were required to have the approval of parents and their meetings to marry. Couples might spend months corresponding and visiting before committing themselves to marriage. Companionship and friendship were viewed as the base of a marriage. Romance and pleasure could have a role, but only in the context of shared devotion to God. Friends believed that the wife and husband should be supportive of the other's spiritual growth. Both partners were also expected to be capable of doing their part to contribute to their household and to raise their children as Quakers.

Having decided to wed, a couple first appeared before women's meetings for approval. The meeting sought to insure that neither of the applicants were already married, were non-Quakers, or were otherwise unsuitable spouses. Men unknown to the meeting were under special scrutiny as the Women's meetings required character references from their home meetings. Some prospective

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husbands complained about women's meetings having the power to stop or delay a man's ability to wed. Meetings also required that when a widow wed, the children of a previous marriage would receive their due inheritance. Only if the women's meeting approved did the men's meeting make the final decision for a marriage to go forward.

Converts to Quakerism sometimes had non-Quaker spouses, but Friends married only within their own religious community. As the Religious Society of Friends turned inward in the 1700s, disownments over marrying out of meeting were frequent. Couples who were disowned could continue to worship with Friends and, with repentance, regain membership.

Early Friends did not believe that a priest or magistrate, or even a Quaker meeting, could perform a marriage. Only God could do that. As today, marriages took place in a silent meeting where the man and woman rose and affirmed their commitment to each other before God. Those present signed a certificate witnessing that the marriage had actually taken place. Careful records of witnesses were kept in hope that courts would recognize the marriage and the legitimacy of the children in it, thus avoiding challenges to inheritance.

The meeting's involvement in a marriage placed couples under its care. Women's meetings heard, and sometimes sympathized with, the problems a wife might be having with a husband's behavior. Elders might visit couples, resolving differences and exhorting changes in behavior. Drunkenness or bankruptcy could lead a meeting to disown a spouse.

The testimonies of Friends and a sense of God's presence permeated Quaker families. Families attempted to live their lives in daily obedience of God. Simplicity, honesty, and order were valued. Card-playing, dancing, and liquor were forbidden, and anger often repressed. Emphasis on humility and pacifism helped prevent domination and use of violence. Quakers never preached sexual abstinence, but spouses were warned they must not put earthly love for a partner above their love of God. Participation in meetings for business taught husbands and wives to listen and achieve agreements in a

Friendly manner that addressed the needs of both spouses. The process that led to and supported Quaker marriages promoted the geniality between married Friends noted by outsiders.

Except for a few gentry like Margaret Fell and William Penn, Quaker families were usually of the "middling sort," differing little in some respects from their non-Quaker neighbors. In the 1600s and 1700s such families often worked together on farms or in artisan households and shops. Relatives and non-relatives lived within households, receiving familial care or helping with the workload. Gender roles tended to be less restrictive than they would become after 1800. Both spouses had to substitute for their partners as needed. While husbands were accepted as heads of households, wives had the authority to act in their absence. What was unique about Quaker families was that women had power

to act in their own right, not simply as delegated by husbands. Quaker women had authority from God, but power did not translate into personal autonomy.

Historians disagree about the relationships between early Quaker husbands and wives. A careful examination of writings by male Friends leads J. William Frost to depict conventionally male-dominated families among Friends in the American colonies. Looking primarily at the women who preached, Phyllis Mack and Rebecca Larson describe families in which women had expanded roles. Margaret Bacon notes both the opportunities and limitations for women inside and outside of their families. Actual families varied and experienced both male and female authority.

As conversion to the Religious Society of Friends slowed, some believed that the religion's survival depended on the children raised in Quaker families, schools, and meetings. Mothers and fathers were to teach by example. Quaker

Quaker Ladies Lunching

by Katharine Jager

When the woman with the bonnet arrives,
we are discussing color, its uses and its vagaries:
the way red was simple some places and in others
inconceivable; how indigo, years ago, was shunned
and homespun taken up; and how even now
we cannot understand the seeming senseless passion
some women have for Manolo Blahnik mules.

Historically, we look at fashion—old Susan B. stands
up in our minds, her one lopsided eye
rolled left. She lifts her index finger to complain
against the corseted rights of our sex. Around us
are the low rich sounds of glass and cutlery, the quiet
thrum of conversation, and we wear pink and yellow,
patterned purple, now, but nothing's binding;
God forbid that anything should pinch or chafe.

Our other mother, the judge's wife and warrior
for George's anarchic vision, Mrs. Margaret Fell, later
Fox, wrote to women from her sightless fetid cell,
quoting Christ in her admonishment: *be like the lilies
of the field, sisters*. Meaning: wear what you wish.
The True Light shall clothe us all, come the end of days.

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children were taught strict obedience. Punishment could be harsh, although parents were urged not to engage in whippings until their own anger had cooled. Self-control was a key value. Regular attendance at long silent meetings was seen as teaching even young children the value of patience and restraint. Maintaining households was hard work, and even children had jobs to perform. In the process, they learned values like industry, honesty, and thrift. Children were instructed from an early age that the good of the group, not their own personal preference, must always come first.

Despite its importance, child-rearing took place amidst the other work of the household. Motherhood shaped women's lives with an almost constant pattern of pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing, not because intimate bonds developed between mother and child. Wives typically gave birth about every other year from marriage until their childbearing ability ended. Eight or nine children were not unusual. Before the availability of industrially produced goods, women were also responsible for making the products that a family used. Quaker families cared about their children, but not in the sentimental manner that would later become fashionable in the 19th century.

Young children, and sometimes older ones, were taught basic reading and writing at home. Children's education was to be "guarded," protecting them from non-Quaker influences. Fathers, grandfathers, and uncles often played a role. In the late 1700s, meetings began to establish schools where their children could learn practical skills while continuing their religious training. Children left home to board at these schools, where girls and boys studied many of the same subjects, but separately. One typical exception was that boys studied Latin while girls learned embroidery.

The first Quakers had sometimes been expelled from their own extended families due to their religious belief, but as the Religious Society developed, extended kinship networks came to be valued. Families intermarried, forming dense, overlapping networks of kinship. Bonds among relatives were nurtured by letter writing. Family visiting spanned the Atlantic. Sisters might live with brothers, serving as their house-

keeper and hostess, and they might join sisters to help at times of childbirth or illness. Aunts and nieces seem to have had special bonds reaching from assistance in a girl's education to her care for the elderly aunt. Extended families, like meetings, were also expected to contribute as needed to the welfare of relatives. Parents could not count on living until all their children were grown, and they expected relatives to be willing to help raise them if necessary. Those who lived into old age could hope that a son or daughter, niece or nephew, would care for them. If a family was slipping into poverty, more prosperous brothers and sisters would help. As some Quakers acquired wealth in the 1700s, relatives might loan money or invest in new business ventures together.

Singleness was unusually acceptable among Friends. Demographers point out that singleness and late marriages for women first appeared among Quakers in England and North America in the 1700s. Young women and widows found that singleness offered expanded opportunities to teach or to travel as ministers. Whatever their age, however, single women were never free from duties to others within their family networks. Some single women found fulfillment in lifelong commitment to other women. Never defining people in terms of their sexuality, Friends accepted those engaged in such relationships and their calls to ministry.

The fact that women and men left family and friends to travel and preach was the most unique and disruptive feature of Quaker families. After receiving the approval of a meeting, individuals embarked on journeys that could be long and dangerous. Atlantic voyages took months, and the risks were high. Those who crossed the ocean often spent a year or more on the other side. Travelers in the North American colonies crossed long stretches of unsettled country where they were not always welcome. For men to leave home and travel was exceptional; for women to do so challenged conventionality outside of the world of Quakers.

Single women were most likely to undertake a traveling ministry. Young women could follow their leadings for a time before marriage, as part of lifelong singleness, or when widowed. Single

ministers sometimes journeyed with longtime partners and friends. Older women, widowed or married, traveled and preached after their child-rearing years were over. Adult daughters accompanied their mothers in their travels. Young women who married after a period of traveling and preaching were highly regarded and generally married easily and well. Sometimes they chose men who were also ministers; the couple alternated which spouse traveled and which stayed at home.

Wives and mothers also traveled in significant numbers as ministers, forcing families to cope. Spiritual equality had to translate into material support. Meetings sought the approval of a husband for a woman to travel, but they could override him if he was reluctant for his wife to follow her leading. In return, the meeting assisted in maintaining a household and raising children while a wife and mother was away. Some mothers left infants and small children behind. They traveled abroad throughout their childbearing years, and some still averaged the same number and spacing of children as their contemporaries. At a time when men were leaving their household workplaces to take jobs outside the home, Quaker men were called upon to be the chief nurturer of their children.

Women often viewed a religious journey as a sacrifice of the comforts of home and the love of family. Only submission to God was enough to cause a woman to put down her responsibility to those closest to her. Leaving small children to the care of others was agonizing for some traveling ministers, but Quakers did not admonish women to stay home with their children. God's call took priority over motherly attention to a child, at least until "domesticity" became popular in the 19th century. As Rebecca Larson states, "In Quaker culture, the service of a woman as a divinely chosen 'instrument' resulted not in the abdication of marital and maternal roles, but a striking redefinition of them."

Motherhood was honored among Quakers and expanded beyond a woman's biological children. Margaret Fell

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The Nurture of Quaker Marriages

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What does it mean to a couple to be “married under the care of the Meeting”? How is this different from being “married in the manner of Friends”?

■

by Ruth Peterson



Neil Gould

This article has two themes, both of which address what it means to be married under the care of the meeting. First comes a detailed description of the author's interpretation and observations of the process of marriage in a Quaker meeting. Following this is a narration of her own experiences of caring for marriage after the wedding—in her case, as a part of a group of couples concerned for each other's ongoing healthy relationships.

The Clearness Process for a Quaker Marriage

When a couple asks to be married “under the care,” they are asking for the spiritual blessings of their faith community. They are expressing their willingness to seek spiritual guidance in living their lives together. They know that they will be asked to meet with a clearness committee to examine

their readiness to make a commitment. *Faith and Practice* of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting clearly states that the same clearness process is used for same gender couples as for heterosexual couples. The final decision for clearness rests with each monthly meeting.

The process begins when the couple writes a letter to the clerk of the meeting, stating that they wish to be married “under the care of the meeting.” The clerk reads this letter at the next meeting for business. At that time, it is referred to the committee that appoints a clearness committee. In different meetings there are various names for this committee, but in Abington (Pa.) Meeting the letter is given to the Care of Members Committee and is read at their next committee meeting.

Other meetings may have a different process, but in Abington Meeting, in past years, serving on the clearness committee was something that we rotated within the Care of Members Committee, assigning two or three people to meet with the couple. We are a fairly large Meeting and have had many weddings. What we learned from some couples was that they felt that the time

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spent together was more of a social occasion rather than a time of probing questions. Several couples expressed their definite disappointment with the process.

At one of our Care of Members Committee meetings, a person fairly new to our committee expressed disappointment with the clearness process she had observed when she had been asked to accompany two other more experienced members. In response to this concern, the clerk of the committee asked all members to read an issue of *The Pastoral Care Newsletter* that focused on marriage, and to come to the next meeting prepared to discuss it. In one portion of this newsletter, Jan Hoffman had reported on clearness procedures in various monthly meetings. She mentioned that some meetings have a permanent Clearness Committee. The newest member of our Care of Members Committee suggested that we use this idea.

We now have a completely new process. The Clearness Committee for Marriage is a subcommittee of the Care of Members Committee. First of all, we went outside of the Care of Members Committee to find two more individuals to serve who would relate to younger couples. We now have three women and two men who form this new subcommittee. This group used the publication of Friends General Conference, *Living With Oneself and Others*, which has queries for couples considering marriage. They modified some queries, added a few, and they send these to the couple a few weeks before they plan to meet with them. The last question is, "Are there any questions that you have avoided discussing with your partner?"

In the past, a clearness committee met with the couple once. With the new process, they first meet with each of the couple separately, with half of the Clearness committee meeting with one person, and the other half meeting with the other person. Then the entire Clearness Committee meets to share comments. Then they all meet with the couple, and more than one meeting may be necessary. Only then does the Clearness Committee report back with its recommendation to the Care of Members Committee. If the report is to recommend that the monthly meeting take this marriage under its care, the clerk of the Care of Members Committee includes this as part of its monthly report at the next

monthly meeting for business.

This is not a fast process. It can take several weeks before completion. The Care of Members Committee feels that Abington Meeting has now moved closer to providing the level of marriage counseling that is offered in most other faith communities. For couples that do not wish to submit to the clearness process, or wish to have a wedding at an earlier date, they can still be married "in the manner of Friends." The actual wedding ceremony would be the same.

Care of the Wedding and Care of the Marriage

When a couple is married under the care of the meeting, the monthly meeting is not just responsible for providing guidance for a Quaker wedding, but it should also have the care of the couple in mind up to and beyond the wedding day.

After a couple has met with the clearness committee and the approval for the marriage has been reported to the monthly meeting, the couple chooses three or four persons to serve as their oversight committee—individuals or couples. If the couple comes from two different monthly meetings, there can be individuals on the oversight committee from both meetings. These individuals will help the couple with the practical details of planning a Quaker wedding. Some couples may never have witnessed a Quaker wedding.

An important early responsibility for the couple is to decide the wording of their vows and the type of marriage certificate they wish to use. Unless the couple wishes to purchase a pre-worded marriage certificate, such as those available from Friends General Conference where the couple fills in the blanks with names and dates, they will need to find someone who can prepare a hand-printed certificate. FRIENDS JOURNAL carries advertisements of individuals who offer this service. Many couples wish to write their own vows. The vows they say at their wedding should be identical to the words that are printed on their marriage certificate. The couple should also have an estimate of the number of wedding guests because space on the certificate must be reserved for signatures of all who attend the wedding. It takes time

to prepare this certificate. The oversight committee should be clear about the importance of these early decisions to allow for sufficient preparation time.

Abington Meeting is a fairly large meeting and does have frequent requests from couples to be married at the meetinghouse. The role of the oversight committee is to raise questions about details that the couple may not have considered. The Care of Members Committee has prepared a pamphlet, *Getting Married at Abington Meeting*, to assist couples in the various decisions, including whether they are being married "in the manner of Friends" or "under the care of the Meeting."

The date and time for the wedding and rehearsal should be cleared with the meeting calendar. At the rehearsal or before, the couple needs to choose someone on the oversight committee to open and close meeting. This can be the same person or two people. The marriage license should be brought to the rehearsal and kept by one member of the oversight committee.

The couple is encouraged to make sure that the person they have selected to read the certificate is present at the rehearsal. It helps if all persons who will be in the wedding party are also present for the rehearsal, but this is not always possible. Experience has proven that a second "walk through" at the rehearsal is wise.

On the day of the wedding, someone from the oversight committee should arrive at the meetinghouse before guests arrive. There are generally practical concerns where someone familiar with the meetinghouse needs to be present, such as the location of the rest rooms, glasses for water, or parking assistance.

Generally one person from the Oversight Committee is the last to be seated after determining that all in the wedding party are ready at the appointed hour. The oversight committee is seated near the couple. At Abington Meeting, we have two special wedding chairs for the couple being married.

A Quaker wedding in an unprogrammed meeting is very different from a traditional church wedding. The couple enters as equals. A third person is not needed to "give another in marriage." Clergy are not required. After the couple and any attendants have entered and are seated, the person that the cou-

or what happens at a Quaker wedding and how it ends.

After all the explanations, when the couple feels centered, they stand, say their vows to each other, and exchange rings if desired, followed by their first married kiss. The couple is then seated. A table holding the marriage certificate is carried to the couple and placed where they can comfortably sign their names. This is the time that the parties indicate if they are keeping their surnames or assuming the surname of the other.

It is important to use archival-quality pens so the ink on the certificate will never fade, and it is a good idea to have a spare. The table is then removed, and the certificate is given to the one chosen to read the entire certificate aloud, including the names just signed.

After the reading, the certificate is returned to the table and all enter into silence. In the opening remarks, anyone present was encouraged to speak during this time. Sometimes there are wonderful memories recalled, sibling stories told, best wishes extended, and new members are welcomed into the families. Tears and laughter are not strangers in a Quaker wedding, and sometimes there are even expressions of healing of a relationship. Every wedding is different.

It is the responsibility of the Oversight Committee to decide when to end the wedding. When it seems that most who have wanted to speak have had an opportunity, the ceremony ends with the shaking of hands. The person chosen to close meeting then asks all to remain seated while the wedding party and family leave the room.

This is also the time that the person on the Oversight Committee stresses the importance that everyone in the room sign the marriage certificate, even the children. This signing as witnesses to the marriage is the equivalent of "I now pronounce you" that would be the final words in a traditional wedding.

The couple chooses someone to supervise the signing of the certificate. There are usually lines penciled in for the anticipated number of guests. Spac-

**our marriage
with a
shared faith
and it
has served us
through the
years in some
tough times.**



reporting at the next meeting for business. One of the Oversight Committee members reports that the marriage was held in good order, giving the complete names of the couple and the date of the wedding. They also report if one has assumed the surname of the other. This information is recorded in the minutes and eventually becomes a part of its archives.

In the best of circumstances, the monthly meeting continues its "care of the marriage" after the wedding. If the couple has remained in the community, the Oversight Committee may invite them for dinner near their anniversary. If they remain active in the meeting, a continuing concern is easier to maintain. Often a couple has moved away, and this requires a more creative approach to keep in touch. A telephone call near the anniversary, or any other time, would be one way. It is appropriate to ask, "How is your marriage?" A card is less personal, but would be welcomed.

A Marriage Group

Because my husband, Charley, and I had been asked to be on an oversight committee by four couples within two years, we decided to start a "marriage group" and invited these couples to be a part. We added another couple who were married under the care of the Meeting before we knew them, and another couple who were already married when they came to the meeting. For three of the couples it was a

bers who may be involved in a receiving line and will sign later. Names are completed across one line before moving down to the next. Children can be assisted in signing.

In Pennsylvania, one of the two responsibilities for the Oversight Committee is to see that the marriage license is signed by the new couple and two members of the Oversight Committee and the appropriate section is returned to the courthouse of the county where the license was obtained. The second is the

on a summer evening. To begin, following some great food, Charley and I shared an essay on our marriage that we had written at Pendle Hill when we were resident students for a term. Each student was required to have an end-of-semester project. Since we had celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary during our time there, we decided to write a chronicle of our marriage, the ups and down, warts and all. We were candid and honest about the problems we had faced, our faults, and how we gradually changed and we shared all of this with this new group at our first meeting.

We were not Quakers when we met in a college class in a church in California. Later we were married in a small chapel in that church. It was wartime; Charley was a newly commissioned officer in the Army Medical Corp. He arrived from Texas on a Friday, and on Saturday we decided to get married. There wasn't any time for any kind of marriage counseling. We were married on Tuesday, and he left on Thursday to return to Texas to find us a place to live and give me time to give notice at my job. We had four short months together before he was sent to Europe. We lived in a rented room in the home of a widow from the church. We shared a bathroom and kitchen. I had everything to learn about cooking. We jokingly say that Charley could fry the steak and I could cur the avocado.

Although we probably never discussed the subject, we both knew that we intended to marry for keeps. Our relationship to the church had been important to both of us since we were young. We expected this to continue. The reality before us was knowing that Charley was going to war, and that he might not return. Each night, we knelt by the bed and prayed together, out loud.

Charley served 202 days as a combat medical officer, during which time he lived through the Battle of the Bulge. He returned to begin graduate school and we resumed sharing our lives together. Neither of us was provided satisfactory role models from our families of origin for a good marriage or good parenting. We did not have good communication skills. We wasted hours and hours in trying to establish who was to blame for whatever had happened. We

problem or even discuss how we might prevent it from happening again.

We shared that assumptions had been a major problem through the years. Many conversations went, "I thought that you meant . . ." or "I thought you were going to do . . ." Gradually we learned to stop and verbally reflect back what we thought we had heard and correct any misinformation.

We shared that we both sought professional counseling because of some family problems and "emotional garbage" from our past. We learned that neither of us knew how to handle anger because we were afraid of losing the other. My father left after a divorce, and Charley's mother had died when he was young. Most of Charley's energy went into his career as a college professor and I was left with the feeling that I was a single mom with four children and that Charley simply lived in the same house.

We had a lot of fun also. We took car trips out West to visit family. We went camping and took part in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Brownies, and PTA. We always attended Sunday School and church as a family. From the outside, we looked like a pretty "together" family, but we were not. Although we never discussed the subject, I was considering giving the marriage one more year—but Charley was not aware of this. I had become very discontented with the church we were attending. Then I visited Abington Meeting, and I felt I had "come home" to something I did not know existed. I began attending meeting, and some time later Charley and the children began attending. Later we began some counseling. These two influences turned our marriage around.

We began our marriage with a shared faith and it has served us through the years in some tough times.

We ended by assuring our marriage group: "If we could make it, you can make it."

At our potluck the second year, two couples were willing to share a current problem. The issue for one couple was the handling of finances. The one earning the living was not the one that was good at paying the bills on time. The other was good at handling money but was not the one earning income. Another couple was getting adjusted to al-

other needed "togetherness." As a group, these couples were just getting acquainted, and there were some cautious comments by a few of the others.

In the next few years, couples were easier with sharing what was going on in the marriages. At first, the women did most of the sharing. There was finally a breakthrough when the men joined in, especially talking about their fathers. All but one man wanted to learn to be a very different person than their fathers.

One year the couples each found a private spot and each wrote what they appreciated about their partner, and then shared those thoughts with each other. Later, when we met back as a group, they shared whatever they were comfortable in sharing. It was very affirming to all to hear the other partner express their appreciation for the other person. Sex was not a subject that was ever brought into the comments or discussions.

This group has been meeting annually each summer for 12 years. The collective wisdom within this group has seemed to support each couple in facing its life situation. Two of the women have

them that the recovery takes a very long time. One has experienced a second brain tumor surgery, and we have all learned of the variety of spiritual resources that she is using to live with her situation. Another couple dealt with the decision of whether to enlarge their family by adopting or taking a foster child. Some couples have utilized the Quaker counseling services when they hit some hard places. One marriage has ended in divorce, but the couple remain friends. One member of the couple continues to participate in the group gatherings.

Charley and I share from the perspective of a couple in our 80s and the concerns that come with getting older. We have had to adjust to the fact that we cannot drive at night. When Charley does not wear his hearing aids, the questions and answers do not always match and can sometimes be quite funny. We also share the joy of being able to square dance in the winter in Arizona and feel such gratitude for the gift of good health.

We have recently celebrated our 65th wedding anniversary.

Our beliefs have changed significantly from those early days. We have learned that "please" and "thank you" are gentle words but contribute greatly to making everyday living much smoother. Seeking spiritual guidance has increasingly become a part of our lives. We don't pray together except for a silent grace when we eat an occasional meal in our own apartment at our retirement community. Finding the Religious Society of Friends has been central to the two people we have become. Whatever is ahead of us, we know that we have a source of strength that will sustain us. □



Avid square dancers Ruth and Charley Peterson, in a recent photo

Quaker Marriage: A Journey

by Paul Sheldon

A Quaker wedding may appear to be a relatively simple affair. During a meeting for worship for marriage, a couple publicly declares their love and continuing commitment to one another. Nothing more is required. However, what Quakers reject in formalisms and ceremonial trappings, they more than compensate for in preparation—and that is especially true for significant life events such as marriage. A couple who wishes to be married under the care of a meeting is required to seek spiritual guidance concerning how they understand their current relationship, what they want it to become, and how they can best help it develop. When they feel they have achieved this understanding, a clearness committee tests their leading for marriage. This is no simple task but an extraordinary undertaking, valuable for its practical contribution to a successful marriage as well as for the spiritual enrichment of the couple as a family unit and as individuals.

My wife and I had many lively discussions in the course of writing our vows and discussing what they meant in the context of our intended marriage. We agreed that a basic requirement was that our marriage be an open and honest relationship between equals. Without a base of equal power and commitment, any attempt at this is fatally compromised. This sense of an open marriage should not be confused with the so-called “open” marriages of the ’70s that skirted marital responsibilities in the name of freedom.

We asked ourselves whether anyone could honestly promise to love a partner



forever. We acknowledged that love can never be totally secure. Marriage does not change that fact. The heart follows its own course, and we would not pretend to promise the heart. We considered that perhaps it is preferable to make an ideal promise and fall short, because the promise provides a clear goal. Ultimately we realized that change is inevitable and can be seen as an opportunity for love to grow, not as something to be feared.

We acknowledged that the root of Quaker marriage is spiritual responsibility. The root of love is continuing revelation. You must accept spiritual responsibility in marriage for the continuing revelation of love. Although love is spontaneous, with mutual seeking a couple can construct the contexts that favor love's growth and development. At the same time, we recognized that even

the best-intended spiritual seeking is not necessarily rightly led. If either of us ever felt the need, we would call upon our clearness committee to help us test the source of significant leadings. Such testings can generate valuable insights to help guide a successful marriage.

A loving relationship represents commitment to the partner, not ownership. Because we are still growing as individuals, what we should wish for our spouses is no less than we would wish for our children. As I said to Fran at our wedding, “My love is intended not to encumber your freedom, but to support you along your life path, so that you may live fully and authentically.”

I experience my love for Fran as unconditional love. I find this to be a life-changing feeling. It does not mean that I never get angry. Fran and I are blessed to be amazingly well matched, but we are not perfect. I do believe that perfect love, in the sense of being forgiving, understanding, and having total confidence in one's love, is achievable. Such love blesses both the giver and the receiver, and even the world beyond.

I have long been an antiwar activist, and our marriage is a source of inspiration and empowerment for my work in this area. My love for my wife leads me to understand that war is totally wrong because it destroys the lives of people who also love and are loved. This is an example of how the continuing revelation within marriage becomes part of the evidence of God's love for all humankind, and how the marriage partners become a channel for expressing this love in the world. □

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***The root
of love is
continuing
revelation.***
■

Curtis Fletcher

Paul Sheldon, a member of Lansdowne (Pa.) Meeting, teaches Psychology at Villanova University.



Three Weddings, One Marriage

We focused on what was really important to us: declaring our covenant with each other before God, family, friends, and the community of Friends, which is the heart and soul of spiritual marriage.

by Eleanor Harris
and George Owen

We did not set out to have three weddings. We were both married before and were in our 50s and 60s, so we didn't have a strong desire to make a big fuss. When we met at Northern Yearly Meeting's 2006 annual session, Eleanor was from Minneapolis and George was from Milwaukee. It seemed obvious that we would get married under the care of whichever meeting was in the city we chose to make our home. And we imagined that our friends, family, and members from the other meeting would travel there as was typical with other marriages we knew.

When we decided that George would move to Minneapolis, we assumed the marriage would be under the care of Minneapolis Meeting, and the wedding would be there. But as George contemplated the many relationships he would leave behind, it became clear how much Milwaukee Meeting had nurtured and challenged him to be ready for this next step. He began to see his meeting community as an important part of what he brought to the marriage, and it became more difficult to leave Milwaukee out. In the end, we were married under the care of both Meetings, each with a clearness committee and each with a meeting for worship with attention to marriage. We had two Quaker weddings two weeks apart, August 25, 2007, in Minneapolis and September 8 in Milwaukee.

And then, as if things were not already interesting enough, between the two weddings we moved from the Midwest to Pendle Hill, just outside Philadelphia—a dramatic change of plaus when Eleanor accepted a staff position

offered to her in June. So Eleanor, too, had to contemplate the many relationships she would leave behind, as well as the importance of Minneapolis Meeting to her spiritual development. This experience of the shifting nature of our relationships with both of our meetings immediately following our two weddings has led us to some reflections.

In the year before our Quaker weddings, Eleanor had left her job and was spending nine months as a resident student at Pendle Hill. By the end of 2006, we had met with each of our two marriage clearness committees, and felt well prepared. We decided to marry in the summer, after Eleanor finished her student year at Pendle Hill.

Except for one problem, which led us to our third wedding. Eleanor's health insurance from her former job was going to run out December 31st. She could have gone on COBRA at great expense, but if we were married she could be added to George's insurance under his employer at about a quarter of the cost. So we decided to proceed with a private civil marriage. On January 1, 2007, a Minneapolis judge came through the freshly plowed snow to the home where we were staying, changed out of her snow boots into her dress shoes, and married us, with our dear friend and one of her neighbors as witnesses. Under the laws of the civil government, we were now married. But we didn't tell many people because we felt the real marriage would be our spiritual marriage under the care of our meetings.

Separating Civil and Spiritual Marriage

We separated the civil marriage from the spiritual marriage for practical reasons, but we gradually came to appreciate the clarity that this approach brought to our relationship with each other and with our civil and spiritual communities. Much of the

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Photos: Eleanor and George's
Minneapolis and Milwaukee weddings



Quaker Testimony of Simplicity is about stripping away distraction. With the civil marriage out of the way, the meaning of our Quaker marriages was not cluttered with legal, civil issues. Instead we focused on what was really important to us: declaring our covenant with each other before God, our family, our friends, and the community of Friends. This is the heart and soul of spiritual marriage, the covenant not just with each other, but with God and our community—and not just the gift they were to us, but also the gift we were to them.

Civil marriage, on the other hand, is simply a transaction with government in the service of social goals such as extending rights and duties regarding health, death, taxes, and property, and the protection of dependent spouses and children. Often clumsy and unjust, civil marriage still contains essential rights that justice and equality demand be extended to all couples.

Because we had separated our civil and spiritual marriages, it became clear to us what a good idea that was. "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." We Quakers have no business acting as agents for the state. At Quaker meetings for worship with attention to marriage, everyone present signs the marriage certificate as witnesses to the spiritual marriage. Why should we also sign the state's civil marriage certificate? Why should we be agents for the state, particularly in this matter where the state refuses to extend the rights of marriage equally to all its citizens? Imagine a true separation of church and state where the only legal civil marriage was one performed by the state. Then everyone would be free to pursue the spiritual marriage of their

choice, and no one religious view could hold everyone else hostage. With that separation, it would be much harder for the state to maintain its current discrimination against same sex marriage, and marriages performed by spiritual communities would take on a renewed level of seriousness.

Taking Spiritual Marriage Seriously

In recent years, Minneapolis Meeting has worked to make marriage under its care truly extend beyond the traditional marriage clearness process. It formed a Marriage Oversight Committee, which provides guidance for the marriage clearness committees, and also facilitates an ongoing relationship with the couple. Its focus includes the entire life of the marriage, recognizing the differing needs of young families, empty nesters, and elderly couples. One year after our wedding, we received an invitation to be in touch with our clearness committee, and suggesting ways to do so.

Marriages fail at an alarming rate in the larger society, and unfortunately the Religious Society of Friends does not perform any better. It is difficult to practice the covenant of intimacy in marriage when the larger society distracts us and lures us away from an intimate relationship with self, community, place, and God. Spiritual marriage brings us back to our meetings where we find the understanding, wisdom, perseverance, support, and joy for our spiritual cove-

nant with God, our community, and our marriage. Otherwise a civil marriage would do just fine.

Long before we met, our experiences in our meetings helped shape our ideas and feelings about spiritual marriage. Often in our early discussions about our marriage, we found ourselves referencing examples of couples we knew from our meetings.

Our marriage clearness committees asked tough questions and engaged us in thoughtful consideration of the challenges and opportunities ahead. Our marriage vows are a covenant to each other and a covenant with God and our community. Our meetings accepted our marriages under their care. Reflecting on our experience has clarified to us just how much our meetings influence the journey toward marriage and continue to nurture the marriage throughout its life.

Our reflections on marriage raise up a more general truth. By faithfully attending to our meetings as our chosen community of Spirit, we can experience a depth of knowing and compassion not otherwise possible without God's grace. This knowing and compassion challenges us when we are stuck, supports us when we are suffering, and celebrates with us in our joys. We are known, cared for, and useful. This is covenant community.

Proximity Matters, Community Matters

But what of those of us who physically relocate? We, for example, moved away from our covenant communities immediately after our weddings. By choosing to move to Pendle Hill we have become displaced, separated from those who know us best, and who we know best. Our covenant with past communities remains intact, but the intimacy is weakened. We re-

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Sexual Ethics: What Is Our Goal?

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I have heard a great deal about the harsh judgments of the "puritanical" culture, but my experience of sexual judging and shaming has come from the instant-gratification culture.

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by Joanna Hoyt

As I understand it, the central Quaker commitment is to listen to the Spirit's promptings and act faithfully in accordance with them, however difficult or unpopular they may be. This shared commitment allows people with different beliefs, gifts, and wounds to support one another, hold one another accountable, and find true unity. I have seen Friends unite in this way across differences of class, theology, politics, and vocation. This unity is more than mutual tolerance or even respect; it challenges, deepens, and transforms all who take part in it. I believe that we need this kind of healing and transformation as we struggle with our different understandings of sexuality and spirituality.

I discovered Quakers in my mid-teens. Before that, I had left one church because of the pastor's insistence on the damnation of those who disagreed with his doctrine. I left another church because it offered unconditional acceptance but no challenge or help in spiritual formation. When I read John Woolman's journals with my family and then visited Portland (Maine) Meeting, I encountered a powerful combination of openness and centering, freedom and accountability. I heard people describing many different understandings of God and saw them living many different lives. I also heard them asking themselves and one another hard questions about their faithfulness to Spirit.

Their faithfulness helped me to discern a leading that took me out of New England. I wasn't able to participate in a meeting in my new location, but for a time I was blessed with the chance to join several Friends in meetings for extended worship and sharing. We focused on the Spirit's working in our lives and the ways in which we were dis-

tracted or attentive, resistant or obedient. Our vocations and theologies varied widely, but we shared a commitment to spiritual discipline and an understanding that nothing in our lives could be separated from our relationship to God, however we named God.

When I first encountered Quaker conversations about sexual ethics I was dismayed because they seemed to reflect the popular culture's assumptions and polarities. Most of the Friends I knew were on the liberal end of the dialogue. Many of the older adults spoke passionately about the harm done by our "puritanical" culture, with its emphasis on sexual repression and shaming, and they celebrated the increased sexual freedom enjoyed by my generation. I agree that there is some value in this freedom, but I also think there was some strength and safety in having a shared set of boundaries for sexual behavior. Among people my age and younger I see a great deal of harm done by a sexual culture based on instant gratification without attention to context or consequences.

I think of children I have mentored who were bounced from home to home as their parents changed partners. Some were abused in this process; many seemed disoriented and insecure. I think of a guest in her early 20s who said she was trying to figure out how to be a whole person. She had been sexually active since her early teens; she felt successful when she could attract cute guys, and her friends and family valued that ability. She started thinking more about spirituality (for her, Pagan/New Age) in her late teens and began to believe that her mind, body, and spirit were intimately connected. At that point she was dismayed to realize she had been treating her body as an object separate from her mind and soul, and that she had encouraged her partners to treat it in the same way. When I met her she was observing a year of celibacy, trying to find her way back to wholeness. She

Joanna Hoyt, a member of Portland (Maine) Meeting, has worked and worshiped for the last eight years at St. Francis Farm, a community in upstate New York that practices an alternative to the consumer culture through prayer, sustainable agriculture/forestry, and presence and assistance to neighbors.

When Friends strenuously avoid any semblance of "puritanical" judgment, we risk being co-opted into the instant-gratification model of sexuality. I remember a national gathering where Young Friends discussed their sexual experiences as they might have discussed video games—this move is cool, this is weird, that part's kind of gross. They didn't discuss the relationships within which sex occurred, except that some mentioned thinking that everyone else their age was having sex and it was time for them to get with it. I said that I wanted sexual union to be part of a long-term commitment and a shared life and spoke of the challenge that went with my choice: practicing celibacy while delighting in my body and having close nonsexual relationships with people whom I sometimes found attractive. I felt like a visitor from another planet.

Later that week I attended an inter-generational gathering of Quaker women discussing sexuality. Most of the participants were two generations older than me. They spoke of the shame they had felt about their bodies and desires when they were girls and of the wonderful sexual freedom enjoyed by the younger generation.

I spoke, again feeling alien.

The other young woman who spoke described being sexually harassed and finally raped by co-workers. The older women offered her their sympathy; then the next speakers moved back to describing the restrictions of their youth and wishing aloud that they had grown up in these liberated times.

I have heard a great deal about the harsh judgments of the "puritanical" culture, but my experience of sexual judging and shaming has come from the instant-gratification culture. Instead of condemning sexual activity outside narrow limits as sinful, this culture derides celibacy and sexual self-restraint as signs of neurosis or hopeless unattractiveness.

and her boyfriend. The other kids at school taunted them because they enjoyed holding hands but didn't feel ready to make out. When I was 13 years old, a girl at summer camp said that she couldn't believe I hadn't been kissed yet, since I wasn't *that* funny-looking. Five years later a church youth group visited the organic farm where I was volunteering, and the girls asked how I could stand to mess around with dirt and poop and all that stuff; didn't I know that ruined my chances of ever getting a boyfriend? Three years later, while visiting a yearly meeting, I encountered a group of parents talking about how good it was for their kids to experiment with sex and drugs with other Quaker youth instead of the rougher crowds at

should engage in these behaviors. One man, a father and psychologist, warned me that young people who don't experiment with sex and drugs are usually severely neurotic.

During the World Gathering of Young Friends in 2005, a small group gathered to discuss the personnel policy that instructs people who work for Friends United Meeting (FUM) to refrain from sexual activity outside monogamous heterosexual marriage. One person spoke sternly about the immorality and ungodliness of homosexuality and non-marital relationships. Others condemned group-imposed limits on sexual behavior as abusive, bigoted, ignorant, and destructive. I said I couldn't choose sides. I had been blessed to attend the marriage of two women under the care of my meeting. I had felt the Spirit moving there and had admired the love, strength, and understanding of that couple. I grieved that their marriage, and others like it, were not recognized by the policy. I also celebrated the policy's affirmation that sexual relationships are meant to be sacred and covenantal, not casual. No one else spoke publicly from the place between. Two young women came up to me afterward and said they agreed with me but didn't feel comfortable saying so, because if they spoke of valuing marriage and commitment people would assume that they were homophobic.

Recently I have encountered some conversations that break through these dichotomies. Two years ago, visiting Friends told us about a discussion of sexuality at New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) Sessions. This discussion began with concerns about the FUM personnel policy; it culminated in the members and meetings



Lucy Sikes

ethics. I was excited and regretted my distance from NEYM and Portland Meeting. When I saw a preliminary statement in Portland's newsletter dealing mainly with the FUM policy, I was surprised and somewhat uncomfortable. I agreed strongly with this statement's affirmation of love and commitment between gay or lesbian couples. I was troubled by references to the culture of sexual repression and statements questioning the rightness of celibacy and other forms of sexual self-restraint. I wasn't sure if my convictions about sexual fidelity were unacceptable in the meeting's eyes. I wondered what counsel the meeting had for young people trying to deal with sexuality in the instant-gratification culture.

I wrote to Ministry and Counsel with my questions, joys, and concerns about their statement. Their response was generous and thought-provoking. I received a thick envelope with writings from individual members of the committee. Some sent Queries, Advices, and other excerpts from NEYM and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's books of *Faith and Practice*. Some reflected on their own sexual ethics and the questions and convictions that shaped them. Some recalled their youthful struggles to come to terms with desire, social pressure, and their own sense of integrity. Some tried to differentiate their personal sexual choices and boundaries from those they considered necessary to community life. These writings helped me see my own questions and choices more clearly. I was glad that my experience and questions were an acceptable part of the Quaker continuum and had contributed something valuable to my meeting's discernment.

The January 2009 NEYM young adult retreat with attention to Quaker sexual ethics was another gift and challenge. I was grateful for our honest and tender sharing. We came to the gathering with hugely different backgrounds, assumptions, values, and wounds. We started with our stories: how we learned about sexuality, spirituality, and relationships; how we had been hurt and blessed by our sexual experiences and choices; what we hoped for and what we feared. I think this groundwork made it easier

heard some things that shocked and troubled me. I think I may have shocked and troubled others. But while I found (and find) some sexual behaviors quite easy to judge, I couldn't condemn or dismiss the people who found those behaviors acceptable; we had worshiped together, and I had some idea of the gifts and the pains they carried. I did not feel condemned or dismissed, nor did it seem to me that we refrained from speaking the truth as we saw it for fear of giving offense.

Some basic practices helped us to keep sharing deep and safe. We began with experience, owning our own wounds, gifts, doubts, and certainties. We spoke honestly and listened tenderly. We didn't assume that others experienced either popular culture or Quaker culture in the same way we did. We tried to know those who held different values as whole people, not just as members of the opposite camp. If Friends could practice these behaviors consistently when difficult matters are being discussed, it might help to heal, strengthen, and center our community.

A few common threads emerged from our discussion. One was the desire for more open conversation and guidance around sexuality and spirituality. Many Friends said that they had been well taught about sexual biology as teenagers but lacked guidance or helpful questions about relationships and sexual ethics. Others spoke gratefully of adults involved with the Young Friends program who made it clear that they were willing to listen to teens' questions and struggles around sexuality. I described my conversations with my mother around puberty in which she shared some of her own stories, convictions, and questions about sexuality, reminded me of friends and relatives with different understandings, suggested some books written by thoughtful people with very different ideas of sexual ethics, and encouraged me to think carefully, listen deeply, and form my own values and guidelines.

We wanted to fully include and welcome people with different experiences of sexuality, and also to set some clear boundaries. One participant warned Friends against letting our understand-

choices and actions acceptable. Some participants spoke about experiences of sexual coercion or manipulation, which painfully contradicted the assumption that we Quakers are all respectful people and our gatherings are safe places where young people can relax and trust one another. Several people spoke of the need to publicly acknowledge the potential for abuse within the Quaker community. Such acknowledgment might remind Friends to maintain their own boundaries and respect those of other people. It might also help victims of sexual abuse to feel free to speak out instead of believing they must keep the secret and preserve the image of an ideal community.

We did not reach a shared understanding of sexual ethics beyond preventing sexual manipulation and coercion. Some of us sought ways to help each other with clear discernment and faithful following of Spirit in our sexual lives. Others felt that sexuality and spirituality were unrelated. One participant said that there was bad (abusive) sex, spiritually deepening sex, and then just normal sex, which was sort of like eating potato chips—fun, insignificant, morally neutral. When we spoke of sexual ethics some of us meant making sexual choices consistent with and contributing to our relationship to God (Spirit, Life, whatever name we felt comfortable using for that which we had met), and helping those around us to do likewise. Others, as well as I could understand, meant giving and receiving pleasure without inflicting evident harm (pain, fear, betrayal, trauma, disease, or unwanted pregnancy). Given this basic difference in our understandings, I couldn't see a way forward for us as a body.

If we intend to go beyond courtesy and respect and try to reach unity as a Religious Society, I think we must begin by clarifying our basic shared commitment, the ground of our unity. We will proceed in one way if our first priority is to include and accept all practices and opinions found within the Quaker community. We will proceed differently if our first priority is to integrate all our lives in listening and obedience to God, however named. □

Homosexuality and the Bible

One Quaker's Response to the Pope

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**The only thing
that counts
is that all
human
relationships,
including all
human sexual
relationships,
should be
characterized
by the loving
fruits of
the Spirit.**

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by Steve Chase

"Speaking on Monday, Pope Benedict said that saving humanity from homosexual or transsexual behavior was as important as protecting the environment." —BBC news

A little fact-checking will help us qualify this widely reported news story about Pope Benedict's Christmas message to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2008. The reality is that the Pope did not actually use the words "homosexual" or "transsexual" anywhere in his talk. Yet, the BBC, and many other news outlets, still got the basic story pretty much right.

In his talk, Pope Benedict XVI did talk movingly about the importance of all people of faith protecting God's Creation, which the Pope rightly says is not "our possession which we can plunder according to our interests and desires." He went on to say that in our current planetary crisis, people of faith "ought to safeguard not only the Earth, water, and air as gifts of creation," but that we "ought also to protect man against the destruction of himself." Apart from his use of sexist language to signify the whole of humanity, I was actually in agreement with him right up to this point in the text of his speech, which I was recently able to read in translation on the Internet.

Yet, what exactly is the main threat to humanity mentioned by the Pope in his Christmas talk to the Roman Curia? What is the looming danger that he claims is of equal importance to global warming, toxic pollution, and mass ex-

tinctions? Surprisingly, he does not mention war, imperialism, nuclear weapons, poverty, organized greed and exploitation, prejudice, ethnic cleansing, or the corporate domination of governments. What he does mention is the decline of old-fashioned sex roles in modern life and our "modifying the message of creation" by turning away from the legal definition of marriage as a bond that is only between a man and a woman. That's the climax of his argument. His biggest fear for the world is the legalization of marriage for gay and lesbian couples, and that many men and women no longer act within the confines of the rigid gender roles that he thinks best. What are we to make of such a message made to celebrate the birth of Jesus?

Like the Pope, and millions of people around the world, I identify myself as part of the spiritual renewal movement sparked over 2,000 years ago by Jesus of Nazareth—that radical Jewish upstart in first-century Palestine. Simply put, I try to be a faithful friend and follower of Jesus in our modern world. For over three centuries, this has been the Quaker way.

As a committed follower of Jesus, the fundamental core of my faith tradition is love: loving and listening to the Divine Spirit with all one's heart, soul, and strength; loving one's neighbors as oneself, including one's enemies and adversaries; and loving God's good Earth and appreciating the many gifts and beings it includes. In more modern terms, the central mission of my faith tradition is to create an ecologically sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling human community on this beautiful blue-green planet. This is what Martin Luther King Jr. called creating the Beloved Community, and what the ancient Jewish prophets and Jesus called bringing forth the Kingdom of God "on Earth as it is in heaven."

Clearly, the Pope of the Roman Cath-

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concerns about making the way of right living," a way that is common to the best ethical wisdom of both Judaism and Christianity, and many other faiths as well. Yet, I think that in his Christmas message about the overwhelming dangers of marriage equality, the Pope widely missed the mark, which I believe is the literal translation of the word for sin in Hebrew. According to Pope Benedict, to be a faithful follower of Jesus you need to believe that two people of the same gender living together as life partners and sharing a committed sexual relationship is as destructive to the world community as global warming or the toxic pollution that kills hundreds of thousands of people every year.

Now, I agree that it is possible for two Bible-studying, Jesus-loving, and Spirit-led Christians to have two very different views about the morality of gay and lesbian relationships. Not all issues of faith and practice are black or white. Yet, after much soul searching and study, I do find the Pope's decidedly alarmist view to be a silly, poor theology with very weak support in the Bible and absolutely no support in the ministry and life example of Jesus.

This conclusion may surprise many people, so let me explain why I think the Pope is on such weak theological ground in his homophobia. Jesus was simply never recorded as ever making an anti-gay comment in the Bible. Not once. This means that the homophobia championed by the current Pope is not sanctioned by Jesus. It is a doctrine that is absolutely without any support from the central figure of our common faith tradition. Indeed, the negative attitude of the Pope toward gay and lesbian people actually seems to run counter to the underlying spirit of the early Jesus movement, which sought to gather the poor, the despised, the marginalized, the oppressed, the exploited, and all those outcast by the iron triangle of the Roman empire, its local client kings, and the collaborationist religious elites of his day. In place of the hierarchal norms of this sinful imperial world, Jesus sought to spread the good news of the coming reign of God's love, compassion, and justice. Within his spiritual renewal movement, he enacted a radically—and even scan-

as a seed for the coming fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The Pope's remarks on rigid sex roles and his viewing marriage by gays and lesbians as the ultimate danger to our society seem remarkably out of step with the central thrust of the faith and practice of the early Jesus movement.

This is not to say that there is absolutely no support for the Pope's position in the New Testament Scriptures that emerged out of the Jesus movement after Jesus was crucified by the Roman Empire as a nonviolent, revolutionary rabble-rouser. In these specifically Christian Scriptures, there are a total of three anti-gay passages to be found—all of them attributed to one man, the apostle Paul. These homophobic remarks can be found in Paul's letters to the Romans (1:26-27), to Timothy (1:9-10), and to the Corinthians (6:9-10). It should also be noted that Paul's comments were made in response to some early Christian communities that did not support his homophobic views and, by his own report, actually included gays and lesbians as full and respected participants in their congregations.

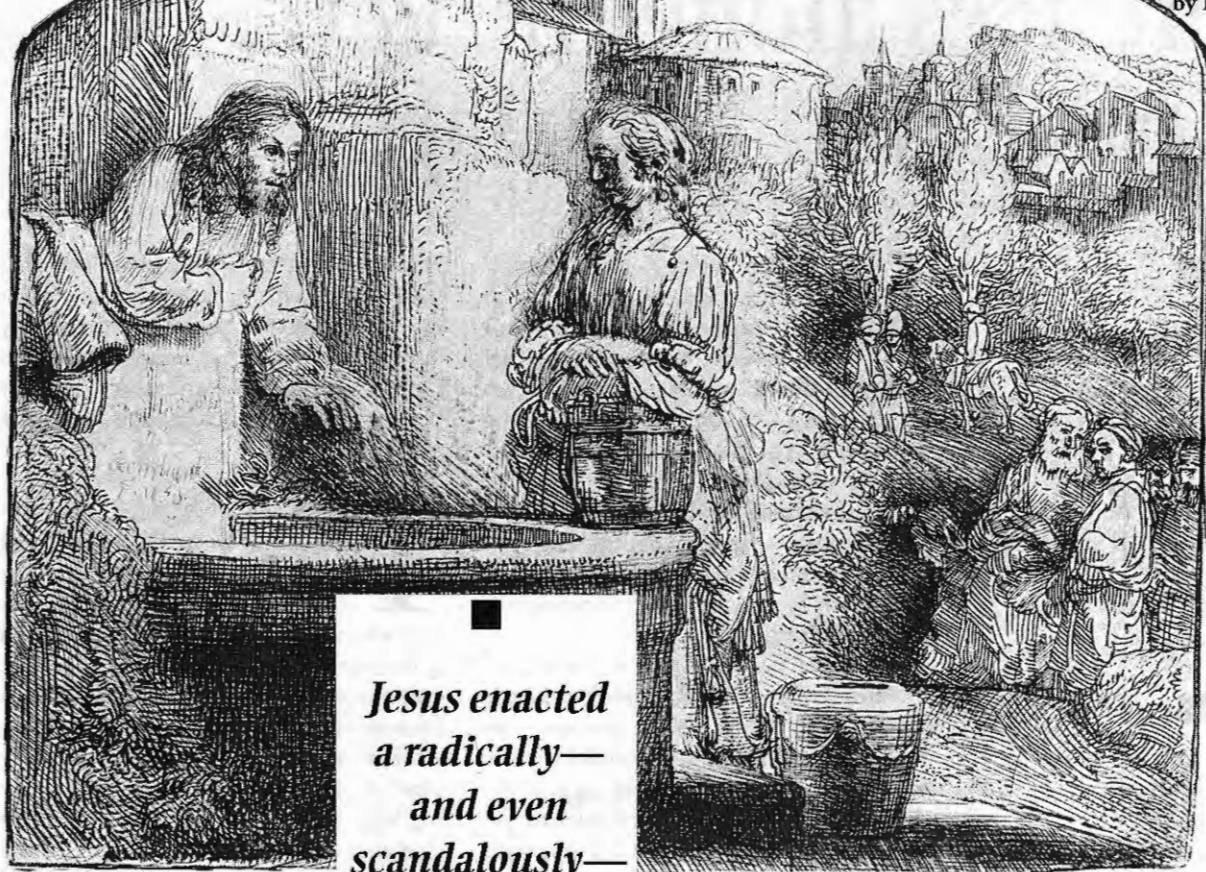
The core theological question here is what authority in our lives and religious communities should we give to these three statements attributed to Paul? Are these three passages a deep revelation of the wisdom and way of God, the loving and liberating Spirit so fully embodied in human terms by Jesus of Nazareth, or are they the product of a historically-conditioned, culture-bound, patriarchal worldview not fully left behind by Paul? Given that these three remarks by Paul were never sanctioned by any recorded comment by Jesus, this seems like a fair theological question. Even Paul says, "Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil."

As much as I am deeply moved by so much of what is written in Paul's letters, and as much as I appreciate his efforts to organize and spread the radical Jesus movement in his day, I see some of his remarks as violations of the best in Jewish and Christian wisdom and practice. For example, the letters attributed to Paul also argue that women should not speak in church, that followers of Jesus should always obey governmental orders, that there is nothing wrong with

then masters. He even once said that it was sinful for women to wear their hair in braids or to not cover their heads in church. None of this seems very insightful, and some of it is profoundly inconsistent with the radically inclusive and prophetic faith and practice of Jesus of Nazareth. So, I do not think that there is much good reason to believe that Paul's three homophobic remarks are consistent with the radical and liberatory good news proclaimed by Jesus. Like all of us, Paul was a creature of his times, and while he often offered great insight into the wisdom and way of God's Spirit, he was still entrapped by some oppressive patriarchal prejudices.

Some professed Christians argue that anything said or done by any of the apostles in the Bible is an infallible expression of God's will. Yet, this seems a naive theology to me. It certainly is not a doctrine I see supported by the Bible itself. Just think of Judas, who the Bible says betrayed Jesus by turning him into the imperial authorities for 30 pieces of silver. Also, in Bible story after Bible story we see how even Jesus' closest and most loyal disciples often had trouble understanding his radical teachings, and sometimes, out of their own confusion, faithlessness, or prejudices, even actively denied him or his teachings. The ingrained thought ways of an oppressive, imperial world are very hard to leave behind—even among some of the oppressed and marginalized in the early Jesus movement.

To his credit, Paul himself had the humility to say in one of his letters that much of what he says feels to him like it is a deep and direct revelation of God's wisdom and way, but other things are just Paul's personal opinions, his best guesses, or his personal interpretations of ancient Hebrew scripture. Furthermore, it must be remembered that Paul was not a close disciple of Jesus. He did not join the Jesus movement until after Jesus was crucified. He never knew Jesus, or traveled with him day in and day out, or discussed his own perspectives and confusions with Jesus. It would appear then that there is not much reason to accord automatic agreement to Paul's three anti-gay comments in his letters. They are a fairly flimsy theological foundation for the Pope's exaggerated anti-gay comments.



**Jesus enacted
a radically—
and even
scandalously—
inclusive
community to
serve as a seed
for the coming
fulfillment of
the Kingdom
of God.**

So let's now turn to the Hebrew Scriptures, what many Christians call the Old Testament. Here we also find a few scattered passages that might offer some theological support for the Pope's exaggerated homophobia. In total, there are five additional passages that I have found in the entire Hebrew scriptures that might be legitimately considered anti-gay, or view gay and lesbian behavior as a sin, perhaps even a major sin. These passages are Genesis 19, Leviticus 19:22, Leviticus 20:13, Deuteronomy 23:17, and Judges 19-21. I say "might" here, because three of these passages are definitely not evaluating the moral worth of loving, committed gay and lesbian relationships, but actually speak out against male-on-male rape, or against men consorting with male or female ritual prostitutes, a practice that was common among some non-Jewish cultural traditions at the time.

The only significant theological support in the entire Bible for the Pope's homophobia then is found in Leviticus, which in my translation says in one passage that gay male sexual behavior is a sin and an abomination before God and then soon goes on to another passage that says it is a moral imperative on the part of the faithful to kill all men who engage in homosexual behavior. This very strong prohibition against gay male sexual behavior, and the commandment to kill all men who engage in homosexual behavior, are two of the 613 religious laws described in the Torah as being directly commanded by God and communicated to the newly liberated Israelites through the prophet Moses. Indeed, each of these 613 religious laws is described in the Torah as "what the Lord has commanded to be done" and as "a perpetual statute throughout your gen-

erations, in all your settlements."

Whether or not you agree with the murderous homophobia of these two laws attributed to God through Moses in the Torah, one might be tempted to say that they do at least offer a firm theological support for Pope Benedict's homophobic fears of gay marriage. That would be true if the Pope actually supported all 613 of the religious laws listed in the Torah as legitimate commandments from God and perpetual statutes to be followed by all generations of Jews and Christians. The Pope doesn't believe this, though—and neither did the Jewish prophet Micah, or Jesus, or Paul. Indeed, if the Pope did believe everything that is said in all of the 613 laws attributed to God in the Torah, he would order animal sacrifice as a core religious practice within the Catholic Mass and he would oppose Catholics eating shellfish or wearing clothes made from two types of fabric. He would also demand that all Catholic men get circumcised. More chillingly, he would demand that all faithful Catholics kill

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Differences along the Path towards Equal Marriage

■
***Heather and I
did not have
the luxury
of having
marriage
predefined
for us.***
■

by Annika Fjelstad

When seeking inclusivity in marriage minutes, it is tempting to focus on similarities between same-sex and opposite-sex couples. There are so many ways in which shaping a lifetime together is a parallel experience for any couple, regardless of gender. Many of the rewards and challenges are similar; indeed, same-gender couples will not have equal opportunity until institutions such as state and church recognize these similarities.

I believe, however, that to live deeply towards fairness we must look squarely at the differences. Faith communities that take same-gender couples under their care must recognize the significant differences between what couples of the same gender and couples of opposite genders are doing. It is not the same thing for a community to bless a couple stepping into the norms of their culture as to bless a couple breaking those norms. These are fundamentally different journeys. For a clearness committee to fully hold a couple in this important transition point in their lives, they must stay cognizant of the cultural parameters that shape the worlds in which the couples are making their commitments.

For me personally, one of those defining differences was fear. In the 17 years since my celebration of commitment with my spouse, Heather, we have known other same-sex couples who have had public ceremonies, yet in 1991 we had no role models. It is hard to describe how strongly I felt that I lacked the courage to stand up in front of everyone I knew and say by implication, "The path less traveled has chosen me. I hereby publicly sign off from the known and

respected route. I honor the love that God has given me, knowing that society will deny me equal social security benefits, a shared pension, financial security, and legal recognition for my family. Do you hereby support me in taking this step?"

The day of my wedding was unquestionably the most terrifying day of my life. I add that the second most terrifying day was one when, as a canoe guide, I evacuated a teenager with a ruptured appendix and returned alone in the dark. Not finding the group where I had instructed them to wait, I spent the whole night alone in the wilderness without a sleeping bag. I mention this to let you know that it is not simply that I don't know true fear. The night alone, however, was an isolated event, contained by time and caused by circumstances beyond my control. Finding the group again the next morning brought resolution. The wedding was a wholly different matter, created by my own choice, and its implications were forever. Everyone I knew would watch me. I couldn't design a next morning that would erase the fear and vulnerability that the public nature of our commitment raised within me.

As a same-sex couple, Heather and I did not have the luxury of having marriage predefined for us. We could not look to role models among our community or elders to know what it meant for one woman publicly to commit her life to another. Marriage between two individuals of the same gender was not a ready-made equation in 1991, nor is it now. There was no predetermined formula of what to say or do. We defined for ourselves what our commitment to one another meant to us, what we hoped it would communicate to others, what we would call it, and why celebrating it publicly was important, despite all the vulnerability and obstacles. While this was not easy, I never find myself envious

Annika Fjelstad lives with her spouse, Heather Ferguson, and their two elementary-school-age children. They have spent the past two years as sojourning members of Monteverde Meeting, Costa Rica, where Annika serves as director of Monteverde Friends School.

understanding what they are doing when they decide to marry each other. On the contrary, I wonder how those for whom marriage provides a predefined set of roles might have access to the richness of self-inquiry that was required of us.

Although it is true that my wedding was the most terrifying day of my life, it is also true that it is among the most joyful, spirit-filled, and sacred days I have experienced. While I do feel irrevocably scarred by some of the events leading up to our wedding, I also feel eternally blessed by the depth of what we were given along that journey. The intermingling of pain, vulnerability, and fear with the richness that was given to us shapes who we are and our understanding of marriage, commitment, hierarchy, faith, community, and God. Among other things, the struggle of our journey planted a seed that led us to Quakerism.

Our wedding, planned as a hybrid of two faith traditions, was not the last time we worshiped as Methodists, nor the first time we worshiped in the manner of Friends. But it was pivotal in our understanding of the power of the Quaker form of ministry. I didn't have the language at the time to name what occurred that day, but with the perspective I have since gained as a Quaker I understand how God was truly present that day, ministering through the members of the community in a way I had never experienced in a Protestant church service.

Four days before our wedding, our Methodist minister received a registered letter from her bishop warning her that if she spoke at our wedding she would be called before a discipline committee, risking suspension of her pastoral credentials and her job. At the bottom of the letter the bishop had added on, "Tell Annika and Heather that I'm sorry."

It is hard to speak of the vulnerability we felt at having friends and family flying into town from all over the country to witness our wedding, and to know that the key leadership for shaping it was being silenced. Not only was this a logistical challenge, but it also undermined the authority and legitimacy of

standing and respected what we were doing. The church affiliation grounded this wedding for them, as it did for us. To have denied us the most visible link to our faith community jeopardized the integrity of our celebration. It was a deep betrayal.

We did not quite know how to respond. The thought, "If the bishop wants to say I'm sorry to us, I think she ought to look us in the eye to do it," reverberated in my head for the remainder of the afternoon. By that evening I had convinced myself that I was really only offering her an opportunity for what she herself proposed to do. It was Christmas Eve, so I could not reach her at the office. I looked up her phone number in the phone book and called her at her home, asking if she would meet with us.



To her credit the bishop met with us the day after Christmas. I recall her telling us that she, in her leadership position, was not the person who could make change within the church, that she was too vulnerable, and that speaking out for change would cause her to be ostracized. Change, she said, could only come from the grassroots. I remember that she encouraged us to continue to work from the pews for welcome within the church. While clergy could bless a barn, a pig, a horse, or a cow, blessing us would cause the entire 150-year-old institution of this church, along with all its potential for doing good in the world, to crumble.

For some reason that I no longer recall, I continued my conversation with the bishop by telephone on the morning

ing. Could our minister say this? "Could she say that." As I talked with her, friends and family members began to arrive at our house carrying in food and other things that were to be transported to the church. Heather looked at me talking on the phone and pointed to her watch. I realized that my conversation with the bishop was going nowhere and that I needed to give up trying to gain her approval. I moved the conversation to a quick end, hung up, and drove to our wedding.

As I hung up the phone I thought to myself, "If anyone had told me how hard this was going to be, I would never have done it." I felt in that moment a deep aloneness. I realized that the bishop wanted to cancel my wedding and that I also wanted to cancel it. I so easily could have accepted that we had tried for too much. I would sooner have disappeared into a hole in the floor than gone and stood before everyone I knew to speak about the deeply personal and vulnerable topics of love and commitment.

The powerful realization I have had since about that moment of desperation was that it was too late. The bishop did not have the power to cancel our wedding. I did not have the power to cancel it either. The community was gathered for a purpose that was stronger than the power of the hierarchy and stronger than my individual fear. That day was a living illustration of the scripture, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of you" (Matthew 18:20). The bishop does not dictate who may and may not be blessed; it is God and the people who bring that blessing into being.

Over 120 people gathered and the celebration began. Our minister remained silent. Four other Methodist ministers attended, in solidarity with their colleague, and two of them spoke their blessings. A Presbyterian minister quoted Annie Dillard, speaking her desire to find something that demanded all the joy she had, and how this wedding gave her that. One after another the members of the community rose and blessed us. A child of five rose to speak

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Alla Podolsky

by Christina Huether-Burns

Finally, the conductor collected our train tickets.

"Good. Everyone's straight now," he said.

"I'm not," replied my mother. The conductor laughed awkwardly, then quickly moved on to the next passenger.

Living with two moms is nothing short of extraordinary. I get all sorts of looks, comments, and questions because I am an African American teenager raised by two white, lesbian women in a family formed through adoption. It has its serious moments and its funny ones. I always won the "yo' mama" jokes in middle school, because people would say "yo' mama," and I'd reply, "which one!" This always caught people off guard because they couldn't think of a comeback.

I used to be embarrassed about my family because we stood out so much. When I was in middle school, if we were together in public, I told people that my moms were my neighbors. It was easy because they don't look like me. But even though we don't look alike, I soon realized that there are many things we do in the same way. I have the same sarcastic personality, signature, and anxious need to be on time for events as my mom Susan, but I have the same motherly traits, handwriting, and short temper with my sister as my mom Sara. When people meet us, they notice we are very similar. I grimace and think, *Oh no, I'm turning into my mothers!*

Christina "Nina" Huether-Burns was welcomed into Pittsburgh (Pa.) Meeting as a toddler. She currently attends various meetings in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Her interests are in human rights, education, working with children, Spanish, and community development. A senior at The Barrie School, she wrote this as her college application essay. She plans to attend Earlham College.



Nina Huether Burns (center) with moms Sara Huether (left) and Susan Burns.

When people ask me questions about my family it gives me a chance to educate people.

But being part of a diverse family has taught me important lessons, things I assumed everybody else knew. Most importantly, I learned to treat everyone equally and to respect, if not accept, our differences. I love people's reactions to my family, the looks on their faces as they try to figure out how we're related, the questions they're too polite or too embarrassed to ask. It takes some people longer than others to ask me a personal question.

One of the most memorable examples occurred in middle school when a friend said, "Nina, are your parents Jamaican?"

"What?" I asked, thinking I'd heard him incorrectly.

He repeated his question, "Are your parents Jamaican?"

"No, they're white," I replied, with the straightest face I could muster. I could see the series of questions going through his mind at that moment, but he just walked away.

I like it when people ask me questions about my family because it gives me a chance to educate people about

what it means to be adopted. I know that not everyone is comfortable with same-sex relationships, and this has made me cautious of how and when I introduce my parents. When I meet new kids, I listen for gay jokes in their conversations. All of my close friends have always loved my parents, saying they're the coolest lesbian moms they've ever met. In my high school, there is a student who is enamored of my parents because he thinks they are the coolest things since sliced bread and sincerely always wants to know

how they're doing. Many of my high school friends have become more accepting of my moms than before. I, too, am more accepting.

Having two moms is a complex and rich experience. I am proud to be my moms' daughter. □

Transitioning in the Light:

A Quaker Community's Journey across the Gender Divide

■
Nothing has been more difficult in my life than gender transition, yet nothing has felt more appropriate and necessary.
■

by Chloe Schwenke

Chloe Schwenke, a member of Adelphi (Md.) Meeting, is an ethicist and international development consultant. She is the author of Reclaiming Value in International Development: The Moral Divisions of Development Policy and Practice in Poor Countries. Her website is <www.developmentvalues.net>.

I was feeling terribly alone on that cold February evening as I placed the call to Carole Hoage. Muscles knotted with nervousness, there was much more of resolution than desperation in reaching out to her. A weighty and perceptive Friend, I trusted her warmth. I was coming out, and the stakes were high.

My wife, Christine, and I were drained, exhausted, and confused. The demons we confronted were frightening; we both knew they threatened our marriage, our happy family, and our sense of who we each were. Not to confront the demons was no longer an option; for me, not to acknowledge them threatened my very survival. Despite years of denial and pain, my identity had shifted, finally and irretrievably. Daunting challenges would surely ensue for so many in my family, our meeting, and our world. This was the start of a new journey—no longer private—of a committed and loving couple, married under the care of Langley Hill Meeting, but now members of Adelphi Meeting (both in Baltimore Yearly Meeting). Christine and I took “care of the meeting” to heart and deeply trusted in the loving presence of our faith community; these thoughts were much in my mind as I heard Carole’s warm voice answering.

“Carole, I need your help—the Meeting’s help. After 16 years of therapy, countless hours of silent discernment, and a half-century of struggling to make the jigsaw pieces of my life fit, I now know with certainty why they never will. To make this puzzle come together, the pieces will need a different picture; I will need a different body. A different life perhaps, who knows? Carole, I’m transgender.”

There, the words were out, and the

silence that followed was poignant. When Carole finally responded, it was with tenderness but no sentimentality, followed by a quick admission that despite being a therapist for many years this phenomenon was well outside of her experience. Her very next question: “How are Christine and the children dealing with this?” It was a concern that framed the months ahead: this gender transition would be a journey into the unknown for every member of my family as well as for me, and ultimately for many members of our meeting. Yet everyone’s journey, while simultaneous, is different. A new person is emerging, yet she will retain much of the old; a beloved husband is leaving forever, but in baffling ways “he” will still be there. Stephen was becoming who she was always meant to be; I am Chloe.

Christine had been overwhelmed when I first shared with her about my transgender status—while finding the inner strength, grace, wisdom, and honesty to admit that somehow, oddly, it all made sense to her. She knew me that well. Many therapists had urged me to find comfort and meaning in being male, and it had taken a long time to find the therapist who finally saw Chloe within me. Even then, I had waited until the diagnosis was tested and found conclusive by a well-recognized expert, Martha Harris. I was born into the wrong body and had waged a costly and painful internal struggle until, at the age of 57, I could play the part of Stephen no longer. Chloe’s struggle to “be,” to have that long-denied integrity, came with a heavy price. Christine had married Stephen, not Chloe, and the children loved having a dad. What was I thinking; what was I doing? Was this be-

ing honest to the Light? Or was this phone call to Carole and the journey that ensued—as two of my brothers angrily accused me later—an egotistical exercise in selfishness?

Selfishness and courage; oddly those are the two most common moral judgments made when people first hear that I am transgender, now that I am finally myself living the life of Chloe. For most transgender persons, once fully aware of their situation, there is but one sensible choice, and that is to transition to your true gender and become a transsexual. As with other transsexuals I've met, this isn't remotely about selfishness or courage. Fortitude and persistence, yes; changing one's physical gender, with all the implications to loved ones, the interminable complexity of moving resistant bureaucracies to accommodate this change, the awkwardness and embarrassments and humiliations, the exacting physical pains involved in reshaping a body, the extraordinary expenses that no insurance will pay, and most of all, the struggle of learning to be convincing out in the world in one's actual gender without benefit of a lifetime of practice, example, and advice—well, only a perverse masochist could find this a “selfish” pursuit. Nothing has been more difficult in my life, yet I am quick to say that nothing has felt more appropriate and necessary.

Courage doesn't sit well on my shoulders either. It fits more appropriately on the gracious person of my wife and my brave, loving children. Compared to the ordeal of living the painful myth of Stephen year after year, it didn't take courage to come out as Chloe. Being Chloe was about survival, not courage. Yet to this day, the fortitude of my young children awes me. They loved me as a whole person; not just as “dad.” Bravely, they trusted that my love as a parent would not be diminished by this transition, even if now expressed differently.

I'm at a loss to recall exactly what pushed me that night to reach out to Adelphi Friends; perhaps connecting with the meeting seemed the obvious place to begin. Despite the fog and confusion around us, Christine and I clung to the conviction that we are a Quaker family who want to stay together in our love, in our faith, and in our faith com-



munity. We both felt the burden of our separate doubts whether these goals were achievable, yet giving in to despair and a silent shame never entered our minds. We also had experienced over many years the boundless spiritual gifts that exist within a spiritual community for those who sought them.

Adelphi had been our spiritual home since we moved to Maryland ten years earlier, and the meeting features largely in our lives as a family. Our children attended the local Friends Community School, started long ago by Adelphi, and my wife and I have both served on various meeting and school committees. We all attend meeting for worship regularly. Still, Adelphi is a busy metropolitan meeting; people frequently come and go, and neither of us enjoyed deep bonds with more than a few Adelphi Friends and attenders. Carole was one of them, and as she quickly gathered her composure on that telephone call, the reality of that bond was tangible and comforting. I explained to her that Christine and I thought that given the sensitivity of the issue, and the large size of our Pastoral Care Committee, the irregular step of moving ahead discreetly with a small ad-

hoc group of Friends would be best for now. In relatively short order we had agreed on the composition of our group, and that it would support both Christine and me in our separate but interconnected journeys. Carole would be joined by three others: Jamesen Goodman, a family therapist; Cheryl Morden, a woman with a career similar to mine in international development; and finally, Sandy Overbey, a pensive man, one of our oldest Quaker Friends, and a member of our original marriage committee from Langley Hill Meeting.

Awkwardness; how else could any of us describe that first gathering at Carole's home in early March of 2008? No one there had any prior experience with the transgender phenomenon, and every one of us felt more than a little at sea. I had been voraciously consuming all that I could read on the web and in books on transgender, but no one else present other than Christine had any facts or experiences to draw upon. No one personally knew another transgender person—we remain relatively rare—so the group started by sharing photocopies of a short web-downloadable brochure from the American Psychological Association: *Answers to Your Questions about Transgender Individuals*

Andy Campbell

gathering of the group, I would come dressed *en femme*. We would respect the confidentiality of this process (even this article has been cleared by the entire group before submission). The group's focus would not just be on me, but on the two of us as separate individuals, as a couple, and as parents. In time, it would embrace our son Ian (14) and our daughter Audrey (9), even if indirectly. We all acknowledged from the outset how different Christine's journey was from mine, and that our separate spiritual support needs did not coincide. She was overcome with grief at losing a husband, while feelings of fear and anger often distanced her from that nourishing inner peace. I, too, was on a voyage into a new reality; yet, as I journeyed, I drew deep spiritual energy that effervesced into my life. For me, a jarring blend of joy, discovery, exhilaration, grief, fear, and—despite all of this cacophony—a welling up of the most powerful peace I had ever known.

Amidst the tears and unquestioned warmth in that first gathering, one thing was certain: we were among Friends, and the spirit was at work. I was lovingly yet firmly called upon to be accountable, then and throughout the group's existence, to share as clear an understanding of the truth of my situation as I could discern. Call it tough love, but seeing the tears in my wife's eyes and the loving concern in the faces of these gathered Friends, I held nothing back. The discussion (punctuated when needed by pauses for silence) went well past dark. Before we left, we asked each member of our support group if they were prepared for this deep commitment of time, love, and spiritual endeavor. To our eternal gratitude, each agreed without hesitation.

This small support group was in many important ways our spiritual and emotional anchor in the months ahead, as we gathered every four to six weeks. There was much to do. First, there was my personal challenge of being Chloe among them. My first "appearance" wasn't easy for any of us, but at least for me it felt surprisingly natural. The closest analogy—and it is an odd one—is that feeling you get when you finally find your-

spiritual home you've looked for. But we all had much to learn about the meaning of gender identity, the nature of the transgender phenomenon, and about coming to some peace with our separate, diverse feelings. We discerned as a group the important difference between "tolerance" and "acceptance." Under the loving care of these Friends, Christine and I reached within and to God for some answers (even if tentative answers) for such questions as to whether our marriage could survive, and what we could possibly say as we came out to our two children and our larger family. We thought long and hard about how best to unfold this transition to the larger meeting, whose support we all knew was critical to making this transition a success. We did not even know with certainty what "success" in a gender transition meant, except to sense how important it would be that the meeting community offer a safe and loving place for our family.

As the year unfolded, our support group steadfastly helped us find a gentle, sensitive way to introduce our "situation" to the larger meeting community. It started with discreet discussions and then visits by Christine, at least one member of our small group, and me among the various meeting committees to raise awareness about our situation and the nature of being transgender. The process reached its culmination with a tenderly choreographed *coming out* to the whole meeting. First, there was a midweek email letter in September from our clerk, Ann Marie Moriarty, announcing our transition. Accompanying her warm, supportive letter was one of our own, crafted prayerfully by Christine and me, and seasoned by our support group's holding us in the Light. I chose not to be present at the next meeting, allowing Cheryl Morden from the support group to spend a few minutes after rise of meeting speaking to those with concerns or questions, or to people who had not received the email. Having me not there, but Christine and the children present, gave the meeting community a little space to see for themselves that my wife and children were well, without having to adjust to my new appearance. By the time I arrived next First Day as Chloe, there

In October, the meeting arranged a Second Hour—a period after meeting for worship—for Christine and me each to speak from a centered, worshipful place to all who sought to learn more of our respective journeys. The meeting-house was full, including nearly every young Friend; all present sat in rapt attention as we spoke of pain, sorrow, joy, and discovery, but also of the power of a meeting to transcend rejection, to move even beyond tolerance, and embrace acceptance.

After a year, this much is clear: Christine and I both continue to feel the power and love of God expressed through these four Friends. Through their love we have been led to find a deeper spiritual home within Adelphi. Our transition journeys have been the occasion for spiritual growth for others in the meeting, too. We may be "special" as a couple and a family, but within the meeting we are one with our faith community, where all are held to be special. We are loved; through our transition we are even a part of the Adelphi community's Quakerly journey of spiritual growth.

For Christine and me, there remains much to resolve even as our relationship has moved to a deeper level of friendship. Not all transgender people change their sexual orientation even if the labels shift under them; the world has reclassified me from "heterosexual male" to "lesbian." Christine remains herself, as she always has: a loving and caring heterosexual woman who now finds herself legally married to a woman. She finds the grace somehow to accommodate that dynamic tension, tempered perhaps by the qualities of warmth and friendship between us that eclipse anything we've ever experienced before.

The transition continues in its quiet way, and my presence no longer elicits undue attention. Thankfully we are no longer "news," just another Quaker family enjoying the warmth of a very remarkable faith community where the Light shines brightly. Christine and I know that the future still holds deep challenges for us as a "trans-couple," but we need never face those challenges alone. □

When My Meeting Had My Back

by Dee Birch Cameron

Curtis Fletcher

Bitter laughter isn't my usual response when I look into my new issue of FRIENDS JOURNAL, but a few years ago I opened right to an article accusing Friends of being soft on divorce ("On Marriage and Divorce—With a Proposition Bound to be Controversial," by Anne E. Barschall, FJ June 2004). "Surely I must be the only Quaker who is reading this right after leaving a 40-year marriage," I said out loud. Here I was, a novice at living alone, and already talking to myself.

Fortunately, my mind's ear still heard Phyllis's response from the previous Sunday, when I had sprung the news on local Friends. "Your meeting has your back." She and her husband offered to help me move or to hang around in case I felt unsafe. (I didn't.) They served me a delicious supper. They heard my tale of woe.

I won't summarize it here, except to say that I wasn't in grave physical danger. I don't want to tempt any reader to judge on the evidence whether or not I did the right thing. Without knowing the particulars, Phyllis had assumed I did. She didn't know the details, but she knew me.

In contrast, the Pittsburgh Friends who oversaw our wedding decades ago were taking a chance on us, a couple of new attenders, one with an Army commitment in wartime. Sometime later, wondering at our youthful folly, I was comforted to remember that a whole committee of discerning Friends had worked at getting to know us and none of them had warned us to turn back.

Years later I met one of them who admitted to relief that at least one marriage they had fostered in the 1960s was still intact. Did other failed relationships point to a history of faulty discernment? I don't think so.

Dee Birch Cameron, a member of El Paso (Tex.) Meeting, is a librarian and often acts in a community theater.



Modern Quakers lean toward hope. If the mainline Protestants of my youth were right and humanity is innately sinful, Friends don't dwell on it. They try to clean up the results. Whatever any of us means by that well-worn quotation about "that of God in everyone," it is an optimistic idea. We tend to give actions that are not unarguably horrible the benefit of that belief.

Maybe that's soft, or maybe it's taking the Jesus of Matthew 12:31 seriously when he calls blasphemy of the Holy Spirit the unforgivable sin. Chronic skepticism about other people's motives and actions implies that genuine leadings are rare and that the human heart is generally too tough a nut even for the Holy Spirit to crack.

A few years after our wedding, I got a surprise long distance call from another of those committee members. She asked how we were, and I said we were just fine. Even though almost from the start I sensed that my husband regretted having me along on his life's adventure, I hoped to change that by trying harder.

"You started out under my eye, and I still think of you," the caller said. I was

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***Did failed
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■

new in Texas, lonely, feeling like a failure, and I took great comfort in the thought of being under Florence Shute's eye then and whenever I remembered her words.

Comfort came again when FRIENDS JOURNAL later published an article by a woman who combined the experience of a long, happy marriage with keen empathy for others whose married lives were sad ("Another Reflection on Marriage among Friends," by Georgana Foster, FJ Jan. 2006, p. 10). My sense of being known and supported by a stranger made a hard time easier.

For a long time, I had not been believed in or believed. Right after walking away from that, I don't know how I might have reacted if I had encountered similar doubts about me in my meeting. I might have fallen back into my habit of taking criticism to heart without examining it. Or I might have laughed it off, as I did that first article. In neither case would the reaction of my religious community have done me any good.

Was the meeting that allowed my wedding wrong because of how my marriage developed later? No. Like me, they were simply doing the best with the light available to them at the time.

Goodness has been more important to me than rightness, and Friends have been good to me. They have kept me under their eye. They have had my back. □

The Miracle of Death

■

*It was
the most
extraordinary
six weeks
of my life as
I cared for
my dying
companion.*

■

On May 10, 2006, my wife and partner of a quarter century, Deborah “Misty” Gerner, who was under treatment for metastatic breast cancer, asked me to call her nurse practitioner concerning a series of odd symptoms she had been experiencing. I called and explained these as best I could, and the response was quick and to the point. “Phil, get her in here immediately—in the four years we’ve been working together, this is the first time Misty has ever asked you to call me, rather than calling herself!”

A few hours later, a CAT scan showed a large, rapidly growing tumor in the lining of her brain that had been invisible only a few weeks before. Misty’s

struggle against metastatic disease, which she had held off far longer than most people, had finally encountered an insurmountable obstacle. The prognosis: she had days, or—at most—weeks, to live.

Misty and I met in our late 20s, both coming from earlier failed marriages of the “young and stupid” variety that, in retrospect, would have better remained cohabitation. As a consequence, we lived together for quite some time before getting married. Our “first date,” I liked to joke, was a six-week

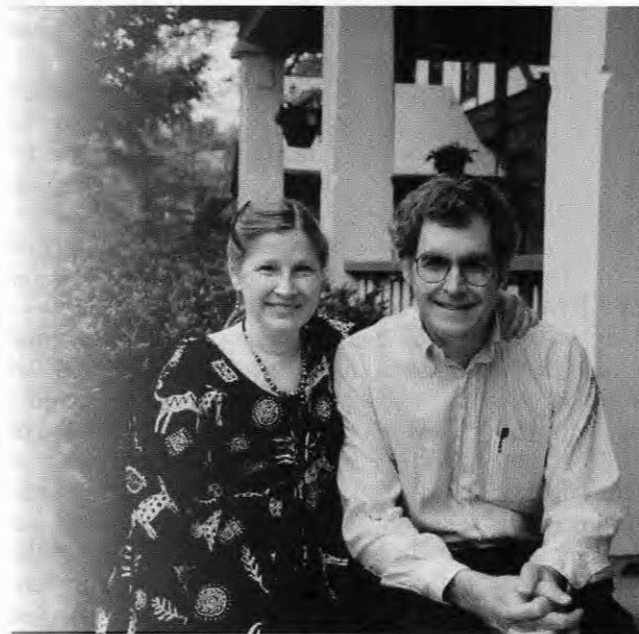
trip to Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, and Europe, though in fact we’d been involved for several months before that. Our “en-

Philip Schrodt was a regular attendee, and Deborah Gerner a member, of Oread Meeting in Lawrence, Kans. Details on Deborah Gerner’s life, and an extended set of emails detailing her experience with metastatic breast cancer, can be found at her memorial website, <<http://deborahgerner.org>>.

gagement” occurred on a snowy New Year’s Eve in a borrowed apartment when we decided, “What the heck, why don’t we get married!” This was several months after we’d purchased a house together. Our wedding was two weeks later on a -10 degrees Fahrenheit Chicago evening. The union was legalized by an ordained Presbyterian seminary student on whose dissertation committee I was serving; the premarital counseling consisted largely of a theological disputation between him and Misty—an Earlham religious studies major—on the extent to which the Almighty needed to figure into the ceremony.

This was obviously not a marriage under the care of a meeting. In different circumstances, it might have been—Misty was a member, and I a regular attendee, of Evanston (Ill.) Meeting at the time—but we were in a commuting relationship, and in town together for just a couple of weeks, so the situation dictated instead a syncretic civil-Presbyterian-Quaker ceremony in a home with a dozen friends (mostly small “f”) in attendance. Our honeymoon was breakfast at our favorite restaurant, and then I was off to teach a 10-AM class.

Our situation was not ideal in those first years (is it ever?), as we dealt with professional demands that, at times, seemed (and quite likely were) explicitly designed to break up relationships: The 25-person department where I worked had only one person who was *not* divorced at least once, and it had experienced two spousal suicides the year before we started dating. Misty was the first tenure-track female professor in her department in her first job—at a Big Ten institution in the 1980s—and left there after a year. We spent three years commuting, first by car, and then by plane. Misty finally landed a temporary position at my institution, but multiple attempts to “solve the two-body prob-



Deborah “Misty” Gerner and Philip Schrodt

by Philip Schrodt

lem" failed. In one ironic case, I received an afternoon phone call that began "Phil, I think we've finally found a position for you . . ." from an institution an hour away from one from which Misty had resigned that very morning.

We eventually found two quite satisfactory jobs at University of Kansas, though even there we faced strong resistance from senior colleagues, one of whom told us straight-out shortly after we arrived, "This department should never have hired a couple." Nor has it ever again. (The progressive social orientation of U.S. academia is, I would suggest, vastly overstated.) But the situation was good enough and, after carefully keeping our work separate until we both had tenure, we embarked on a long and highly productive research agenda that combined Misty's interests in the Middle East and mine in the statistical analysis of political conflict. These efforts yielded the satisfaction of peer recognition, several National Science Foundation grants, and Fulbright awards for each of us to teach at Birzeit University in the West Bank, where we lived in an apartment just a few blocks from Ramallah Friends School.

Our offices were in the same building, eventually just down the hall from each other, and we generally went to work and returned at the same time, as well as sharing lunch whenever we didn't have anything else scheduled. More than a few times we were told—in that self-conscious joking manner that tells you the person is *fully* aware of the implications of what they are saying—"I couldn't possibly work as closely with my spouse as the two of you do." To which one could only smile and say, "Well, it works for us."

Our union was, like most successful relationships I'm aware of, one of complementarities, both at work and at home. Misty was comfortable with people, I with machines; our research project involved a system that required both human input and technical complexity. We could not have done this without each other; others had failed to construct similar systems, either because they could handle the people part but not the technical, or because they had created a complex computer program

but failed to motivate humans to provide the knowledge required to make this relevant to the real world.

The pattern continued at home. In our first few months of living together we tried, following the hyper-egalitarianism of the age, to split household responsibilities equally. But in time we realized the virtues of specialization. It was clear I would never master the subtle interactions between laundry technology and women's clothing ("Read the labels? What labels?"), and my attempts to do so typically resulted in devastation sufficient to create a tempo-



rary blip in the stock price of T.J. Maxx. While Misty enjoyed cooking on special occasions, she was more than happy to leave the day-to-day routines of putting food on the table to me.

And so this went on for a quarter of a century, during which time we became more and more likely to finish each other's sentences, to know with a glance when the other was ready to leave a party, to settle into that familiarity—a vision of Hell to those in their 20s—where the most enjoyable thing in the world was to spend a Saturday evening together at home, sitting in the living room by the fire, quietly reading.

The relationship was not without its challenges, of course, and we spent quite a bit of our first years figuring out how to negotiate those. In most instanc-

es, old wisdom rang true. Most importantly for us: never go to bed without resolving an argument. Turning anger into humor was another, resolved in the final years—when the combination of the seemingly unlimited side effects of cancer treatment, pain, and ever-present uncertainty introduced many occasions of stress—with our adopting our own scapegoat-mediator, a little rubber shark, acquired on a trip to Hawaii, which squeaked when you squeezed it. The shark could be invoked to either mediate a dispute or accept blame for it as the occasion required. Silly?—Yes, but it worked.

By May 2006, we were three months past celebrating—or not, as Misty underwent major surgery the next day to replace a hip destroyed by metastatic lesions—the 25th anniversary of our (actual) first date. By that point, we had spent close to five years—first in 1995 with her initial diagnosis, and then from 2002 onward with the metastatic disease—in visits to the cancer center, with all its attendant expectation, hope, and fear. And now, unambiguously, we had come to the final act.

What followed was, without a doubt, the most extraordinary six weeks of my life as I cared for my dying companion. And not just for my life, but for our relationship.

As the tumors grew, Misty's mental abilities deteriorated rapidly. On the day before the diagnosis, she had taught—with complete competence—the final class of the semester, on her beloved—if ever exasperating—Middle East, and I have no question that by sheer force of will she kept the effects of the tumor at bay until that point. But now its physical impact was overwhelming, and her brain began to suffer the ravages of the disease. Her speech first became unsteady, then positively quirky (she lost the ability to deal with nouns in otherwise grammatically correct sentences); her eyesight deteriorated; she was soon confined to bed. A brief attempt at whole-brain radiation therapy had no effect, and after ten days, with the consent of her medical team and plenty of tears all around, we stopped curative treatment and shifted into hospice mode. Misty's firmest wish, which she had expressed a great many times, if in-

Kansas. It now rested on me to see that wish fulfilled.

It proved to be remarkably easy. At the time, and still three years later, I view that period as a remarkable experience, not one of trauma. Call it the miracle of death, in the same way that we think of the miracle of birth. A child is formed in an act of love, is born, is cared for through years of helplessness, maturation, and with effort and knowledge and no small amount of luck grows into a healthy, happy, and complete adult. It doesn't always work out that way, but as often as not it does.

And the miracle of death? An adult who has accomplished much, who was autonomous, in and of the world, the life of the party, the lion of the office, or the caregiver who could always be counted upon, now lies on a bed, taking shallow breaths, completely under the care of others, and turns inward, first to sleep, then away from food, and finally away even from water (yes, that happens). And then that person departs to a state that we imagine in so many different ways, and which, unlike so many things that we merely imagine, we will all someday reach. A truly remarkable set of events.

And the other miracle of death is the sheer cursed irrationality of this whole caregiver thing.

Relationships are built on reciprocity, are they not? And yet, where is the reciprocity of caring for a dying spouse or parent or friend? In a few days, or weeks, or months, the dying person will be gone, and then day-to-day life will carry on. There is no quid pro quo. And yet in precisely that time where we can expect no reward, our inclination is to give the most. Why?

That is the mystery, or

where the skeletal remains included those of an individual who had suffered grievous injuries that rendered them clearly incapable of obtaining food. But that individual had lived sufficiently long for some of those injuries to partly heal: incontrovertible evidence that they had been cared for. Here, the archeologist concluded, we are dealing with individuals we would unquestionably recognize as human.

Misty—as was her wont—lived well beyond the initial prognosis, but in the end she died, resting quietly in her own bed, a little after noon on June 19,

decades earlier, that our marriage would continue “as long as we both shall live,” was fulfilled.

I don't pretend that this happy ending—and I do regard it as happy—is possible for everyone. We were very fortunate in our circumstances. We were two upper-middle-class professionals with full medical coverage, who were trusted with large quantities of potent painkilling drugs. At no point did her medical team pressure me to resort to heroic measures. I had a job I could simply drop for weeks without repercussions. Our legalized, heterosexual relationship was provided full protection by the powers of government, and not—as some relationships are—subject to the meddling of persons adamant that their highly selective readings of ancient and dimly-understood texts take precedence over the here-and-now of ties that may have been bonded in love for decades. Misty's medical circumstances were such that, with the assistance and advice of hospice professionals, and the aid of a loyal set of—again, utterly irrational—friends (several, as it happened, Friends), I was able to provide palliative care in our home.

Change any of those circumstances and things could have been considerably more difficult, if not impossible. We were lucky; we made some of our luck; we prepared for the unexpected; and some things just broke the right way.

In the months and years that have followed, I have been constantly told, “I can't imagine what you went through.” And, “I couldn't possibly do what you did.”

On the second point I reply, in all sincerity, “Yes, you

*“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.”*

—William Wordsworth
Ode: “Intimations of Immortality”

If

If our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
then our death must be an awakening, a remembering.
Listen. Can you discern a long-forgotten melody?
Is exquisite harmony beckoning from the edges of
your memory?

If our death is an awakening, a remembering,
is there a glory beyond the rose, beyond music?
Is there a sweeter spring than the daffodil
in heaven's deepening expanse?

I cannot willingly release you
yet
if we love what we love
because dim memories
evoke such love,
then
death is just a passing
from loving hands to loving hands
from the rose, to the glory beyond the rose,
to a sweeter spring, a richer harmony . . .

If
our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

—Julie Cadwallader-Staub

Julie Cadwallader-Staub lives in South Burlington, Vt.

Continued on page 48

■

**We were aware
that friends
had joined the
worship via
Internet links.**

■

by Joan Dyer Liversidge

I first met Michael Baldwin and Uriel Orellano when they attended a Couple Enrichment workshop led by my husband and me at Friends Meeting of Washington (D.C.). Couples who were part of an ongoing Couple Enrichment Group at Bethesda (Md.) Meeting urged Michael and Uriel to attend the workshop before they joined the group, so they would understand better the couple dialogue process and the way the group functioned. Michael and Uriel participated in the program, learned the basic skills of couple dialogue and the principles and practices of couple enrichment, and joined Bethesda's ongoing group, which met monthly in various couples' homes. Couple Enrichment provided a nurturing and supportive environment for Michael and Uriel as their relationship grew and flourished.

After Michael and Uriel moved their home, they attended Sandy Spring (Md.) Meeting, where my husband and I are members. Shortly after that, Michael was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. He entered an aggressive course of treatment, which concluded in the fall of 2006. After his treatment ended, we invited Michael and Uriel to participate in a weekend couple enrichment retreat that we were leading. At that retreat, both of them were upbeat and hopeful about the future, despite being exhausted from the ordeal of the disease and treatment. Staying up late into the night, we talked about their future. They were clear that they wanted to have a marriage that was blessed by God and the Quaker community, and someday enjoy a civil marriage acknowledged by the government. We talked about how part of that dream might be realized within the Quaker community. They left the retreat feeling supported and nurtured, and ready to

face their future together.

By Christmas 2006, Michael was re-hospitalized. After many tests it was determined that the cancer had spread to his brain. I visited Uriel at the hospital, along with a member of Bethesda's Couple Enrichment Group. Uriel asked for our help to arrange a marriage under the care of Sandy Spring Meeting. Michael was a member of Montclair (N.J.) Meeting, and in consultation with members of that meeting we discerned that it would be in right order for them to take the marriage under their care with the local support of Sandy Spring Meeting.

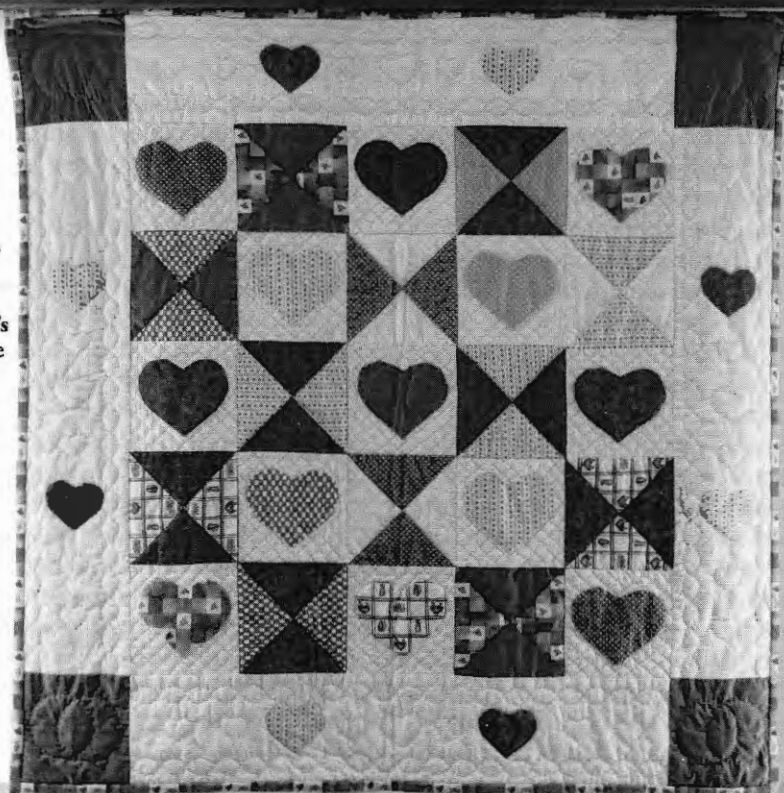
Within 24 hours of being approached, Montclair Meeting held an emergency called meeting for worship with a concern for business, approved taking Michael and Uriel's marriage under their care, and appointed an oversight committee and a co-clerk to serve with me as the local on-site person. They also arranged for members to travel to Washington, D.C., for the meeting for worship for marriage scheduled for the next day.

On that wedding day, silently and almost tiptoeing, about 20 of us walked through the Intensive Care Unit at the Washington Hospital Center to Michael's bedside, trying not to disturb others in neighboring rooms who were very ill and struggling for life. We gathered in Michael's small room around his bed, squeezed into a tiny space. Michael's sister, standing in for him because he had fallen back into a coma, stood at his head. Next to her was Uriel. I stood at the foot of Michael's bed after gently placing the Marriage Quilt (p. 37) over him as a way of "dressing" him for the solemn and joyous but bittersweet event that was about to occur. A video camera was connected to a laptop in the room, extending the meeting for worship for marriage to another 20 witnesses gathered in the ICU waiting room.

I offered a brief description of a Quaker wedding for those in the hospital and others participating in the wor-

Joan Liversidge is a member of Sandy Spring (Md.) Meeting. She and her husband, Rich, serve as leaders and trainers of new leader couples in Friends General Conference's Couple Enrichment Program.

Uriel
Orellano
and
Michael
Baldwin's
Marriage
Quilt



ship via the Internet. We settled into deep silence. Out of the waiting worship, Uriel said his marriage vows and Michael's sister spoke the vows on behalf of her brother. They signed the certificate. We all sang "Down by the Riverside," Michael's favorite song, very softly, and settled back into worship.

After about 20 minutes we silently filed out of the ICU, gathered the others present in the family waiting room, and snaked our way through hospital corridors to a large conference room. We arranged the chairs in a circle and re-entered worship. Someone brought in the laptop, and we were aware that friends had joined the meeting for worship via Internet links from as far away as Hawaii, London, Luxemburg, Dallas, and Connecticut. The worship was deep and centered, with messages of celebration, love, and joy. Some messages were delivered electronically and read to the

Continued on next page

FGC's Couple Enrichment Program

by Brad Sheeks

Friends General Conference's Couple Enrichment Program is a ministry of couples who, recognizing the divine center of committed relationships, support them through the practice of deep dialogue and other authentic sharing consistent with Quaker faith and testimonies.

In this pioneering Quaker program, a small group of six to eight couples come together under the guidance of a trained leader couple. Together they learn and practice communication skills while reflecting on the strengths and values of their relationships. The couples gain a sense of being part of a community of couples where they learn from one another about how to invent and re-

Brad Sheeks is a member of Central Philadelphia (Pa.) Meeting. He and his wife, Patricia McBee, serve as leaders and trainers of new leader couples in Friends General Conference's Couple Enrichment Program.

invent a relationship with the Divine in the center. As one of our experienced leaders has said, "When we engage in our relationship in a conscious and intentional way, we build the Peaceable Kingdom, beginning in our own home. We can then share that power in our meetings, in our community, and the world."

Couple Enrichment certainly has helped maintain loving relationships over many years, and it has drawn us deeper into our spiritual lives. It is a privilege to be with couples and watch the love flow between them. It is an even greater privilege to see a couple again, years later, and hear that the skills they have gained along with the support of others in our community have served them well over the years.

The FGC Couple Enrichment Program began over 40 years ago with David Mace's Rufus Jones lecture "Marriage as Vocation." That lecture led to the creation of a working group to consider how to support and nurture marriages among Friends. The need for this

was described by David Mace in the Winter 1968 *FGC Quarterly*: "Companionship is now the central goal in marriage, and that is the simple reason why marriage is much more difficult today than it was in the past."

David and Vera Mace led a Marriage Enrichment Leadership Training Workshop at Pendle Hill in 1969 as a pilot program. The couples trained in that workshop started leading couples workshops beginning with the FGC Gathering in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, in 1970. A second training event was held at Pendle Hill in 1971. Those programs continue at the Gathering to this day.

David and Vera also founded the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (ACME) in 1973. ACME was committed to supporting family life through marriage enrichment programs. Joining with ACME in their mission, several Quaker cou-

Continued on next page

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rest of us.

Two days later, Michael succumbed to the cancer that had entered his brain. He left this Earth surrounded by the love and caring of his partner and now husband, and those who had participated in this very special occasion.

A marriage under the care of Friends is a precious sacrament. I felt privileged to be a witness to the growth of Michael and Uriel's relationship, which culminated in their profession of faith and love "in the presence of God and these our friends."

There is great beauty and power in our sacred marriage process, and in being "taken under the care" of a meeting. Michael and Uriel understood this beauty and power and wanted to have their love and relationship blessed in this way. They stood in the midst of the Divine Presence through Friends who gathered together in a solemn and joyous occasion to bring this blessing to them.

We were blessed by the use of technology. Michael was a computer expert

and a proponent of technology and its capacity to create a spiritual pathway between and among people. On this occasion, the technology was skillfully and sensitively incorporated into our worship and celebration, helping to broaden the witness of this solemn and joyous occasion across continents.

I celebrate that the Couple Enrichment Program, and the couples who participated in couple enrichment groups with Michael and Uriel, brought that Divine Presence to them when they were new to an area and needed a supportive place to grow and sustain their relationship. And many of us were present for them at a time of great need and joy.

Michael Baldwin and Uriel Orellano were married under the care of Montclair Meeting, with the assistance of Sandy Spring Meeting, on February 3, 2007. Michael passed away on February 5. Uriel continued to participate in Bethesda's Couple Enrichment Group until the fall of 2008. □

ples were trained as leaders and then went on to train other couples as leaders through ACME and subsequently the FGC Couple Enrichment Program (FGC-CEP).

Early in the formation of the FGC-CEP, there was clarity among its leadership that the leading to serve couples included both same-gender and opposite-gender couples, as well as couples in varying stages of commitment. The program was intended to provide all couples with an opportunity to learn from other couples in a sacred space, prepared by leaders using long-standing principles from Quaker faith and practice.

Although some of the ACME leader couples included committed gay and lesbian couples in their programs, ACME did not recognize same-gender couples as leaders. After a period of discernment, the leadership of FGC-CEP pressed the officers of ACME to recognize these couples as leaders. But ACME, out of a concern about the effect of same-gender leader couples on the continuing participation of pastors from several Christian denominations, was unwilling to grant them leader sta-

tus. ACME leaders worried that its fledgling and struggling organization would not be able to sustain itself and grow in light of the anticipated internal controversy. For ACME, the training of leader couples was available to couples who had the ability to be legally married, and that was—and until recently has been—between one man and one woman.

Meanwhile, the FGC program changed its name from FGC Marriage Enrichment to FGC Couple Enrichment, established a training and recognition system, and began a search for potential leaders among same-gender couples who had participated in couple enrichment workshops. In 1988 a Basic Training Workshop was conducted following the FGC Gathering in Boone, North Carolina, and at its conclusion, FGC had its first same-gender couple enrichment leader couples. Today, many same-gender couples who participate in the FGC couple Enrichment Program are recognized as married couples in their home meetings. "Couple Enrichment" continues to be the term that we believe is the most inclusive description for this ministry. □

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Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks

By Jean Zaru. Edited by Diana L. Eck and Marla Schrader. Fortress Press, 2008. 144 pages. \$20/softcover.

In 2002, the deputy speaker of Israel's Knesset told the International Quaker Working Party on the Middle East that one of the biggest problems in the area is that there are two narratives of the Israeli/Palestinian people that are both true—but that don't meet. For Israelis, the 1948 war was a glorious fight to establish a new nation; for Palestinians, it was the nakba—a catastrophe of displacement. For Israelis, the "security fence" is a barrier between them and suicide bombers; for Palestinians, the "apartheid wall" is an instrument of imprisonment and land expropriation. The list could go on and on.

Jean Zaru's *Occupied with Nonviolence* presents a compelling narrative of what the conflict means to a pacifist Quaker Palestinian woman, active in international ecumenical circles, who has lived the region's vexed history for seven decades. As clerk of Ramallah Friends Meeting and widow of the head of the Friends Boys School in El-Bireh/Ramallah, Zaru's perspective comes from experience rather than theory—although there is ample theory offered. As a Christian woman living under what Palestinians call "the Occupation," hers is a view from the margins. It is not the narrative that the mainstream media typically tells.

What is the toll of such a life on physical health? Zaru shares harrowing stories of applying for travel permits, going through checkpoints, and enduring hours of travel to go a short distance for medical treatment. What is the impact of structural violence on the lives of ordinary Palestinians? Zaru tells of her daily struggle to maintain her sense of self-worth and dignity, and her commitment to religious ideals, while confined in her Ramallah bantrusan.

For those who ask, "Where are the Palestinian partners for peace?" this anthology of essays provides an answer. For those who have heard only the dominant narrative of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, this book will serve as an important balance. A foreword by theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether summarizing the current situation in the Middle East is by itself worth the purchase price.

While I was teaching at Ramallah Friends Schools in the early years of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, I heard Zaru

give ministry in worship about the Israeli military governor's recent visit to her home. She had wondered whether to serve her best chocolate cake to a man who oversaw a military operation that was humiliating her friends and neighbors; whose soldiers had harassed teachers and students at the Friends School; and whose insistence on visiting her and her husband on campus rubbed the Occupation in their faces—and set them up for accusations of collaborating with the enemy. In the end, however, she did serve the cake. It was the response she felt Jesus required of her—the response her Quaker faith demanded.

And it is in that spirit that Jean Zaru serves us this book. The situation and issues are not glossed over, and we may not like visiting some of the issues addressed; seeing the conflict through the eyes of Palestinians is hard. But in the end, Zaru is true to her beliefs—and in the process, she offers a compelling call to listen to the Palestinian narrative in the hope for reconciliation, peace, and justice.

—Max L. Carter

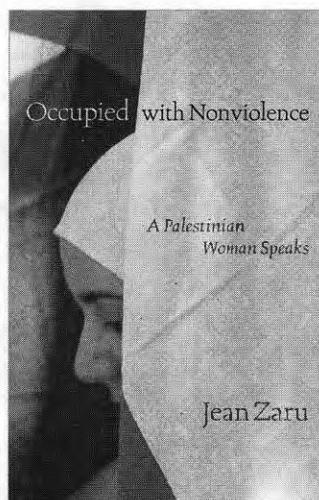
Max L. Carter is director of the Friends Center and campus ministry coordinator at Guilford College.

The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction

By Pink Dandelion. Oxford University Press, 2008. 144 pages. \$11.95/softcover.

This latest survey of Quakerism offers a comprehensive overview of Friends theology and practices, along with historical background and a conclusion about the future of Quakerism. At three times the length of a pamphlet, this "very short introduction" offers complex analysis comprehensibly. It's an ideal resource to recommend to friends and new members who have deeper factual questions about Quakerism than a conversation or website can provide.

As with his lengthier *Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), Pink Dandelion provides an impressively balanced discussion that encompasses the full spectrum of Friends, both theologically and geographically. The book is truly introductory in that it does not require any prior knowledge of Quakerism or the



concepts discussed. In addition to the core text, it includes a bibliographic essay with suggestions for additional reading, a timeline, glossary, and index. Those who want to explore further will be well served by Dandelion's longer book; despite many similarities, the two are different enough in scope as to not overly duplicate one another.

Because this book is written for a broad audience, and because many general read-

ers know of Friends through Quaker-founded educational institutions (especially with President Barack Obama's girls attending Sidwell Friends School), it seems quite an oversight that nothing is included in the book about Quaker education and schools—especially since it opens by noting the role of Quakers in the "formation of civil society." (Prison reform and opposition to slavery are given as examples.) Any future editions should include more direct comment on Friends' strong tradition of literacy and education.

Still, veteran Friends and seekers alike will benefit from approachable publication—especially those with limited time or less inclination to delve into more exhaustive texts. The title is part of the Oxford University Press' Very Short Introductions series. (The 200 or so titles include atheism, the Bible, quantum theory, and racism.) The books are pocket-sized, the type size is small and the margins narrow to maximize the information presented in the compact format. As this is published with wide market appeal, it will be interesting to see if local meetings receive any inquiries from non-Friends who have read the short version and want to experience more.

—Gwen Gosney Erickson

Gwen Gosney Erickson is librarian and college archivist at the Friends Historical Collection at Guilford College and a member of Friendship (N.C.) Meeting.

Ghetto Flowers I: The Early Years

By Francis Oliver Lynn. Amodon Publishing Company, 2007. 271 pages, \$19.95/softcover.

Though it includes both real and fictionalized events, *Ghetto Flowers I* stands firmly in a long line of Quaker memoirs



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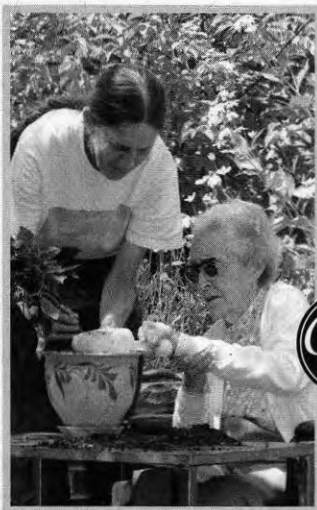
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The Early Years



Francis Oliver Lynn

meant as teaching tools. The book follows Francis Lynn, of mixed Irish and German ancestry, as he grows up in the racial and ethnic ferment of the 1960s and '70s in Philadelphia. It is the first of a projected trilogy.

The book is self-published, an avenue that is becoming increasingly important for Friends, particularly as the world of Quaker publishers continues to shrink.

The author, a member of Princeton (N.J.) Meeting who has taught at Princeton Friends School for more than 15 years, certainly has something to say. Young Francis experiences structural inequality, violence, gang warfare, and poverty with increasing amounts of reflection and doubt. We see Francis the street gang strategist alternate with Francis the peacemaker as he grows into new levels of self-awareness and closing with his determination to lift himself out of the ghetto.

That said, it is always frustrating when a talented writer with an important message does not deliver it well. This book would have benefited tremendously from a good editor (a resource often not available to self-publishers). Aside from superficial errors, stories lack unity and occasionally send confusing messages, especially when it comes to violence. The author's frequent and detailed presentations of everything from police intimidation to street fighting among rival gangs of boys are overdone, and seem to savor the same violence the audience is being warned against. The stealing of fireworks is presented with the same glee as the beating of a camp counselor, and more often than not jail is held up as the only and ultimate consequence.

Lynn's best stories are those where he delves into moral gray areas. In breaking the law, the boys are sometimes on the side of justice, as when they "rescue" the cash of a dead neighbor from a thieving policeman and redistribute it to poor neighbors. A scheme to use fire hydrants on a hot day turns into a confrontation with city author-

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Lee B. Thomas, Jr. is a longtime-businessman and founding member of Louisville Friends Meeting, which celebrated its 50th year in 2004.

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ities who are unconcerned with citizens' well-being.

Lynn, by way of his protagonist, is working with an acute understanding of the difference between power through hierarchy and power through collaboration and community, as well as justice as defined by law and justice as defined by common good and decency. These are issues that Friends need to hear more about, from within our own ranks, if we are really serious about diversity. The delivery is awkward at times but the message is important, and Lynn often offers his life story with breathtaking honesty.

—Angelina Conti

Angelina Conti lives, writes, and attends meeting for worship in the Philadelphia area. She is project coordinator for Friends General Conference's Quaker Youth Book Program.

Is It Still Cheating if I Don't Get Caught?

By Bruce Weinstein, Ph.D. *Flash Point*, 2009. 160 pages, \$12.95/paperback.

Since Quakers have always been more interested in orthopraxy (right practice) than orthodoxy (right speech), it would seem that ethics is a natural for us. Most religions purport to be creators of ethics. I have heard it argued that morality is so basic to the human condition that religions must follow it or risk irrelevance.

The author of this book for young adults defines ethics as "the art of doing the right thing." Weinstein gives a nod in both directions saying that you may have heard about the five principles of ethics where you worship or from a teacher or parent. He sets out five simple life principles: Do no harm; Make things better; Respect others; Be fair; Be loving.

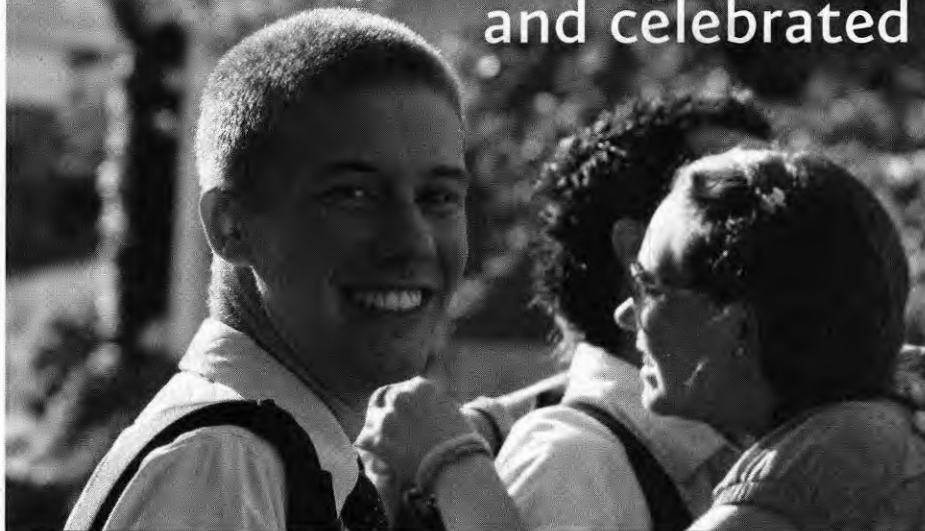
Weinstein makes the case for society's dependence on everyone's trying to follow these precepts, although he acknowledges that most of us don't manage to balance all five points all the time. The book also features a series of hypothetical situations centered in the daily lives of American teenagers. It's refreshing to see a rather matter-of-fact set of reasoning behind doing the right thing, and Weinstein makes doing right seem very practical as well as moral. I recommend this book for use with middle-schoolers and teens in meeting, in school, at summer camp, or at home.

—Sandy Farley

Sandy Farley is a member of Palo Alto (Calif.) Friends Meeting.

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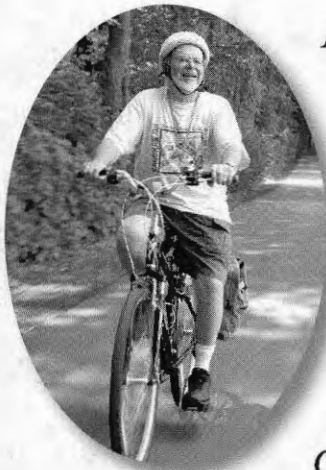


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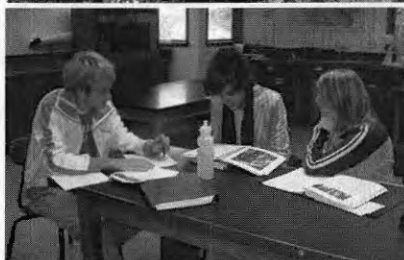
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- July 6-9—Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting
- July 6-10—Quaker Institute for the Future Summer Seminar, at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif. The Summer Seminar offers a unique blend of research time and group reflection in a setting of excellent resources. Daily meeting for worship, individual study, and collaborative discernment. For more information contact Shelley Tanenbaum at <sheltan@pacbell.net> or (510) 525-8964.
- July 9-13—North Carolina Yearly Meeting
- July 17-19—Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting
- July 17-20—North Pacific Yearly Meeting
- July 18-21—Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region
- July 19-24—Northwest Yearly Meeting
- July 20-26—New York Yearly Meeting
- July 23-26—Alaska Friends Conference
- July 23-26—Indiana Yearly Meeting
- July 23-25—Evangelical Friends Church—Mid America
- July 24-27—Wilmington Yearly Meeting
- July 24-August 2—Central Yearly Meeting
- July 25-August 1—Britain Yearly Meeting
- July 28-August 2—Pacific Yearly Meeting
- July 29-August 1—Iowa Yearly Meeting (Friends United Meeting)
- July 29-August 2—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
- July 29-August 3—Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)
- July 30-August 3—Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting
- July 31-August 3—Western Yearly Meeting

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and others were known for the supportive roles they played during the Religious Society's early years. They had ensured that traveling ministers and those they left at home had the resources they needed. Later, Women's meetings would fill this need. In addition women welcomed ministers in their homes, held meetings there, and wrote letters to hold the community together. Sometimes called Mothers in Israel or "nursing mothers" they expanded their maternal roles into the public arena where they nurtured the larger community while leaving their own children behind to be cared for by others.

By the 19th century, middle-class people in the United States began to emphasize the ideals of the modern nuclear family. A husband, wife, and children were considered the basic unit of society. Without assistance from the outside world, they were responsible for retaining sharply defined gender roles, solving their own problems, and raising perfect children. Eventually our public policies tried to fit everyone into this mold. Early Quakers knew better. For them, a family was never expected to be autonomous or to exist outside the context of relatives and meetings. When individuals took on responsibility outside the individual family, others stepped in and assumed the daily chores left behind.

Few of us want to recreate all the family patterns of early Quakers, but we can learn from them. Like them, we can value our ties to kin, even when our lives differ from theirs. Our meetings, like meetings in the past, can be vital centers for family-like relationships and support. Like early Quakers, we can respect the fact that families take different forms, and we can foster commitment and love among those living alone or in same-sex unions, as well as for those in more conventional families. Like early Friends we can also acknowledge that women, like men, have their own callings, and we can find ways to ensure that a parent's absence from home does not leave children without nurturing. Finally, we can work for a society where no family, of any description, is expected to stand alone without the support of others. □

main connected and we visit, but it is no longer the same.

We have been lucky to experience much faithfulness with our past communities and much welcoming from the new. But it is challenging to form new intimacy with a new community and new place while retaining our covenant with the old. And of course the new contains none of our history, and no intimate knowledge or understanding of our experiences. With time we will develop new history and new covenants, but it is humbling to confront our difficulties along the way.

Several years ago, a Quaker couple with young children who had become members of Minneapolis Meeting asked the meeting to take their marriage under its care because they had quickly moved away from the meeting under whose care they had been married. They went through a clearness process with the meeting, and this new covenant was celebrated with meeting for worship and a reception. Perhaps this reflects a broader need, not yet addressed by many couples and meetings, for reaffirming and re-engaging this care and covenant whenever we transfer to another meeting.

This same need applies equally to all of the non-couples, single people, alternative relationships, transitions, and lifestyles that also make up our communities. What are we doing to enrich, strengthen, and deepen the power of true spiritual community within our meetings?

Our "one marriage with three weddings" has brought home to us the importance of our meetings for learning and practicing intimacy, integrity, and connectedness in community. It is this practice of spiritual community that best nurtures and challenges us and deepens our covenant with each other and with God. □

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every child they know who talks back to their parents, and he would also demand that we kill every woman who is guilty of adultery.

All of these actions and prohibitions are included among the 613 laws of Moses. It is no wonder that Paul called the slavish following of all these religious laws "a curse" and warned people to stay faithful to the underlying spirit of the Law, but not the detailed letter of each one—as many of them are based on mere cultural convention and some are even rooted in deep human prejudices and cruelty. This picking and choosing among the laws of Moses by Micah, by Jesus, by Paul, and by the Pope casts doubt upon the strength of theological foundation of the Pope's alarmist homophobia.

How can a faithful follower of Jesus choose which of the laws and commands in the Torah are part of the wisdom and way of the loving and liberating Spirit that the Jewish prophets and Jesus called God? Jesus was actually pretty clear on this point. He said that the two most important commandments from the Torah were to love God with all one's heart, strength, and soul, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. If the lesser commandments supported these two great commands, they were deemed by Jesus to be part of the wisdom and way of God. If any of the lesser commandments were of marginal concern to either of these two core commandments, they could either be done or ignored without consequence. Or, if they were hateful, cruel, or violent commandments, as a few of them are, they should not only be disregarded, but actively challenged by the faithful—as Jesus challenged the fundamentalist believers who sought to stone a woman charged with adultery. In direct violation of one of the 613 laws attributed to God through Moses, Jesus talked these men out of killing her. He urged them instead to treat her with compassion, and he told them to look into their own hearts for the seeds of sin. Again, it would appear that the Pope's view, whose strongest foundation is the murderous homophobia of two passages in

Leviticus, has no real substantive theological ground to stand on.

As Paul said about a disagreement in the early Church about whether to require circumcision of all male participants of the Jesus movement, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love." I do not think then that it is a far stretch to also say that in the emerging Kingdom of God, neither heterosexuality or homosexuality counts for anything; that the only thing that counts is that all human relationships, including all human sexual relationships, should be characterized by the loving fruits of the Spirit—including deep commitment, care, respect, equality, tenderness, honesty, faithfulness, joy, and humility.

Frankly, I have never quite understood why so many professed Christians are obsessed with homosexuality—all on the basis of five to eight questionable passages scattered throughout the Bible that were never once supported, or even mentioned, by Jesus of Nazareth. I have also never understood how so many of these very same people can then ignore the over 2,000 passages in the Bible calling for economic justice for the poor and opposing all organized systems of greed, exploitation, and oppression. These statements were directly and repeatedly supported and sanctioned by Jesus in the course of his public ministry inviting people to abandon the ways of empire and help usher in the Kingdom of God.

I submit that the Pope is fundamentally wrong in his assertion that one of the most important sins to be challenged in the world today is the specter of marriage by gay and lesbian couples. I side instead with Jesus, who repeatedly claimed that the most important obstacles to the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God are empire, violence, greed, exploitation, moral self-righteousness, selfishness, arrogance, and hardheartedness.

As people of faith and good will, let's focus on what matters most, which is loving God, loving each other, and loving God's good Earth. □

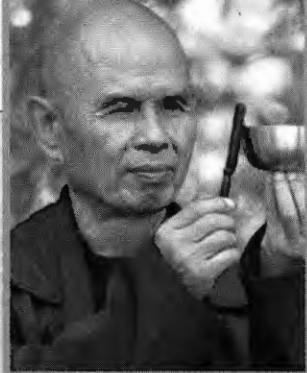
from the silence saying that she loved us. The sharing continued for almost two hours, causing one acquaintance to stand and bless us sweetly, then add he was so sorry to leave, but he was late for another wedding. A relative who had pledged not to attend showed up unannounced and though could speak no words, kissed the hand of one who spoke eloquently. A colleague shared that she didn't believe in God and didn't feel comfortable in churches; but that this gathering opened her heart to what church was supposed to be and renewed in her the possibility of believing in God.

Church hierarchy had imposed silence upon our minister as a form of control. That same silence became transformed through worship to invite in the voice of the Living Spirit in its many manifestations. We had been accustomed to the power of ministry being vested in one person, yet here we experienced the power of community members ministering one to another.

Our marriage was witnessed that day by God and community. Although it is not recognized by the government, it is recognized. The deep grounding of that recognition gives us courage and faith to live into that marriage deeply and openly, even in circumstances where we fear we will be misunderstood, not seen, or disrespected.

Did our faith community hold and support us the same way it would hold and support an opposite-gender couple? Yes, it did. It also held us differently. Had they not held our wedding and made it happen no one could have, not even ourselves. They held us as if we depended upon them to make our wedding real, which in fact we did. Likewise our marriage continues to be deepened and strengthened by our communities' regard for us as a couple and a family.

We stand outside of cultural expectations, our legal status is unchanged, and at most times and in most places we are not seen or accepted as a family. Only in a very few places do same-sex couples have the safety net of government, church, and culture to recognize us as families. A welcoming faith community is one of these few places where our families are seen and accepted as whole. □



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can and you would." Or, more completely, just open your heart, let your basic nature, your instincts, that of the Divine in all of us—or whatever you want to call it—be your guide, and you will do just as I did if the circumstances permit. That basic human impulse that sustained life in a broken body at a primitive campsite tens of thousands of years ago sustains it today, if you just let it. And that basic human impulse is simply love, is it not?

In terms of never imagining what I went through, prepare for the possibility that you will not just imagine it, but experience it. For those of my boomer generation, this will occur with increased frequency. Misty and I just got there a little earlier.

A relationship came to an end. This happened very gradually; I spent the next year largely in a natural process of slow and gentle grieving, combined with the complexities of finding good use for the material accumulations of a life that had ended well short of the promised three-score-and-ten. I kept an aphorism on my desk: "The only way out of the desert is through it." As months passed, I imagined myself first wandering aimlessly, then getting a sense of approaching the edge of the desert, and then finally, after a year or so, I had left the desert—still wandering, mind you, but wandering in the forest, and somewhere, sometime I would discover where I was going.

The final postscript: Misty had hoped that I would find another committed relationship, though as she was dying she expressed fears that I would not be able to do so. (I do machines, not people, remember?) About a year and a half after her death, after the usual awkward web-enhanced middle-aged dating experiences, a woman in my Buddhist mediation group—hidden in plain sight—suggested we go to a couple of parties together. Over the next year, we gradually became first a steady couple and, by the time this is in print, expect to be married. The journey through the desert ends as I—and Misty—had hoped it would, if at a place I never would have expected. The cycle is renewed: We are, after all, only human. □

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Voters, she worked on national security and sustainable agriculture studies. She was the first person in Oregon to own a hybrid car. She belonged to the American Civil Liberties Union, the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the Inter-Religious Committee for Peace in the Middle East. Connie's first husband, Robert Brown, died in 1993, and in 2004, under the care of Eugene Meeting, Connie married her old friend and fellow community activist Lyle Perkins. Connie was active in her home meetings, serving on many committees, including Ministry and Oversight and Ministry and Worship. She was recording clerk for Santa Barbara Meeting and represented Eugene Meeting on the steering committee of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Connie was a passionate, spirited advocate for peace and social justice right up to the end of her life, and even though she had strong beliefs, she was always willing to listen to the other side. Connie was preceded in death by her first husband, Robert Brown, in 1993. Her husband, Lyle Perkins, died in 2008. She is survived by two sons, Robert and Christopher Brown; one daughter, Aisha Osaimi; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Cox—Robert Milton Cox, 90, on January 7, 2009, in Columbus, N.C. Bob was born on July 16, 1918, in Toledo, Ohio, and as a youth was active in the Lutheran Church. He attended University of Toledo, graduated from Adrian College, and in 1942 married Martha Corbett. When World War II came, Bob registered as a conscientious objector and served in Civilian Public Service in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, mostly as an attendant in mental hospitals. During this time his calling to become a minister became clear, and he attended Yale Divinity School for three years. Because the Methodist Church was supportive of his CO stand, and because he favored the Methodists' bishop appointment structure, Bob became a Methodist. He graduated from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and was ordained in the Methodist Church in 1950. In 1968 Bob withdrew from the Methodist Church and joined New Brunswick (N.J.) Meeting. In early 1969, Bob and Martha were divorced. He and Eleanor Morris married under the care of Southampton (Pa.) Meeting in July, 1969, and lived in the Flemington, N.J., area, where Bob served as clerk of Quakertown (N.J.) Meeting. They moved to Brevard, N.C., in 1979, and Bob's ministry continued in business, state, and private organization settings. While in Brevard, Bob served as an interviewer at Sharing House, as mediator for the Dispute Settlement Center (now Center for Dialogue), and as member of the Board of Transylvania Vocational Services. Bob and Ellie joined with others in 1981 to form a worship group in Brevard, which became a monthly meeting by the time Bob and Ellie returned in 1988 from a five-year sojourn in Kalamazoo, Mich., where he had been clerk of Kalamazoo Meeting. Bob served Brevard Meeting as clerk and as member on several committees. His good nature and ability to reach out and include others made everyone feel welcome, especially newcomers, and his skills in listening and mediating were helpful when Friends discussed con-

tentious issues. When Bob spoke during meeting for worship, he often quoted Bible passages or favorite hymns. His sense of the Presence of God, and of Jesus Christ as his Light, was real, strong, and evident. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor Morris Cox; his two sons, Robert B. Cox (Martha Redmond Cox) and Alan C. Cox (Tracy Torrence Cox); three grandchildren; and two sisters.

Ford—*Frances Fuller Ford*, 68, on May 8, 2008, in Brooklyn Center, Minn., of cancer. Fran was born on November 10, 1939, in Appleton, Wis., to Bertha and Harold Fuller. She attended Northwestern University, graduated from University of Wisconsin at Madison, and received an MFA in Performance at University of Florida in Gainesville, with a Thesis Role in *The Belle of Amherst*. In the mid-1970s Fran joined the Religious Society of Friends. Having taken Frances Ford as a stage name, she performed in Broadway and off-Broadway plays and took part in national and regional tours. Fran was also a drama teacher and director and served as artist-in-residence on two occasions: first in Huntington, N.Y., where she worked with the Participation and Cooperation in Education (PACE) program, and again at Friends Seminary. She taught public speaking, interpersonal communication, and acting at University of North Dakota and at several colleges in the Twin Cities area. In 2006, Fran created the War Plays Project to stimulate conversations about war and its effects on the winners and losers and their families and communities. The first of these plays was *Letters To, Letters From . . . Letters Never Written*, based on letters, journals, and memories of Minnesota veterans of wars from the Civil War through the Persian Gulf War. Fran also co-produced *Vet-speak*, a documentary made up of interviews with soldiers, veterans, and conscientious objectors. Another play, *Rachel Corrie . . . A Life for Others*, tells of the life and death of the young woman killed by a bulldozer as she tried to block the demolition of a Palestinian family's home. During hospital and hospice stays shortly before her death, Fran completed her final play, *At War with Women*, based on interviews with women veterans. Even in her final illness, no longer able to attend Ministry and Counsel committee meetings, Fran offered caring and support to Friends, trying to reciprocate her own support from the Quaker, theater, and Buddhist communities. She was unfailing in her appreciation of those who cared for her, learning and remembering names so that she could greet people with her typical grace and friendliness. Fran brought a vibrant and eloquent enthusiasm to everything she undertook. She is survived by her son, Nathanael Seymour; two brothers, Herb Fuller (Martha) and Steve Fuller (Karen); and nieces and nephews.

Hartley—*Martha Newlin Hartley*, 89, on February 21, 2009, in Salem, Ohio, of complications from Alzheimer's disease. Martha was born on March 27, 1919, in Snow Camp, N.C., to Nannie Guthrie and Harvey Newlin. She was a lifelong Friend and grew up in North Carolina Yearly Meeting. Martha played basketball at Eli Whitney High school as a girl, and loved horse-



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back riding and local and national high school sports. After graduating from Eli Whitney, she received a second diploma from Olney Friends Boarding School (now Olney Friends School) in Barnesville, Ohio, and taught in a one-room school in Barnesville before her marriage to Everett Hartley. After a brief period in Ravenna, Ohio, at the Harlan Dale Dairy Farm, she and Everett moved to North Lima, Ohio, in 1949 to operate the Hartley Dairy Farm. She was an active member of the community and was founder of the Beaver Zippers 4-H Club, serving as advisor for 35 years. She held many offices with the Extension Homemakers Club, Mahoning County Farm Bureau, and Community Institutes. She played in community theatrical productions and was an honorary member of the Co-operative de Criadores del Cibao, Inc., in Moca, Dominican Republic, a group promoting enhanced food production. At the time of her death she was a member of Middleton Meeting in Columbiana, Ohio, and a winter attendee of Pima Meeting in Tucson, Ariz. She was preceded in death by her husband, Everett Hartley, in 2005; a son, Harvey E. Hartley, in 1964; three brothers, Roseland Newlin, Burton Newlin, and Alfred Newlin, and one sister, Mary Bray. She is survived by her daughter, D. Pearle Burlingame (Jerry); four grandchildren, Cheryl Jackson (Bill), Linda McElroy (Patrick), Brenda Burlingame, and Carol Burlingame; two great-granddaughters, Cora Jackson and Claire Jackson; and several nieces and nephews.

Mitchell—Edith Bertsche Mitchell, 83, on August 10, 2008, in Edison, N.J., in her sleep. Dee was born on October 1, 1924, in Queens, N.Y., to Hertha and Carl Bertsche. She graduated from Brooklyn Friends School in 1941 and from Swarthmore College in 1945, with a major in English. Dee became a teacher, and in 1946 she married Lee Carlisle Mitchell, who was studying civil engineering at Swarthmore. She and Lee soon moved to Bay Shore, Long Island, where they raised their six children. In Bay Shore Dee taught in Head Starr and other tutoring programs, and she and Lee became the first white members of the NAACP in Bay Shore, promoting racial integration through their membership in Bay Shore Methodist Church. In 1969, Dee and her family moved to Kailua, Hawaii. As Lee's health deteriorated, Dee became the breadwinner, teaching and tutoring in public schools, students' homes, and at drug treatment facility Hawaii Habilitat. An effective and inspired teacher, she continued working into her 70s. After Lee died in 1995, Dee joined Honolulu Meeting. She drove over the mountain to attend meeting for worship, she never missed a meeting for worship with attention to business, and she was an active participant in discussions and worship sharing. Dee was always ready to do more than her share of any chore, eager to be of help in any way, and ready with new ideas to try. As clerk of the Hospitality Committee, she organized intergenerational social events, and every Christmas she hosted a party at her home for all ages. She also served as clerk of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee and rekindled the meeting's concern for prison reform. Dee wrote letters on behalf of

prisoners of conscience for Amnesty International and began a correspondence with a death row prisoner in Mississippi. In 2003 she moved to Caldwell, N.J., transferring her membership to Montclair (N.J.) Meeting, where she served on the Committee for the Religious Education of Children. She was a frequent presence at the local bookstore, where most of her purchases were on spiritual topics. Dee prayed often, and her worn Bible exhibited her frequent use of it over a lifetime. Dee moved to McCutchen Home in August 2005, and in April 2007 to Whispering Knoll in Edison. Dee is survived by her six children, Janet Letalien, Ronald, Linda, Curtis, Alan, and Lee Mitchell; and five grandchildren, Carl Mitchell, Lucas Mitchell, Booker Mitchell, Kai Mitchell-Reiss, and Jesse Mitchell-Reiss.

Moore—*Thomas William Moore*, 84, on June 6, 2008, in West Chester, Pa., of myeloproliferative disease. Tom was born on April 16, 1924, in Mt. Clemens, Mich. When he was 11, his family moved from Grosse Pointe, Mich., to Berkeley, Calif. He attended University High School and University of California at Berkeley. While in college he was active in the local, regional, and national Student YMCA and was president of Stiles Hall, a private community service agency. In 1943 he was drafted into the Army Air Force, where he served for three years. He graduated from college in 1949 and taught junior high school for three years, but had to leave his job because he would not sign a loyalty oath. Before the Korean War, he registered as a conscientious objector. He joined the Religious Society of Friends in Berkeley in the late '40s, became assistant clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting and Association in 1953-54, and participated in a Quaker study tour in 1954. During that time he met Anne Hollingsworth Thomas, and they were married in 1954. Tom worked at the Community Y in Eastern Delaware County, Pa., as co-director of the International Student House in Washington, D.C., and as director of the Kansas University Y in Lawrence, Kans. Tom was a candidate for the Kansas State Legislature in 1970 and served on the Kansas Commission for Civil Rights in 1971-78 and the Kansas Office of Equal Opportunity in 1978-80. He organized a 1982 vote in Lawrence on a Nuclear Freeze, served on the Lawrence Human Relations Commission, and was active in the Lawrence Coalition for Peace and Justice. Oread Meeting in Lawrence, Kans., was pivotal in his life for 23 years. In 1983 he and Anne moved to Wayne, Pa., and Valley Meeting in Wayne, and he worked part-time with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They moved to West Chester in 1998, when they became part of community life at The Hickman. Besides loving to talk, Tom was a good listener, with a contagious smile, outgoing personality, and sense of being at home in any situation. "What is the most loving response?" was his habitual guide for making decisions. Tom was preceded in death by his daughter, Lydia Moore, in 1994. His mother-in-law, Lydia H. Thomas, died a few weeks after him. He is survived by his wife; Anne H. T. Moore; his sons, Charles Moore and Howard Moore

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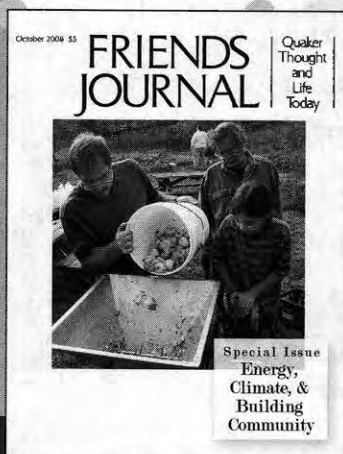
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(Stephanie); four grandchildren; his brother, James F. Moore; his sister, Marjorie M. Gasser; his sister-in-law, Amy Hoopes (Rae); and nine nieces and nephews.

Preston—*Edmond Preston III*, 85, on October 29, 2008, in Medford, N.J., of Parkinson's disease. Ed was born on September 5, 1923, in Philadelphia, Pa. He grew up surrounded by music, as his father was an organist and his pianist grandmother lived with his family. When Ed attended Friends' Central School, one of his teachers inspired him to pursue biological studies. He was also inspired to love science and medicine by Germantown Friends School pediatrician Joseph Stokes. He graduated from Haverford College in 1945, and later served as a member of the Corporation of Haverford College. After receiving his MD from University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1947, he interned for two years at Pennsylvania Hospital and was a pediatric resident at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. As a U.S. Navy physician, he served families in Hawaii, enjoying the diverse community and photographing the landscape and flowers, including the night-blooming cereus. He received an Admiral's Citation when he separated from the Navy in 1953. Ed and his family moved to Moorestown, N.J., in 1954, and he practiced there until his retirement in 1997. He often made house calls in the early years, sometimes to farm families who paid their bills with crates of cranberries and blueberries. An early pioneer in adolescent medicine, throughout his life he remained engaged by his patients' individual differences and needs, serving three generations of children and their parents as a specialist in pediatrics, adolescent medicine, and family dynamics. When his children were young, the family took a road trip each year, enjoying hiking, canoeing, fishing, and looking for antiques in New England. Ed and his wife, Betty, also traveled to Russia, the Caribbean, and Mexico. A member of Moorestown Meeting, Ed was a director of the Y's Men's Club of Moorestown, a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, president of the Medical Club of Philadelphia and of the Delaware Valley Society for Adolescent Health, a board member of the Philadelphia Pediatric Society, and an instructor in pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He also served as chairman of the Physician's Advisory Committee to Visiting Homemakers of Burlington County, board member of the Family Service of Burlington County, and attending pediatrician for the Well Baby Clinic of the Visiting Nurse Association of Moorestown. He enjoyed learning, teaching, and collaboration, especially with the families of his patients. He listened intently and reflectively and learned as much from his patients and their mothers as he taught them. Throughout his life he grew roses and he tended his tomatoes and vegetables accompanied by the family cat. Ed and Betty moved to Medford Leas in 2000 after 46 years in Moorestown. Ed is survived by his wife, Elizabeth Preston; his daughter, Catherine Preston Koshland (James); two sons, Curtis Preston and

Dan Preston (Margaret Rose); six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Self—Edith Barton Self, 62, on September 23, 2008, in Eugene, Ore., of cancer. Edie was born on June 16, 1946, in Philadelphia, Pa., to Lois and Hal Barton. She moved with her parents to Oregon in 1948 and lived most of her life in and near Eugene. She graduated from Olney Friends School in 1964 and attended Honors College at University of Oregon from 1964 to 1969, majoring in Psychology. After college Edie became a VISTA volunteer with the Apache Indians in Mescalero, N. Mex., and then worked for a time in the office of AFSC in San Francisco. In 1975 Edie married Robert Self, of Eugene. Edie had an active relationship with the small birds and animals around her home. She had a unique talent for picturing the behavior of these creatures in small stories, many of which appeared in the local web magazine *westbynorthwest.org* and were collected in a booklet. Her health was not vigorous over the years, and before she began using health supplements, she had serious repeated bronchial infections. Edie became local office manager and a distributor for nutritional supplements in the 1980s, and she continued the distribution work until her death. Suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, she established a local support group for that disease. A few years before her death she embraced a macrobiotic diet. She was treasurer of Eugene Meeting for two years, providing helpful coaching to her replacement, and she was a talented and supportive member of the meeting. Edie was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Self, and her son, Charlie. She is survived by her mother, Lois Barton; her granddaughter, Brianna Ireland; four sisters, Margie Ferguson, Mary Kirk, Fran Krohn, and Rachel Barton Russell; and three brothers, Dave, Steve, and Bill Barton.

Valdivia—Rebeca Valdivia, 46, on October 21, 2008, after a struggle with cancer. Rebeca was born on January 6, 1962, in Santiago, Chile, the third of six children. When she was three, her family moved to a small mountain village called El Transito for fresher air, as Rebeca had developed lumps on her neck. When the lumps disappeared a few months later, her family moved back to Santiago, and then to Dayton, Ohio, when she was seven. Always a good student, Rebeca won a spelling bee after only a few months in the United States, and she continued to excel in school. Later, her family moved to Escondido, Calif. After high school she studied in a summer abroad program in Turkey, and continued throughout her life to expand her cultural and social awareness with new experiences. She received her BA in Diversified Liberal Arts, her Master's in Special Education from University of San Diego, and a PhD in Bilingual Education from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Rebeca helped families, schools, and communities create developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and inclusive learning environments for young children. She served as a statewide consultant for early childhood training and was mentor at the San Diego Office of Education and member of the California Advi-

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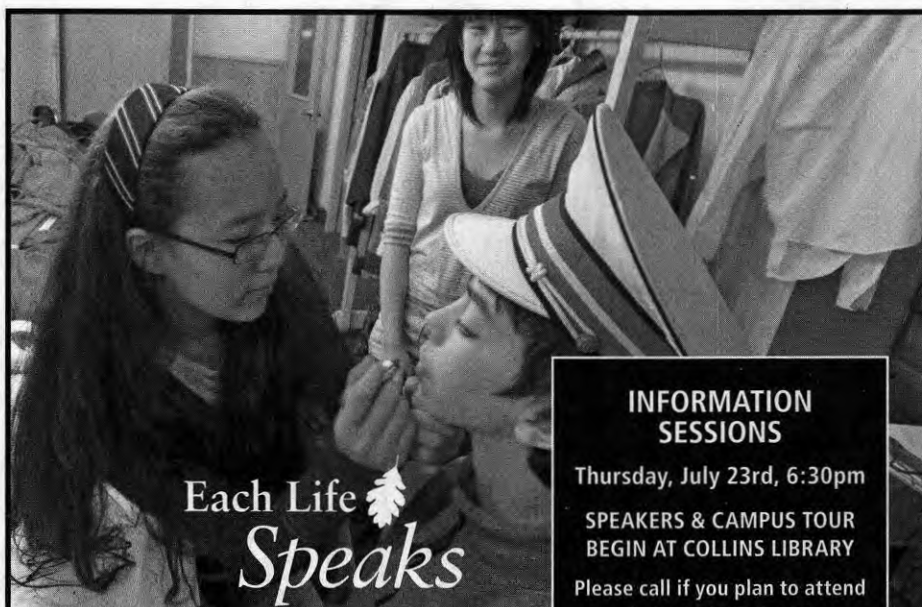


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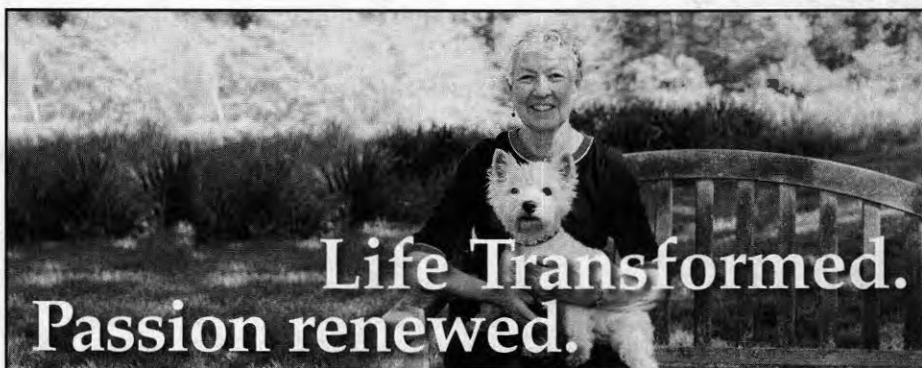
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sory Commission on Special Education. Since 2003, Rebeca served as senior research associate with WestEd's Center for Child and Family Studies, where she trained national and international groups in early childhood dual language development and special education. Rebeca oversaw the Center's San Diego office and contributed to many books, journals, and statewide projects. Shortly before she was diagnosed with cancer, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship. A vibrant and beautiful woman, Rebeca was a devoted single mother to her sons, Cristofer and Arel. She came to La Jolla (Calif.) Meeting when her children were small, and she felt welcomed by the openness Friends displayed toward her infant son and their acceptance of her keeping him with her during worship. She attended meeting for over 16 years and became a member in 2002. Rebeca taught in First-day school and contributed thoughtful deliberations to the Funds and Budget Committee. Calm and happy most of the time, she fiercely defended the disenfranchised from injustice. She had a gift for developing close long-term friendships, and she loved her family, friends, travel, music, cooking, dancing, and entertaining. On the day of her burial, about 40 Friends participated in a walk/run in her memory to benefit the hungry. Rebeca is survived by her sons, Arel and Cristofer Haggins.



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life has forever changed! And of course, they introduced me to FRIENDS JOURNAL! I read it from cover to cover. These two Quaker women were also instrumental in supporting my efforts (financially, spiritually, and physically) to start a peace group in our small town, and it is still meeting.

I have wanted to write you more than once to thank you for this amazing journal and all the wonderful articles that have opened my mind, stretched my thinking, and have given me courage, inspiration, and knowledge to continue my efforts to be a person of peace. So I thank you for the wonderful work you do and to also thank your contributors.

I was especially moved by the powerful essay in July 2008 by David Gosling, "A Testimony on the Effects of Combat." He was so brave to write his story and it is profound. Also, the articles about Rwanda and AVP in the January 2009 issue were beautiful. In the February JOURNAL, I was equally moved by Merry Stanford's "I Am Who I Am" testimony. I could relate to so much of her experience for spiritual authenticity. I also shared Paul Hamell's article "My Year of Cancer" in that same issue with a very dear friend who is also experiencing cancer. In the March issue, "Listening to Lincoln" by Burton Housman was so timely and full of wise information. At our monthly peace meeting, Newaygo County People for Peace, we showed the film *Body of War*, and I had extra copies of his article available for the discussion that followed.

FRIENDS JOURNAL has made a positive difference in my life!

Gloria Switzer
Fremont, Mich.

Quakerism alfresco

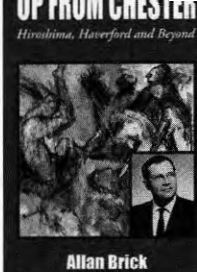
More than 30 years ago New York's public broadcasting station WNET showed a short British TV movie called *The Bar Mitzvah Boy*. In the midst of preparations for his big day, young Eliot has a crisis of faith brought on by a crisis of confidence in his family: in their preoccupation with the "proper" food and clothing, he believes they have lost sight of the deeper importance of the ceremony. On the morning of that ceremony, the family cannot find Eliot. His older sister suspects that perhaps he has gone to his favorite thinking place, the playground, and indeed she finds him there, in his suit and tie. She teases him, saying that he has run away from everyone out of fear—that he hasn't learned his Torah portion and

doesn't want to look foolish. Eliot replies that he does too know his long Hebrew reading by heart, and to prove it he recites it, hanging upside-down from the monkey bars. Reflecting on this later, Eliot's rabbi opines that it does not matter where Eliot recited his portion: he learned it, he recited it, and he has become a bar mitzvah. (And the family gets to have its party.)

I thought about this on a beautifully sunny Monday morning in September 2008 when all of the Greenwood Friends School students from kindergarten through 8th grade went to the Millville (Pa.) Meetinghouse for the first monthly meeting for worship there of the school year. (Most Mondays, meetings take place in the school's library, but on the last Monday of the month we go three miles down the valley.) All meetings start in the classrooms, and we boarded the bus and traveled without speaking. The bus as always let everyone off at the end of the meetinghouse's driveway, and we walked up it to find the building locked tight. So children and teachers sat outside, on the porch benches and on the floor, and meeting continued. We all faced away from the building, looking out on the lawn and the trees, where squirrels worked busily. I noticed the traffic noise from Route 254 more than I would have had we sat inside, but more importantly I noticed the calm air among the children—exactly what one would find in a meeting filled mostly with adults. No one spoke, a few kids fidgeted; 15 minutes in, our office manager drove up with the key (someone had evidently sneaked off to call her on a cell phone, although for the life of me I cannot imagine how it worked in Millville), and we all went inside.

Just as Eliot could become a bar mitzvah in a playground, meeting for worship can happen anywhere, among any group of people willing to sit in quiet expectation of the "still small voice"—a phrase that in Renaissance English connoted "breeze." The Quakers among us believe that God need not appear to us embodied in great natural forces but may also come forth directly, softly, and personally, like a voice in the mind or a September breeze. Anyone, Quaker or no, may use a time of quiet shared contemplation to think, to dream, to come to realizations—something that I realized yet again one morning in September on the porch of the Millville meetinghouse.

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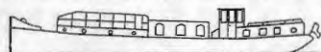
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United Friends School: coed; preschool-8; emphasizing integrated, developmentally appropriate curriculum, after-school arts, sports, and music programs. Busing available. 1018 West Broad Street, Quakertown, PA 18951. (215) 538-1733. <www.unitedfriends-school.org>.

ARTHUR MORGAN SCHOOL. Boarding and day school for grades 7-9. Small academic classes, consensus decision making, outdoor and community service trips, daily work program. A small, caring community environment. For information about admissions or hiring: (828) 675-4262. <info@arthurmorganschool.org>. 60 AMS Circle, Burnsville, NC 28714. <www.arthurmorganschool.org>.

Lansdowne Friends School—a small Friends school for boys and girls three years of age through sixth grade, rooted in Quaker values. We provide children with a quality academic and a developmentally appropriate program in a nurturing environment. Whole language, thematic education, conflict resolution, Spanish, after-school care, summer program. 110 N. Lansdowne Avenue, Lansdowne, PA 19050. (610) 623-2548.



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Frankford Friends School: coed; Pre-K to grade 8; serving center city, Northeast, and most areas of Philadelphia. We provide children with an affordable yet challenging academic program in a small, nurturing environment. Frankford Friends School, 1500 Orthodox Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124. (215) 533-5368.

Stratford Friends School provides a strong academic program in a warm, supportive, ungraded setting for children ages 5 to 13 who learn differently. Small classes and an enriched curriculum answer the needs of the whole child. An at-risk program for five-year-olds is available. The school also offers an extended-day program, tutoring, and summer school. Information: Stratford Friends School, 5 Llandillo Road, Havertown, PA 19083. (610) 446-3144. <gvare@stratfordfriends.org> <www.stratfordfriends.org>.

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Summer Camps

The non-profit Farm & Wilderness Foundation operates six summer camp programs for children ages 4-17. Each of our unique program shares these common themes: Wilderness experiences, organic farms and gardens, living in community, cooperative work and service, life of the spirit, and homegrown art, music, and dance. F&W offers children and young adults fun and challenging outdoor experiences that add depth to their understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world. (802) 422-3761 <www.farmandwilderness.org>.

CAMP CELO: A small farm home camp in the North Carolina mountains. Under Quaker leadership for over 50 years. Boys and girls ages 7-12. 3:1 camper/staff ratio. <www.campcelo.com>, (828) 675-4323.

Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures, in Vermont's Green Mountains, is a unique, primitive summer camp designed to build a boy's self-confidence and foster a better understanding of native peoples and their relationship with the Earth. Activities tend to spring from the natural environment and teach boys to rely on their own ingenuity. Through community living and group decision making, campers learn to live and play together in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition. For 40 boys, ages 10-14. Two-, three-, and six-week sessions. Please visit our website: <www.nighteaglewilderness.com> or call for a full brochure: (802) 773-7866.

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Journey's End Farm Camp

Farm animals, gardening, ceramics, wood shop, outdoor games. Program centered in the life of a Quaker farm family focuses on nonviolence, simplicity, reverence for nature. Sessions of two or three weeks for 34 boys and girls, ages 7-12. Apply early for financial aid. Welcome all races. One-week Family Camp in August. Kristin Curtis, 364 Sterling Road, Newfoundland, PA 18445. (570) 689-3911; <www.journeysendfarm.org>.

Make friends, make music at **FRIENDS MUSIC CAMP at Olney**. Ages 10-18. Grow musically in a caring, Quaker community. (773) 573-9181. <musicfmc@yahoo.com> On-line: <friendsmusiccamp.org>.



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“I Feel Better When I Share!”

“What’s my motivation for giving?” asked Mary Anna Feitler. “Wanting to be part of a larger whole is some of my motivation for giving. I feel better when I share.”

When Fred and Mary Anna Feitler established their Family Trust, they knew they wanted to include Friends General Conference among the charitable beneficiaries.

“FGC is a dynamic organization, fostering beliefs that we share, educating and encouraging young and old Quakers, and being a light in the world—how could we not want to support an organization that will help maintain a practical, spiritual presence in a difficult world?”

*Read more about the Feitlers at
www.fgcquaker.org/development*

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“There is satisfaction in knowing we faced our end of life questions, thought about what made sense for us, and got things in order. As Quakers, we want to be good stewards of our resources and make things easier for our children and grandchildren.”

Friends General Conference will be glad to assist you in designing a gift or gift plan that balances your philanthropic and financial goals while nurturing vital Quakerism. Please contact FGC’s Office of Planned Giving: 215.561.1700 or plannedgiving@fgcquaker.org.

