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QUAKER THOUGHT AND LIFE TODAY

11/2025

Fiction



ANNUAL

*Books
Issue*

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AMONG FRIENDS

Welcome to Our Fifth Annual Fiction Issue

There are times when I sit in worship when my attention turns to the physical structure keeping us warm and dry. The building is a generic nineteenth-century East Coast U.S. Friends meetinghouse, with six doors and a central partition whose pulleys still work to open and divide the two sides. The original building committee reported it took over 48,000 bricks to hold it all up. It's handsome, certainly, but I marvel not so much at the wood, plaster, and brick but at all the labor that must have gone into the construction.

Building it was only the start. Even in the two years I've been the clerk of the meeting, we've had to replace a porch roof clipped by a delivery truck, repair and paint the columns holding that roof, and diagnose and fix a rather inconvenient sewer issue. We're now looking at a chimney that's starting to tilt. How many collective hours have Friends sat in committee meetings in that building over the last two centuries talking about everything that was falling apart?

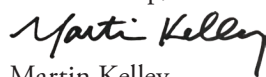
The most time-consuming ongoing labor is, of course, simply showing up week after week, year after year. My meeting's recent history had a stretch during which there were only two regular attenders every Sunday. Their faithfulness bridged a gap until more of us discovered the community and came to help shoulder some of the burden.

In the silence what I'm really thinking about are the ghosts, the ancestors: all those generations of Friends who kept coming, kept ministering, kept fixing, and kept believing that there would be another group of Friends to follow. Even meetings without buildings, or with Friends coming in via the modern miracle of instant video feeds, are indebted to ancestors who kept the faith going by telling the stories of Friends over and over again. And in continuing to tell our stories and fixing our porch roofs, we ourselves become ancestors to the future.

There are many such ghosts in this year's fiction issue. I'm glad for this. A good story can bring long-dead Friends back to life. It can remind us who we are. Fiction is a wonderful medium with which to explore the generational cycles of life and the long span of history. You're going to want to read many of these stories a second or third time, because the authors play on our assumptions and deliciously deceive us with plot twists that shift characters and motivations. Be sure to go to our website to read four more fiction pieces that we couldn't squeeze into the print magazine.

This is the fifth year that *Friends Journal* has given over our November issue to fiction. We hope the storytelling in these pages helps to inspire even more tales of Friends. Also in this issue, don't miss our annual expanded book review section, with 13 reading recommendations worthy of your time and money, including two fascinating biographies of eighteenth-century Quaker ancestors we can learn from today.

In Friendship,



Martin Kelley
Senior Editor

martin@friendsjournal.org

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- **Open Issue** (due Nov. 17)
- **Gender and Sexual Identities** (due Dec. 22)
- **Friends in Latin America** (due Feb. 23, 2026)

Cover image by Anastasia

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Quakers & Affinity Spaces: Finding Wholeness in a Separated World

Season five of our podcast began in September. The second episode looks at "Quakers & Affinity Spaces" and features interviews with Vanessa Julye and Curtis Spence. You can follow along at QuakersToday.org or your favorite podcast app, but new this season will be extended video interviews on our YouTube channel at Youtube.com/friendsjournal.



ONLINE FEATURES

Friendsjournal.org/online

Out of the Mouths

JOHN CROMPTON

There was a change of atmosphere, and a silence. He sensed their sympathy, wondered if he should have been so revealing about himself, and recalled that Quakers tell the truth. He felt unsteady on his feet and sat on the edge of the teacher's desk, and covered the moment of weakness.

The Body

NICHOLE NETTLETON

Mark was confused. He had expected impatience from the driver. But the man didn't swear, start the engine, and roar away. He didn't even make a sarcastic, passive-aggressive, cat-got-your-tongue remark to cut the awkwardness. That was the mask worn by every serial killer at the start of every horror flick ever.

Brothers

ANNE NYDAM

Did Cain in this life remember the details of those other lives that he had replayed over and over in his mind? He had murdered his brother once and lost even the little love he had known. Even with Abel gone, there had been no love for Cain.

A Place to Begin

KEN GIBBLE

"There's no need to apologize for telling me your story. That's one of the nice things about people who come to hospitals. Everybody's hurting in one way or another: young or old, rich or poor. A hospital is a great leveling place. And sometimes strangers are easier to talk to than people close to us."

Supporting those with direct experience of the Divine

I'm grateful to the editors of *What Canst Thou Say?* ("News" by Sharlee Dimenich, *FJ* Oct., Sept. online) who have provided the WCTS newsletter for so many years, as well as several wonderful gatherings as a way to encourage the sharing of profound spiritual experiences and to support those who have had direct experiences of the Divine, which can sometimes be overwhelming and require support in integrating into one's life in a healing and growth-producing way. The volunteer editors have worked hard and lovingly for a very long time. I'm glad to see this recognition of their work in *Friends Journal*.

Marcelle Martin
Chester, Pa.

Expanding the concept of affinity groups

Reading the October issue of *Friends Journal*, I learned about affinity groups—a form of gathering new to me. Was the group of parents loosely connected to New England Yearly Meeting such a group? This group has been meeting for over five years. Parents come from near and far—even as far as Australia—to share their experiences of caring for and guiding their children. They explore how their Quaker beliefs and the testimonies and practices guide their parenting. They end their sessions with some silent worship.

The issue made me wonder what

Forum letters should be sent with the writer's name and address to forum@friendsjournal.org. Each letter is limited to 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity. Letters should be direct responses to published content; we do not accept letters on general topics or addressed to previous letters. We invite readers to engage in discussions in our online comment sections, located at the bottom of every published webpage; we frequently use online comments for our print Forum.

other such groups exist and how do they nurture both individuals and our wider Quaker community?

Harriet Heath
Winter Harbor, Maine

Commonalities in religion

Evan Welkin's "Shining Our Light Before Others" (*FJ* Sept.) is a good read with an ecumenical message. I have been in a number of places of worship. I did some work for the Carter Center. The project called for a good deal of reading the Qur'an and I came across this message, "You can't have peace without justice." There are so many similar messages in most religions. The more I read in this and other religious writings I continue to see that most religions have much more in common than some folks want to admit. That is sad. As Pope Francis taught us: "Who am I to judge?"

Ross P. Alander
Tampa, Fla.

Well, maybe all roads do lead to Rome, but apparently not all of them lead to God. However, Rome and Florence are truly wonderful cities to visit. I hope I'll be able to do it someday.

Thanks for the interesting and wise article. Having read it once, I wanted to read it again, and then again after a while. And every time, I found something to think about, to reflect on, including from my own life.

Gene T.

The new constitution of the Beatitudes

I have a completely different reading of this passage ("Blessed Are the Meek" by Judith Inskeep, *FJ* Aug.), though these traditional readings are wonderful. I think that the Beatitudes were Jesus's commentary on inheritance law in the context of the reign of God he was inaugurating. This verse is explicitly about inheritance and his promise when he declared himself the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, in Luke 4:16–30 and proclaimed the Jubilee, which, among other things,

returned families to their inheritance, if they had lost them to foreclosure (Lev 25:10).

In this context, “meek” means judicially disenfranchised, those who did not own land and therefore could not represent themselves before their village’s assembly of elders if sued. They were “meek.”

Likewise, the Hebrew “eretz” in this passage can mean “earth.” But the word literally means “land.” In the context of inheritance, it means one’s inheritance: one’s family farm, your land.

So Jesus’s listeners heard this: Blessed are all of you who have lost your land, your farm, your inheritance, because you could not pay your debts, for you shall re-inherit your land, because I have prophetically declared a Jubilee.

But how could Jesus fulfill this promise? The answer is given in Acts 2:43–47 and again in 4:32–37: we will do it for each other. Like Barnabas in Acts 4:36–37, believers with surplus wealth would liquidate some of their assets and give it to the poor. Believers who had lost their inheritance might not be literally returned to their farm, unless the community actually paid off their debt for them; but at least they would not starve.

In Luke 4, Jesus had defined his role as the Christ, as the Messiah, the Anointed One, thus: his mission was to proclaim good news to the poor. The Beatitudes were like planks in the platform of the new “constitution” he was proclaiming. He was proclaiming an economics of redemption—the forgiveness of debts (“forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”)—in the common-wealth of God (Acts 4:32–34).

Steven Davison
Pennington, N.J.

I have been in a Quaker Bible study for five years via Zoom. I’ve found when Quakers search the “word” deep reflections come out. There is a sense of light that I encourage others to witness and not be afraid of what the world says. I find members offer

love, grace, and mercy when in discussions. It’s quite remarkable.

Steve Whinfield
Cheshire, Conn.

More marriage milestones

North Meadow Circle of Friends in Indianapolis, Ind., had not had any marriages under its care when in 1986 a heterosexual couple requested the meeting to consider taking under its care marriages of lesbians and gays, as well as heterosexual couples (“A Union Unlike Any Other” by Sharlee DiMenichi, *FJ* Aug.). In 1987 the meeting united on such a minute supporting same-sex marriage. That same year a lesbian couple was married under care of North Meadow Circle of Friends. This may have been one of the first same-sex marriages under the care of a Friends meeting in the United States.

Michael J. Fallahay
Indianapolis, Ind.

One milestone in the process of acceptance of same-sex marriage was not in the article. Goshen (Pa.) Meeting performed a marriage between myself and Daniel Burgoon under its care on October 27, 1990.

In 1988 I applied to become a member of Goshen Meeting. Everyone in the meeting knew my partner Dan and I had been together for ten years. At my clearness for membership, one member of the meeting said to me, “Phil, you know that this meeting has never discussed whether we would perform ceremonies of commitment for same-sex couples, and I don’t know what the meeting would decide. Would you still want to be a member, even if we decide not to do so?” I realized that I loved this meeting and its members more than I wanted a ceremony of commitment. So I joined the meeting.

A year later I asked the meeting to discuss whether they would perform ceremonies of commitment. The meeting began threshing the concern. Threshing sessions were held once or twice a month for a year, and were very well attended. I did not attend because

I wanted to give Friends space to speak openly. The contents of threshing sessions were not reported back to the meeting. I had given up thinking that Friends in the meeting were ever going to come to unity on ceremonies of commitment if they were still threshing it a year later.

Then the clerk, Betsy Balderston, came to me and said the meeting had for the last several months been threshing what marriage was. They concluded it was not a legal event, but rather a religious event. Marriage was two people who love each other, who commit themselves to each other, and who involve God in their relationship. They decided that definition applied to Dan and me, and so no minute was required. They would simply accept an application for marriage from us and treat it as any other application for marriage.

Dan and I were married under the care of the meeting. Dan died in 2001, but the meeting did take us under its care for the rest of our marriage. Goshen Meeting was truly Spirit-led.

Philip Fitz
Northampton, Mass.

I read “A Union Like Any Other” last week with tremendous enthusiasm. I appreciate the way its author highlighted the dynamics and complexities that were a part of discernment processes to support same-sex unions in the 1980s and 1990s. These were challenging times, and many community bonds were tested.

As a historian and an academic working on LGBTIAQ+ history myself, I was honestly disappointed that the first same-sex union under the care of a meeting wasn’t mentioned, which celebrated the partnership of Dorsey Green and Margaret Sorrel at University Friends Meeting in Seattle, Wash., in 1981. The first Quaker minute in support of gay marriage came from San Francisco (Calif.) Meeting in 1971, and it was also not mentioned in the article.

Brian Blackmore
Philadelphia, Pa.

What Is Actually There

Peterson Toscano

Image by Tissen Vadim

Here we go again. Jordan groaned as Longfellow stood to his feet during the Quaker meeting for worship. What's it going to be this time? Jordan wondered. A flood, a fire, a plague of locusts? Didn't anything good happen in the past?

For six weeks straight, the old man, Longfellow Niederlander—such a stupid name for a short person, Jordan thought—shared a prepared message about a particular disaster humans faced and how Quakers responded.

Jordan fumed. We're not even supposed to share made-up messages. Whatever happened to inspiration from the heart or the Spirit or whatever?

At the age of 17, Jordan Masters often criticized and judged people in his life, and always felt bad about it afterwards.

"Don't be overheard complaining, not even to

Peterson Toscano is a queer Quaker writer, performance activist, co-host of Quakers Today podcast, and host of the Bubble and Squeak podcast. A member of Millville (Pa.) Meeting, his work has appeared in Advocate Magazine; The Friend: The Quaker Magazine; and Liturgy Journal. He uses storytelling to explore faith, identity, and justice.

yourself." That was Seneca or Marcus Aurelius. He never got them straight.

In two months, Jordan would begin college. By the end of his senior year, teachers expressed their frustrations and fears about his slothfulness and excuses, and their inability to break through his despondency and apathy. What they couldn't see was that under the heavy layers Jordan wrapped around himself, he was actively engaging with the feelings that piled up and cluttered his inner life. With space opening to think about a future, he decided to improve his mind and body over the summer break.

How old is Longfellow? Jordan wondered. He looks like he's 80.

Longfellow Niederlander had just turned 94. A retired history teacher, the old man felt a sudden, urgent spiritual leading to share history lessons during worship.

That day, Longfellow began, "One hundred years ago, a handful of ultra-rich men ran the country and ruled the world. Partisan politics divided the nation, and news outlets stoked racism and fear: issues we still face today."

Longfellow paused. Jordan groaned, Oh my God! He makes it sound like we're still in the Stone Age.

Longfellow continued, "Things are much better now. We

learned, changed, and grew as a species. But back then. . . .”

Here it comes, Jordan thought, disaster and woe.

“ . . . out of the blue, the world faced a crisis: a global pandemic. Fear spread with the virus along with misinformation, opposition to government mandates, suffering, and death.”

Jordan shifted uncomfortably in his seat and breathed in deeply. Shut up already!

Longfellow paused and remained standing. Jordan, through closed eyelids, glared at the old man.

When Jordan was 12, his mother, after six months of illness, died, leaving him alone with his father, who—no matter how hard he tried—couldn’t get close to his son or get him to open up.

During the last week of her life, his mom invited Jordan onto the bed to lie beside her, like when he was a little boy. She stroked his hair and said, “I can’t make you, but I would be so happy if you kept going to Quaker meeting at least until you are 18 and old enough to decide for yourself.” Her request took Jordan by surprise. His

Jordan recognized something in the old man’s eyes: pain . . . the pain he saw in his own eyes when he allowed himself to look closely in his mirror where he had posted the Marcus Aurelius quote: “Let your aim in all you do be to see what is actually there.”

mom nearly always attended the weekly meetings, but she never spoke about her faith or forced him to go with her when he didn’t want to. This may have been why Jordan took his mother’s wish so seriously, and even though he was chronically bored and frequently annoyed, he rarely missed a Sunday meeting.

Longfellow remained standing, pausing longer than was normal. He’s done already? Jordan thought, looking up, relieved. But something was off. Longfellow stood frozen, his mouth half open like he was going to spit out the side. Jordan panned the room. All the other Quaker worshipers sat still, heads down and eyes closed, waiting. Jordan looked back at Longfellow, who was still as a tree stump, and then he noticed a slight tremor in the old man’s wrinkled hands. Oh, God! He’s having a stroke,

Jordan thought, and everyone’s off in LaLa Land!

Jordan jumped to his feet to help the old man. The sudden movement woke Longfellow from his trance or whatever it was. He shifted on his right foot, looked up, and their eyes met.

For an instant, Jordan recognized something in the old man’s eyes: pain, the kind of dull aching pain he saw in his mother’s eyes during the last month of her life, pain she couldn’t hide, the pain he saw in his own eyes when he allowed himself to look closely in his mirror where he had posted the Marcus Aurelius quote: “Let your aim in all you do be to see what is actually there.” When confronted with that pain in the mirror, Jordan felt haunted; he imagined he was looking into his mother’s eyes, and he was comforted. If he focused just on the eyes, he saw her looking back at him.

Still looking at Jordan, Longfellow’s mouth relaxed into a conspiratorial smile, like he was caught stealing from a cookie jar. Jordan relaxed his body, pressed his lips together into a thin smile and sat back down.

Longfellow took a deep breath and plowed on with his message.

Jordan stopped listening and focused instead on the old man’s voice, raspy and breathy, like the sound of paper tearing. He looked at his skin, wrinkled and dry around the elbows and neck, like saggy bark on an old tree. Jordan remembered a walk he took with his mom at Scutter Mills State Park. He was no more than six, swinging a stick and kicking up leaves.

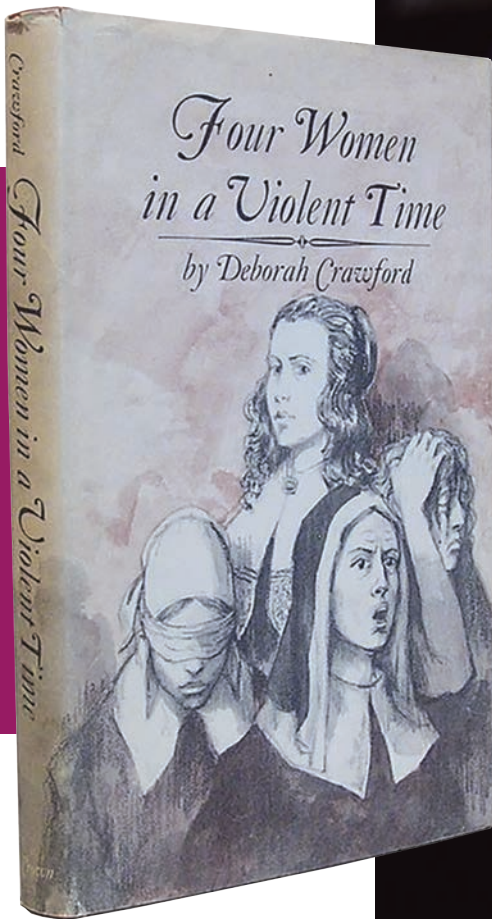
“Shh,” his mother put her hand on his shoulder to still him and pointed to a spot six feet in front of them.

“Look,” she whispered. He saw a bright flash of a shiny, emerald-green snake emerging from an ashy, flaky sleeve. “See the old skin? It’s shedding it.”

“Does it hurt?” he asked. His mother stood silent so long Jordan almost asked again. But then she said, “Maybe. The old skin might cling to the new in places. That’s why the snake is wiggling so hard. It takes effort, and I bet the new skin is tender.”

Longfellow sat down, and the worshipers ruffled themselves into new positions, raising their heads looking up, crossing, uncrossing, or recrossing their legs. Jordan missed the end of the old man’s message about how the Quakers, once again, saved the day. Or maybe this time, despite their best efforts, they didn’t. They floundered for months or even decades, struggling to discern a path forward, find the Light, and sink down to the Seed. And like innumerable times before, they emerged, saw themselves and each other clearly, and started anew. □

Margaret Cotton



My Troublesome BFFs

All photos by the author

For years, I created a respectable, rational cover story for my possible madness. “Research” with a prestigious national award for independent study, countless visits to distant impressive libraries, authorizing credentials on lanyards, fingerprints, and notable historical societies provided legitimacy. I misrepresented as scholarly passion my ongoing, genuine relationship with women who lived over three hundred years before my birth. Their narratives and mine blurred. I am there; I am not. Am I present, past, future, or just tense? Does it matter?

Katherine, Mary, and Anne found me browsing in the county library stacks. Only passing time as my twins finished researching for a school project, my attention was caught by the three women’s irreverence for library

A recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study early female religious activism’s influence on the evolution of the First Amendment, Margaret Cotton has long admired faith and courage that confront injustice. Her second book, The Radiance of Grace, coming late 2025, is a well-timed reminder.

protocol. They were dressed in long linen skirts, simple and a bit outdated, but like the variety of clothing people wear to the library these days. Frequently, I see a patron even in pajama pants.

Doubled over with hearty laughter, the three motioned for me to come over, pointing to a book on the floor. Before replacing it on the shelf, I read the title aloud: *Troublesome Women*.

To match their playful mood, I asked, “Are you troublesome women?”

“Well, I suppose it depends on who you ask,” the older woman said. “We have known men who hated us and men who adored us.” That got them chatting, their words cascading with animated facial expressions and muttered little nicknames, clearly sorting a list of men into either the loving or hating categories.

I nodded teasingly. “Okay, which of you would be the most troublesome?” The women burst into another round of responses and laughter.

“That is a short question with a very long answer,” the youngest answered.



ago forgiven. However, we see it as a bit of God's humor, applied when His hand of love turns things upside down and all around. All we did was for the glory of God, but it is very amusing that the ideas these men fought so hard against are now remembered so closely with their names." The women all chuckled and shook their heads.

"I have time." Surprised and pleased that I would take the time to sit down at their table and open the story, they shared. I was mesmerized for the next three hours as Anne, her sister, and Mary told a story that was unbelievable in its sadness and joy—its suffering and glory.

My twins had completed their search and were ready to go, so I stood up to leave. "Well, I thoroughly appreciated hearing your stories. They really are unbelievable, almost fiction. I do not know why I never learned this at school. I was a history major!"

A simple but profound statement followed Anne's parting smile: "You must remember the line between reality and fiction is not a single straight line but many lines of narrative that blend to create a blurred horizon of pasts and futures. When the sense of time shifts, it seems less necessary to sort it all out."

I misrepresented as scholarly passion my ongoing, genuine relationship with women who lived over three hundred years before my birth. Their narratives and mine blurred. I am there; I am not. Am I present, past, future, or just tense? Does it matter?

Holding the book in my hand, I asked, "Will I find out if I read this book?"

Immediately, they all broke into denial. "No, no. Certainly not in that book. Our stories are long forgotten."

It was clear these were good friends who could easily complete each other's sentences.

"Only now can we see the ironic but satisfying path of justice. And it is weirdly amusing." The older woman smiled. "Because it all ends well."

The mood changed as the tall woman moved over and placed a protective hand on her friend's shoulder. "Few people remember how God moved in our community, but they attribute the faith we expressed, lived, and for which we died to the very men who harassed and persecuted us."

I reflected on the silence we were comfortable sharing. I thought many people could consider that painfully funny, but I saw in their faces a mysterious glint that they wanted me to understand why it was okay that they were laughing.

The third woman was very attractive, in a simple and comfortable way. "We are not vengeful, for we have long

I wasn't at all sure what she meant, but the afternoon's experience did not leave me. I looked up Anne's name in the index of my white set of *World Book Encyclopedia* to see if any of the facts they told so passionately were true. Surprisingly, they were true-ish. The text had a different slant, but their names and events were close enough.

A boy I dated probably tried to impress me by saying, "Mysteries exist because not all that is rational is true, and all truth is not rational." The memory of when and where he said that came back: a walk on the boardwalk, the smell of suntan lotion, orange and peach nail polish,



french fries, pizza, and the top 100 playing on my new transistor radio. Incredibly, this one date and these words had floated back after over four decades of more interesting and important dates and statements. The passage of time seems to speed up, slow down, or evaporate but survive. It is not the linear experience I once believed.

The confusing, mysterious, even irrational conversation I had in the library continued to interrupt my thoughts and reasoning. Returning the next day, I hoped the women would still be there, and they were. I signed them out, and we went home together.

Since then, Mary Dyer, Anne Hutchinson, and Anne's sister Katherine Scott have been my faithful companions for over 35 years.

Mary confided, "We did not envision the consequences or accomplishments of our lives becoming history. We just went to Anne's conventical, and there faith created gratitude for Christ Jesus, who submitted to pain and suffered for the sake of sinners and for a Father who endured the unbearable pain of seeing his innocent Son accused, abandoned, beaten, and humiliated unto death."

Anne finished, "and for humbling themselves—delivering us from the darkness of death to the light of Glory."

Mary added, "When George Fox taught about Light and Love, it was a confirmation that what Anne taught was from our Lord."

Katherine confided, "What was meant to reduce, instead multiplied; what was meant to bring death, brought life eternal."

I am not sure how long her simple surrender floated around us. Words hung in radiant, sacred light. A minute, a year? Was breathing necessary? The completeness and peace of all things were close and real and trustworthy. Theirs was not the survival story I first heard in the raw details of their experiences. It was an amazing, eternal love story, and I was privileged just to linger there with them.

I complained about the state of the world, the state of the church, and the state of my despair. "I don't know how to fix everything I find heartbreaking."

"Grace enables you to see your neighbors' needs. You are not responsible for fixing everything. You will want to do what God makes clear you can do.

The unexplainable is sometimes the undeniable. I cherish the bold ladies' visits, less frequent since I finished our stories. I remember them by intentionally seeing the Light in strangers and Friends.

Although our trials were many, in each we learned the resilience of faith is possible within His Light, guidance, and comfort," Anne said quietly, looking into her friends' eyes and patting their hands. They nodded agreement.

Katherine stated, "We are pieces of a great mosaic. Although we cannot see all the other pieces or the grand design, we trust the artist."

Years passed, and my perspective matured. Sometimes truth is irrational. My Friends and I stretched out on the warm sand, heated by light that had taken eight minutes to reach the beach. The unknown inhabitants of oceans existed silently near us in patterns repeated and predictable: seasons, tides, moon and stars, and billions of horseshoe eggs emerging the same week the first migrating plovers—depleted and starving—arrive from their South American migration. In our Creator's patterns exist the mystery of contradictions: snowflakes, fingerprints, DNA, and voices. This is our God, the Creator of all things, seen and unseen, the author of time. The mystery of time gently settled in my soul.

Are my secret friendships with these three women a pattern or a contradiction? Should I be afraid and have misgivings? Should I feel anointed and be grateful? Are

they visions or delusions?

I trust the goodness and love I see and how their lives honor God. The only answer that gives me peace is acknowledging the necessary, submissive journey of love. Angels declare not to fear. Light exposes the very emptiness of darkness and deprives it of power. An ironic sense of safety is in the unknown

I repeat a distant Summer Bible School lesson line from John that I memorized to earn a pink, plastic bouncy ball. “In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. Whoever follows Jesus will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Anne, Katherine, and Mary all smile and nod. Again, the memory of singing a song, “Hide your light under a

confidently in a chair. She breathes deeply and waits. We follow her lead, expecting the unanticipated. “What has God revealed to you recently?” she asks.

Enough time passes that I hear the birds outside the window, and then Katherine says, “His Grace is love without merit, and his mercy is available to the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Calmness prevails. There is time to abide, so we feel no rush. I wait, and then without a decision to begin, I say, “Only Jesus is enough. His Light within provides a path to follow through the aloneness of trials and doubt. His Light is more than enough to keep us from falling as darkness passes over.”

I pray that more than just speaking this truth, I can live it.

Is such fellowship my secret madness? Is fiction possibly irrational truth? How is this possible? It was as unlikely to Anne that in 2025 I could stand on the corner of School Street in Boston with a Chipotle bowl in one hand and call her name above the din of buses and trucks, as it was for me to watch a lighted UFO float above the houses on School Street in my own town. But they are both true—as true and unexplainable as space and time and the universe that clearly are filled with the holy unbelievable.

Recently, I met Mary on Shelter Island at dawn. As I climbed over a dune, there she was dancing in the sky’s reflection of the shallow tide’s advance across the beach. Water and sky perfectly mirrored into one seamless expanse of light and color and unheard harmony. She danced wildly, twirling, swirling with joyful liberty that only a glimpse of heaven might promise. Her hair was loose; her long linen skirt wet to the knees from the delicate ripples that began on the African coast, now creating intricate patterns at her feet.

Mary turned and saw me. Waving, she shouted, “This is our Lord’s glory, His promise fulfilled. When you see only oceans of darkness, faith offers an ocean of Light to cover it. Come dance with us!”

The faith of my irrational life remains. I follow unseen Light; I trust ancient third-person witness accounts; I believe the truest thing in my life is the divinity and defeat of death by the religiously rejected and politically executed Son of God, which sounds like foolish fiction to the perishing. The unexplainable is sometimes the undeniable. I cherish the bold ladies’ visits, less frequent since I finished our stories. I remember them by intentionally seeing the Light in strangers and Friends. □



Anne Hutchinson lived on this corner of School Street in Boston before her 1638 banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her home burned in the Great Boston Fire of 1711 and was replaced by a building known as the Old Corner Bookstore. The site now houses a Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurant.

bushel? No!” sung in a hot church hall bubbles up, fresh and wise. We sing it with exaggerated, clever hand motions. “We’re gonna let it shine!”

Likewise, the ladies’ memories came forth, and I shudder at the courageous faith that helped build a nation. It forces me to consider whether I am equally willing to sacrifice for what I claim to value and believe.

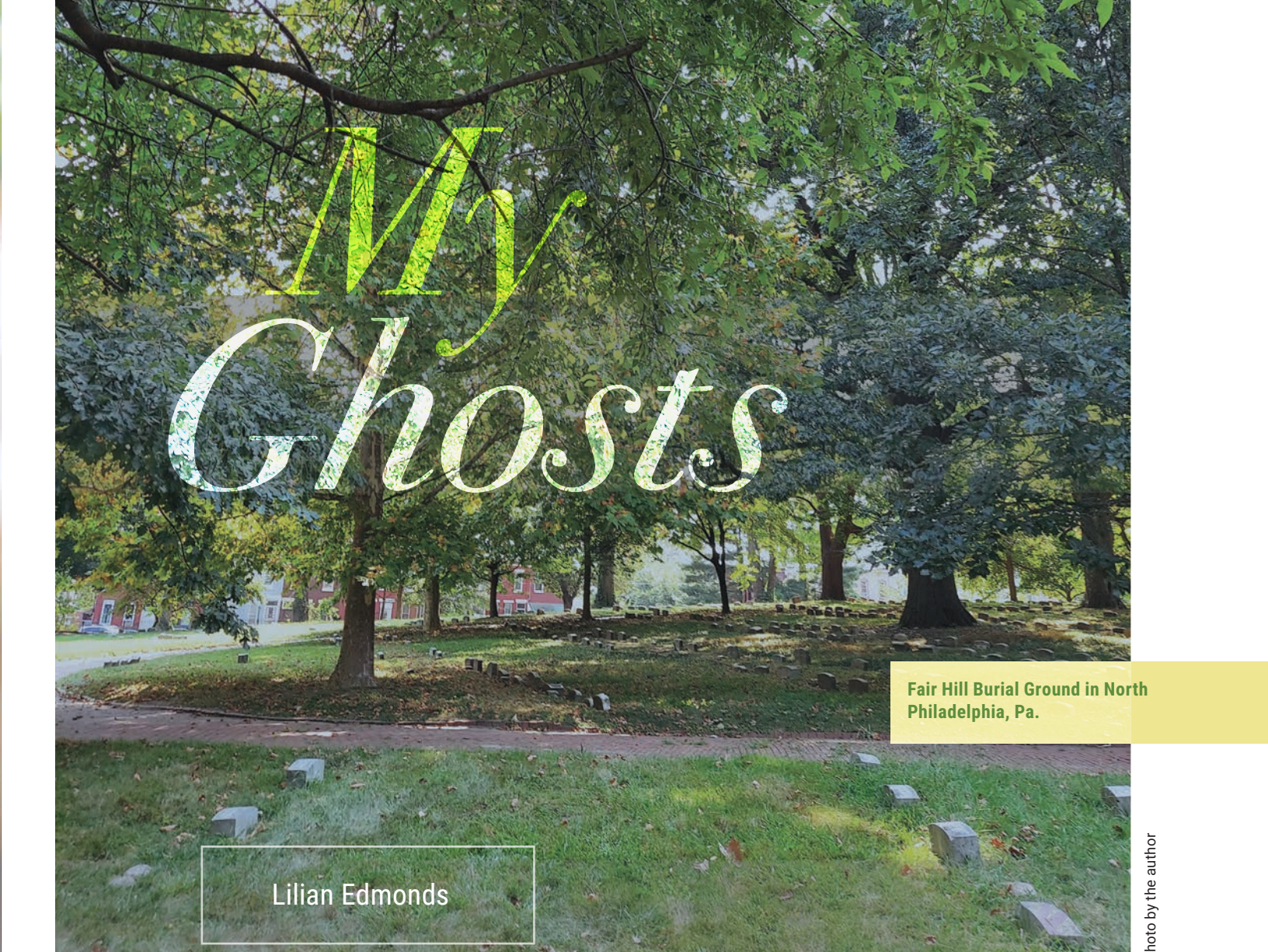
A simple action or a defining moment? Anne sits

Coffee Hour, 1965

The ladies are staying far too long
after First Day School. We look for our
aunts among support hose and sensible
shoes and find them talking in low tones
by a silver tray of danish pastries
that aren't meant for us.

Sara Clancy
Tucson, Ariz.

Photo by Barbro Bergfeldt



My Ghosts

Fair Hill Burial Ground in North Philadelphia, Pa.

Lilian Edmonds

Photo by the author

Wandering in abandoned cemeteries picking fragrant wildflower blooms, I listened to the forgotten. Someone whispered, “Please remember me; I am all alone.” My imagination, you say? You would be mistaken. Ghosts are present everywhere, especially behind old Quaker meetinghouses in quiet burial grounds.

They lived in silence when they were alive, but a few want to speak now. Many ghosts belong to others, but I warn you, some have chosen you. Try to listen to them.

I will explain how I know.

Lilian Edmonds is working on a poetry and essay anthology inspired by her grandmother’s work written from 1885 through 1935. Her work has appeared in, or is forthcoming in Fifty-Word Stories, Planet Paragraph, Accidental Magazine, and Paddler Press. Website: wavingfromadistance.substack.com.

In my sixth year, I attended a centuries-old, Quaker one-room schoolhouse where children learned throughout the 1800s—possibly even earlier. It was a tiny museum tucked behind two-hundred-year-old shady, sugar maple trees in Germantown, a neighborhood in Philadelphia where I grew up. I visited it perhaps twice.

I do not remember when I first went to school in that historic building. Nevertheless, I recall exactly what happened the most recent time I was a six-year-old child—the days I freely wandered—listening to my ghosts.

Maybe it was the last century. I’ve lost track of time.

Our Quaker teachers chose one student from each grade to attend class in a single room that smelled of antique wood, melted candles, and lost hope. A week-long colonial days celebration—make-believe! I was one of the fortunate ones. Wearing a long, black cotton dress with a crisp, simple, white collar (a frock my mother

Frank T. Merrill, 1900. Book illustration. Published in Mara L. Pratt-Chadwick's *America's Story for America's Children*.



made for me on her sewing machine with the giant peddles), I pretended for one week.

Everything felt familiar to me for the first time in my young life. It was as if I belonged in that dress, in that school—just not in that year.

I have always wanted to live in the “olden” days. I used to sit in the meetinghouse and drift away to visit other times, many years before I was born. Times I recalled when I smelled the aroma of silence and the scent of old furniture permeating the room.

Even now I vaguely remember the year I approached my eightieth birthday. I figured I’d die soon, like my Quaker grandmother before me, at the age of 82. I had hoped to have a chance to speak in meeting, as an elder, although I was pretty sure I’d run out by then. Since I’d never spoken before, why should I be granted one more time just because I was old?

Never mind, I told myself. Sit in the quiet and wait.

Whenever I last set foot in that nearly crumbling one-room school house on Green Street—that magical year when I was still an innocent child—I never lost the feeling of being out of place: at least in that lifetime. It was especially difficult as I aged into what they called the modern world. I discovered that there was not much silence left to enjoy.

But I still didn’t speak.

I have time to think now. I question how, when I was only six years old, I could have heard the voices of people long dead? Words I forgot soon after I received them, messages I did not remember until recently, I’m certain they were a gift.

When I sat in silence, alone, eyes closed, and listened as a child, magical things happened, not only in meetings but also when I was fortunate enough to be left alone.

Just past my babyhood, I was chosen to live in a past

that seemed familiar. I know it was a benediction, and then I ignored it. It was a gift I did not have to earn, someone who needed me to listen, a mysterious blessing, and I forgot until it was too late to use it.

As I lie here waiting in silence, those distant days of mine remain a luminous memory, as clear to me as if I were still a child, waiting for

something. I have a lot of time to wait, to think about the days I spent in the old one-room schoolhouse imagining that I lived in the past: playing in the graveyard behind the historic building—the only area available for recess—tiptoeing in and out of headstones, reading the remaining legible ones, running my fingers across fading names, and dancing on fertile earth above the dead.

I remember thinking: I am one of those, a little girl buried beneath the fetid soils of time, my weather-worn headstone sinking into oblivion. In the silence I loved as a child, I heard whispers from the dead: “I’m lonely. Play with me.” What do I hear now in my permanent silence? Is it someone I used to know, perhaps a Quaker friend I had centuries ago when we went to meeting and snuggled up together waiting for an elder to speak? Does she lie next to me deep in the ground with no headstone to mark her final place? Like me? Like my grandmother?

Drifting off in the silence, I grow distracted. That did not happen when I was alive. I’ve no idea where I go or what I hear because I have trouble remembering.

The only worry I have is this: if I do not get another chance to live as a Friend—in silence as a child—to visit the meetinghouse I loved when I was young, to smell ancient candles and old wood from the past, will anyone visit me as I lie in my grave?

Will anyone listen to what I receive? I am ready to speak. □



Jonathan Doering

A Fine Showing for the Court of Owls

And thorns shall come up in her palaces . . . it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

—Isaiah 34:13 (KJV)

The day was beginning to fade. The cave lay in the soft gold light of late afternoon, a breeze passing its fingers through the fronds of pine branches laid across the cleft in its roof.

A diminutive man, animated and wiry despite his gray beard and hunched back, made his way up the slight slope to the cave's mouth and entered his home, sweeping the thick cloak wrapped about him onto a hook.

Jonathan Doering is currently a member of Nottingham Local Meeting in England, where he lives with his family. He holds master's degrees in creative writing and Quaker studies. His work has appeared in: The Friend, Quaker Voices, Faith Initiative, Concrete, Cascando, Icarus, LitSpeak, Backdrop, Contemporary Review, Poetry Manchester, AltHist, Brittle Star, Gold Dust, The Guardian, and Friends Journal.

Words from earlier in the day rose up in his mind, both his and others':

"God Almighty loves all His human creatures equally."

"Impudent idiocies! This cannot be borne with!"

His wife's voice cut through his reverie. "Well, Benjamin, was it a good showing for the court of owls?"

Turning, he smiled at Sarah, who was waiting for him, as she always was these days.

He laid the items he had been carrying onto the table: a leather-bound book with a gaping, ragged hole worked into its center, sticky and dark and red, and a small cloth bag soaked through with the same viscous liquid. Having set a fire, he dropped these things into the flames before scrubbing his hands thoroughly, stained as they were with the juice from the bag and book.

"It would never do to take any of that in my mouth, Sarah," he explained over his shoulder to his wife. "Pokeberry juice is noxious, noxious."

"No one else took any, I hope. Benjamin?"

He stopped scrubbing for a moment, squinting over his shoulder. "Sarah, please."

“All around were Quaker worthies, dressed in their First-day frills and finery. My heart clenched at those haughty so-called Quakers, Sarah, so many owls and dragons wrapped up tight and respectable within the softest shoe leather and finest cloth. . . .”



Illustration by Ann Lou

“I am sorry. What did the owls of desolation and dragons of destruction in the meeting make of it?”

Benjamin Lay began unbuttoning the soldier’s jacket he was wearing. “Patience, Sarah. If you cannot accompany me, you must wait until I am ready to tell.”

“It cannot be helped that I was not there.”

He acknowledged her words with a curt nod. “Nevertheless, I must put off these horrible clothes, get on something more myself, and set something to cook. I shall roast turnips and butter some bread.” His head twitched slightly, his voice hardening a little. “For me of course. You won’t be joining.”

Sarah’s voice held a trace of remonstrance. “Well of course, Benjamin, we both know that.”

Lay set water to heat as he peeled the turnips; bubbles clawed their way to the water’s silver surface as he scraped and chopped the grenade-like vegetables.

Later, a plate of roasted turnips before him and a cup of warm milk to wash it down, Lay was ready to tell the tale.

“I imagine many couldn’t recognize Little Benjamin, muffled up inside of that thick overcoat.”

“Just as well they did not. They might have interfered with you.”

“I daresay. It’s not every day a man disrupts Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. I shuffled through the throng into the meeting room. All around were Quaker worthies, dressed in their First-day frills and finery. My heart clenched at those haughty so-called

Quakers, Sarah, so many owls and dragons wrapped up tight and respectable within the softest shoe leather and finest cloth. . . .”

He could hear his voice rising a little. He sipped some milk and ate a piece of roasted turnip, distracting himself with the crisp skin and soft, floury innards.

Sarah’s voice broke the silence. “I know how difficult you find those things, Benjamin, but that is not important; pay it no mind.”

Lay popped another piece of turnip in his mouth, sipped his milk.

“You are right, but I confess my own pride leaped at how those upstarts, fresh off the boat from England, could overtake me in Quaker esteem as to be recorded ministers of the Word for their nonsense noises. . . . Men like Morris, Pemberton, and Kinsey. . . . It took me some time to take stock in my thoughts and prayers, to allow the Spirit to indicate to me the correct moment to rise.”

“But it did?”

“Presently, the Spirit opened a comfortable field of silence for me, and stand I did, and performed it as we agreed: speech, sword, and all.”

“So you are satisfied, Benjamin?”

“It was as fine a showing as I could muster on my own, Sarah. But satisfied? Only when the weed of slavery has been dug out by the root, in every place that it can be found. Do you not recall how it was in Barbados?”

“Of course, Benjamin.”

Lay stared at the remnants of turnip on his plate for a moment, memories flooding his mind.

"Richard Parrot, a Cooper, an upstanding Quaker, so-called."

"I recall, Benjamin."

"An upstanding Quaker who loved to whip his slaves on Second-day mornings to teach 'em respect. So many of those poor people would bewail their conditions when they came to our store: 'My Master very bad man'; 'My Mistress very bad woman.' They came to us to ask for help, beg for it."

"Which we gave as far as we could."

Lay snorted. "Oh yes. We gave them the leftovers, the scraps that we would have thrown to the dogs. Dried crusts alive with weevils and scraps of meat writhing with maggots."

And again, sweet Sarah's voice, as soft as a breeze, as reasonable as a lawyer's. "Benjamin, dearest, pray do not take on so. What else could we have done?"

Lay could not bear to cross his words with hers, so pursued his memories:

"This Parrot's man, lusty and a skilled cooper himself, earned Parrot as much as seven shillings sixpence each day that he worked, told us, did he not, 'My Master Parrot very bad man indeed, whippe whippe poor Negro evee Munne Morning for notin at all! Me no bear no longer.'"

"Benjamin. . . ."

"And he did not bear it much longer, did he, Sarah? He hanged himself that First-day night. All while we lived on Barbados. We knew Parrot and spoke to him, yet he would continue to use his slaves so cruelly. . . . A dragon indeed."

Lay looked up from the cold fragments of food on his plate; looked across at his wife, Sarah; and looked into himself through the years that had passed since they had concluded their experiment of living in Barbados. His wife's voice sounded softly in the air.

"I agree that he was a dragon, Dearest, a cruel one."

Benjamin Lay looked up at the pencil sketch of his wife that he had kept in their house these past three years since she had passed away.

"He was a dragon to be sure, Sarah, but were we not owls?"

"What do you mean, Husband?"

"We did not fight as much as we could have."

"What else could we have done, Benjamin? We were fighting to survive ourselves."

Lay looked across at the sketch of the woman he had loved and still loved, then back at the remains of his meal, the drained cup of milk. Tears of anger and shame pricked his eyeballs, and he looked away to the mouth of the cave. "Our Lord does not exhort us to lay up grain in our storehouses or gold in our treasure houses."

"We were not laying up grain or gold, Husband. Only finding enough food for our bellies so that we could go on."

Always so sweet and reasonable. He realized that he was bunching his hand into a fist; the nails bit into his palm. He dropped his hand loose again. Sarah had been a recorded minister in Quaker meetings in her time, but he had never been considered acceptable: too much of a loose cannon. Unpredictable. Did not defer to gospel order. Pshaw! When the Spirit moved, who dared stand against it?

They had even wanted to split him and Sarah apart: had demanded their certificate of marriage. And she had flatly refused to surrender it to them. Tears pricked his eyes again as he looked back at the pencil sketch; that was the only physical image he still had of his beloved Sarah. Sometimes her steady good sense had enraged him beyond words. Yet she had steadied their ship as he set course for storm after storm.

He sipped the last of his milk. It was creamy but quite cold now. "I do miss you, Sarah," he whispered.

"And I you, Benjamin."

Out beyond the edge of the cave mouth, somewhere in the towering pines, an owl hooted. Somewhere further off, a bear growled. Lay smiled. He and Sarah were fond of talking of the owls of desolation and dragons of destruction that Isaiah spoke of. Sighing, he fed another piece or so of wood into the fire. Looking upon his shelves, his eye fell upon Thomas Tryon's *The Way to Health, Long Life and Happiness*. "I shall read a few pages whilst I await sleep, Sarah." He made his bed and prepared for the night.

A while later, with the book's pages furling before him and the firelight dying, he suddenly sat up in his bed and addressed the portrait again.

"Will they ever see, Sarah? Will they?"

"I do not know, Benjamin. We must wait and pray."

The Nineteenth day of Ninth Month, in the Year of our Lord 1738

Report of Burlington Meeting elders required to handle the impudent and naughty Benjamin Lay during a disturbance during yearly meeting this day.

Yearly Meeting began well enough, until the notorious troublemaker suddenly rose. One or two groans were heard around the room. All noises died away, however, as he cast his greatcoat off to reveal beneath the dark blue of a soldier's uniform, and brandished—a sword!

Lay spoke: "Friends, I am compelled to point out to you that God Almighty loves all His human creatures equally. Yea, rich and poor, men and women, White and Black alike. If that be so, slave keeping is the greatest sin in the world. Therefore, how can a people who profess the golden rule keep slaves?"

We elders were nearly upon him, which doubtless prompted him to act with dispatch. Lifting a black leather-bound book signifying a Bible and a sword, to the consternation of those closest to him, he dared to continue:

"Thus shall God shed the blood of all persons who enslave their fellow human creatures." So saying, he drove the point of the sword into the Bible. What infernal thing was this? Blood squirting from it down his hands and arms, splattering not a few of the company seated around him.

More than one woman in the room swooned. As we laid hands upon him, Lay took care to shake the book as hard as possible, showering red droplets onto those sitting nearest.

As the company was thrown into chaos, the impudent disrupter was hustled from the room with our enraged questions in his ears: "Why, why have you done such a thing?" All of his reply was from the prophet Isaiah: "I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and

As the company was thrown into chaos, the impudent disrupter was hustled from the room with our enraged questions in his ears: "Why, why have you done such a thing?" All of his reply was from the prophet Isaiah: "I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return." Impertinence!

shall not return." Impertinence!

Elders secured the sword, and following an interview, Benjamin Lay removed himself from the site. The whole sorry incident, alas, confirms our view that this individual is not suitable to be included on our list of membership. In his own deranged mind, he is an honourable man doing God's work, but how such a one, raising scenes of outrage and consternation, and calling for the end to accepted traditions upon which so much of the wealth and security of this Commonwealth depends could be thought of as discharging the Lord's work, genuinely confounds us.

We recommend to the meeting that a particular watch be kept for Benjamin Lay forthwith, and should he be suspected of further naughty scheming, that steps be taken to limit his behaviour further.

We trust that the Lord will safeguard the Truth to emerge.

Signed this day,
Anthony Morris
Israel Pemberton
John Kinsey. □

Again

New snow falls gentle as a wish
Snow covers fallow earth
white on white on white

We walk out of the house
cold and young again
as if we know nothing

Today there are
no shadows breaking
the surface

only the cloven-hoofed
tracks of a small herd
of white-tailed deer

Hoof prints strewn
halved like broken hearts
circling white pines

Red maples have cast off bud scales
in last week's thaw
crimson stars fallen on snow

We woke up old one morning
my husband and I
Now we stand in the middle

of a pasture
faces upturned and naked
young again

Leigh Gavin Harder
Middlebury, Vt.



Photo by vanilla91

A Silver Trumpet Calls

Barbara Swander Miller



Puffs of dust flew up behind Zeke, our new Morgan. My younger brother, Milton, reached for his hat and then urged the horse on faster, so we wouldn't be late to meeting for worship. Milton didn't seem to mind that my best dress was getting covered in grime. In fact, he seemed thrilled to have a valid reason to push Zeke faster than usual. Under my bonnet, I rolled my eyes. Maybe this was the price I had to pay for dilly-dallying with my new book of poetry on a First-day morning.

I coughed and brushed off my skirt, hoping to stay presentable as we flew along the dirt road toward Elm Grove. Mother had left home earlier with our older brother David to talk with the other elders before worship began. She'd be disappointed if I showed up at meeting looking like I'd just come on horseback from the back forty. Being the daughter of a recorded minister had its constraints.

The rest of our family was scattered this First-day morning. My younger sister, Lizzie, had buggied over to Greensboro yesterday to the Templar picnic and stayed the night with Cousin Debbie, but she'd assured Mother

Retired English teacher Barb Miller enjoys researching her Quaker ancestors who taught freedmen in Mississippi and Arkansas in 1866. She also writes about travel, gardening, and education. Raised in a semi-programmed meeting, Barb now occasionally sits in the silence at Fall Creek Meeting in Pendleton, Indiana. Website: barbaraswandermiller.substack.com.

they'd see us at Elm Grove this morning. Our middle brother, Jonathan, was likely rooted to the chair in the front parlor catching up on *The Atlantic Monthly*. He'd been read out of meeting when he accepted the draft four years ago and vowed he'd never set foot in a Quaker meetinghouse again. And our youngest sister and her husband would likely take their baby to meeting at Carthage, where his family were members and more young people attended.

The left buggy wheel hit a bump in the road, jostling me back to our predicament.

I gripped the seat handles to keep from flying out and scowled at Milton. "I don't mind thy speed, but get us there in one piece." He just grinned.

One more corner and we'd arrive and be expected to settle into the quiet and wait for God's voice, regardless of the hazards of our journey.

My personal journey had plenty of hazards, too, these days. I'd been stewing about the latest for days. Ever since Lizzie'd been asked by Indiana Yearly Meeting to go south to teach the freedmen, I'd been out of sorts. Lizzie was invited, but I wasn't even approached!

"Maybe thee wasn't asked because thee's still grieving, and Lizzie isn't," Mother had said.

That could be true. It'd been almost a year since Joshua's death had shattered my hopes of being married.

Left: Carte-de-visite photo of a young woman, c. 1860s.

Below: Diary of the author's four-times great aunt, Mary Jane Edwards, who taught freedmen in Mississippi under the auspices of Indiana Yearly Meeting.

And while Mother was right that my heart still ached, that wasn't all. I was still angry that Joshua had enlisted, even if it was to help ameliorate the condition of the oppressed. And in truth, I was even angrier that God had let him die in that effort.

But even if I could let go of the anger, being completely ignored by the committee was too much. Not when I was the real educator in the family: the one who'd attended Friends Boarding School. The one who possessed impressive teaching skills; at least, that was what everyone said: not Lizzie. She taught just to fill the time between all her social events, and because Mother had been a teacher. Lizzie hadn't a leading to teach, like I did.

When Milton steered the buggy into the side yard at the old meetinghouse, Mother was nowhere in sight. He tied Zeke's reins to a tree branch, and I climbed down. I took a deep breath, dusted off my skirt, and stepped inside the simple frame building.

Mother had already settled herself on the facing seat. She sat with her eyes closed and a slight smile on her face, always a figure of manifest composure. Even though Lizzie wasn't here and Jonathan and Father never would be again, Mother sat in complete peace, waiting upon the Lord. No wonder she was so highly regarded.

"Will I ever have her composure and faith?" I wondered and sighed. Likely not.

My mind tended to dwell in unprofitable places, when I could get it to settle.

I glanced around at the few Friends who had gathered. Most were old and white-haired, founders of the meeting, as Father had been. How I missed him and his wise counsel! The elders sat, heads bowed in silence, waiting upon the Lord to speak to their condition and perhaps move them to share a message. I saw Milton slip into the back row with David, opposite the women, and I gathered my skirts to slide onto a bench.

Taking a deep breath, I tried to center myself. I let my shoulders sag

I heard a rooster crow from a nearby farm. The gathered Friends didn't speak to my condition, but that rooster surely did. Like him, I wanted to crow loudly, only in frustration. Why didn't God answer me?

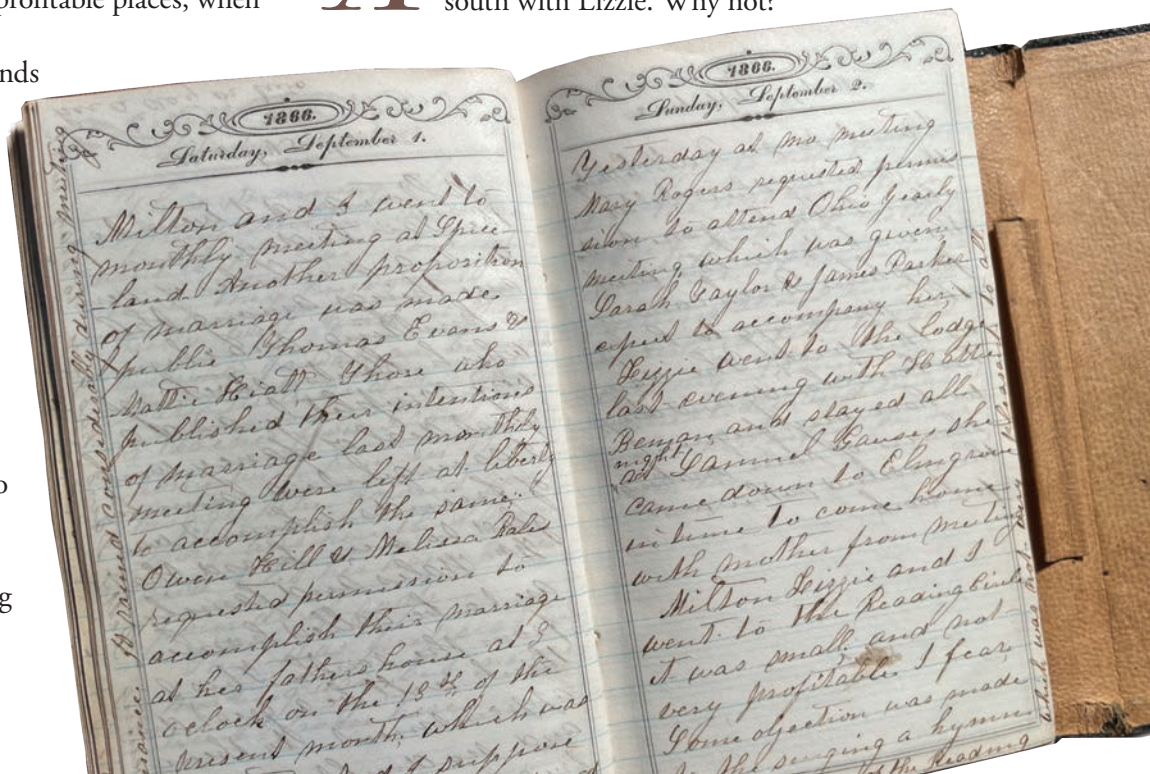
and folded my hands in my lap. I took a deep breath and exhaled. "Lord, help me be open to Thy will. Give me guidance," I prayed.

I tried to listen, to quiet my mind to hear a voice, but before I knew it, my fingers twitched and my heel began tapping on the plank floor. I pressed down on my knee to steady it, but my mind strayed again. I bit the inside of my lip, remembering Isaiah Stout's visit.

The elder from Richmond had shown up on our front porch wearing his wide-brimmed Quaker hat, asking me if he could talk to Lizzie about going south to teach the freedmen. My mouth hung open in disbelief. After recovering my manners and calling Lizzie and Mother, I whirled away and left the three of them in the parlor to discuss the details.

Amidst all the conversation at supper that night, it occurred to me that I could volunteer to go south with Lizzie. Why not?

Photo by the author



I'd been wrong to judge the girls. How could the Lord—or anyone—object to such heavenly words and voices lifted together in worship? Perhaps all things did work together for good!

I'd been teaching the free Blacks near Elm Grove for several years. Plus, I had more experience teaching than Lizzie did. And I certainly was more responsible than she was. I'd never dream of frolicking at a Templar picnic, even in the name of temperance. But go south without being invited? Would that be horning in on Lizzie's commission? Or thinking I knew better than the elders of Indiana Yearly Meeting?

"Way will open, Mary Jane," Mother assured me after supper, but I wasn't so sure. I could barely speak to Lizzie. My mind told me it wasn't her fault that she'd been asked instead of me, but I couldn't let it go.

By Fourth Day, I'd pushed away some of the hurt, but I was still irritated. I knew I had options. I could stay home and teach again during the winter term, as I'd done for countless years. Or I could seek out Friend Stout and risk embarrassing myself, Lizzie, and our whole family if the committee declined my offer.

Usually, when Friends experienced a dilemma, they called a clearness committee, but there was no way I would invite weighty Friends to help me examine my heart and hold me in the Light. Not when I was so irritated and confused, and the adult daughter of a recorded minister who shouldn't have such problems with her faith. That wouldn't reflect well on Mother. No, I'd have to find my own answers.

A breeze stirred my sleeve, reminding me that the meetinghouse doors were left open for stragglers or newcomers interested in waiting on the Lord. I heard a rooster crow from a nearby farm. The gathered Friends didn't speak to my condition, but

that rooster surely did. Like him, I wanted to crow loudly, only in frustration. Why didn't God answer me?

A rustle at the door interrupted my inner rant: Lizzie and Cousin Debbie suddenly appeared with two of Debbie's friends. All three of the younger girls were in the newest fashions, albeit tamed down to just skirt the boundaries of Quaker plain dress practice. Debbie's tightly belted waist made Lizzie's and my pointed front brown shirtwaists look frumpy and dull. And the colors the girls wore—bright green and shades of pink!

Well, that was Cousin Debbie. The only daughter of older, wealthy Quaker parents, she was much indulged



A school for newly freed Black children in New Bern, North Carolina, run by the Freedmen's Bureau.

Photo from commons.wikimedia.org

and little restrained. She'd even taken singing lessons last spring! I was sure she would break out in song at Elm Grove and mortify the whole family one of these days.

"Other meetings allow hymn singing, Mary Jane," Cousin Debbie reproached me when I scolded her for flouting our Quaker traditions, even though those Quaker ways weren't serving me well in this season of challenge.

As Lizzie walked up the aisle, her color was high, flushed from arriving late and being amidst such a lively group. All four women scooted themselves down the empty bench in front of me. No one sitting on the facing seat minded their late arrival. They just smiled. Everyone loved Lizzie.

I tried to let go of my emotions and focus on my

Continues on page 52

A Quaker's Gun



Vickie Aldrich

Snow was coming down. Just a light dusting, a spring storm, snow swirling around as two men approached the cabin. They knocked and waited. It was dusk. They shook the snow off their boots and entered when Jacob opened the door to them.

"Greetings, friends," Jacob said. "Come in and warm yourselves." The two men walked into the warm room but not far. They looked around at the table set for supper, the kerosene lamp, the fire in the fireplace, Sally cooking, the rifle next to the door, and two children playing with a baby on the floor. The men took off their crumpled, brown hats and held them in their hands, looking uncomfortable in their homespun clothes.

"What brings you out on this cold night, Robert and Silas?" Jacob asked.

They looked awkwardly at each other; then Silas said, "We've come for your gun, Jacob. We know you won't join us, and we respect that, but we need more weapons to fight the British."

Jacob stepped back as he heard this and looked over to Sally; the children stopped playing and looked at their parents. Sally, cooking at the stove, stopped stirring the stew pot and gazed at the visitors, "Robert, thee knows we need it for hunting," she said.

Robert studied his feet avoiding their eyes on him. He scuffled his feet, kept his head down, and focused his eyes on the floor.

"I know ma-am," Silas said. "We're sorry; we'll bring it back when these battles are over. We mean you no harm; we just need to stop the British. They will be at Guilford any day now."

The two men put on their hats, turned, and left. Silas's

hand reached out, grabbing the gun at the last, just as he went out the door.

Sally looked at Jacob and asked, "What will we do for meat now?"

Their son piped up, "I can set traps, Mother, and catch rabbits."

"That's the idea," Jacob said and smiled at him. "Don't worry; we'll get by," he told his family.

A week later, once more at supper time, Robert returned to the cabin and knocked. Jacob opened the door, and Robert entered with the gun.

"Greetings, friend," Jacob said.

"I've brought back your gun," Robert said, and he sat it down next to the door where it had stood before.

Jacob looked at the gun and looked at Robert. "I thank thee," he said.

"You're welcome," the man said, as he turned and quickly left, avoiding eye contact again.

The family sat down to eat. They held hands and bowed their heads in a silent prayer of thanks. After the meal, Sally and the children cleared the table and set up the tubs for washing dishes.

Her son turned around and asked her, "Where's Father?"

His sister who was watching the baby looked up to ask, "Where's his gun?"

They all paused in their work and listened. A bang and then a repeating whacking sound came from outside. After a while, Jacob returned without the gun. He took off his coat and hat, sat down, and gazed into the fire. Sally picked up the baby and went to stand near him, and the children gathered around. He looked up from the fire at them and slowly said, "I couldn't keep a gun that was used to slay my fellow man." □

Vickie Aldrich is a lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends and a retired community college math instructor. She is currently a member of Las Cruces (N.M.) Meeting.

**Top: Flintlock gun,
circa 1750.**



An Encounter

"And who is my neighbor?"—Luke 10:29

Whisking along the island's unimproved roads, hazards are unmarked; potholes, vehicles stop, then straddle the middle, while fisher folk sell fresh catch on the edges. No rules for the road.

In the dark, the young couple venture out on the unlit roads from their palatial rental, now hurrying back to waiting children, when the tire smacks the curb. All its air, out in a rush.

With no one for hire in sight, the tourist peels off his jacket, hoping for a jack and spare in the Land Cruiser. It's a puzzlement. No internet to assist. A local man rounds the corner, pulls up to help. This kind man knows the secret combo that drops the spare to the ground.

Sitting astride the tire, he asks if the tourist could hold his baby boy. The child nuzzles against the fine linen jacket as he points at the full moon and stars, from unfamiliar arms.

Elation with the replacement tire in hand very brief as the friendly helper bends to loosen lug nuts. A collection of sand and salt serves as glue, refusing to budge, no matter the strength of a shove or tug.

Both men take turns at serious, stronger tire kicking, defiant and stubborn about not wanting defeat. As an ultimate last word the local man gives a final kick. The tire rolls off, wobbles and lays submissive.

Anne Maren-Hogan
Burnsville, N.C.

Photo by Vladyslav

The Comfort of Horror

An Interview with Chuck Wendig

Sharlee DiMenichi

In the 2023 horror novel *Black River Orchard*, American author Chuck Wendig writes about an addictive variety of apple that at first vivifies but then morally corrupts and destroys those who eat it. The book centers around characters in a fictional Pennsylvania town, including a widower who is raising his teenage daughter; a married lesbian couple; and a Quaker former military member, named John Compass. In addition to writing novels, which include the trilogy *Star Wars: Aftermath*, Wendig has penned Marvel comic books, such as the Hyperion series and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. *Friends Journal* talked with Wendig about creating Compass and other characters, horror writing, and his fascination with apples.

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for *Friends Journal*.
Contact: sharlee@friendsjournal.org.

Friends Journal November 2025

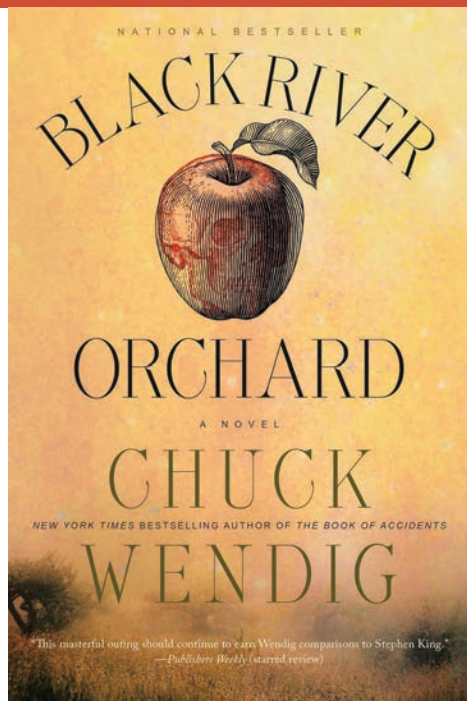


Photo by PhotosbyPatrick

Photo by Michelle Wendig

Sharlee DiMenichi: What initially interested you in creating a Quaker character?

Chuck Wendig: Not only am I obviously here in Pennsylvania and kind of in the heart of Quakerism, but I grew up with friends who were Quakers. We sent our son to a Quaker school. I just like everything that's on offer with the Quakers, all things considered. The book that



has the character is set in this area, so it felt like an appropriate thing. I had resources to touch on and people to talk to, so it felt like the right kind of character.

SD: *When we first meet John Compass, he disarms a would-be shooter and declares that his heart is full of peace. But later, he employs his military training in a fight against evil. Could you talk a bit about his ethical outlook? Is that an evolution, or is that something that was always there for him?*

CW: I think the evolution is a confusing one, because he didn't start that way. He didn't start Quaker; he started military. I think that being a Quaker pushed him to push all that military training aside. At the same time, there's something in him that's tough and tough to deal with. It's something that's trying to get uncaged and come out. It takes everything the character has to keep that in check, because of the way he was trained and because of who he was. He is trying to find that level of peace and redemption in later life after a sort of a rough go of things.

SD: *How did the characters of Emily and Meg develop over the course of creating them?*

CW: Just like any character does really. You write these people out, and you try to figure out who they are and what their journey could look like. I never want to decide upfront for sure how they're going to end up. I like to follow that by instinct. As much as sometimes you do or

don't outline with characters, you really have to feel them out as they go and find those pivot points where they shift and change. And seeing these two characters, I knew they were going to have first parallel development but really don't belong in parallel development, and so eventually it's going to be a perpendicular thing, as they go against each other. So just making sure that that felt true to the characters as they developed, and, of course, tweaking in edits is always key.

SD: *What appeals to you about writing horror as opposed to other genres?*

CW: I always found horror to be comforting, and I continue to feel that way now. Everything I've written, even when it's not a horror thing, usually has some expression of horror in it for me.

SD: *I am intrigued by the idea of horror being comforting.*

CW: Horror is comforting for a lot of reasons. First, it's kind of fun, in a horrible way. Second, it confronts you with horrors that are almost certainly worse than the ones you're experiencing in real life but also shows you characters who are grappling with those horrors. Third, I think it lets you contextualize scary stuff and anxiety in a safe space. I'm wont to compare it to how a sorcerer of the occult might summon a demon into a salt-and-chalk circle in order to control it. The book, the story, is the salt-chalk circle. It brings our anxieties to bear in a safe place to interrogate them—or do battle with them.

SD: *What does body horror allow you to explore or convey that other types of horror writing do not?*

CW: Any horror has a sort of existential vibe to it. Who are we? Are we going to make it? Are we going to be okay? And are we going to live? There is something truly visceral about body horror that gets down to that whole illness thing and of transformation. It really digs deep. When you look online, you'll see a lot of stuff popping up on TikTok or Instagram. You might see an image of something on skin that just looks wrong. Suddenly you're thinking that you don't really want to see whatever this is. And I think that getting to that is a more physical, visceral horror, but it still speaks to that sense of transformation and who we are, a fear of who we are, of who we could become, and what happens with the

dissolution of flesh. But then also on a basic level, it's really just good horror. It's like you can really freak people out: that sort of thing. And you know, I definitely got emails about some of the body horror in that book, for sure.

SD: How long did you spend researching *Black River Orchard*, and how long did it take to write?

CW: I didn't spend too long researching it. I'm a lazy writer, which is to say somewhat opportunistic. I have long been interested in apples, something that I had researched just on my own, not for a book. It was just a thing that was interesting to me. When I become super interested in something, it becomes something that then I later question: *Was there a book here? Is there something? Is there a story?* So I work less from an idea that I then research; it's more that I build up all this research and

SD: What is a typical writing day like for you?

CW: Get up and get the kid off to school, with breakfast and so forth. Then I try to write. I used to write maybe around 2,000 words a day. Now I allow it to be a little more variable. So it can be 1,000 words or 1,500 words; sometimes it's 3,000 words. It just depends on what that day looks like. I'm usually writing until midday-ish, early afternoon-ish. And then I do administrative stuff: calls like this, emails I have to answer, contracts I have to sign, or whatever else is going on.

SD: Do you write one book at a time or several simultaneously?

CW: Oh, one at a time. My brain does not hold two books at one time very easily. Back when I was doing comics, I was able to do a book in the morning and a comic in the afternoon: they seem to flex two different muscles. But in terms of actual writing, I can only write one at a time, and ultimately, currently, my contract demands that I write only one at a time. So if I am writing two at a time, I'm probably doing too much.

SD: Which characters in the book most closely express your own view of the nature of good and evil?

CW: I don't know that any character really aptly mirrors me. It's very difficult at the end of the day to write characters who aren't at least a little bit like you. Empathy is very important in writing characters and trying to imagine what other people's shoes are like, and then walking as many

weird miles in those shoes as possible. At the end of the day, I can never really escape my own experiences and my own feelings, and then reflecting them, distorting them, and bending them backwards to see what they look like from different angles. □



then think, *Well, there's a story in here somewhere.* The research that then gets done specifically for the book is more like niche, local things that aren't necessarily a long-standing body of research. The research is already there, and what you're seeing in the book is just the tip of that particular iceberg.

For the writing, I usually take about six months on a first draft.

Stand Still Where the Strength Is

Margaret Fell for Modern Friends

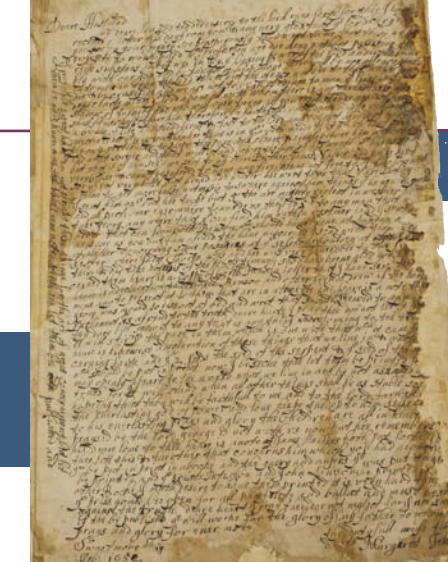
SHULAMITH CLEARBRIDGE

This is the first of two articles that present the words of Margaret Fell translated for modern-day Friends. The second article will appear in the December 2025 issue.

For many years, I have loved reading works by early Friends. Margaret Fell, known as “the mother of Quakerism,” wrote letters and epistles that I found to be extraordinarily helpful and inspiring—once I could figure out what she was talking about. First I had to “translate” her words into modern English, make them gender-neutral, and find out the meaning of obscure Christian terms. As I shared these adaptations with other Friends, they found Margaret’s words as relevant, stimulating, and beautiful as I did.

So here is a bit of Margaret’s story and excerpts from one of her letters, along with a few queries for going deeper. They are followed by one of Margaret’s prayers for her readers.

Margaret Fell was an astonishing person. From the spring day in 1652 when she met Quaker minister George Fox and became convinced of the truth of Quaker ways, she threw herself wholeheartedly into the young movement. Margaret made her home into “Quaker Central” for the new Society of Friends of the Truth, while continuing to fulfill her duties as a mother of eight children and the wife of the lord of the manor of Ulverston, England. She and her husband, Judge Thomas Fell, provided various kinds of support for their parish church, including hosting visiting ministers, which is how George Fox happened to turn up. Margaret became a Friend less than one day after meeting him.



Sample of Margaret’s handwriting, 1652.

Thomas died six years after George’s first visit. Eleven years later, Margaret married George. She was 55; he was 45.

“Stand Still Where the Strength Is” is one of my favorites of Margaret’s letters. It is eloquent and poetic. Margaret wrote it when she was 43, five years after becoming a Quaker. She writes to advise a friend, Col. William Osburne, of the way to be able to “stand still where the strength is”: that strength which overcomes all difficulties.

Margaret’s letters are dense with ideas. Even now when I’m so familiar with her style, I can lose the first part of her thought while concentrating on subsequent thoughts. So I have arranged these lines as poetry.

I recommend reading just a thought or two at a time, a few lines or a stanza, slowly, and aloud if possible. Read as if you’re helping someone else to understand it. Then pause to give it a chance to sink in. Then read it again, and pause again. A few phrases can provide enough food for thought at a sitting; don’t feel you must get through the whole letter at one time.

To begin meeting Margaret’s words, we need to quiet our minds. Life had a much slower pace in her time. Think of how slowly everything moved before there were automobiles and telephones. Patience was a part of everyday living to an extent we can barely imagine. So we must match the speed of our reading with the speed of Margaret’s living and writing.

If you don’t have a practice to still your mind, you can simply do this: take a deep breath, with the desire to *s-l-o-w d-o-w-n* . . . and now another . . . and one more . . .

My dear friend,
Be faithful to what you already know of God,
and let that show you what needs to be
changed in you,
what you can let go of,
be freed of,
so the Light can help you to become more of
who you yearn to be.

Stay humble,
that the divine tree may take root in you
downward,
and upwards you will grow straight and true.
You will be rooted, grounded, into the rock of
the Lord,
unshakeable.

Storms will not be able to beat you down,
earthquakes unable to loosen your anchor.

When troubles and trials come, you will remain
sure
and confident, and know a living strength in
the Light
and a pure peace.

Nothing will be able to take that from you.

So, my dear heart, be humbly regardful of
the Divine,
hold fast to Its light,
and life no longer will be a heavy burden.

You will be free from what oppresses you,
and that in you which hungers will be fed,
and your thirsty soul will be satisfied.

As far as you can, clean out your own house.
When you’ve cleared away what doesn’t
belong,
your light will no longer be hidden under
masks
or debris
or wounds
but will shine out as if from a lighthouse.
People will see that beacon.

So, dear friend, meekly,
humbly,
keep within Spirit’s suggestions for your life,
so what Spirit has planted in you
may thrive.

Some divine weeding needs to be done.
What God has not planted in you,
pull it up.

What God has planted,
let it be pruned
and shaped
and
sheltered
to have the greatest possible growth.

Be purely that which twines up and around the
Divine.

May you be upheld by a belief
unsullied by human motivations:
a pure belief
which is not quick to act
but stands still where the strength is.
This is the strength that overcomes all
difficulties.

Notice that Margaret says *when*,
not *if*; “troubles and trials come.”
Unfortunately, troubles are likely for all
of us at times.

Queries

- Am I willing to let go of my own ideas about what my life is about, so that I can discover what the divine Friend has planted in me?
- Am I willing to be pruned and shaped? Am I willing to be so only if God makes certain promises to me in return?

This prayer is from Margaret to you:

I pour out prayers to the Compassionate
Heart of Everlasting Love
to hold and keep you all
in the light
and life
and power
and presence
and that you rest there forever.

From your dear friend
and sister in the Lord,
Margaret Fell

Note: The original text is posted at
Friendsjournal.org/margaret-fell-words,
along with sources and other information.

Shulamith Clearbridge is a member of Swarthmore (Pa.) Meeting. She is a writer and a spiritual director. Her most recent book is the 2023 Pendle Hill pamphlet Plain Talk about Dying. Shulamith offers presentations and workshops based on Margaret Fell's writings and other topics. Contact: clearbridge@fastmail.com.



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New for 2025, the Bible Study column runs four times a year in the February, May, August, and November issues. We welcome your submissions and comments at Friendsjournal.org/bible-study.

I Have Set Before You Today Life and Prosperity

RON HOGAN

Deuteronomy 30:15–20 (NRSV, Updated Edition)

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall certainly perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him, for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.



Henri Felix Emmanuel Philippoteaux, engraving, *Deuteronomy*, 1800s.

Image from commons.wikimedia.org

What purpose does a religious society serve? I don't just mean the Religious Society of Friends, but any community brought together by faith. Why do people work together in pursuit of their spiritual goals, instead of tackling them individually?

I think that, deep down, most of us recognize the power of solidarity. You may have seen and heard the phrase “mutual aid” with increasing frequency in recent years, in various contexts. When wildfires, floods, or other disasters devastate communities, for example, folks rally to provide the victims the resources to rebuild. They do this with no promise of reciprocity, but nevertheless they trust in their hearts that should they experience similar setbacks, help will come from somewhere.

These relief efforts often begin in religious communities. When you heard about the wildfires around Los Angeles earlier this year, or the flooding in North Carolina after Hurricane Helene last autumn, perhaps someone brought a leading to your meeting to send a donation to relief efforts in the region, or to the Quaker communities who experienced the loss of their meetinghouses or family homes. Perhaps your meeting discerned Spirit's will in this leading, because they saw neighbors in need (no matter how far away) and wanted to do what they could to help.

Quakers don't do such things to solicit God's favor. (As readers often

remind me, many Quakers don't even believe in God anymore!) We offer our help, when we can, because we want the beloved community to thrive.

Some people look at the beloved community as a purely human endeavor, an idealized society in which everybody will treat everybody well because it makes the most sense to live life that way. Other people see God's hand in its creation: “See,” God told the ancient Israelites, “I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.”

For the latter, the beloved community already exists. We just need to choose life.

The word “prosperity” trips some people up; they think God promises wealth to those who “[walk] in his ways, and [observe] his commandments.” If they like the sound of that, they might go through the motions expecting some sort of divinely orchestrated payout. If they don't like the sound of that, they may cynically dismiss God's covenant as a con game where some people take advantage of other people's credulity and naivety.

I like the way the Common English Bible translates Deuteronomy 30:15. “Look here! Today I've set before you life and what's good versus death and what's wrong.” It sounds less elegant, maybe even a bit clunky, but it gets the point across. Walking in God's ways may not bring you a fortune, but it puts you on the path to the beloved community—and if you follow the path devoutly, it doesn't take long to get there.

When I say “devoutly,” I mean walking in God's ways should become as natural to us as breathing. As the Shema, a passage from Deuteronomy central to religious observance for many Jews as a daily prayer, begins: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.”

You might recognize “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” as the first of what Jesus called the two greatest commandments, closely followed by “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And here we find one point on which Jewish and Christian theology concur: We cannot separate these two commands.

In Quaker terms, we must live out the testimony of our love for God.

We could do that by ourselves, of course. Frankly, though, it becomes easier when we work together rather than competing against one another for the most or the biggest prizes. Living in the mindset of beloved community, receiving support and encouragement from those around us, we can become accustomed to letting support and encouragement flow from our hearts. We can learn to view others with love rather than suspicion, to see their happiness and prosperity bound up with our own.

We don’t always get it right. The world abounds with strong temptations, and we may lose our way as individuals, as institutions, even as a society. But the path remains accessible—perhaps because, many of us believe, God wants very much for us to find our way back.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the ways members of your meeting, or you and your neighbors, come together to live in the mindset of beloved community?
- What small actions can you take to “choose life” on a daily basis?
- What small actions can you take today to reject “death and adversity”?

Ron Hogan is the audience development specialist for Friends Publishing Corporation and webmaster for Quaker.org. He is also the author of Our Endless and Proper Work. This essay is adapted from the September 1, 2025 message in his Look to the Light series published weekly on Quaker.org.

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All stories by Sharlee DiMenichi

U.S. Pacific-area Quakers join third lawsuit against DHS

Pacific Yearly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and San Francisco (Calif.) Meeting have joined a July lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) over the threat of federal immigration enforcement in houses of worship. Other plaintiffs include Evangelical Lutherans, American Baptists, and Metropolitan Community Churches.

The suit opposes the January 2025 revocation of the previous DHS guidance that advised Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to avoid enforcing immigration laws in or near “sensitive locations,” including hospitals, schools, and houses of worship. The previous guidance had been in effect for about 30 years and allowed for exceptions such as entering a house of worship to apprehend someone who posed an immediate violent threat.

Attorneys from Democracy Forward, Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, and Gilbert LLP filed the lawsuit on behalf of the plaintiffs July 28. Attorney Richard Giles represents the defendants, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and the Department of Homeland Security.

The complaint argues that the First Amendment protects “freedom of expressive association” and that any government actions that limit that freedom are subject to strict scrutiny. The current DHS guidance limits and chills freedom of expressive association, the suit maintains.

“The result has been genuine human suffering and fear so severe that has stopped even the devout from coming to worship or the hungry from coming to receive food,” said attorney Kevin Friedl, of Democracy Forward, in a September 9 hearing in the U.S. District Court for the District of

Massachusetts before Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV.

Declining attendance is “indisputably an injury in fact,” Friedl stated at the hearing, referencing a 1990 Ninth Circuit Court ruling in *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) v. United States* as well as a preliminary injunction issued this year in *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting et. al. v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security* by Judge Theodore Chuang of the U.S. District Court of Maryland.

Quakers emphasize the importance of worshipers speaking if they feel moved to do so, but even if no one speaks, experiencing collective stillness is central to worship, Friedl explained in an interview. “The whole meeting benefits from more attenders being there,” Friedl said.

To fear attending worship does not, in itself, constitute harm, and plaintiffs are mounting a “pre-enforcement challenge,” Giles argued at the hearing. He noted that ICE had not entered or surveilled plaintiffs’ houses of worship. The facts of the lawsuit differ from the immigration enforcement discussed in *Presbyterian Church* because in that case government agents attended four churches and recorded services for up to nine months. When church members learned of the surveillance, attendance declined.

Giles did not respond to requests seeking comment.

In *City of Los Angeles v. Lyons*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that relief for plaintiffs must be based on “the reality of the threat of repeated injury, not subjective apprehension,” Giles said.

Plaintiffs asserted that declining attendance is a current harm.

“The experience of connecting with the Divine is strong when individuals can worship together without fear of abduction. The religious community is deeply harmed when any person fears to attend worship or does so in fear,” said Jeanne-Marie Duval Pierrelouis, clerk of Multnomah Meeting in Portland, Oreg., in a declaration

provided by Democracy Forward.

Immigrants are not the only people who fear being subject to immigration enforcement at houses of worship, according to plaintiffs.

“People with brown skin are more worried than immigrants from Europe and Canada,” said Robin DuRant, clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting, in an interview.

DuRant noted that assisting and welcoming immigrants is an essential way Quakers express their faith. Two California monthly meetings in Pacific Yearly Meeting offer scholarships for immigrants. Another two meetings in the yearly meeting provide transitional housing for new immigrants and those who have been detained.

In addition to decreases in worship attendance, fear of immigration enforcement at houses of worship leads to a decline in participation in social services, which are essential to congregations’ expressions of faith, Friedl argued at the hearing.

Faith communities have experienced decreased attendance in religious education programs, food pantries, English as a second language classes, and religious camps, Friedl explained at the hearing.

Congregations have also been harmed by a decrease in financial contributions as people avoid attending worship and are not present to make donations. Quakers have a longstanding commitment to pacifism so Friends’ apprehension about armed agents entering their meetinghouses disturbs their silent worship, Friedl argued at the hearing.

The threat of violence at meetinghouses violates worshipers’ faith commitments, according to Paul Christiansen, clerk of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. “Because we avoid and abhor physical violence, bringing weapons into our place of worship would be an assault on our faith and a violation,” Christiansen stated in a declaration provided by Democracy Forward. Christiansen is reluctant

to encourage immigrants to come to worship for fear they would encounter armed agents.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting is spiritually connected to Quakers around the globe. Through FWCC Section of the Americas, members work with Friends throughout Latin America. Intervisitation, or reciprocal visits, with Latin American Friends is an important religious practice, Christiansen explained.

The suit follows two previous complaints in which Quakers joined other faith communities to sue DHS over immigration enforcement in houses of worship. Courts have yet to issue final rulings in the other suits.

On February 24, U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang granted a preliminary injunction for plaintiffs in *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting et. al.* but stopped short of enjoining immigration enforcement at all houses of worship nationwide. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and New England Yearly Meeting participated in the suit, which Democracy Forward filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland on January 27.

“The preliminary injunction in that suit only covered the parties that actually brought the lawsuit, and so we wanted to make sure that everyone who wanted to participate in a lawsuit and get protection would be able to do so,” said Madeleine Gates, associate counsel for Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, in an interview.

On April 11, U.S. District Judge Dabney L. Friedrich denied the plaintiffs’ request for a preliminary injunction in *Presbyterian Church*. Friends General Conference joined 26 other Christian and Jewish denominations and community organizing associations in the suit, which was filed February 11 by the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Although the judge denied the

preliminary injunction, a ruling on the lawsuit itself has not been decided. Plaintiffs are appealing the judge’s denial of a preliminary injunction.

The current lawsuit deals with issues central to democracy, according to one attorney for the plaintiffs.

“The rule of law is still important. The Constitution is still important,” said Sonia Murphy, partner at Gilbert LLP, in an interview.

For the full details and latest updates on this developing story, go to Friendsjournal.org/quakers-third-lawsuit, where a Spanish translation is also available.

Hoopes trial continued to December

The jury trial for the case *United States of America v. Robert Jacob Hoopes* that was scheduled for October 7 has been continued, with a new start date of December 16, according to court staff. Defense attorney Matthew McHenry requested the continuance because he received the first volume of the government’s discovery materials on October 1 and needed more time to review them, according to a declaration filed with the court.

Hoopes, a Quaker activist living in Portland, Ore., has been charged with assault of a federal officer with a dangerous weapon that resulted in bodily injury and depredation of federal property in excess of \$1,000. Hoopes pleaded not guilty to both charges at an August 15 arraignment, according to court transcripts.

For the latest updates on this developing story, go to Friendsjournal.org/jacob-hoopes.

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for Friends Journal. Follow all our news coverage at Friendsjournal.org/news; send us tips at news@friendsjournal.org.



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Anthony Benezet: Quaker, Abolitionist, Anti-Racist

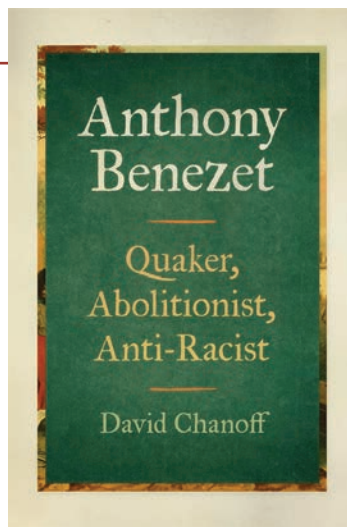
By David Chanoff. University of Georgia Press, 2025. 232 pages. \$32.95/hardcover; \$24.95/eBook.

Reviewed by Paul Buckley

This is not the book I expected: a biography of Anthony Benezet. It is much more ambitious. David Chanoff starts out with a description of civil war in France, attempted religious genocide by Louis XIV, and the lives of Huguenot exiles in Holland, England, and the North American British colonies in the eighteenth century. The Benezet family was swept along by these currents, but little is known of them as distinct individuals. Antoine (Anthony) first appears as a two-year-old religious refugee escaping France with his parents and siblings in 1715. He then disappears from the text for 16 years until he and his family move to Philadelphia, Pa. In between, Chanoff fills in more background with chapters on the founding of the Religious Society of Friends, important early Quakers, and describing William Penn's Holy Experiment in Pennsylvania. The first quarter of the book says little about Anthony Benezet, instead painting a detailed picture of the world in which he came to maturity.

Benezet was still floundering in his mid-20s when he happened into a job as a teacher and a career that was personally fulfilling as well as making a substantial contribution in the history of American education. In 1750, while teaching at what is today called William Penn Charter School, he started a night school to teach Black children in his own home—the first such school in the British North American colonies. Four years later, he gave up teaching at Penn Charter to establish the first public school for girls in the American colonies.

Earlier efforts by others to teach Black people had been motivated by a desire to convert them to Christianity



and, thereby, to content them in their enslaved positions. The basis of these education efforts was that Black and white people were spiritually equal—all children of the same God—but not equal in their humanity. Benezet's experience teaching Black and white children at the same time opened him to directly experience the equal humanity of Black and white people—all deserving the same rights and liberties.

Benezet, of course, was more than just an enlightened educator. In the rest of this book, the process by which Benezet was led, step by step, to become an essential actor in the abolition movement is explained: developing from a religiously motivated tract writer who hoped to cleanse the Society of Friends of the sins of slavery into a persuasive and passionate advocate for universal civil rights. In the course of his work, Benezet's writing evolved in unique ways. He introduced the use of personal stories by those with direct experience in the slave trade (complete with references and footnotes) to give his readers a visceral sense of its horrors. In addition to tracts for the general population, he wrote personal letters to people of power and authority, thereby weaving a trans-Atlantic network of abolitionists. While little political progress was made in his lifetime, incessant pressure drove the British government to outlaw the slave trade in 1808, 24 years after Benezet's death.

As in the early chapters, Chanoff

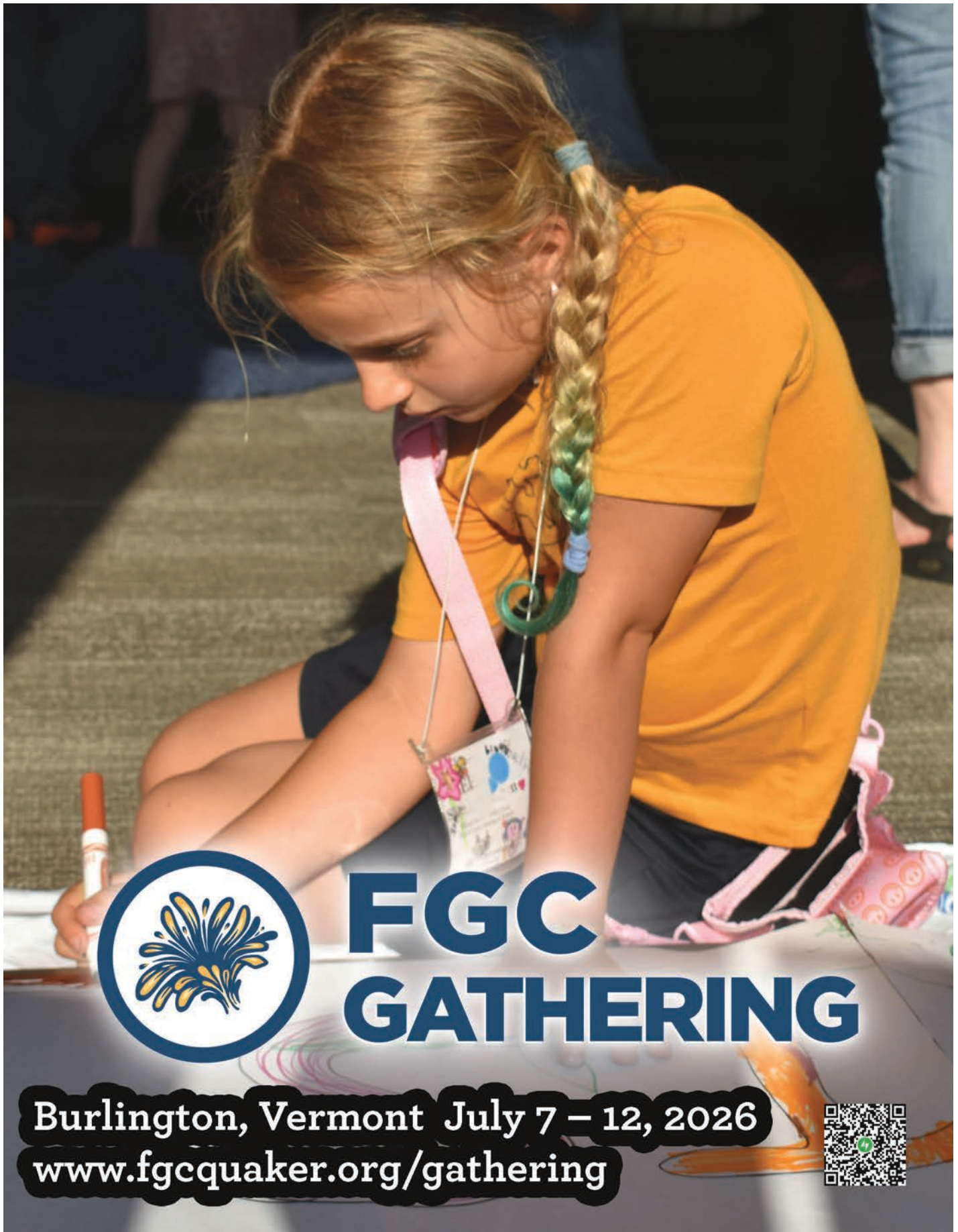
does not limit himself to Benezet's story. Brief biographies of dozens of other characters acting over 150 years pepper the text and give the reader a fuller picture of the multitudinous contributions needed over the course of decades to finally achieve the ban.

This book left me pondering Quakers' complex role in all this. The Religious Society of Friends was first to forbid buying and selling humans into slavery, and they play an indispensable role in raising up the full humanity of enslaved people, but they seemed blind to their spiritual equality. While Anglicans, Baptists, and Methodists actively proselytized Black people (sometimes while simultaneously enslaving them), Quakers excused themselves from religious fellowship.

Chanoff's work also leads me to wonder why, while we (rightly) celebrate the saintly John Woolman, our memories of Anthony Benezet are scant. After reading this book, I wonder if Quakerdom's slow steps to eventually condemning slavery would have happened without Benezet's extraordinary work within the Society—and his sometimes ignoring its stifling bounds.

This meticulously researched book highlights Anthony Benezet's crucial role in energizing and shaping an emerging abolitionist movement. Chanoff showed me how lacking my knowledge was. For anyone seeking to understand the roots of the abolition movement and the Quaker contribution to their nourishment and growth, this book is essential reading.

Paul Buckley has written numerous articles and books on Quaker history, faith, and practice, and he has been active in urging spiritual renewal among Friends. He worships with Clear Creek Meeting in Richmond, Ind., and travels in the ministry among Friends. His most recent publication is the Pendle Hill pamphlet Teach Us to Pray. Contact: bucklpa@earlham.edu.



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Penman of the Founding: A Biography of John Dickinson

By Jane E. Calvert. Oxford University Press, 2024. 608 pages. \$35/hardcover; \$23.99/eBook.

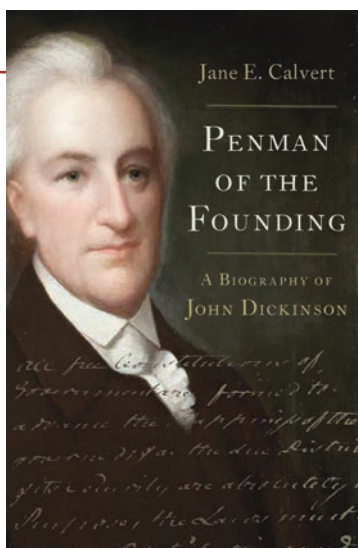
Reviewed by Signe Wilkinson

The Fairhill area of North Philadelphia is generally known for its dense, mostly rundown housing; poor residents; and its crime and drugs. Three hundred years ago, it was a lush part of William Penn's "greene country towne" and the area where John Dickinson (lawyer, statesman, prolific polemicist, and Pennsylvania's president from 1782 to 1785) built his family's estate.

In a new biography, *Penman of the Founding*, author Jane E. Calvert has resurrected Dickinson's reputation as one of early American democracy's most brilliant, influential, and now almost unknown founders. Calvert, a professor of history at the University of Kentucky, is currently the foremost Dickinson scholar, having studied him for over two decades. She is the founding director of the John Dickinson Writings Project, which since 2010 has been working to assemble and publish the entire corpus of Dickinson's political and legal works.

Dickinson was born in 1732 to a wealthy Quaker father and enslaver of people who worked their huge plantation nearby the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. He was liberally educated by private tutors at home in addition to being schooled in the Bible by those who thought that, "Though God was infallible, men were not. The teachings of the Bible, therefore, were not to be viewed too narrowly."

Friends Journal readers will be interested in why Dickinson never managed to become a Quaker even though he was born to wealthy Quaker parents; married a Quaker; and followed many core Quaker tenets in his business, politics, and family life. In various ways, he put Quaker ideals into action more boldly and constructively



than most of the birthright Quakers who largely stayed out of the politics of the day.

Calvert writes that Dickinson was a religious dissenter: dissenting from Quakers. "Although raised as a Quaker and deeply religious in Quakerly ways, he disliked organized religion." He rejected some aspects of Quakerism and felt that "[j]ust because someone dressed plainly or used 'thee' and 'thou' did not, alone, make him a good Quaker, obedient to God's will."

He did, however, bring his Quaker beliefs into his growing participation in colonial politics. In the face of tightening British control, Dickinson wrote:

We claim our rights from a higher source [than British law], from the King of kings, and Lord of all the earth. They are not annexed to us by parchments and seals. They are created in us by the decrees of Providence, which establish the laws of our nature. They are born with us; exist with us; and cannot be taken from us by any human power, without taking our lives.

The 1765 Stamp Act followed by the British Townshend Acts, both of which infringed on the colonists' liberties, spurred Dickinson to start writing his wildly popular series of essays under the pseudonym "the Pennsylvania Farmer." Calvert writes that Dickinson's own experience with Quaker governance on the model of

monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings led him to think something similar could work for civil government. Not everyone agreed. Thomas Paine, in his usual calm, well-reasoned prose called Quakers "a fallen, cringing, priest-and-Pemberton-ridden people." ("Pemberton" was a reference to Dickinson's wife's politically powerful cousins.) Despite Paine's attacks, Dickinson's *Farmer* essays were widely read throughout the colonies and throughout Europe.

By 1777, Dickinson was ahead of his time on slavery: becoming the first of America's founders to begin freeing his enslaved persons with a conditional manumission; he manumitted his remaining enslaved persons unconditionally in 1786. In his 70s in 1805, he was still "impatient" for the end of slavery, Calvert writes, but others had by then become more outspoken. On this and other moral issues of the day, Calvert writes of Dickinson, "time and again he risked reputation, fortune, life, and limb by speaking truth to any power placed over him and by fully enacting his principles in his public and private life."

Today, Dickinson is mostly forgotten. Philadelphia area Quakers are, however, unknowingly carrying on his ideals. A hearty group of Friends has been working for over 30 years in Fairhill, now a poverty-stricken North Philadelphia neighborhood. The nonprofit Historic Fair Hill cares for the historic Quaker burial ground where Lucretia Mott and other Quaker reformers are buried; they clean surrounding blocks, tend community gardens, and volunteer in local public schools.

John Dickinson would approve.

Signe Wilkinson is a member of Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia, Pa. She served for seven years on the Board of Trustees for Friends Publishing Corporation. In the 1990s, she helped to clean and restore the badly deteriorated Fair Hill cemetery.

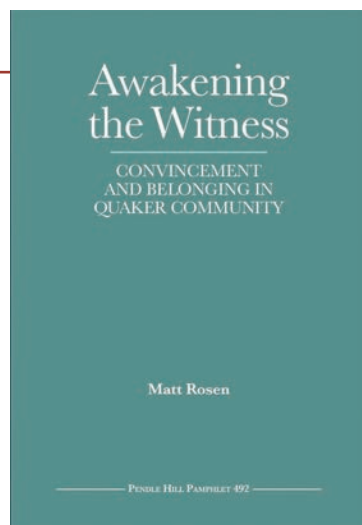
Awakening the Witness: Convincement and Belonging in Quaker Community

By Matt Rosen. *Pendle Hill Pamphlets*
(number 492), 2025. 30 pages. \$8.50/
paperback; \$7.50/eBook.

Reviewed by John Andrew Gallery

Matt Rosen's engaging pamphlet, *Awakening the Witness*, explores the question "What makes someone a Quaker?" by examining early and contemporary Friends' understanding of membership and convincement. The pamphlet is based on research he conducted while he was Pendle Hill's 2023 Henry J. Cadbury Scholar. Rosen is a member of Stillwater Meeting in Barnsville, Ohio, part of Ohio Yearly Meeting, although he has lived much of his life in England.

Rosen begins by reminding us that membership in the Religious Society of Friends did not exist until decades after



the Quaker movement began. George Fox, Margaret Fell, William Penn, and thousands of ordinary people sent to prison were not members of any religious organization. He gives two examples to illustrate this point: James Parnell and Elizabeth Fletcher became convinced Friends as teenagers and traveled in the ministry before each one died at age 19. No one would deny they were Quakers, but neither of them was a member of any

religious organization.

Membership, Rosen notes, is a covenant relationship between an individual and a specific community in a specific place. For early Friends, this was not always practical; many traveled in the ministry; others were geographically scattered. Being a member of something was not essential to being a Quaker. Today, the opposite seems true: membership is seen as a formal act that is essential to being able to call oneself a Quaker. But he asks the provocative and challenging question: "If there were Quakers *before* membership why not Quakers *outside* of membership?" This brings him to the issue of convincement.

Early Friends saw convincement as one aspect of a three-phase process: conviction, convincement, and conversion. First comes the realization that one's way of life needs to change as a result of the "awakening of a witness" within, a witness that "God has placed in every human heart . . .



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that testifies to God's reality and living presence." Such an awakening leads to the understanding that there is another way to live and that God is present within to guide us to that way. The result is not just a change in spiritual beliefs but a change into a whole new way of life. Rosen gives two examples of this process: first, his own. He was once a confirmed atheist but then unexpectedly began to feel that he was being "inexplicably held, cared for, and accompanied. I felt surrounded by an infinitely loving presence." He became a convinced Friend, but it was years before he became a member. On the other hand, Ben Pink Dandelion was a member but "without any real sense of the Divine." Some years later, while traveling across the United States, he "suddenly and unexpectedly . . . felt 'held.' Held by God." He said that as a result he became "a religious Quaker."

For early Friends, it was the evidence of these conviction experiences that brought them together to support one another in sustaining their commitment to follow God's leadings. When membership came along, it was for practical reasons: recording marriages and births, noting who was in need of help, etc., not as the test of spiritual belief.

Rosen recognizes that the Religious Society of Friends exists today in a different context than in the seventeenth century. He accepts that there are many different reasons for becoming a member of a Quaker meeting and that all who join are likely to be enriched regardless of what has brought them there. He also accepts the fact that one can be a convinced Friend and not be in membership. In response to changing needs and attitudes, the structure of meetings and membership in the Society of Friends may change, but that is not something to worry about: "[A]ll people will be drawn to God in God's good time—rescued, guided, and knit together by the Divine hand."

This pamphlet is well worth reading by both those already in membership

and those who are not. If you are a member, it will challenge you to think about why you are: to consider the nature of the covenant relationship between you and your meeting, and to consider the place of conviction in your spiritual life. For those who feel convinced but for one reason or another have not become a member, it provides reassurance (as it did for me) that it is still legitimate to consider yourself a Quaker and that conviction may eventually lead to a deeper engagement with a Quaker community.

John Andrew Gallery is an attendee at Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia, Pa. He is the author of four Pendle Hill pamphlets and the recently published book, Alone with God: Spiritual Reflections and Essays, 2000–2024.

A Revolution in Common

By Douglas Gwyn. Plain Press, 2025. 124 pages. \$10/paperback.

Reviewed by Ron Hogan

Douglas Gwyn is writing as fast as he can: the introduction to *A Revolution in Common* cites events from the early months of Donald Trump's second presidential term, and in the final pages he identifies the dynamic relationship between Trump and Vladimir Putin (and, perhaps, Benjamin Netanyahu) as "an existential threat comparable to the Axis powers that unleashed World War II." Trump is not the ultimate boogeyman, however. "In the shadows behind him," Gwyn warns, "the interests of capital . . . whisper and guide."

Gwyn brings a dramatically apocalyptic perspective to the contemporary moment. In one of the five essays that make up this thematic collection, he compares "global capitalism and the nation-states and military alliances that enforce its regime" to the tribulations of the Book of Revelation. Another begins with the gospel account of Jesus, having just arrived at Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, weeping over a city whose future doom he recognizes as inescapable. When he



looks out at the modern world, Gwyn says, "I feel solidarity with Luke's Jesus."

Grandiose? Some might think so. Others would believe that Gwyn raises exactly the right amount of alarm, given the circumstances. The emphasis on biblical imagery becomes even more significant when we see that, rather than give in to despair, Gwyn looks back at the origins of the Quaker movement for a potential path out of the crisis. In particular, he turns to James Nayler's concept of the Lamb's War as the basis for "an anarchist, nonviolent cultural revolution" and "a vision—and a practice—of a more egalitarian, peaceful and environmentally sustainable future."

Gwyn carefully distinguishes between "anarchy," the state of chaos and disorder, and "anarchism," the tendency to maximize personal liberty by minimizing the concentration of political power in state apparatus. He shows how Nayler, along with George Fox and other early Quakers, rebelled against the ruling powers in seventeenth-century England who, controlling both the state and the church, "alienated men and women from Christ's light in their own consciences and deformed the social conscience generally." He also shows how their anarchist sensibility survived into the twentieth century, citing Quaker projects such as the Movement for a New Society and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

At the same time, however, he worries that most modern-day Friends have not only failed to understand the



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anarchist implications of the earliest Quakers' beliefs but remain "stubbornly uninterested" in doing so, lulled into complacency by what that first generation used to call "the gods of this world." We (and by "we" I mean, more precisely, "many of us") haven't completely blinded ourselves to the suffering and inequality of this world, of course; we often work to bring healing and justice where we can. But we do so while maintaining a belief in the fundamental propriety of global capitalism's organizing principles.

As an alternative, Gwyn offers a vision of the commons, and he isn't just talking about the land and resources left over after the wealthy have staked their claims. He sees all of existence as "a common of both space and time, of histories and cultures," a shared environment which can, ideally, offer each of us what we need to pursue the sort of peaceful, prosperous life that fosters communion with what, in an ecumenical spirit, Gwyn refers to as "the One."

He suggests organizing ourselves on a model of federation, a system of covenantal relationships between people (or societies) who regard themselves as equals and give each other room to pursue their individual goals, as long as they don't conflict. Nation-states would still exist in this world but with sharply diminished powers. In particular, given that nation-states have done less than stellar work in sustaining economies and ecologies that support all people justly, much of that work would be reassigned to a growing network of nonprofit organizations.

As an anarchist at heart (and a democratic socialist as a matter of practicality), I resonate with much of *A Revolution in Common*. I don't agree with all of the details of Gwyn's vision, like his confidence that obligatory national service "would draw us out of our cultural silos, shape young consciences, and nurture our collective conscience." I worry that our nation-states may have already declined too far, that bad actors could too easily manipulate such

programs to the Empire's ends. But I believe that he has hit upon something true about the state of the world, and I agree with him that "the apocalyptic, anarchist consciousness of the first generation [of Friends]" can guide us out of our overlapping crises and toward a happier future.

Ron Hogan is the audience development specialist for Friends Publishing Corporation. He shares weekly Scripture-centered messages on Quaker.org and through our email newsletter. He is also the author of Our Endless and Proper Work.

The First American Quaker Discipline: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Rules of Discipline and Practice from 1704

Transcribed and edited by David R. Haines. Pleasant Green Books, 2024. 80 pages. \$16/paperback; \$8/eBook.

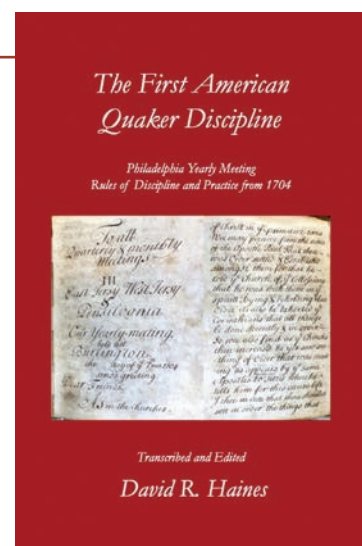
"What Canst We Say?" The Evolution of the Quaker Book of Discipline: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1715–1755

Transcribed and edited by David R. Haines. Pleasant Green Books, 2025. 176 pages. \$20/paperback.

Reviewed by Thomas D. Hamm

Friend David R. Haines is one of the leading collectors of Quaker books and manuscripts of the past half century. His day job before retirement was teaching organic chemistry at Wellesley College. His wife, Nancy Haines, came to share his enthusiasm and operated an antiquarian bookstore with an emphasis on used and rare Quaker materials. These two books, from the Haines' own small publishing company, reflect David's interest in Quaker history and are a model of both painstaking investigation and careful editing.

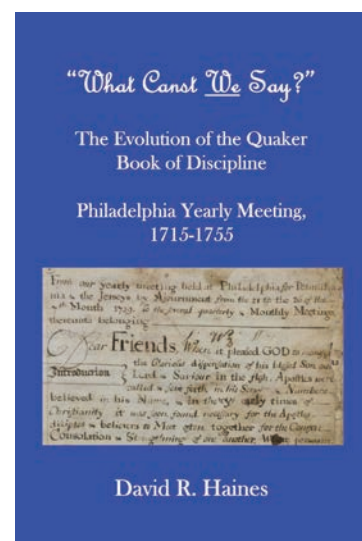
In the longer of these works, "*What Canst We Say?*" David Haines lays out a two-fold rationale that applies to



both books:

The first purpose is to provide an easily accessible source of these texts which are fundamental to our understanding of the origins of the modern Society of Friends in America. Many of the issues included in the early *Discipline* continue to be of concern to us, while others may now be seen as anachronistic. The reality that we struggled with these issues (such as plain dress and language, the appropriate roles of women in the Society of Friends, and slavery) for so many years, has colored our own and society's vision of who we are today.

It is essential to understand this, writes Haines, because "progress for a community is rarely linear and is



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often slow.” This leads him to his second justification. He wants to show not just the conclusions that Friends reached but how and why they reached them. For him “peripheral” issues are as revealing as those that we today find meaningful, for in them “we see all of the human foibles of modern human interactions”: avoidance, denigrating the messenger, false urgency. This history, he concludes, shows that “we have had to learn to have difficult conversations, to live with each other in times when we know that we are not yet in unity, and to make decisions as a community, even when we know that the decisions that we can make now are not the final solutions to the problems that we are seeking to address.”

A short review cannot do justice to the complexity of David Haines’s work. The shorter volume is a recreation of a work that has previously existed only in manuscript: the 1704 “General Testimony” issued by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Many Liberal Friends today will find its Biblicism and explicit Christianity unsettling. The longer work looks at how the *Book of Discipline* evolved between 1715 and 1755, focusing on the development of queries, the slow movement of the yearly meeting to ban slaveholding, and the roles of women in meetings for business.

This is not light reading, but it will gladden the hearts of Quaker history enthusiasts.

Thomas D. Hamm is a member of West Richmond (Ind.) Meeting and the clerk of the New Association of Friends. He is emeritus professor of history and Quaker scholar-in-residence at Earlham College.

Palestine and Israel: Understanding Encounters

By Max L. Carter. Barclay Press, 2025.
320 pages. \$30/paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Chase

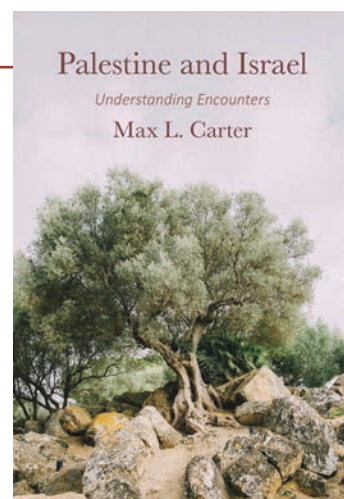
North Carolina Quaker Max Carter once quipped, “It is an ‘in joke’ among

those familiar with the complexities of Middle East politics that those who spend a week in Palestine–Israel return to write a book.”

In Carter’s case, however, he has lived, worked, and traveled in Palestine–Israel for decades and has written three important books on the topic. The first was *Palestine and Israel: A Personal Encounter*, which covers his two years of teaching at Ramallah Friends School in the early 1970s and his observations while leading many service learning trips to the Holy Land every year from the early 1990s through 2005. His next book, coauthored with two cousins, Annice Carter’s *Life of Quaker Service*, includes a focus on his great-aunt’s work as an educator at Ramallah Friends School under the British Mandate in the 1920s and ’30s.

Carter’s latest book, *Palestine and Israel: Understanding Encounters*, offers detailed reflections on the annual service learning trips that he and his wife, Jane Carter, co-led from 2006 through 2019: for Guilford College students in January and for Friends United Meeting (FUM) every summer. As a participant in the FUM service learning trip in 2023, I was eager to read Carter’s reflections on these earlier trips where participants traveled, as we did, throughout the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel and spoke with politicians, peace and human rights activists, religious leaders, business people, kibbutzim, journalists, educators, students, former combatants, and everyday Palestinian families.

Like his other books, this one is well-written and insightful—and sometimes even funny. While there is some variation in details between the different groups that Max and Jane have taken to Palestine–Israel, there is a lot of similarity in the itineraries that are recounted in chronological order. Yet the book does not feel overly repetitive because each of the people visited is speaking at a different point in time and about the historic challenges faced at a particular moment.



This allows for a lot of historical perspective to be shared in the form of a colorful travelogue by an experienced and astute observer. The oppressive and deteriorating human rights conditions over time are very evident. So is the evolving thought of different actors on how the people of Palestine–Israel might achieve peace, justice, equality, and self-determination for all, breaking from the U.S.-backed, single-state, apartheid system that has been in place for decades.

I found the historic background embedded in Carter’s travelogues to be especially helpful in understanding the horrific violent attack on southern Israel by the military wing of Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the much more massive and ongoing assault against the 2.2 million Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the State of Israel ever since—and now increasingly in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The book makes clear that this two-year-old explosion of mass violence in Palestine–Israel has roots that predate October 7. It also suggests that our goal as peacemakers cannot be to return to the oppressive, but less obviously violent, status quo of October 6.

Importantly, Carter describes his many encounters with ordinary Palestinians and Israelis who are seeking a different future, peace and justice activists who envision a new reality where all Palestinians and Israelis can live together in equality and security and with full human rights for all. These people are the seeds of long-

term hope for the region, and they break the standard tropes and stereotypes of Israelis and Palestinians all too common in the U.S. media for decades. Yet, as many of these same peace and human rights activists explained to Carter's delegations, they cannot achieve their visionary goals on their own.

According to these activists, such a profound transformation will require those of us outside of Palestine-Israel to also engage in discernment and political education; humanitarian assistance; lobbying and advocating for a just peace; and various forms of nonviolent resistance, particularly nonviolent boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaigns, as was done to end apartheid in South Africa. These global campaigns, they say, need to be directed against corporations that profit from Israel's military occupation and apartheid policies against Palestinians, as well as Western governments like the United States that enable these extreme violations of basic

human rights and international law through diplomatic cover at the UN, massive offensive military weapons aid, and promoting false or incomplete narratives about the region.

All these urgent requests from people of good will living in Palestine-Israel come through loud and clear in the pages of Carter's new book. The effect is both sobering and challenging. It is simply not enough to leave all this to the professional staff of Friends Committee on National Legislation or American Friends Service Committee. I thank Max Carter for reminding us of our own moral responsibilities as faith-based peace and justice activists.

Steve Chase is a member of Friends Meeting of Washington (D.C.) and involved with the Quaker Affinity Group of the Apartheid-Free Communities initiative. He is also the author of the Pendle Hill pamphlet Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions? A Quaker Zionist Rethinks Palestinian

Rights, and he is the interviewee in the QuakerSpeak video entitled "Moving Closer to a Beloved Community: A Quaker Rethinks Israel-Palestine."

The Mary We Forgot: What the Apostle to the Apostles Teaches the Church Today

By Jennifer Powell McNutt. Brazos Press, 2024. 272 pages. \$47.99/hardcover; \$19.99/paperback; \$11.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Derek Brown

The "forgotten Mary" of this book is Mary Magdalene, which at first seems a puzzling description for a biblical character known in the gospels (mentioned almost as much as Jesus's mother, Mary), in art (such as the stained glass of Sainte-Baume), and in popular culture (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, of course). Yet Jennifer Powell McNutt's argument is that our amnesia is more insidious, for by

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misunderstanding Mary Magdalene's story in the gospels, we miss crucial aspects of Jesus's ministry to both men and women, and how this should inform the church today.

McNutt is the Franklin S. Dyrness Chair of Biblical and Theological Studies at Wheaton College, where she also serves as a professor of theology and history of Christianity. She is an ordained teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (along with her husband, David McNutt).

In the gospels, Mary Magdalene is described as one who was healed from seven demons by Jesus and had financially supported Jesus's ministry (Luke 8:2–3). She was at the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:40–41) and his burial (Matthew 27:61). On Easter morning, she witnessed the empty tomb, met the risen Jesus, and was commissioned to go tell the other disciples this news (John 20:17–18).

The crux of McNutt's argument is that preachers and interpreters have, over time, fused Mary Magdalene's identity with Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus), who washes Jesus's feet with her hair and perfume (Jn 12:1–11). More consequentially, the unnamed "sinner" who washes Jesus's feet with her hair in the Lucan version (Lk 7:36–50) was interpreted as a repentant prostitute. In 591, Gregory I preached what McNutt calls the "gloss heard round the world," conflating all three identities

into one. As a result, according to McNutt, much of Christendom has forgotten the real Mary Magdalene, as she is consistently preached and portrayed as a woman of loose morals and low character.

To understand how this happened and why it persisted, one follows McNutt's historical and interpretive survey, throughout which she sprinkles in thoughtful anecdotes and personal experiences. She closes the book with a call for the church to take "the calling and sending of Mary Magdalene seriously," and in doing so, "the gifts of women for faith and ministry are cultivated for growth." I strongly agree with this call: the implications of Mary Magdalene's apostleship (commissioned by God, outside of any formal office and despite cultural barriers) can and should challenge the church.

Some Quakers reading *The Mary We Forgot* might put McNutt in the position of preaching to the choir. As Friends agree implicitly with the book's conclusions, they are likely more interested in advice for their own meetings. This is a topic McNutt considers in the epilogue, which is unfortunately the shortest section. Imagining the church as a garden, she urges congregations to "sow" (read and hear) the stories of women in Scripture, "cultivate" the gifts of women, and encourage women to "blossom for the glory of the Gardener," but she does not offer much in the way of practical considerations for those who wish to purposely do those things—calling, gifting, and ministry—among all members.

Can Mary Magdalene herself be an example for Quakers? I am uncertain if there is significant consideration of Mary Magdalene in early Friends writings. To look at one example: Margaret Fell does mention Mary Magdalene in her tract *Women's Speaking Justified*, where she distinguishes her from Mary of Bethany and uses her as an example of God spreading truth "without respect of persons." However, a perusal of Elsa F. Gline's compilation

of Fell's letters did not reveal another mention. Even if she was not discussed greatly among early Friends, she can most definitely be an example to contemporary Quakers.

In a larger Christian tradition where the hard-working hospitality of Martha has become a pejorative, it is nice to have a patron saint for the faithful, diligent, and industrious who serve mightily and vitally (and happily) away from the spotlight. I think of my mother, who passed unexpectedly this past Easter morning. While at times in her life, she battled her own demons, and she never felt comfortable on the church stage, her light burned brightest in the grant writing, fundraising, and the administering of the church's afterschool and summer meal programs for children. She would have liked the real Mary Magdalene.

McNutt's book is well-researched, easy-to-read, and has helped wipe away from the lens of Scripture and tradition the grime of thousands of years of misinterpretation, misinformation, and misunderstanding regarding "the Apostle to the Apostles." May Friends learn much from this newfound clarity.

Derek Brown is president of Barclay College in Haviland, Kans. A recorded Friends minister, he lives with his wife, two daughters, two dogs, a duck, and a goose in Haviland, where they are members of Haviland Friends Church. His latest book, American Christian Programmed Quaker Ecclesiology (Brill), was published in early 2024.

Aflame: Learning from Silence

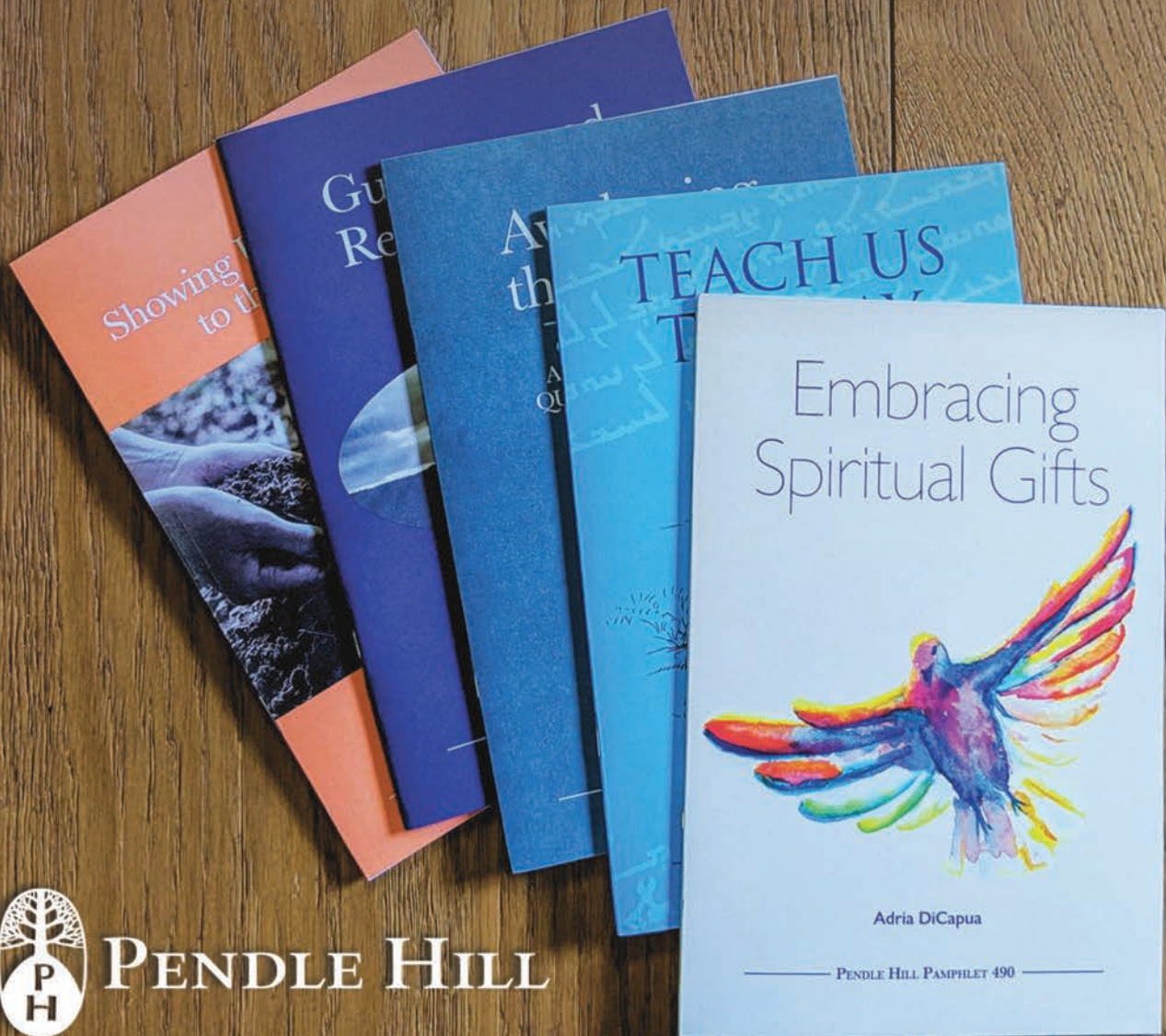
By Pico Iyer. Riverhead Books, 2025. 240 pages. \$30/hardcover; \$13.99/eBook.

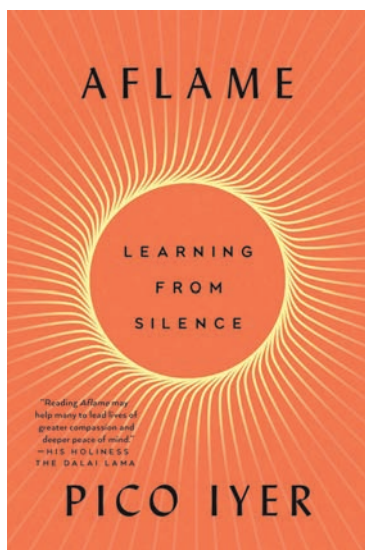
Reviewed by Lauren Brownlee

Aflame: Learning from Silence centers upon author Pico Iyer's more than 100 retreats over the course of three decades to the Hermitage, a small Benedictine hermitage in Big Sur, Calif. He shares a range of discoveries from his time at the Hermitage, many

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of them speaking to the benefits of simplicity. Although the title names silence, the book focuses more broadly on escaping from the unnecessary noise of our often too-busy lives. Through the insights of Iyer himself, the myriad authors he reflects upon, and his fellow Hermitage community members, *Aflame* offers a much-needed balm for the soul in these challenging times we live in today.

After reading *Aflame*, I am eager to experience the magic of the Hermitage. Iyer describes how the simplicity of the space and power of its natural beauty allow residents and visitors to be their best selves. He quotes Henry Miller: “There being nothing to improve on in the surroundings, the tendency is to set about improving oneself.” Many visitors reflect that the lack of plans and the opportunity to “empty yourself out” invite them to fill their time with “everything around [them],” including the sunlight, the stars, and the friends to be made. “I write as many letters as I can while I’m above the sea,” Iyer declares, “because this is the one place where, as my Buddhist friends say, the mind is as vast as the blue open sky.” And he observes that “in silence, all the unmet strangers across the property come to feel like friends, joined at the root.” Both the community and the environment encourage those present to experience spirituality at its best.

I believe Iyer’s reflections as a spiritual writer will resonate with Friends. Iyer shares that “contemplation, I come to see, does not

in any case mean closing your eyes so much as opening them, to the glory of everything around you. Coming to your senses, by getting out of your head.” As he considers the impact of the Hermitage on his work as an author, Iyer also shares the wisdom of great writers such as Franz Kafka: “Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked”; and Albert Camus: “I wanted to change lives, yes, . . . but not the world, which I worshipped as divine.”

Additionally, many of the stories Iyer shares are based on conversations he had at the Hermitage. It is clear that Iyer is a deep thinker who not only has meaningful insights to offer on his own, but is also receptive to the other seekers at the Hermitage who help him clarify the messages he has to share as a writer. In other words, the truths that Iyer comes to understand are strengthened by community, as is often true with Friends in their own meetings and other Quaker spaces.

I treasured every page of *Aflame*. The book articulates meaningful guidance on slowing down and listening to that of God within ourselves, each other, and the natural world. I believe Friends will recognize Quaker faith and practice in Iyer’s words and experiences at the Hermitage.

Lauren Brownlee is a member of Bethesda (Md.) Meeting, where she serves on the Peace and Social Justice Committee.

Yorùbá Boy Running: A Novel

By Biyi Bándélé. Harper, 2024. 288 pages. \$26.99/hardcover; \$11.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Margaret Crompton

“Àjàyí!” exclaimed my Nigerian friend Philip Omogbai, on seeing the photograph of the Reverend Samuel Crowther that appears on the penultimate page of this extraordinary novel. Friendship with Philip’s family had stimulated my interest in reading

it. The book provides background for understanding about religious adherence, slavery, and the country we know as Nigeria. However, I would not have sought such enlightenment through a textbook. The lure for me was the enticing title *Yorùbá Boy Running: A Novel*.

The narrative is an imaginative biography of nineteenth-century Reverend Samuel Àjàyí Crowther (1809–1891). As a young boy, Àjàyí was captured, sold into slavery by Malian (Muslim) traders, freed, educated, converted to Christianity, and ordained. He was a brilliant linguist, became a missionary and abolitionist, and the first African Anglican bishop. He met Queen Victoria.

Nigerian-born Biyi Bándélé, who died shortly before publication at the age of 54, was a pioneering novelist, playwright, and filmmaker. Many narrative forms and traditions—including stories, songs, lists, uninhibited dialogue, and Crowther’s own eloquent writings—evoke the complexity of his subject’s life. Àjàyí is a man of faith, love, and grace in a world of violence, oppression, and explicit sexuality.

The first fast-moving chapters vividly present the boy’s life immediately before capture. Bándélé’s writing is as direct as the language of the drums: “Yorùbá was a tonal language; what they did with their talking drums was to perfectly mimic the tone and rhythm of everyday speech. There was no conversation too complex, no thought too difficult, to express with a talking drum.” Philip read aloud the Yorùbá transliteration of one drum dialogue, bringing both language and raunchy tale to life and reminding me of Chaucer’s storytelling pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*.

The title of the novel itself and part one, “Run, Àjàyí, Run,” refer to the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I* in which a short ballet enacts the tale of Eliza. The original story in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* tells of Eliza, an enslaved

woman escaping with her child. The phrase “Run, Eliza, run!,” shouted by the ballet chorus, represents the struggle for freedom.

While Eliza’s story depicts the struggle to run from oppression and toward freedom, Àjàyí constantly confronts challenges. Even when his life is threatened, he understands “there was nowhere to run to; he was surrounded. He stopped—he had no choice, really—and turned around to face the king. Better die standing.”

However, his greatest challenge comes not from an African monarch but an English religious organization. In his 80s and “blessed with unbroken health,” the bishop, Reverend Crowther, is forced out. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent what Bándélé calls “two operatives . . . both ravenously ambitious and fragrant with righteousness, to talk down to him and humiliate him in order to elicit his resignation from . . . his bishopric.” Bándélé doesn’t hold back in revealing their motives:

They were assassins and, like all assassins on a mission from on high, they struck without remorse. Their mission was an unqualified success; he resigned . . . and was instantly replaced in the post with a white man, their intention all along. It was the beginning of a wholesale

Biyi Bándélé

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Yorùbá Boy Running




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cull of all traces of the African presence in positions of authority within the CMS in West Africa.

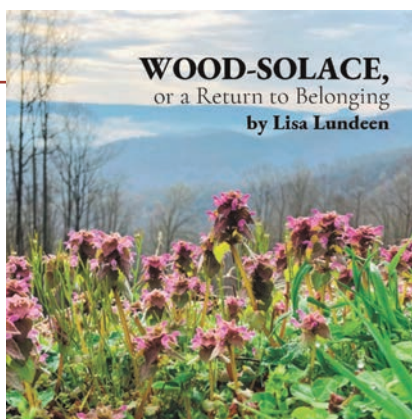
Àjàyí responds with courage and grace but suffers a fatal stroke. This scene reminds me of times white Quakers have failed Friends of Color throughout history. I think about nineteenth-century Friend, educator, and writer Sarah Mapps Douglass, for example, who experienced racism so blatant within the Quaker meetings of her day that she often wondered “in [her] own mind, are these people Christians?”

In response to his father’s ousting, Dandeson Crowther, Archdeacon of the Niger, removes the churches in his own jurisdiction from CMS control and founds the Niger Delta Pastorate Church, the first independent Church in West Africa: “I will have nothing to do,” Dandeson said, choosing his words carefully, “with those who cannot see that all men are created equal before God. It’s a sin.”

In his introduction, the Nigerian author Wole Soyinka writes: “We all knew the Àjàyí story, of course—right from elementary school”—I think of my friend Philip’s immediate recognition of him in the photograph. Soyinka praises Bándélé’s work: “The humanity hidden behind the unsmiling portrait . . . comes to life . . . combative, learned, warmly human, even with a touching sense of humour. It has taken a writer armed with a matching diligence to flush him out.”

Through Samuel Àjàyí Crowther, two great writers challenge us to learn and to confront assumptions and prejudice with humility, courage, honor, and grace. Run, Quaker, run to the bookstore.

Margaret Crompton is a member of Britain Yearly Meeting. Her publications include Children, Spirituality, Religion and Social Work (1998) and the Pendle Hill pamphlet Nurturing Children’s Spiritual Well-Being (2012). She has written and directed plays for a small drama group. Recent publications include poems and short stories.



WOOD-SOLACE, or a Return to Belonging

By Lisa Lundeen. *Plants and Poetry*, 2023. 138 pages. \$25/paperback.

Reviewed by Neal Burdick

At first glance, *WOOD-SOLACE, or a Return to Belonging* seems an odd title for a collection of photographs and poems. But once I realized that the keystone topic of the book is healing and what healing brings us back to, it makes sense. Nature is a source, perhaps the best source, for the process of healing, start to finish. The hyphen in *WOOD-SOLACE* unites the pieces and binds them together: the physical, the social, and then the spiritual. As Lisa Lundeen writes in her title poem, “I myself became part of the wood again, welcomed home as though I had never left.”

Lundeen comes from the “Quaker tradition of sitting in quiet, expectant waiting for the sacred to draw close.” A graduate of Guilford College and Earlham School of Religion, she lives in Greensboro, N.C., where she is a clinical healthcare chaplain. Her poems have been published in *Friends Journal* and other periodicals, including the poem “Plants and Poetry”—the title of which illustrates the intersection of nature and art, particularly the art of writing. This is an intersection Lundeen has long pondered, come to know intimately, and mapped in detail, but not so much as to prevent the rest of us from choosing which way to turn and marking our own pathways.

It’s hard to say which came first: the photos or the poems. That’s

a chicken-and-egg thing. While a marriage of the two forms of expression, image and word, is not unique, in Lundeen’s imaginative ignition, that combination becomes more closely autobiographical than most. Whereas many poetry collections can be absorbed in any order, *WOOD-SOLACE* is most effectively traversed like a prose book: page by page, one after the other, in order. The sequence follows Lundeen’s roller coaster ride through life—up, down, up, down. The four section titles convey this ragged hill-and-hollow journey: Desolations, Ruminations, Consolations, and Celebrations.

Lundeen’s photography is centered in the world of botany. Her pictures—one per two-page spread, each opposite a corresponding poem—reveal the realities of the natural world, mostly as recapitulated in the continent of flowers but also via moths, honeybees, ripe apples, frothing brook waters, and spider webs: delicate yet resilient, hard and soft, tough but vulnerable. As we study these images, we realize they are us.

And so we begin with Desolations, in a hopeful echo of life’s phases to come with the poem “A Cry for Spring”: “I long for days of consolation / . . . and green bright petals . . . / Calling us into our own centers.”

The following accompanies a picture of a desiccated, shrugged-off snake skin on a slab of rotting tree bark:

I long to live in skin
That is just the size to hold my
Sinew, bone, and deep-down
hopes,
Strong and smooth as I
Make my way through the
Undergrowth another day.

Most of Lundeen’s work is blank verse, but rhyme appears once in a while. A spiny saguaro cactus inspires the thought “If not peace, may my / worship bring release.” As we progress through the book’s sections and life ascends, her poetry becomes more rhythmical, more lyrical, more

smoothly structured, and calmer. Consider these observations from “A Leading, My Child” in the section Ruminations: “A leading is what draws the oak from the acorn . . . what calls the caterpillar to spin a cocoon. . . . A leading, my child, gives you wings.”

As we near the final section, Celebrations, things are really looking hopeful: “A Few Instructions for Finding Your Way” advises: “Look through cobwebs / and dust for fresh shoots / of potential, opportunity.” Finally, in that section, all is well, “The Gift of Blessing Another” begins, “To bless another is to incubate their vitality” and ends, “To bless is to send out, to call in, to fling potential, to honor blossoming, to soothe and embrace.”

Quakerism is not here verbatim, but it infuses all of Lundeen’s work, whether it be photographs that demonstrate respect for all living things, regardless of how “correct” they look, or verbal allusions to light, simplicity, and openness. With often startling imagery, Lundeen urges us, whether dealing with the natural sphere or the human, to see “a relationship rather than a document,” and when we achieve this level of perception, “do you allow yourself / to burst into flame?” Read this book and you just might.

Neal Burdick’s poetry has been published in Friends Journal as well as vastly more obscure outlets. The poetry editor of the Adirondack Mountain Club’s magazine Adirondac, he attends Burlington (Vt.) Meeting.

In Brief

Building a Moral Economy: Pathways for People of Courage

By Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda. Fortress Press, 2024. 374 pages. \$35/paperback; \$32.99/eBook.

People who think our economy is very healthy will probably not



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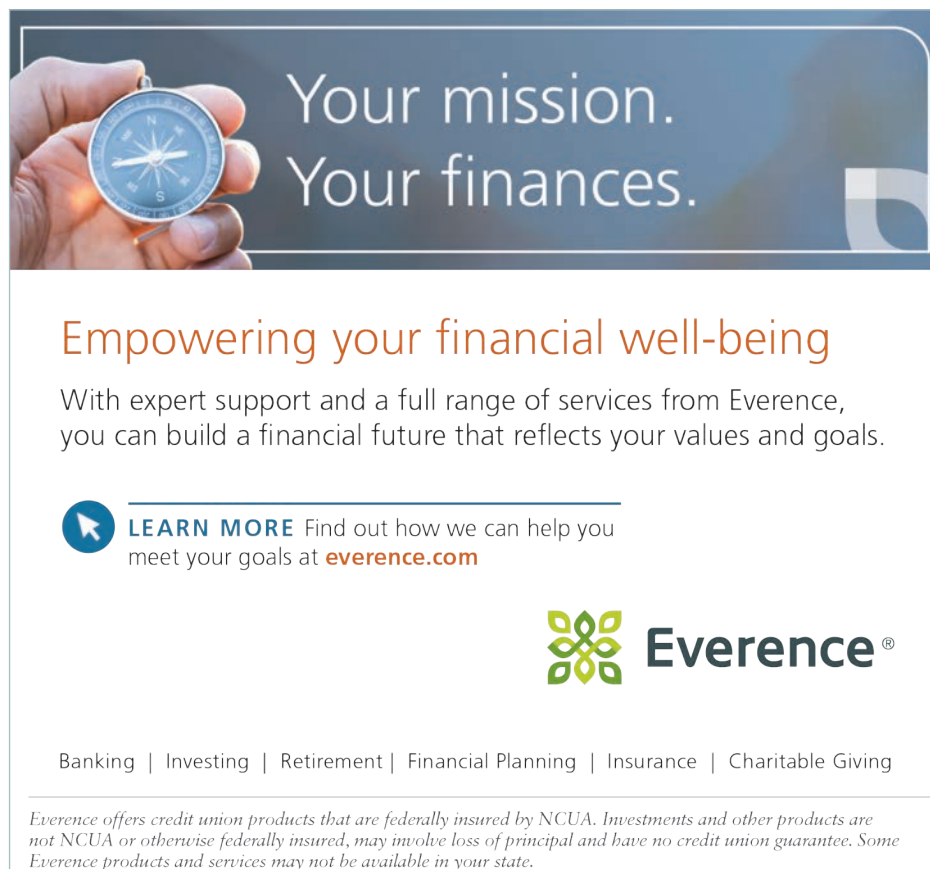
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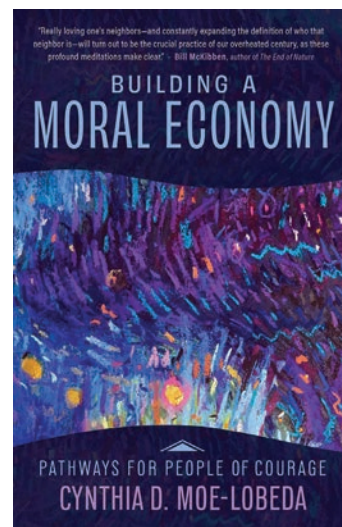
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like this book. The author focuses on things that are not working well economically: climate change, poverty, inequality, and racism. She offers multiple solutions, and emphasizes the many ways they relate to spiritual matters. A professor of theological and social ethics, Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda has come to “see economic life as a spiritual practice, a way of either enacting a spirituality of neighbor-love or betraying it.”

We are living in a time when the economy works for some and does not work for many others, and because of climate change, future generations will probably have a much harder time surviving economically. Moe-Lobeda emphasizes the sacredness of planet Earth and weaves this idea into the actions we should take to faithfully honor Spirit and creation.

The book is divided into four sections. The first two evaluate our problems and lay out cures for them. The last section focuses on the connection between the economy and morality. The third and somewhat unusual section, “Fingers on the Hands of Healing,” has ten chapters, each making a suggestion for the correction of wrongs. Friends will be familiar with much on her list: “Live Lightly” (simplicity), “Move the Money” (divestment), “Resist the Wrong” (civil disobedience), “Drink the Spirit’s Courage” (the nourishment of worship). Much like the fingers on a human hand, one action “alone does not accomplish much. Yet what



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magnificent creations they render when dancing in collaboration.”

If I were still teaching at a university, I think I might build a seminar around Moe-Lobeda’s book, which is also the introductory title in a new series from Fortress Press edited by Moe-Lobeda. Five more books will consider climate justice, housing, water, food, and the religious roots of a moral economy. There is a website with more details at buildingamoreconomy.org.

I would highly recommend this book to Friends looking for guidance, inspiration, and practical steps on how to reshape our economy to morally support all life on Earth.

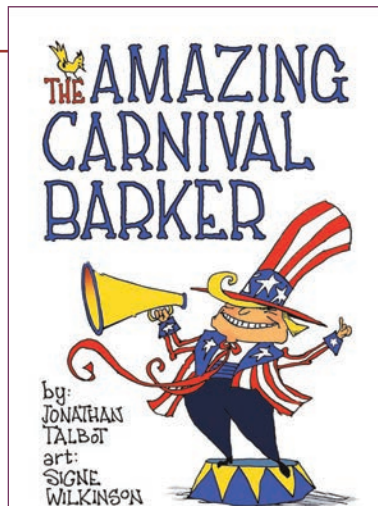
—Reviewed by Tom Head,
a member of Chico (Calif.) Meeting
and professor of economics emeritus
at George Fox University

The Amazing Carnival Barker

By Jonathan Talbot, illustrated by Signe Wilkinson. Self-published, 2025. 44 pages. \$12.95/paperback.

Two talented Quaker artists have teamed up to tell this imaginative “illustrated tale for our times.” A charismatic carnival barker with an impossibly wide grin and a single curl of gold-colored hair stands outside a big tent promising passersby “the greatest show you’ll ever see in your life.” The exaggeration continues once enough cash is secured in exchange for tickets to enter: dressed in his “star-spangled suit,” the barker “puffs up his splendiferous chest” and declares “he’ll make things great . . . again.”

Inside the tent is a fabulous show indeed, with classic attractions a carnival goer would expect—clown cars, magicians, lions, and tigers—alongside more unusual acts such as “billionaire acrobats” flying high in fancy suits without a care for “the rest of us” on the ground far below. Things turn scary once the dragons come out and the exit doors are secretly locked. The barker’s smile is looking more and more sinister just as the excited crowd braces for his “ultimate act,” which



involves dangerously juggling torches of fire. What could go wrong? How did we get here?

It’s clear the creators are commenting on the disastrous social and political challenges facing the United States today, and the barker undoubtedly resembles our current president. I’m a believer in the transformative power of art: in times of absurdity, sometimes humor and satire are what’s needed to cut through the noise and reveal the truth behind the spectacle, to help us see what’s really going on.

Grab your own copy of *The Amazing Carnival Barker*, or perhaps gift it to someone you know, to see how this truly incredible show plays out—will democracy prevail or will the “truth-telling liar” continue to burn it down?

Painter and collage artist Jonathan Talbot’s playful words are Seuss-like, providing the wacky and mischievous narrative (Talbot claims to be the story’s “amanuensis rather than its creator”). Political cartoonist Signe Wilkinson contributes her signature style to both font and illustration. The co-collaborators thank the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts for bringing them together. I’m grateful that they did.

—Reviewed by Gail Whiffen,
associate editor of Friends Journal

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A Silver Trumpet Calls

continued from page 22

situation, but I couldn't keep my eyes off the girls' dresses. The skirt of the girl nearest me had crimped ribbons edging tiers of brown ruffles. It was done so cunningly that even the eldest Elm Grove Friend would have trouble objecting to its style. But it was not very Quakerly in my estimation!

"Judge not . . ." I scolded myself. I shook my head and tried to center down again.

The young women settled themselves, too, for a few minutes. Then they began to nudge each other and whisper.

"These young women are too old for such nonsense," I thought, still judging. And Lizzie was right in the midst of it! I squeezed my eyes closed and tried to pray to push away the distractions.

Then, without any warning, Debbie stood up and began to sing, softly at first but gradually gaining volume and confidence. The other girls rose and joined her. It was a simple tune, sung in their clear, warm voices. Every word of the hymn blended in notes perfect for praise:

O day of peace and gladness, O
day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness, Most
beautiful, most bright.

A smile crept into the corners of my mouth, and my eyes softened as I listened to their words. If only this were a day of peace, inner peace that was long overdue. That was what I longed for.

The sweet harmony of their voices, alien to this simple place built for silence and meditation, swirled in my head and pushed the anger from my

heart. The distractions of dresses and roosters and teaching floated away, as if on a puffy cloud. My heart and head were light and calm.

I'd been wrong to judge the girls. How could the Lord—or anyone—object to such heavenly words and voices lifted together in worship? Perhaps all things did work together for good!

I lingered in the perfect union of their voices, letting it envelop me. Was this the Inward Light? "Lord, is this thy message to me? What would Thou have me do?" I asked.

The girls' final verse seemed to answer my prayer:

Today on weary nations, the
heav'nly manna falls,
To holy convocations, the silver
trumpet calls,
Where gospel light is glowing with
pure and radiant beams,
And living water flowing with
soul-refreshing streams.

As the girls smoothed their skirts and sat down to a silent audience, I was clear:

I would go south with Lizzie. Whatever it took, I would find a way to answer the silver trumpet calling my name. I would use the gifts that I'd been given to bring living water to people who had been denied an education, just as my dear Joshua had hoped to do.

My ears barely registered an objection to their singing by one of the elders on the facing seat. I saw Mother tip her head lower and tighten her lips, but I was too busy making lists in my head, mentally packing for our trip southward, to take on that concern. Elm Grove would have to fend for itself.

No matter what Lizzie or Isaiah Stout had to say, I was bound for Mississippi. □

MILESTONES

Deaths

Mercer—*Judith Ann Fink Mercer*, 83, on December 8, 2024, in Greensboro, N.C. She was born June 8, 1941, to Winship Fink and Ann Kiedrowski Fink in Manhattan, N.Y. Judy attended Richmond Hill High School in Queens, N.Y., and received a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from Ohio State University. She married John H. Mercer on May 16, 1965.

Judy spent her early years in Queens, later living in Miami, Fla.; Columbus, Ohio; and finally Greensboro, N.C., where she attended New Garden Meeting. Her participation at New Garden included attending meetings for worship, assisting with flea market preparations, and collecting donations for immigrant families.

Judy was a very talented artist and writer with a deep love of animals and of nature. A self-described tragic romantic, she appreciated the small things in life: the crackling of a good fire, the stillness that comes while sitting among trees, the beauty of a sunset, the love of a dog, a good glass of wine (or even a bad one), the arrival of Orion in the winter sky. She had an incredible memory up until the very end, and could describe in detail events from her early childhood or plots of books she'd read years ago. She could recite poems she'd learned as a child, and tell the birthday of just about everyone she knew.

Judy lived at Friends Homes retirement community later in life. A lifelong learner, during her time there, she could often be found outside in the courtyard reading her weekly copy of *The New Yorker* from cover to cover, no matter the weather. She'd gladly share details of interesting documentaries she'd watched on television or books she'd read.

Judy's intelligence, kindness, unique sense of humor, and delicious eccentricity will be missed.

Judy was predeceased by her husband, John H. Mercer; parents, Winship and Ann Fink; two sisters-in-law, Mary Etherington and Elisabeth (Wizzy) Mercer; and a brother-in-law, David Hewes.

She is survived by one child, Jane Mercer Kitchen (Christian); two grandchildren; and two siblings, Diane Hewes and Larry Fink (Linda Fink).

Moran—*Donna Shepherd Moran*, 84, on March 23, 2024, at Friends Homes at Guilford in Greensboro, N.C. Donna was born on November 16, 1939, to Margaret Bethel Moran and Frank Moran in Richmond, Va.

Donna graduated from Sweet Briar College in Amherst County, Va., with a bachelor's degree in fine arts. A gifted painter in oils and water colors, she created exquisite beauty in her homes and gardens.

When she moved to Friends Home Guilford she became acquainted with other residents who were artists and built strong friendships among them.

She and her husband, Garnet Hughes, spruced up a cabin near the Blue Ridge Parkway and liked to entertain family and

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friends there.

Donna was a valuable staff member of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in the Continuing Education Department and later was assistant to the chancellor until her retirement in 1997.

Donna was known for her sense of humor, always ready with a quip or joke. She and Garnet supported local artists by purchasing their creations and displaying them in their home and garden. Donna was a beloved member of a book club that has met continually since 1987. She loved fine dining and wine and created delicious meals.

Donna and Garnet were members of New Garden Meeting in Greensboro.

When Donna was diagnosed with cancer she accepted it without anger or bitterness and was determined to meet it on her own terms. With the aid and devotion of her sons, Scott and Kennan, and Kennan's wife, Sandra, she was able to remain in her home. She was cheered by visits from her beloved granddaughter, Isabella, and her longtime friend Karen Adams.

Donna was predeceased by her husband, Garnett Lewis Hughes, in 2020.

She is survived by two children, Kennan DePue (Sandra) and R. Scott DePue; and one grandchild.

Pilisuk—*Marc Pilisuk*, 90, on August 20, 2024, in Berkeley, Calif. Marc was born on January 19, 1934, in the Bronx, N.Y. He grew up in Brooklyn, attending Stuyvesant High School. Born of Depression era values, Marc was often parsimonious with himself but generous with others. He remembered his mother's experience during his childhood of giving up her seat near the front of a bus to a pregnant Black woman, while the driver looked askance but said nothing.

While studying psychology at Queens College, he met Phyllis Kamen. They married in 1956, beginning a marriage of 62 years. Marc earned a doctorate in psychology from the University of Michigan in 1961, where he was one of the organizers of the first teach-ins against the Vietnam War, working alongside student activist Tom Hayden, with whom Marc had a lifelong friendship.

After their first child, Tammy, was born, the family moved to Lafayette, Ind., where their son, Jeffrey, was born. Marc was a professor at Purdue University. While there, he wrote an op-ed piece for *The New York Times* opposing the Vietnam War. This displeased a department benefactor and, after only a year, his teaching contract was not renewed.

In 1967, Marc received an offer to teach at a community mental health program at the University of California, Berkeley. The family relocated to Berkeley during the height of antiwar protests on campus. Marc's classes were often held at an off-campus cafe, where students organized peaceful ways to demonstrate.

Phyllis was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis around that time. She began attending Berkeley Meeting in 1968, sometimes with Marc. In more recent years, Marc took an

active role, engaging with the meeting's Social and Environmental Action Committee on peace and social justice issues. He regularly participated in meetings for worship via Zoom while convalescing at home during his later years.

Marc continued to be an outspoken proponent of nonviolent conflict resolution, and authored several books, including: *Who Benefits from Global Violence and War*, *The Hidden Structure of Violence*, *The Healing Web*, *The Triple Revolution: Emerging Social Problems in Depth*, and an edited compendium of *Peace Movements Worldwide*. He also authored or coauthored more than 100 academic journal articles.

After ten years at UC Berkeley, Marc transferred to UC Davis and served as chair of the Applied Behavioral Sciences Department for 15 years. As Phyllis's multiple sclerosis continued to worsen, Marc retired from UC Davis to be of more assistance to her. He accepted a position teaching remotely at Saybrook University in San Francisco (now in Pasadena).

Marc was a professor emeritus at the University of California. He received numerous professional awards, including five lifetime achievement awards, the most recent from the American Psychological Association's Division of Humanistic Psychology on March 30, 2024.

Marc was a loving husband, caring for Phyllis at home, with a small village of caregivers through her final years. Phyllis died in February 2019.

Marc was a gentle soul, with a tenacious spirit, always striving to resolve conflicts peacefully. His work is admired by generations of students and colleagues, friends and family, and others.

Marc loved a good (or not-so-good) joke. Sharing humor with friends, family, his doctors, and even trying his hand at stand-up comedy with some of his senior groups—a late-life joy. As his health worsened, he, like Phyllis, remained in his home with caregivers.

Marc was predeceased by his wife, Phyllis Pilisuk.

He is survived by two children, Tammy (Mark) and Jeffrey (Philippa); two grandchildren; one sister-in-law, Mimi; four nieces and one nephew.

Tyldesley—*Doris Johnson Tyldesley*, 75, on December 29, 2024, in Tempe, Ariz. Doris was born on November 9, 1949, to Sam and Emily Johnson in Ashton-under-Lyne, England. She was a star pupil at the local elementary school and at 11 years of age passed the entrance examination for Manchester High School for Girls. Doris was exceptional in math and sciences, and in 1968 was accepted into Lady Margaret Hall, a women's college at the University of Oxford.

While in high school Doris read an advertisement in *The Guardian* titled "Why do Quakers make Chocolate?", and wrote for more information about Quakers. Her school principal, who was a Quaker, also influenced her interest in the Religious Society of Friends. Doris attended her first meeting for worship

after enrolling at Oxford in 1968. Doris met Roger Tyldesley at Oxford Meeting. He was a student at the university, also studying physics. After 18 months together, they became engaged.

Her mother died before Doris's final term. After Doris graduated, Roger's mother insisted that Doris move in with the Tyldesley family. Doris took up residence in a spare bedroom.

Doris and Roger married on September 4, 1971, at the meetinghouse in Eccles. They bought a house in Brentwood and attended Brentwood Meeting, which they eventually joined. Doris began her career in Brentwood as a research engineer. She didn't enjoy the work, so was easily recruited away by a member of Brentwood Meeting to teach high school physics. In 1978, Doris and Roger moved to Glasgow, Scotland, for Roger's new job with Motorola. They transferred their membership to West of Scotland Meeting. Their children, Kate and John, were born while the Tyldesleys lived in Glasgow.

Motorola gave Roger a temporary training assignment to Arizona. While in Arizona, Doris and Roger attended Tempe Meeting in Danforth Chapel on the Arizona State University campus. At the completion of Roger's training assignment, they returned to the United Kingdom. When the factory where Roger was working closed, he took a permanent position with Motorola in Arizona. Doris and Roger applied for U.S. citizenship and transferred their membership to Tempe Meeting in 1985. Doris served on the Children's Religious Education Committee, the Ministry and Counsel Committee, and the yearly meeting committee that drafted the first Intermountain *Faith and Practice*. She oversaw the production of many Christmas plays, putting her singing voice and love of performance into service for the meeting. She sang soprano in the ASU Choral Union, a similar level of challenge as that offered by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus where she had also sung. Doris worked for ten years as an administrative assistant in the senior adult program at Scottsdale Community College.

In 2006, Roger took a job with a company in Minnesota. Doris became active in Minneapolis Meeting, serving on the Worship and Ministry Committee.

In 2014, Doris and Roger moved back to Arizona and rejoined Tempe Meeting, where Doris served on the Worship and Ministry Committee. In 2019, they moved to Friendship Village, a life care community. Doris significantly reduced her large collection of books, but continued her lifelong love affair with J.R.R. Tolkien. At Friendship Village, she also enjoyed singing in the choir; helping care for the Tyldesleys' beloved cat, Tosca; and perambulating the hallways to enjoy the creative ways residents decorated their entry areas.

Doris is survived by her husband, Roger Tyldesley; two children, Kate (Stephen) and John (Amanda); two grandchildren; her brother-in-law, Alan, and sister-in-law, Sue; and several nieces and nephews.

Solveig-Karin Erdal traces her Quaker heritage back to the first Norwegian Friends, who converted as prisoners of war in England and brought their faith back with them after Napoleon's defeat. The meetinghouse where her ancestors worshiped was also the place where Lars Hertervig, nineteenth-century Norway's most famous painter, was introduced to Quaker faith and practice.

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Solveig-Karin shares a passage from *Melancolia*, a novel by the Nobel laureate Jon Fosse, in which the young Hertervig's father takes him to his first Quaker meeting. "It describes meeting for worship in almost childlike words," she says of Fosse's prose, "in a very touching way, in a very poetic way." After reading Fosse, she says, "It's so clear how the light [in Hertervig's paintings] is not just the sunshine, it's also the Inner Light."

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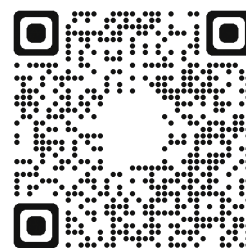


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