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Friends Journal August 2026

The Noises of Our Silences

The sonic landscape of my Quaker meetinghouse changes with the seasons. In the springtime, as we humans shed our heavy coats, the antiquated and noisy heating system is shut off and a hush returns to worship. As we enter early spring, we open up the old eighteenth-century partitions that once separated the men's and women's meetings, and the sounds of the space open up with more vibrato. By the time the heat domes of August settle in, ratcheting the U.S. Mid-Atlantic up to subtropical humidity, people and building alike fling off any pretense of decorum, and the outside doors are flung wide to let in any errant breeze.

The sounds of our August silence are far from pure. Although the calls of red-shouldered hawks can be a bit harsh, hearing them reminds me that a family shares the trees of our burial ground. The crunch of the gravel in the driveway reassures me that one of our perpetual late-comers is about to join our fellowship. Not all the sounds are natural, of course. Once or twice in the hour someone will redline a motorcycle on the street outside, the whiny revs and gear changes drifting over to bounce inside our worship space. I usually try to tune out this sound, but sometimes I smile instead, knowing that someone is having fun on a hot summer day. I say a little prayer for their safety and wish them well.

What is the nature of silence, and how do we share sounds with our neighbors? Author Joe McHugh introduces us to an “anechoic chamber” in Minnesota designed for almost unimaginable silence. It is said that you can hear your heart pound and blood rush. The closest I've ever come to such conditions was a visit I once took of the UK's Lancaster Castle. The building is an impressively heavy structure of stone, iron, and wood where hundreds of Quakers were imprisoned in the late 1660s for refusing to pay tithes. At one point in the tour, visitors are led to a chamber deep in the bowels of the old prison. With a warning (and the option to chicken out), the heavy wood doors are closed tight, and for a full minute all light, sound, and air is blocked off. Yes, my heart pounded as I imagined the deafening silence of the worship early Friends must have endured in that room.

This is not the level of silence we strive for in our worship on the average Sunday morning. I'm glad for the shifting sounds of the season, which root us in the world. Ours is not a monastic faith, and it is not the emptiness of silence that we worship. Indeed, in many parts of the Quaker world, silence is not even the point: our faith tradition can flex enough to allow prepared preaching, music, and song.

To that end, we have a wonderful story from West Coast Friend John Holding, who was transported from a rather self-consciously traditional Liberal Friends meeting into one that was much more freewheeling and experimental with its worship styles. At first, he found its “Singing Sundays” to be mildly embarrassing (especially when visitors from his old meeting were in town), but over time he learned to appreciate his new meeting's “worship-fluid” style. Sometimes a resident from the neighboring goat farm comes in to join.

Like the engines of the revving cycles outside my meetinghouse, the Religious Society of Friends has developed many gears. We don't all need to push the redline—or, to mix the metaphors, let in the goats!—but I do think the Great Teacher is quite capable of reaching us through all the noises of our silences.

In Friendship,



Martin Kelley

Senior Editor

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- **Quaker Fiction** (due August 17)
- **Nontheist Friends** (due September 21)
- **Quakers and Social Class** (due October 19)



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ONLINE FEATURES

Friendsjournal.org/online

Vibes and Sparks: On Sympathetic Resonance and the Value of Disunity

ANNA MELVILLE

Through my work at a Quaker school and in this cultural moment of extraordinary discord, I find myself repeating, "The way to be countercultural is to remain in community with those we disagree with." These words are a mantra in conversation with students, families, and colleagues. In this corner of experience—the Liberal, unprogrammed world of U.S. East Coast Quaker education—I will readily admit that we sometimes conflate Quakerism and left-wing politics as if they are the same religion or, at the very least, parallel tracks leading toward the same just world. Religions rest on foundations of belief and on pillars of practice, while political parties articulate the planks that undergird their campaigns, policies, and actions.

A Door Into Ocean Turns 40: Revisiting Joan Slonczewski's Celebrated Quaker Science Fiction Novel

JONATHAN DOERING

Part of the appeal of Slonczewski's 1986 book—besides its skillful plaiting of hard science with Quaker spirituality and political activism—is the honest acceptance of moral ambiguity. These characters, as in life, are aware of the moral complexity of so many situations, all of them lacking any easy answers. That integrated approach to art and life also informs Slonczewski's approach to writing, which they see as "something that just happens all the time. I'll get little ideas or have an experience and write something down. It's kind of like a patchwork quilt."

Read a review of Slonczewski's latest novel, Minds in Transit, in this issue's Books section.

Changing support for vocal ministry

Thank you for Peter Blood-Patterson's "Speaking with Spiritual Authority" (*FJ* June-July). Only in the past year, for the first time in 40 years as a Friend, have I felt an ongoing call to vocal ministry, and it's been somewhat harrowing, even though I've been thinking, writing, and obsessing about this for decades.

Self-doubt: am I really called? Social anxiety: what will my meeting think about my speaking relatively frequently? Spiritual dread: who will have my back? If I step through the traces or run past my guide, will some elder help me get back on the path? Where's the support? Where's the oversight?

Without a settled and robust culture of eldership for vocal ministry, we ministers are left bereft. It's not right. We need our meetings' support, and our meetings need ministers who are being supported—and corrected, when necessary. Who in our meetings is paying proactive attention to emerging ministers and at least asking them what's going on and what they can do to support their discernment and faithfulness?

Steven Dale Davison
Pennington, N.J.

Thank you for this marvelous article. I also enjoyed re-reading the article by Diane Randall and Debbie Humphries that *Friends Journal* shared in a recent email ("Engaging with a Monthly Meeting about Ministry," *FJ* Sept. 2008). I am delighted to see the renewed interest in nurturing

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vocal ministry among unprogrammed Friends. One of the difficulties is that many, perhaps most, Liberal Friends either do not know or are actively in denial about some key historical truths.

First, Friends historically did have an institution of recorded ministry with its own structures and disciplines.

Second, this tradition was one component of a three-part ministry of elders, ministers, and overseers meant explicitly to reflect the three orders of ministry that later Christians discerned in the New Testament churches: in Greek, *presbyteroi*, *diakonoi*, and *episkopoi*, in which they can detect the later English terms *presbyter*, *deacon*, and *bishop* (of course Friends understood these offices very differently from other churches, who likewise had dramatic differences among themselves).

Third, British and American Liberal Friends actively abolished the institution of recorded ministry. Recording ministers is a deep and rich Quaker tradition, not a recent and alien intrusion.

Fourth, until the twentieth century, Quakers never believed that all Friends were ministers. Rather they believed that God could *choose* any Friend at any time to exercise ministry, whether for a moment, a season, or a lifetime. Ministry was believed to be the gift of God alone, by God's will alone, by God's choice alone. The job of meetings was first and foremost not to stand in God's way by excluding any category of persons (such as women or children or the illiterate) from the exercise of that gift.

If those historical truths were recognized, I believe we would have an excellent basis on which to decide whether and how to rebuild a rich, accountable, inspired public vocal ministry as a key component of our worship that avoids the very real temptations of "hireling" ministry based on human will and inclination rather than divine calling.

Patrick Nugent
Kettering, Ohio

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How Can I Keep from Singing?



Photos by the author

The Marvelous Mystery of Worship-Fluid Meetings

John Holding

“We consider singing to be serious worship, Friend.”

Twenty years ago, the convenor of Lopez Island Worship Group in northwest Washington

John Holding is a member of Lopez Island (Wash.) Meeting, where he has served as co-clerk for a number of years. John previously served on the board of American Friends Service Committee and was founding board clerk of Quaker Voluntary Service. He currently serves on the Friends Fiduciary Corporation board.

State thus spoke to me (a recently transplanted mainlander Quaker) in response to my request that, maybe this month, we skip Singing Sunday, as I had several “deeply unprogrammed” Friends visiting that weekend who would be expecting more “serious worship.”

Now many years later, that eldering remains a strong memory: a strong “Yikes, was I that full of my Quaker self?” It was my introduction to—and now a deeply held understanding—that, yes, singing can be serious and powerful ministry, even as a part of a traditional, unprogrammed approach to Quaker worship.

A bit of background and explanation:
I spent my Quaker youth (my 30s) at San Francisco (Calif.) Meeting, lovingly referred to by some as “SF Conservative.” San Francisco Meeting had, and I believe still has, a steadfast devotion to unprogrammed worship and a commitment to grounding silence and thoughtful vocal ministry. At the time, it had periodic three-hour “extended” meetings for worship, and it was there I practiced settling into the silence and listening for that still, small voice; sought the sensitivity to discern if I was to share a message in meeting; and looked for the grace to deliver it clearly and succinctly.

While my Quaker rookie self was often lacking in discernment and vocal ministry fluency, I did not lack in desire. Through trial and error and friendly eldering, I developed my own deep commitment to unprogrammed worship and a conviction that this was the correct and holy way of doing Quakerism!

In 2006, my life was upturned when I reconnected at a reunion with a college choir mate; fell in love; and left my beloved San Francisco to be with my new partner and her children on Lopez Island, 45 minutes by ferry off the northwest mainland of Washington. I shared with my San Francisco friends that I was moving from a city with 3,000 restaurants to an island with 3,000 inhabitants but, luckily, an island with the largest Quaker contingent anywhere in the San Juan Archipelago.

There in my new home, it quickly became clear I was no longer at San Francisco Conservative. I had stepped into Lopez Island “we do things a bit differently” Worship Group: different in that we met in members’ homes; different in that one Sunday each month, instead of holy unprogrammed silent expectant worship, the meeting held Worship Sharing Sunday where predetermined queries were offered to guide our worship. And the group was majorly different in that once a month we met for meeting for worship for singing, aka “Singing Sunday.”

After a few months, I realized I was now attending what some of my San Francisco Quaker friends had derisively referred to as a “semi-programmed” meeting. Oh my goodness! Was I now in a meeting on the slippery

slope to program-ageddon! It was out of that fear and anxiety that my request to skip Singing Sunday had arisen, and yet it had been dismissed (and now I realize, thankfully had been dismissed) in such an iconically polite yet pulverizing Quakerly manner: “We consider singing to be serious worship . . . Friend.”

Fast-forward 20 years to the present, and much has changed in our meeting, as well as in my own Quaker heart and experience. After working through preparative meeting purgatory ten years ago Lopez Island became a monthly meeting with two neighboring island worship groups under our care. In

Previous page: Singing Sunday worship at Lopez Island Meeting.

Below: The Sunnyfield Meetinghouse on Lopez Island is built around a circular wooden yurt.



keeping with the theme of “a bit different” and with the wonderful opportunity to set up a monthly meeting from scratch, we chose new names for our committees. We preferred “Spiritual Life Committee” in place of the more ominous-sounding Ministry and Oversight and the “Gifts and Talents Committee” instead of the (no one really wants to be on) Nominating Committee. In all seriousness, those names seemed more to the point of actual committee tasks as well as more friendly in all senses of the word.

Our meeting now has a permanent home in a 30-foot diameter wooden yurt—why have a square meeting room



The meetinghouse is located on the property of a family-run goat dairy.

when Friends gather in a circle? We built the yurt from a kit, primarily with our own hands, as island life breeds resourcefulness. The building, named Sunnyfield Meetinghouse, is located at Sunnyfield Farm, a small, family-run goat dairy. One member wryly refers to our new meetinghouse as “The Yurt of the Holy Goats.”

And we are growing. Attendance at worship sometimes reaches more than 30 and is regularly 20 to 25, including our child members: all this in an island community of around 3,000 full-time inhabitants—more if you include the goats, sheep, deer, and other of God’s critters. We are blessed, as how many other meetings have one percent of their area’s population on their mailing list?

And in the spirit of continuing revelation, we continue to experiment! Recently we were led to combine our regularly scheduled Singing Sunday with worship for letter writing regarding immigration enforcement concerns. We started our letters out of the silence, and as friends completed their personal letters to our representatives in Washington, D.C., they transitioned into worshipful singing. So far the reaction to this latest experiment has been positive, and we were able to deliver 51 handwritten letters to our congressperson and senators!

Through all these experiences in my Quaker island home, I have become convinced of the power of guided worship working in partnership with the more traditional form of open worship. Our guided worship feels well-covered by Spirit, with palpable energy and community, and it seems even to be—dare I say—popular.

So friendly reader, if you’re interested, here’s what we’ve learned, what we do, and how I have come to experience these benefits to our meeting and to our faithfulness. All are offered with the hope that it may be food for thought and practice in your Quaker community.

First, some explanation of the alternative Quaker nomenclature that I am using, offered for your consideration and possible use as well.

We use the term “open worship” in place of “unprogrammed worship.” *Unprogrammed* sounds like a trip your friends take you on to a nearby motel for an intervention. Moreover, unprogrammed describes our practice in the negative. In contrast, “open worship” is a positive statement of what we are doing: worship open to Spirit, open to all voices, and open to instruction and faithfulness.

We speak of “guided worship” rather than “programmed.” *Programmed* sounds like something humans used to do and now AI does. “Guided worship,” such as worship sharing and worshipful singing, seems more to the point. And in my experience, deep and spontaneous messages can and do rise out of these guided sessions.

“Worship-fluid” is our choice for “semi-programmed.” Keeping with the wisdom of the times, maybe we can let go of “worship duality” and accept that there are many different ways and combinations of worship that can serve as pathways to the Divine.

At Lopez Island Meeting, we always start with open worship. On Worship Sharing Sunday, we begin with 15 to 20 minutes of open worship; followed by five minutes introducing queries; and another 60-plus minutes of worship sharing, for a total of 90 minutes together in worship. (Who knew God was okay with more than an hour of meeting? Well, of course, George Fox knew that, albeit he did not seem as clear on the singing thing.) Singing Sunday also starts with a period of open worship and then

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Experiments in Silent Worship

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. —John Cage, “Lecture on Nothing” (1950)

If it's quiet you're after—out-and-out quiet, borderline scary quiet—head to East 25th Street in Minneapolis, Minnesota. That's where you'll find the quietest room in the world. Spend time in the Orfield Anechoic Chamber, and you'll hear your heart pound, lungs flex, and blood rush. Most folks can stand it for about 45 minutes, tops.

However, I'm writing about silence, not quiet. Quieting is an activity: something we do. We can quiet ourselves, but we can't *do* silence. Quiet can prepare us for it, but

An award-winning writer, Joe McHugh regularly writes and workshops in the area of practical spirituality. A founding member of the certification program in spiritual direction at Southern Methodist University, he has written the book Startled by God: Wisdom from Unexpected Places. He attends Community Friends Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: jjmch1300@gmail.com.

Reflections in Three Movements

silence is always a gift, never an achievement. When silence and a person find each other, it's time for gratitude, wonder, and humble exploration. Silence reveals itself as a mysterious, even holy Presence, what Quakers hesitantly call “of God.”

Either by grace or temperament, silence first grabbed me when I was in high school. I used to hide in the back of our rowdy study hall: dodging menacing spitballs and courageously resisting the herd instinct to roam the halls with friends. Safely seated in that back row, I pushed my pesky algebra homework aside and read books like *Mysticism* by Evelyn Underhill and *Seeds of Contemplation* and other books by the American spiritual writer Thomas Merton.

But silence is a demanding and unpredictable companion. One moment it comes easily, while moments



later it's an exasperating, exhausting drudgery. We gently learn to welcome both experiences, slowly noticing how they jointly teach us without words. Yet our relationship with silence is often tentative, guarded, and ambiguous: we welcome it and resist it at the same time.

A Silence Assessment

The twentieth-century American musician John Cage was a champion of silence. In his view, silence is always full, never empty: we just need to open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what silence brings our way. One of Cage's most well-known compositions is *4'33"*, a piece in which he asked performers to not play anything for that period of time. I especially enjoy a 2020 performance by the Philharmonie Berlin, conducted by Kirill Petrenko, available on YouTube.

As an experiment, listen to a performance of Cage's piece, keeping track of your immediate reactions and longer-term reflections. Don't panic; it's less than five minutes long. The music's complete score has three instructions:

- Movement I, Tacet
- Movement II, Tacet
- Movement III, Tacet

Tacet is a musical instruction for an instrument to stay silent. What were your reactions? Confused? Impatient? Waiting for something to happen? Did you check to see if your device's sound was on? Did you think it was a joke? Did any surprises or insights sneak up on you as you listened? Did you laugh or at least smile? Did you get angry? Did it wrestle your default expectations to the ground?

Tacet I: Silence for the Sake of More Silence

I lived in the immersive silence of a Trappist monastery for a year. For Trappist monks and nuns, silence is not occasional practice but a way of life, a pervasive atmosphere in which their search for God takes root and grows. The monks told me a secret: silence is God's first language.

I went to the monastery for a number of reasons. Work was overly demanding, and I worried about losing my soul in compulsive velocity, scrutinized productivity, and idle chatter. Anxious to rekindle my ties to silence, I wanted to explore what the Spanish Catholic priest Raimon Panikkar calls the "monk archetype," an instinct for cleansing and challenging silence: a gut instinct in all of us, not just monastics.

Western monasticism started in an isolated cave in the Italian mountains. Benedict of Nursia took silent refuge there to seek God alone. Soon other monastics begged him to start a monastery where he could teach them how to live alone together in what Benedict described as a "school of divine service" in his groundbreaking *Rule for Monasteries*.

Monastic life revolves around three activities: praying the psalms communally several times a day; doing *lectio divina*, or meditative reading of Scripture; and engaging in simple manual labor designed to rest the mind and free the heart. When I was in the monastery, we began each day by praying psalms together at 3:15 a.m. and concluded every day at 7:30 p.m. by alternately reading Psalms 4 and 91. The psalms give voice to the full range of human emotions, and an older monk once whispered to me, "Pray them every day for 30 years, and they'll start praying you rather than the other way around." For work I washed cheese, packed fruitcakes, and worked in the laundry. I also had weekly meetings with my director.

The relentless sameness of the daily schedule actively picks at egoism and attachments to pleasure rather than joy, optimism rather than hope. I marveled at monks who lived for years in the monastery; most were warm-hearted and gentle, simple yet not simplistic, peaceful, and eminently practical.

I began to notice how silence was leading me. For monastics, silence is completed in more silence. I loved monastic living, but I gradually began to see that while I needed to cherish the silence and return to it each day, it was a grace in my life rather than a way of life. I needed to return to managing and teaching. Rather than living a different kind of life, I was being led to live and work differently.

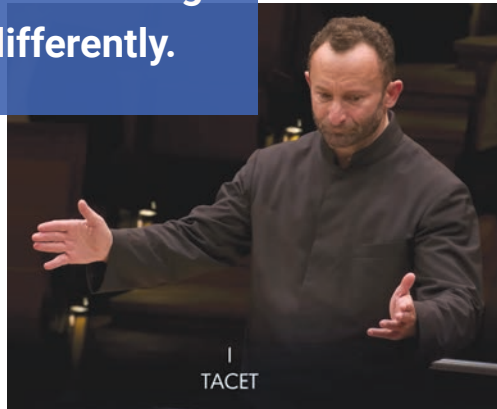
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What did I take with me when I left the experiment with monastic silence? The monastery taught me to cherish the dark hours before dawn, and I still get up before 4:00 a.m. each day to let silence pray in me as I wait for the dawn. Monastics live according to a rule—Benedict’s *Rule for Monasteries*, for example—and designing a personal Rule of Life impels one to be faithful to spiritual practice rather than spiritual thinking alone. It also keeps us accountable.

I’m amazed at how often Quakers tell me they’re going to spend time in a monastery, evidence that the “monk archetype” is alive and well in all spiritual traditions. Monasteries are known for their inclusive hospitality, and most monasteries today welcome people for shorter retreats or extended stays. Both Trappist monks and nuns have such programs as do many other monastic communities.

Tacet II: Silence for the Sake of Discernment

Ten years after my monastic experiment, I wanted to take stock to see if I was still on what Dante called a “straightforward pathway.” Neither undergoing a depressive demand nor a midlife crisis, I sensed I’d marched in place for too long. I needed to find a “school of discernment” to help me become more discriminating about what I paid attention to each day.



Discernment comes down to seeing things for what they are, not the way I’d like them to be. My unconscious attachments to excessive or restrictive ways of thinking and living keep me captive, something the poet William Blake once described as “mind-forged manacles.” It’s all about interior freedom or, as Jung suggested, not walking in shoes that are too tight.

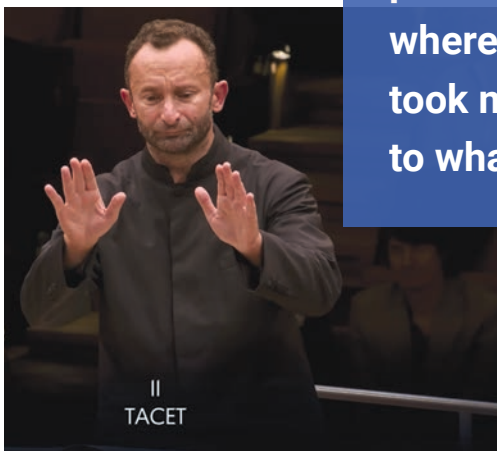
After talking with a trusted advisor, I decided to make a 30-day silent retreat based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of the Spaniard Ignatius of Loyola (Ignatius), who, like

Benedict, lived in a cave for a time where silence was his teacher.

Years later, he organized what he learned in the cave so that others could learn from his experience. The result was a small book of retreat directions called the *Spiritual Exercises*. In its original form, the silent retreat was done over 30 days, under the watchful eyes of a director: a companion skilled in silence, prayer, and discernment.

My director was a blind Jesuit priest. Instead of living in a silent monastery, I made the retreat in a busy Jesuit community made up of professors, pastors, and students in the heart of a city. I lived in a guest room and ate my meals at a separate table.

Trappists are monastic contemplatives, while those formed in Ignatian spirituality are called “contemplatives in action.” As a result, Ignatian silence, prayer, and



I started practicing the Examen each day: a short daily regular pause to honestly take stock of where my desires and activity took me that day, paying attention to what I’m paying attention to.

Pages 9, 11, 12: Stills from a performance of John Cage’s 4’33” by the Philharmonie Berlin, conducted by Kirill Petrenko in 2020.

Previous page: An anechoic chamber at the IBM Yamato Facility in Japan.

discernment is completed in service rather than in monastic-like silence. It's a spirituality of chastened ambition, designed for those who want to do "great things for God." The *Exercises* are structured to help a person find and embrace what is traditionally called the "will of God," or perhaps better, learning to practice resurrection by being fully alive. Discernment helps us see which of our desires take us toward and which take us away from what is "of God."

I took a couple of things with me from my experience of the *Exercises*. I learned to read Bible stories imaginatively, putting myself in the story, watching what

**Silence works like punctuation:
without pauses words run
together and make little sense.
Without pauses in music,
we just hear noise.**

Jesus did, and looking for clues about how to be with and for others. I also started practicing the Examen each day: a short daily regular pause to honestly take stock of where my desires and activity took me that day—what I described earlier as paying attention to what I'm paying attention to. I also began meeting with a spiritual director to help me discern and to keep me accountable.

Tacet III: Silence for the Sake of Truthful Witness

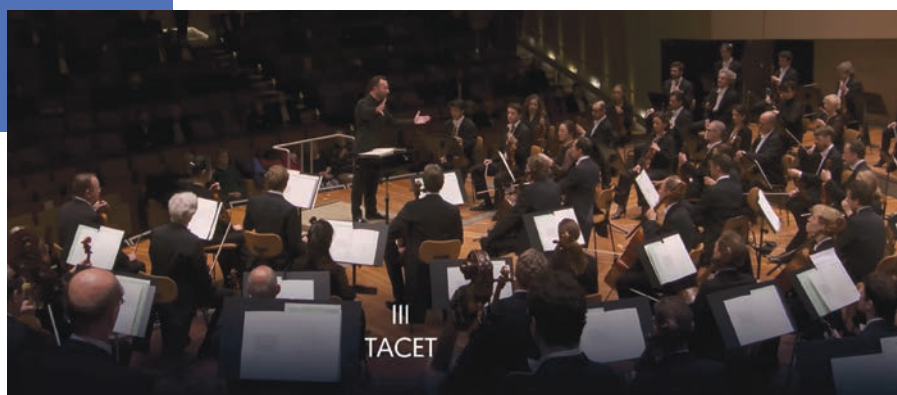
I felt a kinship with Quakers before I ever met one or stepped into a meetinghouse. Something told me I'd find like-minded people among Quakers. And I did. That's why I've attended meetings for worship for 20 years. The silence in meetings does more than promote spiritual growth; it looks to be completed in service and advocacy.

Rather than a one-off *experiment* in silence, Quaker worship has become a regular *experience* of silence. Not only have I found kinship in meetings, but meetings are a spiritual home for me and also keep me grounded in community. Spiritual growth is often imagined as going inward to meet silence and that of God. But

this inward movement needs to find the outward path back into the heart of the human community. The genius of Quakerism is that it sees no artificial separations between contemplation and action, silence and speech, and personal growth and social involvement.

Interestingly, theologians have written about the similarities between the Quaker and Ignatian methods of communal discernment. Analogously, monastics discern and make decisions in communal gatherings called "chapters." Benedict suggested seeking input from younger monastics when the chapter considers a decision.

An elderly Benedictine monk once told me that their community was listening to Rex Amber's book *The Quaker Way*, which was read during their silent dinners. "It feels so much like 'home' to many of us," he told me. I've also been amazed at how many Quakers have told me they planned to do the *Spiritual Exercises* to deepen their spiritual vision and practice. Different paths into silence, but each path similarly leads to experiences of the leadings



of Holy Mystery living at the heart of the world.

My experiments with silence have led me from seeking completion in the contemplative life and moved me more in the direction of being contemplative in action and the Quaker version of silence for the sake of truthful service. Strangely and quite unexpectedly, my three experiments with silence, while different, all attest to the inner unity of our common quest for growth and service. Silence works like punctuation: without pauses words run together and make little sense. Without pauses in music, we just hear noise.

Finale

At the beginning of the *Exercises*, Ignatius cautions that "[i]t is not in an abundance of knowledge that the soul is satisfied, but, rather, in the interior

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Credo

I believe
there is always hope.

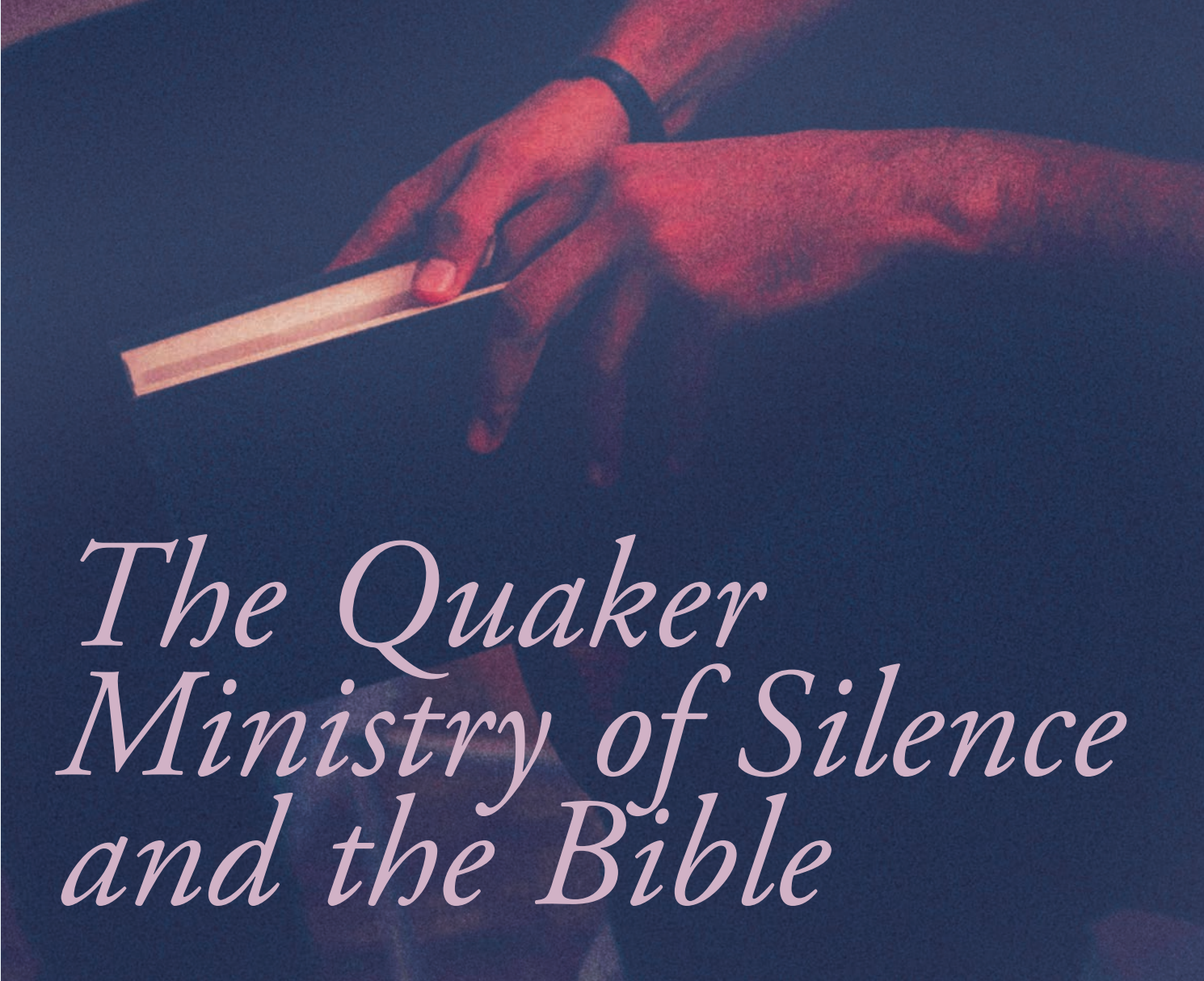
I believe the light shines
where it will and that
shadows never last.
I believe each day
breaks with the night
and that we are born
to do good:
to plant seeds, to sing
together, to partner,
to feed the hungry,
and to love one another.

When I stepped into
the recycling shed,
a bird flew past me
with a scrap of corrugated
cardboard in its beak:
the bird knows that a nest
spells H-O-P-E, that we
build hope piecemeal
piece by piece
weaving together
the bits and bobs
the world throws our way.
That our life is a puzzle,
that broken shards
reflect more light
than a smooth pane of glass.

Tammy Iralu
Gallup, N.M.



Photo by Ewald Fröch



The Quaker Ministry of Silence and the Bible

Jasson Arevalo

Among the first things I experienced when I came to the United States almost three years ago that differed from my Quaker tradition was silent worship. Our gatherings in Central America are filled with sounds from music, preaching, and testimonies. I remember entering our first worship service of the semester at Earlham School of Religion (ESR) and feeling a bit disoriented, primarily because of the novelty of everything around me. Some of this was the new university, language,

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Translated from the Spanish by Renzo Mejía Carranza.

professors, and classmates, etc., but in particular, I didn't know how to behave during the worship service.

So I observed what everyone around me was doing and imitated them. Everyone entered the worship hall at the appointed time, greeted each other discreetly from a distance, found their preferred seats, and remained in silence for approximately 45 minutes. When someone indicated that the meeting had concluded, everyone stood up and said goodbye in the same manner they had greeted each other, and left.

Since that first time, I have participated in many unprogrammed silent worship meetings, so I believe I have learned to navigate them and now understand their dynamics. No, it's not just about sitting and being silent. Amid that absolute silence, many things are happening among those present, both individually and within the community as a whole. Although not all aspects of the

dynamics align with my experience and spiritual background, it is fair to acknowledge that it is an individual and collective practice of great spiritual richness that is worth sharing.

Let's begin by providing a fair explanation of what a Quaker silent worship meeting is. According to Quaker scholar Michael Birkel, the community gathers together in a waiting, expectant frame of spirit. Worship is in silence until a participant feels led to share a message with those present. There may be many, few, or no such messages. The meeting concludes when the person with responsibility for closing the worship discerns that the time has drawn to an end. Usually some people shake hands with the participants at the end. In a modest and simple way, that's how any Quaker silent worship meeting unfolds—nothing extravagant. It is in the spiritual dimension (individual and collective) where the transcendent occurs, for in silence and stillness, the Spirit of God manifests, revealing His will and Truth, bringing peace and fulfillment to everyone.

According to George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, fleshy wisdom dies in silence. As a worshiper turns away from their own thoughts, imagination, and desires in order to wait upon the Lord, their strength is renewed. Fox asserted that God revealed to him the form of silent worship to replace the forms—rife with confusion, schism, and corruption—of the apostate church of that era. We might say that silence was a subversive worship element that God revealed to Fox.

Fox's experience connects me directly to the biblical account in Matthew 6:5–15, where Jesus tells followers not to be like the hypocrites who loved to pray in public (in order to be seen by others) but rather to withdraw and pray in private. In both experiences—that of Fox and that of Jesus—I identify the same three elements: first, the corruption and perversion of prayer or other aspects of worshiping God; second, God's command to His people

to withdraw/separate themselves from such practices; and third, Jesus himself shows them what the correct way to pray is, which is a sober and quiet way, so that with distractions silenced, the voice of God can be heard clearly.

Now let's take a look at the seventeenth-century Scottish Quaker Robert Barclay, known as the Quaker theologian, and his thoughts and experiences related to silence. Barclay places great emphasis on the collective aspect of worship. What unites all those gathered—both outwardly and inwardly—is waiting upon the Lord. Worshipers should focus on God, turning away from their own thoughts and desires, so that the Spirit pours forth a power and virtue that refreshes the soul, thereby fulfilling the promise that He is in the midst of those who gather in His name. Barclay highlights three things that take place in corporate worship: the refreshing of the soul, the building up of the church, and the glorification of God.

Barclay supports his argument on collective/communal worship with Matthew 18:20, which emphasizes God's promise to be present wherever people gather in His name. In Proposition 6 of his 1676 *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Barclay refers to the manifestations and signs that occur in worship services. Barclay cites 1 Corinthians 2:4, where Paul tells the Corinthians that his ministry to them was not in the works of the flesh but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power. Barclay uses this Pauline reference to say that the manifestations and signs that occur in worship services are not due to human wisdom or ability but to the power of the Spirit.

Joseph John Gurney, a British Friend born 140 years after Barclay, has recently become one of my favorite Quaker figures. In the section "On Silence" from *Observations on the Religious Peculiarities of the Society of Friends*, Gurney says that if he were asked

Amid that absolute silence, many things are happening among those present, both individually and within the community as a whole. Although not all aspects of the dynamics align with my experience and spiritual background, it is fair to acknowledge that it is an individual and collective practice of great spiritual richness that is worth sharing.



Illustration by MstMoushumi

what is most essential in worship, he would not hesitate to answer that it is a profound humility and submission of the soul to God. Gurney draws a distinction between the worshiper and God: the former is finite, ignorant, and weak, while the latter is omnipotent and eternal.

Gurney cited the prophets Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zechariah to argue that in worship, the most important thing is the exaltation of God and the subsequent complete surrender of the worshiper before their Lord. Personally, the first biblical reference that came to my mind when reading Gurney's idea was the one narrated in Isaiah 6, when Isaiah has a vision in which God is seated on His throne and there is heavenly worship before Him: seraphim declaring, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). Faced with such a scene of worship of God, Isaiah recognizes his own weakness and exalts the King whom his eyes have seen. This idea, part of Quaker worship philosophy, has a solid biblical foundation and was strongly based on it.

Contemporary Quaker scholar Michael Birkel emphasizes that vocal ministry—an audible message, usually brief, that someone expresses during the worship—should come from a deep sense of community, which means that it must arise from inner communion with God and the other worshipers, and be for the edification of the worshipping community. The audible message might be a verse from Scripture for collective reflection or a message of exhortation to deepen one's relationship with God. Still, one must be self-aware so as not to convey a message whose impulse is superficial and emotional. We must not create a message that feeds the personal ego or is intended to please others.

Peter's sermon at Pentecost, as narrated in Acts 2:14–42, although lengthy, bears several similarities to Quaker vocal ministry. Firstly, it takes place in an atmosphere of community and unity, as the Bible says that they were all together in one accord (2:1, King James Version).

Secondly, they had gathered to await the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which seems similar to the "expectant waiting" practiced by Quakers in

their silent meetings. Thirdly, since they were all gathered in God's name, as Barclay previously mentioned, the Holy Spirit came, bringing powerful manifestations, one of which was the conversion of around 3,000 people as a result of Peter's preaching.

Although the topic has been addressed primarily as a communal and ecclesial practice, Quakerism also encompasses and teaches private prayer and silence as an individual practice. Birkel states that the communal experience of worship should be complemented by the nourishment each individual receives during personal devotional retreats, a process he describes as interior prayer. William Penn expressed to his son in his writing *Counsel and Advice to His Wife and Children* that in the stillness and silence of the early hours of the day, before the sun shines in its full glory, and before undertaking any other activity, the worshiper withdraws and encounters God in prayer. This prayer may be accompanied by reading and meditating on the Scriptures. Penn reminds his son that amid the activities of his day, he should be mindful of God's Presence with him and urges him to be careful with words, actions, and thoughts. Penn's advice to his son describes the most familiar scenario of silent worship to me, since in Guatemala Yearly Meeting, individual prayer is more emphasized than collective prayer.

Mark 1:35 recounts how Jesus withdrew to a solitary place in the early morning to pray. David also mentions morning prayer in Psalm 5:3. It seems that the quiet of the morning, while not having any magical or indispensable factor for prayer, does have some very favorable characteristics, such as silence, stillness, and the freshness of mind and spirit of the worshiper. Being the first activity of the day, it is a demonstration of the place God occupies in our lives. If we prioritized other daily activities before prayer, we probably would not even pray at all. By prioritizing it over all other activities, we are demonstrating that it is something irreplaceable in our daily lives. Also, being the first activity of the day, it allows us to entrust all the other activities of the day to God's guidance and direction, since we want every word,

Illustration by mitay20



Relevant and genuine silent worship must yield outward evidence—such as Quaker testimonies and the fruits of the Spirit—which, enlivened by the power of the Spirit, can transform a society that stands in such dire need of it.



thought, and action of the day to be pleasing to God and to have His blessing.

At the age of 20, George Fox was engaged in incessant inner searching when he was assailed by great temptation and despair. Fox recalled that Jesus had also been tempted but had not yielded to Satan's attacks, and so he (Fox) continued to seek guidance from priests and ministers. Fox took long, solitary walks at night and in the early morning, and he read the Scriptures: all to alleviate his anguish. He continued in this way for two years until, in 1646, God revealed Himself to him during a solitary walk, letting him know that no earthly thing was necessary to be His minister but only the gift of God. Then Fox was satisfied and marveled at God's goodness. I believe that Fox, being tempted and going through much human anguish, followed Christ's example by seeking—in prayer, silence, and solitude—God's answer, which alone was sufficient to satisfy his condition.

In addition to the communal or collective aspect—as well as the individual aspect—of Quaker worship, there also exists an inner aspect (known as “Inward Light”) as well as an outer one (known as “outward light”). Birkel mentions that the Spirit first transforms the individual through the inner worship and then the individual manifests spiritual virtues capable of transforming their environment. These transformative practices within Quakerism are known as “testimonies,” which are essentially manifestations of the inner transformation of worshipers who then seek to transform society.

The public witness of early Quakerism is the most

appropriate example to support the argument that worship is only truly effective if it leads the worshiper from the temple or place of worship into the outside world to embody the fruits of the Spirit. The Quakers began with their refusal to remove their hats before those in power, refusal to take oaths or to support war, and later they extended their activism to fighting against racial segregation and advocating for the rights of women, prisoners, and other causes. These radical actions

led George Fox himself to prison on several occasions, but it was a price he was willing to pay for having a living faith and not merely a “nominal one.” Quaker testimonies are, in biblical terms, “the fruit of the Spirit” mentioned in Galatians 5:22–25. The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; and against such things, the Scriptures add, there is no law.

Although I am far from being an expert on Quakerism and its practice of silent worship, it is my opinion that the entire development (or a large part of it) and practice of Quaker silent worship was conceived and based strongly on the Scriptures. This is evidenced in historical Quaker writings, which show that the early Quakers were men and women of great biblical knowledge and reliance, and they based much of their lives on the Bible.

I am convinced that silent worship is not merely an element of Quaker history but a ministry that remains highly vital and relevant in these times that are so filled with noise and distractions. Every Quaker is called to carry forward the legacy of this noble practice—not as a lifeless tradition or ritual but as the means to connect with God and be transformed by the power of His Spirit from the inside out. Relevant and genuine silent worship must yield outward evidence—such as Quaker testimonies and the fruits of the Spirit—which, enlivened by the power of the Spirit, can transform a society that stands in such dire need of it. ■

What Can We Say?

Steven Dale Davison

SIX ESSENTIALS OF QUAKER FAITH

When someone asks us, “What do Quakers believe?” we can find ourselves fumbling for an answer. What can we say that is true to the depth of our tradition yet simple and short enough to serve in the situation? How can we give an answer that honors both the full breadth of our tradition and the significant diversity of Quaker faith and experience?

I was given some answers in 1991 at a consultation co-sponsored by Earlham School of Religion and Quaker Hill Conference Center in Richmond, Indiana. Friends from across the Quaker theological and geographical spectrum had gathered to consider these questions: What do we all hold in common as Quaker treasure? What are the essentials of Quaker faith and practice?

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In two gathered meetings, I felt that Friends at that consultation were brought into unity around at least five basic tenets of Quaker faith. I feel that the answers I'm about to offer have come not from myself so much as from the Holy Spirit (though I've met Friends who also attended who vehemently disagree). To these five, I have added a sixth, which I believe follows naturally from both the work at the consultation and from Quaker tradition itself.

Here is a concise summary of these six essentials of Quaker faith, which are the foundation for some distinctive elements of our faith and practice.

1. THE LIGHT WITHIN

Now by “God,” I mean the Mystery Reality behind our religious experience, whatever that experience is and however we name it: the Light, the Light of Christ, “that of God” in everyone.

From our experience of the Light Within arise important Quaker distinctives: for example, a transformative, listening spirituality; universal grace; and openings, leadings, and callings to ministry—including vocal ministry.

2. THE GATHERED MEETING

Just as we can know the Divine directly as individuals, so too the community may be led directly and collectively by the Holy Spirit and gathered into unity and joy. The Quaker movement was born out of such a gathering in a second Pentecost when George Fox convinced a large number of Seekers on Firbank Fell in 1652, and the Spirit has been gathering us as a people of God ever since. This experience of gathering in the Spirit ushers us as a body into unity, energy, and a clarity of direction. It strengthens our faith in the work of the Spirit, our faith in each other, in the way of love, and in the way of Friends.

From our experience of this collective communion arise many Quaker distinctives, among them silent, waiting worship; corporate discernment; and business conducted under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We hold a corporate listening spirituality practiced in several forms, such as worship sharing and clearness committees as well as the meeting's discernment and support of ministry.

Thus the distinctive value that Friends can offer to seekers is not just “beliefs” but real experience of the Divine: personal, individual experience within ourselves and collective experience in communities covered by the Spirit.

3. CONTINUING REVELATION

God's revelation did not cease with the writing of Scripture but continues for and in those who heed the Light. The Spirit has never ceased working to strengthen and comfort us, to guide us, to correct us, and to forgive us when we step off the path. It heals us and inspires us, both as individuals and as communities. It awakens love within us.

From our experience of continuing revelation arise some Quaker distinctives: openings, leadings, ministries (including vocal ministry, again), and new testimonies.

4. LETTING OUR LIVES SPEAK

The Spirit calls us to live our outward lives as testimony to the Truth that has been awakened inwardly within us. We seek the Spirit's presence, guidance, and grace in all moments, tasks, and situations. This principle finds expression in our approach to right living and in truths about right living that have become settled testimonies. And we see all of life as sacramental and as opportunities for baptism in the Spirit.

A number of Quaker distinctives besides the testimonies arise from this principle, including the faith and practice of Quaker ministry (again), Quaker missions, and evangelism.

5. LOVE

We are called to love as the first motion in our walking in the world. This love is something we *do*, not just feel; it is something we do, especially when we least feel like doing it and when we least “love” the other in the conventional sense. This includes treating our enemies as we should.

But this love is more than just an obligation. Love also is the joy we find in each other when our faith and our labor together bear fruit, when God's joy in us becomes complete. Love is also the key to being gathered in the Spirit; love is the gift bestowed by the gathering.

6. WHAT CANST THOU SAY?

Religious life for Friends is answering with personal integrity and with our lives the questions, “What canst thou say? . . . And what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?” We base our religious lives on what we ourselves have experienced. We do not simply follow the experience and dictates of others, though we respect the testimony of Scripture and tradition. What can *we* say as the body of Christ, based on our collective experience?

Thus the distinctive value that Friends can offer to seekers is not just “beliefs” but real experience of the Divine: personal, individual experience within ourselves and collective experience in communities covered by the Spirit.

So for us Friends, “What do you believe?” is not quite the wrong question; it's just not the more important question. The more important question is, “What canst thou say?”

think of these essentials as describing the house that the Spirit of the Christ has built for us. The first four of these essentials are the foundation for the

superstructure of Quaker distinctives. Love is the mortar that holds it all together. And experience is the rock upon which the whole edifice stands.

But now, I offer a reality check. We aspire to these elements of faith, practice, and experience, but in reality, we fall short at times, as any community will do with respect to its ideals.

Moreover, I have no doubt that some Friends will disagree with the choices I feel I received in that consultation, and will perhaps cite things that I've not included. While we may not have experienced all of these elements ourselves, we take them on faith anyway—or we do not. We lay out our beliefs as a community, and then we each follow our own Guide as best we can as individuals. We know many of these beliefs have been confirmed in the experience of other Friends and their meetings throughout our history, though they may not all speak to us personally right now. Whatever we may believe individually, we still do have something we can say collectively.

Many Friends might ask, where is Jesus Christ in your list? Where is any mention of sin or salvation, or any explicitly theistic understanding of the Divine? My presentation of Quaker essentials has been fairly Liberal in its sensibilities and vocabulary. It's an answer that offers what perhaps only some Quakers believe. I've tried to rewrite these six principles as I imagine a more Christ-centered Friend might, but I found that I could not do so from the integrity of my own experience.

For the difference here goes deeper than just the choice of vocabulary or of "belief," more broadly understood. It's a difference in experience and in the very character of religious life. Christ-centered Friends conduct their religious lives as a *relationship*. There is a "who" at the center of religious life—Jesus, the Christ—not a "what," not some vaguely defined Spirit. Whereas, for many Liberal Friends, *experience* is the central thing, for which "the Spirit" is a placeholder. So how can we agree on the essentials of our faith if we base them on differing experiences?

Belief, tradition, and our experience are in a dynamic dialogue with each other. What we think and how we think about our spiritual experience help to shape and support our experience, just as our experiences help to shape our thinking. It's a feedback relationship: faith and experience in fruitful engagement with each other in real time. We call this "continuing revelation."



The Source behind our beliefs may be a Mystery, and we may give it different names, but it is real! We know it is real because we have experienced it ourselves.

The writings of the Bible and of early Friends, and of Friends since, are attempts by writers to faithfully share their experience and work out its potential for them and for their community, because the Holy Spirit has hold of their minds and tongues. They are trying with their writings to answer their peers' questions and challenges, their children's questions, their own questions.

So I think that it still comes down to experience. Have you been called to discipleship by Jesus Christ? Then that's the central Mystery Reality of your religious life. If so, you do your best to understand what that experience means for you. We Quakers have a rich tradition that can help you develop that understanding and share it with others.

But if your experience is otherwise—if, like me, you've not had such a call to Jesus's discipleship—then what *is* your experience? What *is* the central Mystery Reality of your religious life? And what in our tradition helps you understand it and share it with others with clarity and confidence?

Each Quaker community seeks its own truth in corporate discernment under the guidance of a Spirit of Love and Truth, however it experiences and names that Spirit. Hopefully our answers do arise and are confirmed in covered meetings for worship with a concern for the Truth.

And for this we are in good hands. We are in the hands of the Spirit that anointed Jesus at his baptism. We are in the hands of the Spirit that anointed his disciples at the Pentecost; that anointed the Seekers on Firbank Fell; that

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Carried

For Joe (Josef) Parko

The log where my dad perched as a bluebird
in the full sun
was carried by water's flow
to tree shade.

In its split center,
it has collected
pine needles
and dirt and twigs
from the summer torrents
that have rushed through.

There are wild sunflowers growing around
it. It is cool
there in the shade and
I can see how it is both

falling apart
and coming together.

Kim Parko
Santa Fe, N.M.

The Gift of Good Boundaries

Susan Calhoun

Photo by Judy Ray



WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM ELEANOR DART

In *Holy the Firm*, Annie Dillard describes a moth that is drawn to a flame, is caught in it, and “burns, like a wick, for hours.” She is referring to the life of a writer who is transformed by one’s pursuit of truth. This is also true in the religious life. When we apply ourselves to our

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religious ideals, we are transformed to become a light for others.

The ability of a person to be a light for others is diminished when a person does not value themselves. This can occur through a value system, such as the Christian faith, which emphasizes care for others over care of oneself. This sets the giver against themselves when they believe that others are more worthy of care. To fully claim one’s abilities, a person must value themselves as much as they value others; they must like themselves. To do so is to have a positive identity. Responsibility to oneself, beginning with honesty about one’s wants and needs,

enables a person to be responsible to others. Responsibility for oneself in relationships is one's integrity, and it is maintained by having good boundaries.

I was raised in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), where I was taught that I should always put others' needs before my own. The LCMS taught that everyone was born with a bad will and could not, of themselves, want to do any good things. My mother also became depressed during my adolescence; she seemed to need someone to agree with her and to support her when the rest of my family did not. I never developed my own boundaries because I always deferred to her. Further, in my family, it was important for a woman not to express or address her needs directly. Female goodness came from not recognizing one's needs but prioritizing the needs or desires of someone else. This is the antithesis of a positive identity: a person is not supposed to acknowledge themselves at all.

In short, I learned not to have any boundaries. This led to serious mental health problems by the end of high school. Later, psychology and psychotherapy helped me learn to take care of myself and find a way of being religious while maintaining boundaries.

After I graduated from college, I found Unitarian Universalists who helped me acknowledge myself. I eventually had a dream to learn about being in a spiritual community, which I interpreted to mean that I should visit a Quaker meeting. I did, and after I had been at Pima Meeting in Tucson, Arizona, for several years, I found Rufus Jones's *Social Law in the Spiritual World*. It allowed me to join what I had learned through therapy about self-care with my study of psychology and my practice of spirituality. Jones explains how a person can develop themselves to embody the values they hold most

Responsibility to oneself, beginning with honesty about one's wants and needs, enables a person to be responsible to others. Responsibility for oneself in relationships is one's integrity, and it is maintained by having good boundaries.

dear. He writes that each person has a quest to realize one's relationship to God, or one's relationship to life itself, through the development of one's character. Beginning with the emergence of one's will in early childhood, a person can apply themselves to the real but unseen spiritual values such as "love and sympathy, goodness, and patience." Jones writes that as we seek to embody our ever-greater understanding of these characteristics, we come to have a "divine-human life." As we come to be the person we actually like, we'll want to maintain our identity to be able to share ourselves with others; in other words, we want to have good boundaries.

When I first came to Pima Meeting, I was amazed by the number of women who were able to state their own needs and positions plainly and without apology. It is clear, in this community, that people have different opinions and a person has to do what they think is right, even if that is not what other people want to do.

One woman in particular, Eleanor Dart, an elder at Pima Meeting who is active in Intermountain Yearly Meeting, impressed me with her ability to be honest about her limits. She was able to share her truths, which come from her vulnerability. Recently, we sat down to talk about how she became able to establish



Photo by Judy Ray

Previous page: Eleanor Dart.

Left: The Pima Meetinghouse in Tucson, Ariz..

and maintain good boundaries.

Early in her life, Eleanor experienced a gross violation of her boundaries: Eleanor and her sister were sexually abused as infants by a family member (not their father). Memories of these experiences were repressed but were the underlying reason for her anger as a young adult.

Because anger was unacceptable to her family and her Quaker meeting, she withdrew from her family and her meeting. The memories of her abuse resurfaced when she was 40, and she began therapy, which she continued for five years. She also attended an Incest Survivors Anonymous group twice a week. Through both of these experiences, she gained support to recognize and talk about what had happened, was able to work through her anger, and to reconnect with her family and her Quaker life.



Eleanor Dart during her chemotherapy treatment.

At first, the experiences of abuse and the refusal of her family and her Quaker meeting to accept her anger inhibited Eleanor from developing a positive identity. Her words follow:

I think that I felt that I was a bad person for a very long time, partly because of the abuse, [because] children think they

deserve it. I was nonverbal at the time this happened to me, but still, it's like darkness comes at you, and you absorb some of that, and you think it's yours. The darkness didn't belong to me; I was an infant; it belonged to my family member, but I certainly absorbed some of that, and then, [I was] also . . . the rebel in my family. ("We are an all-good Quaker family and we don't talk about anger and stuff like that; we don't do that." But I did it.) I expressed and acted out anger, and I got punished for it, so I really had a sense of myself as part of me was bad and shameful.

Through help from other people, Eleanor became self-affirming.

When I became aware of my history, which was through flashbacks and was very traumatizing. (I got therapy and attended a support group for incest survivors.) So there was a lot of support in that context, to name it—the secret I had been carrying without knowing it, that had everything to do with so much about my history, and so much pain, and so much alienation. I became more aware of what had happened and not afraid to say so. And that suited me. It also suited my inclination. I think I've had that inclination since I was born; I want to tell the truth.

A clinical consultation group also helped Eleanor address issues without feeling a sense of shame. Through her own studies to become a therapist, Eleanor met an extremely capable facilitator whom she asked to lead a clinical consultation group.

For like eight years, I met once a week with a group of therapists with her as a leader, and she would not let us avoid things that were limiting our ability to do good work as therapists. She was really good at seeing it and challenging you to look at it in yourself. . . . That was all about facing up to mistakes and not being ashamed but learning from them. . . . We really, really looked at that stuff and that helps because there was no shame in that group. She didn't shame us. She just said, "Ok . . . now look at this stuff. Look at it. What are you going to do to become the person you want to be?"

Through the years, Eleanor has learned how to set boundaries to be in better relationships with other people. When she is responsible to herself, she is able to be responsible to other people. She has learned that when she does not acknowledge her own limitations, she can end up hurting other people. In 2014, Eleanor was diagnosed with cancer, and she said the following while she was being treated:

I sat down and I made a chart of the prior five or ten years, of all the things I had been doing and I looked at it, and I got it. I saw that I had been overdoing and exhausting myself physically to where my immune system was trashed over a period . . . of at least five years. Of course I got cancer, of course my body forced me to stop. So I've learned—that's a huge one—but I've learned from experiences like that, the

trouble that will result, not just for me but imagine for my husband and my family—maybe I’m going to die now, or I’m so sick that I need to be taken care of in a major way over a period of years. You know, that’s a terrible burden to put on others, even if they love you and they’re perfectly willing to do it. If I [can avoid that], that would be better. So, realizing the damage I’ve done and realizing I don’t want to do that kind of damage anymore. . . .

This led her to place limitations on herself and to say no when she needed to. Eleanor further states that a person can learn to respect their limitations by listening to themselves:

I kind of think there is a Quaker model in there, and it has to do with leadings. I perceive leadings as everything from very small to very large. So when I’m asked to do something, I ask myself, am I led? And it might be something really small, but it’s still the right question: am I led? And not wanting to, is what my sister [with whom Eleanor has an informal clearness process when they are asked to do anything within their meetings], who always helps me, calls “a stop in the mind”: kind of like a little stop sign in your mind that flips up and says, “I don’t wanna,” or it’s saying no in some form, and, if you have a stop in the mind, you’ve got to respect that because you’re headed into doing something you don’t want to do.

She further clarifies:

There are things in life that I am not led to do, and I do them even though I don’t want to, because they’re part of life. I don’t want to clean my house; I don’t like cleaning the house . . . there’s a certain amount of things having to do with being in a marriage and having a home that I don’t want to do, but I want to have my marriage work more than I don’t want to do them. So sometimes I have a stop in the mind that’s self-indulgence—I just would rather read another book than do anything, like wash a floor—so a stop in the mind needs to be inquired into: is it self-indulgence? Or is it in some strong internal place that not only do I not want to [but] that there also isn’t an imperative that will override that? That’s important.

Cause sometimes there is, and I have to respect that. So if I’ve done that kind of discernment—and

Honoring our boundaries allows us to embody our greatest values, to be the Light we truly wish to be.

that can happen very quickly, or not—then I don’t have trouble saying no. Well . . . there’s this long history in terms of women and feminism and learning to say no. Somebody said to me once (this is Quakerism again) that in order to say one strong yes, you have to say five strong nos. So if I want to be able to have my yes—to have the light and energy to carry out a leading that is a yes—I have to say no to the things that will divert me. That’s a hard thing to learn in this world . . . and I think it may be harder for women because historically we haven’t been brought up well to say no. So there’s a learning curve there, and I’m past the point now [laughs] where it’s difficult for me. Um, doesn’t mean I’m always going to get it right, but I’m pretty good at saying no. And if you’re going to say it, say it!

Following one’s leadings helps a person have better relationships. Eleanor explains:

See, if I say yes to something that someone wants me to do, but I really don’t want to do it, I’m going to end up being a pissy person. I’m going to end up mad at them; I’m going to end up annoyed; I’m going to end up shirking it; I’m going to end up not doing it and feeling guilty. I mean there are all kinds of bad consequences that will interfere with my relationship with this person I care about, who really wants me to do something, or maybe it’s the meeting, and I’ll f— it up. I’ll muddy it. If I start to do something I really don’t want to do, it’s going to create trouble [that] we will then have to overcome, and it’s better not to get into it to begin with.

Honoring our boundaries allows us to embody our greatest values, to be the Light we truly wish to be. As Eleanor has illustrated, we sometimes lose our sense of wholeness through our experiences in the world, but through relationships with other people, we can regain appropriate boundaries. Honoring our boundaries and the boundaries of others is our integrity. We become the embodiment of our greatest ideals and a light to others. □



Child Safeguarding in Quaker Spaces

Truth and Transparency in Dealing with Abuse

Sharlee DiMenichi

Safeguarding children in Quaker schools and meetings takes community-wide effort, according to those who work and volunteer to protect children in Friends spaces. In decades past, many Quaker entities did not have child safeguarding policies. Friends often assumed that Quakers were wholly good people, not capable of child abuse.

Child sexual abuse scandals, such as those involving the Catholic Church and Penn State University, have raised public awareness about the importance of prevention policies and practices. Legal requirements and insurance company standards have guided the development of safeguarding policies that are aimed at preventing abuse and reporting allegations.

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for Friends Journal. She is a member of Lehigh Valley Meeting in Bethlehem, Pa. Contact: sharlee@friendsjournal.org.

CNN reported that Penn State assistant football coach and defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky was convicted of multiple counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and other charges stemming from his abuse of ten minors. In 2012, Sandusky received a 30- to 60-year prison sentence.

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education fined Penn State \$2.4 million for violating a law that required it to report Sandusky's crimes to authorities.

In 2002, *The Boston Globe* reported in its Spotlight series that Catholic Church officials moved former priest John J. Geoghan from parish to parish despite repeated accusations that he was sexually abusing children in his congregations. The reporting led to widespread accusations against Catholic priests worldwide.

Quakers and others in several English-speaking countries, including the United States, spoke with *Friends Journal* about developing child protection policies and

responding to allegations of abuse. Policies and training help counteract tendencies to hide accusations of abuse.

Members of faith communities might feel reluctant to draw negative public attention to their congregations. They might also disbelieve accusations of sexual abuse because they consider members of their house of worship to be trustworthy people. Feelings of loyalty and seeing someone as a trustworthy Friend are deep-seated and may inhibit meeting members from recognizing and reporting child abuse, according to Mark Mitchell, safeguarding officer for Quakers in Britain, also called Britain Yearly Meeting. Mitchell (who is not a Quaker) previously worked as a detective in charge of child abuse investigations in London.

“Sometimes the reputation of that faith group is more important than the care of a victim,” Mitchell said. “They think if they know someone, they know them 100 percent.”

One Friend pointed out that egalitarianism makes covering up allegations less likely than it would be in denominations led by layers of clergy. The non-hierarchical structure of Quakerism makes hiding abuse more difficult than it would be in a more top-down faith community, according to Sheilagh Reaper-Reynolds, clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting Education Committee.

“It’s hard for people to make decisions to push things under the carpet,” Reaper-Reynolds said.

Reaper-Reynolds also serves as Ireland Yearly Meeting’s designated liaison person, the individual in charge of ensuring adherence to guidelines and reporting allegations to authorities. In addition, she is the yearly meeting’s vetting officer who handles screening adults who wish to work with children.

Some Quaker schools have had to respond to accusations of sexual abuse of students by adults in the school community. Spanish teacher Fernando Antonio Asturizaga worked at Friends Community School (FCS) in Maryland. In 2012, Asturizaga was convicted of four counts of second-degree rape; two of the counts carried 20-year sentences, and two of the counts called for ten-year sentences, according to court documents. He was also convicted of eight counts of second-degree sex offense with each count punishable by a ten-year sentence. In addition, the jury found the former teacher guilty of four counts of third-degree sex offenses; one count called for a two-year sentence, and three counts carried six-month prison terms. Asturizaga was also convicted of two counts of child abuse, one of which carried a 15-year sentence and the other of which was punishable by a ten-year prison term.

One key piece of advice is to observe the rule of three, which means that there is never an adult alone with a child. The rule of three applies even in virtual meetings; adults should never be alone with children even when meeting online.

The abuse took place between 1999 and 2001 while Asturizaga was a teacher at FCS and the victim was a student, according to Montgomery County, Maryland authorities.

The person Asturizaga was convicted of raping was a student who was ten years old when the abuse began. An email to attorney John Beins seeking comment for this article from the survivor went unanswered. Beins represented the survivor in a 2018 lawsuit against the school and other defendants. Additional defendants included Adelphi (Md.) Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM), the estate of Fernando Asturizaga, as well as former FCS heads of school Thomas Goss and Marcia O-Neil-White. An email to attorney Jason Waters seeking comment from the former heads of school received no reply. Waters represented the former heads of school in the 2018 lawsuit.

The lawsuits do not allege that former heads of school, or individuals from Adelphi Meeting or BYM, participated in abuse. The 2018 lawsuit explains that between 1999 and 2001, Adelphi Meeting appointed members of the FCS board. The suit also claims that BYM officers and trustees knew of allegations by the survivor’s mother that Asturizaga had an inappropriate relationship with the survivor but did not report these concerns to the police.

The 2018 lawsuit, which was filed in the Circuit Court of Fairfax County, Virginia, was settled in 2019. Another lawsuit was filed in 2023 by a former student identified as Jane Doe who alleged that Asturizaga sexually abused her beginning when she was



Writing and publicizing child protection and response policies can prepare Friends at Quaker schools, yearly meetings, and monthly meetings to reduce the risk of child abuse and respond to any allegations reported.

eight years old and continued until she was 18 years old, spanning the years from 1993 through 2002. Defendants in that lawsuit included FCS; Adelphi Meeting; Baltimore Yearly Meeting; the estate of Fernando Asturizaga; and former FCS heads of school Thomas Goss, Marcia O'Neil-White, and Judith Smith. The estate of Jane Manring, former head of school, was also a defendant. Jason Waters, the attorney representing the former heads of school in the 2023 lawsuit, did not reply to a request for them to comment. The 2023 lawsuit, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland-Greenbelt Division, was settled in 2025, according to court records.

In 2018, while Asturizaga was incarcerated, authorities identified him as a person of interest in the cold-case investigation into the disappearance and legally declared death of Alison, mother of a survivor of his attacks, according to a press release by Montgomery County, Maryland. [*Friends Journal* is omitting the mother's last name.] Asturizaga died by suicide in prison shortly after

the announcement that police were investigating him as a person of interest, according to the press release.

Marcy Seitel taught at Friends Community School from fall 1999 to spring 2004. She was a friend of Alison, who she wants to be remembered for her writing talent; strong, loving spirit; and infectious laugh.

Asked about advice to school faculty and staff wishing to ensure child safety, Seitel suggested that each employee should make sure to understand the policies that guide the school. Protection policies are developed by experts on child abuse and grooming. She explained that if something in the policy is unclear, workers should ask their supervisors to clarify it.

Employees should carefully follow policies about reporting any concerning behavior, Seitel noted.

"People should go by that guidance even if they really like the person," Seitel said.

Recognizing that there is that of God in everyone also involves realizing that there are aspects of people that are not of God, according to Seitel. She noted that when Asturizaga taught at FCS, he was extremely well-liked by many teachers, staff members, and parents.

FCS's current head of school, Rachel Kane, discussed the school's current child safeguarding policy and practices in a statement to *Friends Journal*. It says, in part:

As an organization, Friends Community School has confidentiality obligations that prohibit us from sharing certain information about Fernando Asturizaga, an FCS employee in the 1990s and early 2000s. In subsequent years, members of our community have come forward to share their experiences of abuse by Mr. Asturizaga. As a community that centers children and prioritizes respect and safety for all, the behaviors those community members have described violate our deepest core values.

All employees, staff, and parents/guardians must also review and acknowledge expectations outlined in the employee and family handbooks. These policies address all forms of interaction with students, including physical, verbal, written, and online communication, and they establish both preventive expectations and clear response procedures when concerns arise. We review our policies and practices regularly in light of evolving legal standards and best practices. For example, we recently added language related to AI and non-consensual intimate images.

Faculty, staff, and parent/guardian volunteers must complete criminal background checks, sex offender registry checks, and annual orientation or boundaries training before participating in school activities and/or chaperoning trips.

Friends Community School is committed to maintaining a culture of safety, accountability, transparency, and care for all children. In addition to ensuring that school staff understand and fulfill their obligations as legally mandated reporters, the school's safeguarding expectations emphasize appropriate adult-student boundaries and explicitly recognize the power imbalance between adults and students. Employees are required to communicate with students and families only through school-approved channels, remain observable when interacting with students, maintain professional boundaries in conversations and physical contact, and respect and support students who disclose abuse or neglect. They are prohibited from private or inappropriately personal communication with students and retaliating against individuals who report misconduct, or engaging in any sexual, exploitative, or otherwise harmful conduct. Additionally, FCS strictly prohibits sexual or romantic relationships or communications both with current students and with former students under age 23.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting has had a youth safety policy for more than 25 years, according to Sarah Gillooly, general secretary of BYM. The success of such policies depends on their daily implementation, Gillooly noted. "We must consistently cultivate a community of practice that understands the risks and warning signs of child abuse and neglect, that takes consistent action to reduce those risks and immediately intervene when any troubling behaviors arise," Gillooly said in a statement.

"As we have learned from experts, child predators target 'high trust' communities, such as religious communities, to gain access to potential victims," Gillooly said in the statement.

BYM does not oversee or govern any Quaker school, according to Gillooly.

Decision making in response to allegations of abuse can place school and yearly meeting leaders in morally complicated positions. When Mike Hanas was head of school at Carolina Friends School in Durham, North Carolina, he learned that several former students alleged that a previous principal, as well as a former middle school teacher, had sexually abused them. The accusations stemmed from alleged actions when the students attended the school between 1969 and 1975. One of the former pupils stated that an ex-middle school teacher sexually abused them in 1976. Former *Friends Journal* news editor Erik Hanson reported on the accusations in 2019.

In 2012, when the students made the allegations, Hanas was not sure what the school could do to address accusations of abuse that had allegedly occurred decades prior.

Hanas explained in a recent interview that when he learned of the allegations, he notified child protective services and law enforcement. He also hired two attorneys to conduct a forensic investigation. Hanas met regularly with the survivors over a period of between 18 and 24 months. Hanas asked for the victims' guidance on how to handle the allegations.

Friends Journal reported that the statute of limitations had expired, so charges could not be brought against the accused.

Some of the survivors told Hanas that they wanted to share their accounts of the abuse. He had to balance the value of transparency with the importance of safeguarding the confidentiality of survivors who did not want their experiences discussed with the school community or the public.

Once the investigation found that the allegations were credible, Hanas decided to name the perpetrators, both in correspondence with the school community and in the media. Hanas invited the perpetrators to be part of the inquiry process. He intended to provide safety for survivors of abuse. The former middle school teacher died by suicide after the allegations were publicized.

"I do not pretend to have no part to play. My commitment to transparency was likely a component," Hanas said.

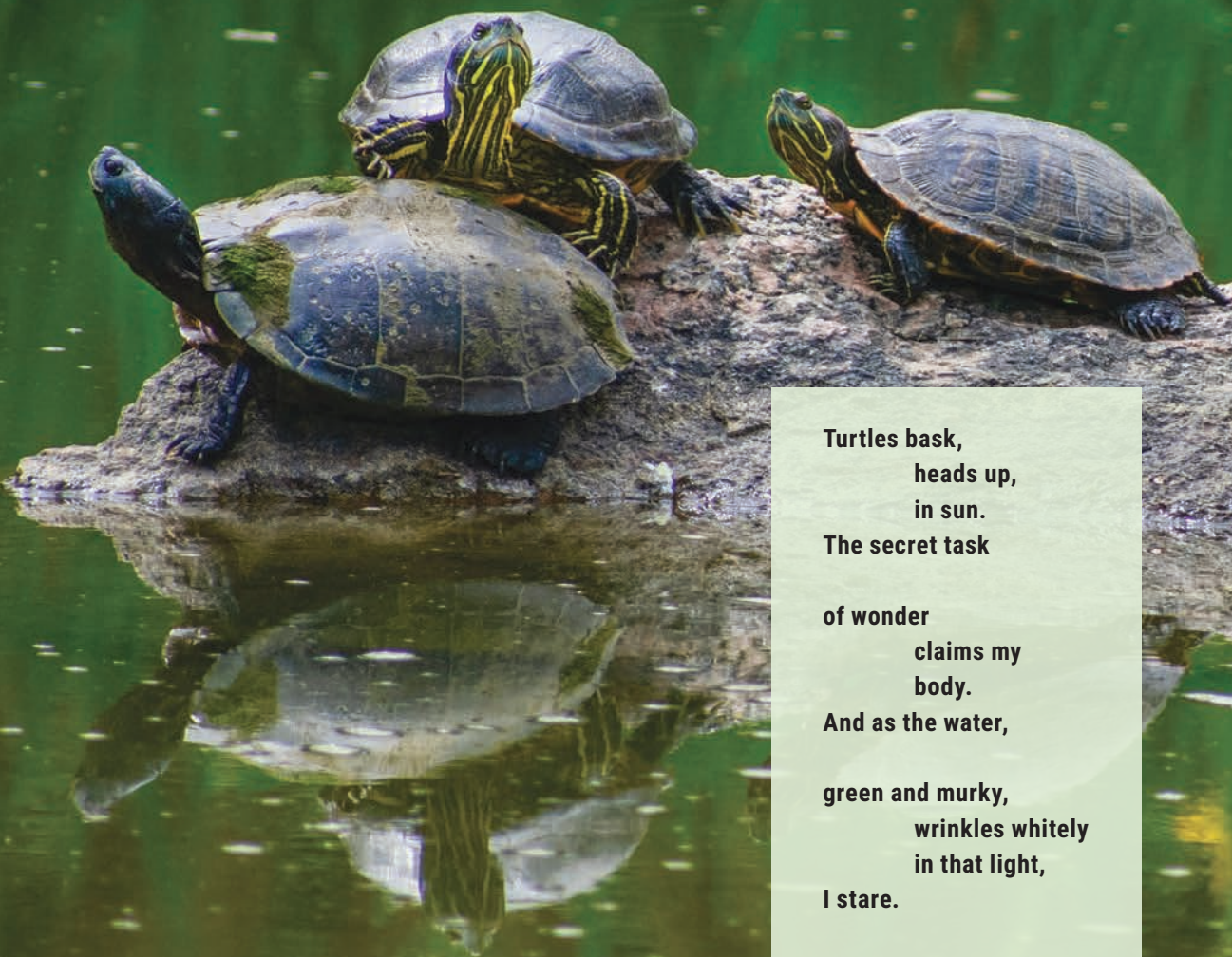
Hanas would like to have put in place a source of support and mental healthcare for the perpetrator who took his own life.

Hanas noted that background check procedures that vet potential school employees have become more sophisticated over the decades. School employees have also grown more familiar with the signs of sexual abusers grooming students.

Signs of grooming include teachers or coaches talking or texting with students on private cell phones rather than allowing the school to mediate communication. Hanas explained that meeting with a student individually without being in other adults' clear line of sight is another red flag, as is extending privileges to a particular student or having meetings before or after school between an adult and an individual student. Identifying grooming was much harder 50 years ago before the phenomenon

Continues on page 52

By the Pond



Turtles bask,
heads up,
in sun.

The secret task

of wonder
claims my
body.

And as the water,

green and murky,
wrinkles whitely
in that light,
I stare.

May the presence of
what is
dismantle
fear.

Magda Andrews-Hoke
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Money and Ethical Finance? Don't Ask, Don't Tell

PETERSON TOSCANO

I remember my days in debt and how they suddenly ended one day. As a gay solo performance artist, I routinely experienced cash flow problems, and credit cards got me through the lean months, even as the balances grew larger and larger. Still, the credit card companies continued to increase my credit limit.

At one point, I stopped looking at the balances on the maxed-out statements. I wrote a check for the minimum amount, then ignored my debt for another month. It was my version of “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

Then, after over ten years of debt, I received an inheritance that finally allowed me to pay off all of the debt and still have money to invest for retirement.

What do you think of when you hear the word *inheritance*? I’ve always imagined an eccentric aunt with a manor house and a carriage barn filled with horses and antique cars, designating her eccentric nephew as heir to her entire fortune.

I grew up in a working-class Italian American family. My dad was a welder, and my mom a housewife; neither finished high school, but they learned from my entrepreneurial grandfather, Frank Toscano. Even with his limited English skills and minimal education, Frank kept his wife and six children fed, clothed, and sheltered from the 1920s to the late 1960s through a string of small businesses he started in the Bronx, N.Y. He started selling coal in the winter and ice in the summer, then ran a moving company, and finally opened a scrap metal yard.

My parents purchased a bar 100 miles outside of New York City and



turned it into a prosperous restaurant. At “Pete’s Pub,” they worked six days a week, often from 8:00 a.m. until after midnight. My mom oversaw the finances and refused to purchase anything on credit. On the occasions when she experienced cash-flow problems, I heard her say she needed to “rob Peter to pay Paul.” As a child, I had no idea how she personally knew the apostles, but I assumed paying the bills required supernatural intervention from the saints. Turns out, I wasn’t far off.

I eventually figured out that robbing Peter meant my mom calling her insurance agent to request a partial cash surrender from the value of her life insurance policy, or delaying the purchase of a commercial refrigerator she needed until the door on the family fridge fell off, or sending us kids to stay with our Uncle Frankie and Aunt Rolla in New Jersey for two weeks each summer, instead of going on the family vacations we postponed ten years in a row. For decades, they robbed Peter by denying themselves, and one day, they gave my sisters and me a substantial payout.

I’ve never thought of myself as rich or even middle class, but Diana Yañez, my *Quakers Today* cohost for a special series focused on Quakers and money, and our guests, are asking challenging questions that reveal the multiple forms of wealth I possess. In the recent episode entitled “Quakers and Capitalism,” Traci Hjelt Sullivan, executive director of Right Sharing of World Resources, comments on the hidden ways ancestral money benefits those who have it: “Both my husband and I had our undergraduate education paid for by our parents. Is graduating without debt a form of wealth? I think

it is, especially nowadays. Starting adult life with no debt gave us so many opportunities. It’s a form of ancestral wealth.”

When I worked as a performance artist, I managed to do it full-time, unlike many of my fellow performance artists—white lesbians, trans people, and straight and queer People of Color—who had to juggle multiple part-time jobs and temporary gigs to stay afloat. I didn’t work harder than they did, and I was not more skilled. But according to the way the world worked, I was lucky. Many times I showed up to perform at a fancy university, and strangers in the community offered me their cars, places to stay in their homes, and other gigs in the area. Over time, I learned that venues paid me a higher fee than many of my peers. I’ve often wondered what opportunities came my way because I am white and male. Many artists creatively make their work sustainable, but for some of us, this is easier than for others.

I also had a support committee that my meeting, Hartford (Conn.) Meeting, formed for me. In addition to spiritual support, they provided rides to some of my regional gigs after I sold my car to save money. They gave me interest-free loans that took me years to pay back. My success as a performance activist came from a community that supported me and from a world that openly welcomed and trusted me.

Coming up next month: I don’t feel guilty about naming these privileges and forms of wealth, but I do feel a growing responsibility for the money I am saving for retirement and where I spend it, in addition to my relationship with money and “stuff.” In the August episode, “Quakers

and Wealth,” we hear from Fran Brokaw, a Quaker who became wealthy from a large family inheritance. She shares a query that has enabled her to think more deeply: “Is this my money?” Her answer may surprise you: “It shouldn’t belong to me. It should go through me. It should be a channel. I can channel it as energy, as love, and not hoard it—and not let it just sit in a brokerage account or something like that.”

Fran inspires me to ask hard questions about my own life and money. In next month’s column, I’ll consider a few, which I invite you to think about as well, including, how ethical are my retirement investments? How might leaning into more simplicity free up finances so they can flow through me and also provide me with the benefits of living with less? Beyond being responsible for my personal wealth, how can my connections to organizations, businesses, and my Quaker meeting

help engage justice-minded finance on a larger scale?

Peterson Toscano is a queer Quaker writer, performance activist, and cohost, along with Diana Yañez, of Season 6 of the Quakers Today podcast, in which they explore money not just as personal math, but as a spiritual practice and communal responsibility. The limited-run Quakers and Money column shares essays by Diana and Peterson on themes related to the series.

Resources and Recommendations

Check out the QuakerSpeak video “What If Wall Street Were Honest?” featuring an interview with North Carolina Quaker Mark Hulbert, who has tracked investment advisors since the early 1980s (QuakerSpeak.com). Also recommended in the June episode is to play Spent (playspent.org), a free browser-based survival game that places players inside the poverty trap. You begin with \$1,000 and try to survive for 30 days while making

impossible choices: pay rent, fix the car, buy medicine, or keep the lights on.

It offers one way to better understand how expensive it can be to be poor in the current economic system.

Do you have a question about Quaker values and money? Or a resource to recommend from your own financial journey? Let us know and you might get featured on the show! Leave a voicemail by calling 317-QUAKERS (317-782-5377) or send an email to podcast@friendsjournal.org.

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Peace, Silence, and the Inner Light

MY LATIN AMERICAN FAITH JOURNEY

HAZEL GUINDON BADILLA

My paternal grandparents arrived in Costa Rica from Fairhope, Ala., in the 1950s. They were part of the group of Quaker families whose pacifist values led them to defy the American draft and leave the United States, settling in Costa Rica, a country that had abolished its army in 1948. Seeking to live in peace and community, they founded Monteverde, and started an unprogrammed meeting and a school. It's a beautiful haven that continues to thrive today.

Although my father grew up in the Quaker tradition, he later chose an evangelical path, and it was there that he met my mother. They married, and after I was born, they raised me in that faith. Nonetheless, as a family, we also participated in some Quaker community activities organized by Monteverde Meeting, such as shared lunches and the Christmas program.

I grew up between two spiritual worlds, and also between two different ways of understanding the role of women, power, and the relationship with the Divine. In the evangelical context, my experience was shaped by a patriarchal worldview. I did not know any female pastors, at least not in the church we attended. There was frequent discussion of the woman's role as homemaker; mother; and faithful companion to her husband, the head of the household. Terms such as "spiritual warfare" were common, and we were taught the concept of the fear of God, fear of sinning, fear of outsiders, and fear of hell. I felt that I needed to remain vigilant at all times.

When I entered seventh grade at the Friends school in Monteverde, which is under the care of Monteverde Meeting, I carried deep insecurities and an

aggressive attitude that concealed my need for protection. Yet it was there that a profound transformation began—one that was neither immediate nor linear but constant and radical.

One of the first lessons that deeply affected me was about nonviolent conflict resolution. I found it revolutionary to be able to engage in dialogue across differences without raising my voice, exaggerating, or imposing myself. I connected with the idea that every voice matters, including my own; that I can set boundaries without shouting; and that I can speak from my center and be heard. I learned that peace is not merely the absence of war but a daily practice of active listening and shared understanding.

Later, I discovered another idea that changed my life: I do not need books or hierarchies to connect with the Sacred. There is an Inner Light and a living wisdom within every person, accessible through silence and stillness. From that Light, everything becomes possible. No demon from the past can hold me captive if I possess the power to learn and transform. I can observe



Photo by Finola O'Sullivan

everything, feel everything, explore everything, and then choose what resonates with my truth. And I learned something even more radical: silence.

Those who know me understand that I have always been restless. If my body is not moving, my mind races intensely. Yet having the opportunity to practice an hour of silence every week throughout my adolescence has been one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. I learned that it does not matter where I am, who I am with, or what I am experiencing: I always have access to my own inner sanctuary. All I need to do is close my eyes, become silent, and listen to myself. Silence has brought me back to myself again and again. Doesn't that sound like a truly liberating combination for life?

This is how a girl raised among expectations, fears, and hierarchies discovered that her voice had value. That she could think, feel, and choose from love rather than fear. That she could be a free woman within a context still influenced by machismo.

Over time, I have often wondered what it means for me to be Quaker, especially in Latin America, where the majority of Friends—outside of Costa Rica—practice Quakerism in evangelical, programmed meetings. I do not see myself as the most plain



Hazel Guindon Badilla, *Beetle Gift*, 8" x 6". Illustration originally hand-painted with acrylics, later scanned and vectorized to create digital version. "A gentle reminder of our Inner Light."

The author on Pendle Hill in England on a trip supported by Friends World Committee for Consultation, 2025.

or the most “proper” person in the traditional sense. I love rings and earrings; I enjoy a glass of wine while watching the sunset; I tell provocative jokes; and I use language playfully and with wit. If I were walking through any city, nothing about my appearance would identify me as a Quaker.

And yet, in the deepest part of my being, I have chosen to live faithfully according to my Inner Light. Many times, I fail and doubt, but every day I choose to listen to myself more carefully, respect myself more lovingly, and express myself more clearly.

I choose to live the testimony of peace in all its forms and colors.

I choose to act with gentleness toward everything around me.

I choose to bring harmony to my thoughts, emotions, and actions.

I choose to share, regenerate, and build community.

I honor that I am a free and diverse Latin American woman, carrying the same sacred worth as all people and living beings.

Perhaps all of this sounds like the path of any person, not necessarily a Quaker, who has chosen to live in a regenerative way. Yet there is something uniquely powerful in the combination I experienced among the Quakers of Monteverde: silence, community diversity, and a deep connection with nature. I hope that essence continues to intertwine with my Latin roots and continues to accompany me on my journey.

Hazel Guindon Badilla is a dedicated graphic designer. She grew up in Monteverde, Costa Rica, and completed high school at Monteverde Friends School. She is passionate about living a life rooted in well-being, freedom, and connection to nature and community.

Translated from the Spanish by Renzo Mejía Carranza.



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Appoquinimink Meeting Honors Abolitionist John Alston 152 Years After His Death

KATE O'DONNELL

In 2007, the U.S. National Park Service evaluated the site of Appoquinimink Meetinghouse in Odessa, Del., as “making a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad in American history and it meets the requirements for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.” The Delaware segment of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway passes directly in front of the meetinghouse on Route 299, Odessa’s Main Street.

Lacking plumbing and air conditioning, Appoquinimink Meetinghouse is largely unspoiled by modernity. It is bordered by two burial grounds, one of which is restricted to descendants of a single Orthodox family. Reading Appoquinimink’s applications for acceptance to the National Register of Historic Places, one name stands out: John Alston (1794–1874), who at the time of his death was the only active member of the meeting.

The challenge became to locate Alston’s grave marker among the many on the meetinghouse grounds. We



found one for John Cowgill Alston, but the dates (1869–1950) did not match. Through additional searching, over six years ago, John Alston’s grave was identified nearby but the marker was nearly illegible due to acid rain and ageing.

For too long Alston has stood in the shadow of his younger, better known cousin, John Hunn (1818–1894), a farmer, Quaker minister, and abolitionist who was a “station master” of the Underground Railroad in Delaware. Hunn’s name also features prominently in the historic places application, as his active participation with assisting escaping slaves began in 1844 while he was living in Odessa.

Alston saw to the needs of Appoquinimink Meeting from 1830 until his passing in 1874. A long

dormant period followed until about 1938 when the meeting reopened. Local Friends kept it going, then the arrival of Wills Passmore and his family in the early 1960s led to improvements such as electrical heating and lighting. In 2016 the torch was passed to this author to see to Appoquinimink’s needs. A box of very miscellaneous documents of the meeting’s recent past created the foundation of the library therein.

The decision to wait no longer to bring John Alston’s life story to the fore was made in part because Appoquinimink’s newest attenders were unaware of Alston and Hunn’s pre-Civil War activities on Delaware’s Underground Railroad.

So on a Sunday morning this past May, the Friends of Appoquinimink Meeting gathered to honor the late John Alston with a plaque that commemorates his dedication to abolitionism in the nineteenth-century village of Cantwell’s Bridge, later named Odessa. Alston’s plaque echoes the dates inscribed on his grave marker with the modest addition of the words “Quaker Farmer/Underground Railroad Agent.” In addition to the plaque, I’ve written a tribute to Alston (see below) in the style of a *Friends Journal* milestone. May this Friend’s life and legacy continue to inspire Friends today.

Kate O'Donnell is overseer and historian at Appoquinimink Preparative Meeting in Odessa, Del. She raised her sons in Swarthmore, Pa., and worked in Swarthmore College's Special Collections for ten years. She and her husband spend summers on an island in Penobscot Bay and the rest of the year in Rock Hall, Md.

Above: John Alston's new plaque.

Left: Friends gathered in Appoquinimink's burial ground to honor the late Alston at his grave, May 2026.



Appoquinimink Meetinghouse in Odessa, Del.



Alston—*John Alston*, 79, on Ninth Month 25, 1874, at home near Middletown, Del. John was born Tenth Month 31, 1794, in Kent County, Md., the son of Joab and Hannah Lamb Alston, members of Cecil Meeting in Maryland. John was their fourth child, the others being Joshua, Abner, and Susanna.

The Alstons transferred their membership to Duck Creek Meeting in Delaware in Fourth Month 1798. In 1800, David Wilson Sr., of Cantwell's Bridge, Del., deeded a parcel of land to a group of Friends, including Joab Alston, "in trust for the Society of Friends (or the people called Quakers), the said lot whereon stands a Brick Meeting-house." That building was Appoquinimink Meetinghouse, erected in 1785 on Wilson's farm property.

It's uncertain how the Alston children were educated. They may have attended the Friends school that existed as early as 1735 near land on Main Street in Cantwell's Bridge. John Alston mentored his young cousin, John Hunn (1818–1894), and was responsible for Hunn's relocating to a farm in Middletown, Del.

John Alston hired many free Blacks to work on his farm. The labor contracts he signed remain in his papers. His personal library contained antislavery material. His papers donated to the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College include an antislavery tract by John Woolman.

The historic split among Quakers beginning in 1827 resulted in two sects, Orthodox and Hicksite. Appoquinimink and all of the Southern Quarter meetings aligned with the Hicksites. Many wealthy Quakers chose the Orthodox sect, leaving behind John and a few other Hicksites to attend at Appoquinimink. In 1830, John commenced serving as treasurer. In his manuscript ledgers, he meticulously noted debits and credits, to whom payments were made and for what purpose. They are the only known nineteenth-century Appoquinimink documents. They describe an active, functioning meeting.

John Alston didn't detail his Underground Railroad activities, understandably, as it was illegal to aid self-liberators. John, his cousin John Hunn, and Daniel Corbit were known as Friends to whom Samuel D. Burris of Dover, Del., a free Black Underground Railroad conductor, was directed as he led freedom seekers north. Hunn related an account to William Still of his cousin John sheltering a "bonds-woman" named Molly, which Still recorded in his 1872 book titled *The Underground Railroad*.

Around 1841 John Alston built a large brick homestead he called "Oakdale," making it ready for company when Friends traveled through the area to attend yearly meeting in Philadelphia, Pa. Other travelers he was concerned about may have been enslaved

individuals on the run. In his journal entry for Fourth Month 16, 1841, he wrote, "O Lord My God, Entreat me to redeem and preserve me. Bless and keep me and mine and enable me to keep my heart and house open to receive thy servants, that they may rest in their travels, that this house that thou has enabled me to build, may be holy dedicated unto Thee, of the pilgrims' rest."

On Sixth Month 9, 1856, John married Quaker widow Lydia Corbit Cowgill Wilson at Little Creek Meeting, east of Camden, Del. They had three children: Susan Corbit Alston; Lydia Cowgill Alston, who died in 1865 at the age of three; and John Cowgill Alston. All are buried at Appoquinimink Meeting. His widow, Lydia (1823–1899), is buried at Little Creek.

In Ninth Month 1874, John Alston, according to *The Middletown Transcript*, "dropped dead at his home near Middletown on Friday morning. He was a Friend, and greatly devoted to his faith. He is about the last of that Society in that neighborhood and for the past twenty years has been the sole attendant at the little brick Meeting-house in the west end of Odessa, where he has gone twice a week, regularly . . . to hold silent and lonely meditation."

He was survived by his wife, Lydia; and two children, Susan and John.



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FCNL clerk Kitty Ufford-Chase and general secretary Bridget Moix at last year's Annual Meeting. Photo by DAG Photo/FCNL.

And After the Fire a Sound of Sheer Silence

FLORENCE CAPALDO KIMBALL

One of the Bible passages that I find myself coming back to again and again is **the account of the prophet Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal, which is found in 1 Kings 18:19–19:18**. In this passage, God poses a question to Elijah that I feel is almost universal and timeless in its application.

I have excerpted and somewhat condensed the text of the story from this passage in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). In my account, I consistently use the Hebrew word *Hashem* for the name of God (Yahweh), which is considered by Jews to be too sacred to be spoken. The word used in the NRSV translation is *Lord*. However, individuals with a Christian religious background associate the title Lord with Jesus and with the risen Christ, so using *Hashem* avoids possible confusion. Hashem literally translates to “the Name.”

Elijah, a prophet in eighth-century Israel, served as a spokesperson for Hashem, reminding the Israelites of their obligations as people of the Sinai covenant. Elijah's name (the Hebrew pronunciation is *el-ee-yah*)—which in Hebrew, literally means “my god is Jah”—reflects how fervent and unswerving he was in his allegiance to Hashem. The Israelite king in that day was Ahab, who had married a Phoenician princess, Jezebel. Jezebel worshiped the Canaanite fertility gods,

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/biblestudy.



Elijah's challenge of the prophets of Baal and Asherah, depicted in two scenes on the walls of the third-century C.E. synagogue at Dura-Europos in modern Syria.

Image from commons.wikimedia.org

Baal and Asherah, and she brought more than 800 prophets of these two gods with her to Israel. Elijah considered having prophets of Baal and Asherah in Israel to be an abomination. Worse, some Israelites began worshiping the Canaanite gods in addition to their worship of Hashem. To demonstrate to the Israelites that the Baal gods were powerless next to Hashem, Elijah challenged the Baal prophets to a contest on Mount Carmel in front of all the people.

The Baal prophets went first. They built an altar, fueled it with wood, and placed on it a bull for sacrifice. Per agreement, they did not light the pyre. Instead, the prophets appealed to Baal to consummate the sacrifice. Nothing happened despite fervent and intense supplications by the Baal prophets throughout the day. Then Elijah repeated the altar building process and even poured water over the wood to make it more difficult to ignite. When he prayed to Hashem, fire immediately came down from heaven and consumed everything: offering, wood, stone, and water, thus proving to the people the reality and power of Hashem.

The Israelites who witnessed this demonstration of power were incited to assist Elijah in killing the Baal prophets. When word of what had been done reached Jezebel, she vowed to kill Elijah who then fled from Israel south to Mount Horeb. When he reached Mount Horeb, Elijah took shelter in a cave.

Then the Word of Hashem came to Elijah, saying, “Go out and stand on the mountain before [Hashem], for [Hashem] is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before Hashem, but Hashem was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but Hashem was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but Hashem was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (19:11–12)

Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (19:13) Elijah explained what had happened and that of all of Hashem's faithful, he alone was

left, and they were seeking his life. Hashem told Elijah that he was not alone; Hashem explained that he had maintained a faithful remnant and that Elijah had work to do.

In this account, the first phrase that captures my attention is one that refers to “a sound of sheer silence.” After all the roaring of the wind, earthquake, and fire, one might expect silence to have a quality of emptiness. However, the Hebrew text plainly uses the word *qol*, meaning “sound” or “voice.” It is attached to the word *demamah*, which means “silence” or “whisper.” (The root word *damah* means “cease.”) Together, this phrase describes a very rich silence. Friends have sometimes experienced this sort of silence in meeting for worship when, even though no one present is speaking, essentially everyone feels as though there is someone else in the meetingroom. This has been called a gathered or covered meeting, and it is generally understood that our Eternal Teacher is present with us. For Elijah, the silence was rich with the presence of Hashem.

The second phrase that captures my attention is the question “What are you doing here?” (19:13) This has potentially profound implications, as the meaning can be nuanced depending on which words are emphasized. Thus, with stress on *you* and *here*, the focus suggests someone who is perhaps in an unexpected place or outside their comfort zone. For example, Hashem might be saying, “Elijah, I appointed you a prophet in Israel; I did not expect to find you 300 miles south of Israel here on Mount Horeb; why are you here?” Alternatively, stressing *doing* implies concern for activities. Hashem’s question might be, “Elijah, I see that you have come to Mount Horeb; what work are you carrying out for me here?”

Hashem spoke to Elijah out of silence: “a still, small voice” (as it’s described in the King James Version) but a living presence. The living Word, our Eternal Teacher, continues to speak to people out of silence. When we listen closely, we can hear the still,

small voice asking questions that encourage us to think about how we are leading our lives. Hashem also explained the situation to Elijah and showed him the work to be carried out. So it is with us: when we listen closely, we may receive a message that might clarify a situation or that might direct us in a particular course of action.

Elijah had no companions with him on Mount Horeb, and so he had to discern Hashem’s messages by himself. Friends worship offers an opportunity for shared discernment and can enable an individual to test their leadings. In this way, one Friend’s leading may gain clarity or might even lead to a corporate testimony.

As I have gotten older and as I live with a progressive muscle disorder, my mobility has been substantially reduced and with it my ability to participate in many activities that have been important to me. Among these have been ones devoted to community service, peace, and social justice. Yet the Teacher continues to ask me, “What are you doing?” The voice encourages me to continue to be of use to others, despite my physical limitations. And even as the question is posed, sometimes way opens, and I am shown what I might undertake.

Discussion Questions

- Have you experienced a gathered meeting for worship? How would you describe it?
- Have you heard (or sensed) the voice of the Eternal Teacher asking about your life or offering you guidance?
- Share some times you’ve felt God in noise and in silence.

Florence Capaldo Kimball has been a Friend since 1969 and is currently a member of New Brunswick (N.J.) Meeting. Professionally, she is a microbiologist, teaching and directing diversity programs at a medical school for 20 years. She also served seven years on staff at Friends Committee on National Legislation. She enjoys choral singing and learning ancient languages.

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Photo courtesy of the Hoopes family

Robert "Jacob" Hoopes at the federal courthouse in Portland, Ore., on February 18, 2026.

Jacob Hoopes sentenced to more than two years in prison for assaulting an ICE agent

By Sharlee DiMenichi

Robert "Jacob" Hoopes was sentenced to 30 months in prison and three years of probation, and ordered to pay \$8,097 in restitution after pleading guilty to aggravated assault against an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, according to court transcripts. Federal judge Adrienne Nelson sentenced the 25-year-old man, who grew up in a Quaker family and has ties to Newtown (Pa.) Meeting, on June 11, 2026, at the Mark O. Hatfield Courthouse in Portland, Ore.

During a protest on June 14, 2025, Hoopes threw a rock from outside a federal building in Portland at an ICE agent inside the building, hitting the officer above the eye and causing a cut that required treatment, according to previous court transcripts.

Hoopes is scheduled to self-surrender in six weeks and will serve his sentence in a minimum-security section of the Federal Correctional Institution, Sheridan, in Sheridan, Ore., court transcripts state. The minimum-security level will allow for

regular family visits.

Leah Bolstad, assistant U.S. attorney, showed a security video of Hoopes throwing the rock into the federal building and noted that it was one of four rocks or bricks Hoopes had thrown at the building over the course of approximately half an hour, according to court transcripts.

Charges related to Hoopes allegedly using a stop sign as a battering ram to do approximately \$7,000 worth of damage to the ICE building in South Portland were dismissed under a plea deal, previous court transcripts stated.

In the plea petition, signed February 18, Hoopes stated that he understood he would not be eligible for parole.

Bolstad argued for a 46-month prison term with three years probation and monetary restitution. She noted that sentencing should not necessarily favor a defendant with an outpouring of support, such as Hoopes had, over defendants who faced their sentence with no one to accompany them at their hearings. She also stated that sentencing should serve as a deterrent to others who might emulate Hoopes's actions.

According to court transcripts, Hoopes addressed the court—which included approximately 60 of his supporters—at the sentencing hearing, saying in part:

First, I want to make clear that I accept full responsibility for what I did. As the video showed, I was violent. It's not right. It's more than not a moral way to solve problems, it's not an effective way either. I acknowledge that, and I understand that I made a mistake, and more than any felony conviction that I will carry with me for the rest of my life, I will carry the knowledge that I did this for the rest of my life.

In a pre-sentencing public letter, Hoopes expressed regret and reflected on his Quaker values, saying in part:

To ward the armored people back, with adrenaline narrowing my focus and pepperballs and tear gas burning my eyes and skin, I threw a rock at the guards through one of the partially opened doors of the facility. I knew there were heavily armored agents on the other side of the door, but at that moment I did not think that my act would or could injure any of them. At that point in time, I was under the impression that these agents were invulnerable. That impression was wrong. . . .

I know that I betrayed my Quaker values by violently disregarding the safety of another human being. My actions were not justified, nor were they effective, and I did something that cannot be forgotten or undone. In all my lifelong, vocal affirmation of the power of nonviolence, I tried to solve a problem in a way that contradicted that belief. In this, I have been a hypocrite. I will do better.

Judge Nelson explained that she weighed a variety of factors to determine the sentence, including the severity of the crime, the need for deterrence, and Hoopes's lack of

criminal record. She also considered his family and community—60 of whom wrote letters of support—and his current enrollment in a master's degree program in urban and regional planning at Portland State University.

In a sentencing memorandum filed on June 3, Hoopes's attorney Matthew McHenry argued for the minimum sentence allowed by the plea agreement.

"A 24-month sentence is a profound deprivation of liberty, and for a young man with absolutely no prior criminal history, it is more than sufficient to accomplish the goals of sentencing, including general and specific deterrence," the defense memo states.

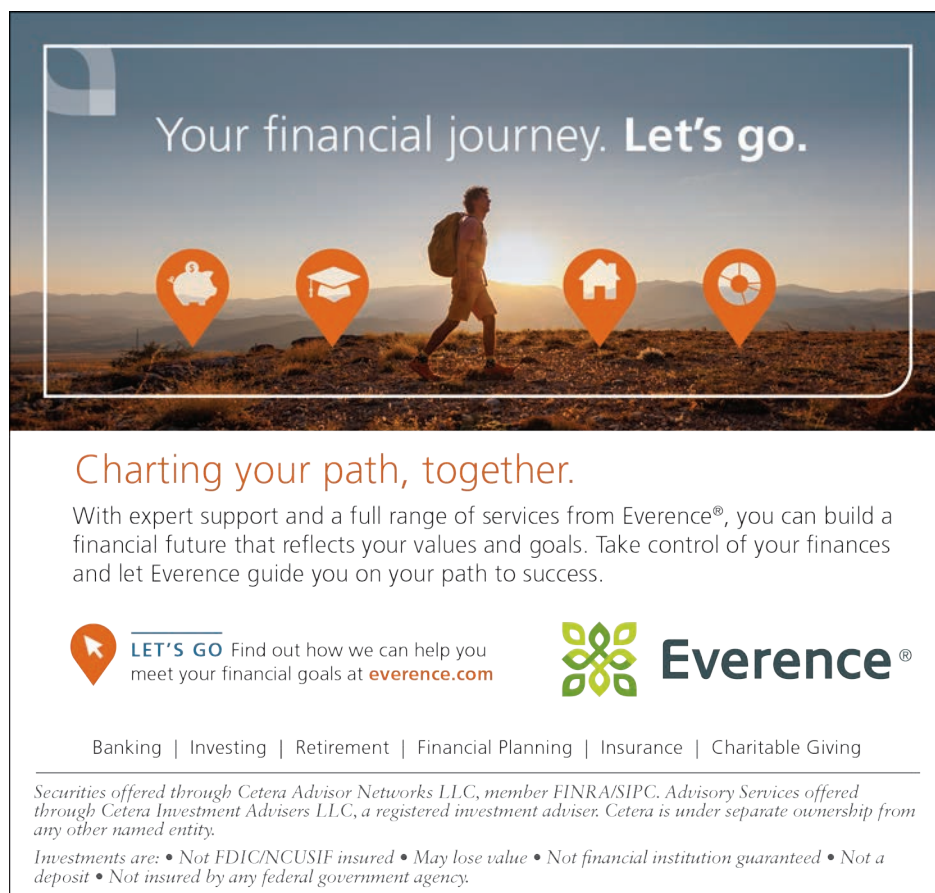
The government's sentencing memo, filed on June 3 by U.S. Attorney Scott Bradford, referred to a group chat investigators found on Hoopes's phone in which the writer of a text message stated that they were laughing at Hoopes's actions, which the writer had seen reported in the media.

Bradford called for a sentence that would discourage potential crimes by people such as the writer of the text message.

"A 46-month sentence for this conduct sends a powerful deterrence message to those contemplating engaging in similar violence at the ICE Building. It sends a strong message to those agitators who, seeing these events unfold, sit back and 'LMFAO' [an internet term meaning "laughing my f—ing a— off"] as a federal property is destroyed and federal officers are assaulted. The government urges this court to impose a 46-month sentence. It will promote, and it may even help restore, respect for the law," the government's sentencing memo states.

Read the full story at [Friendsjournal.org/hoopes-sentence](https://www.friendsjournal.org/hoopes-sentence).

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for Friends Journal. Follow all our news coverage at [Friendsjournal.org/news](https://www.friendsjournal.org/news); send us tips at news@friendsjournal.org.



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Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified* in Modern English

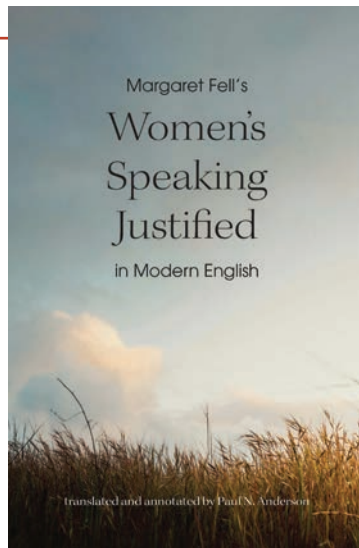
Translated and annotated by Paul N. Anderson. Barclay Press, 2026. 76 pages. \$31/hardcover; \$19/paperback.

Reviewed by Barbara Birch

In 1968, I took a job aptitude test in high school, and my highest score was “nun” because that was the only church ministry job for girls on the test. My friends and I laughed at the result because I was a Lutheran and the celibacy requirement didn’t appeal. Still, I knew that in the hierarchy of my own church, pastoral positions were restricted to men only. Some women worked as “deaconesses,” low-level social workers who could teach Bible and theology classes to women and children. That position didn’t appeal to me either, so I had to consider other career possibilities. The second wave of women’s liberation had not yet reached my Midwest hometown, so I didn’t question anything, but soon afterward, I rejected the church that did not value my passions or skills.

Sadly, it’s too late for me, but nowadays, some churches allow women pastors, and there’s even a female Archbishop of Canterbury in the Church of England: Sarah Mullally, who was installed earlier this year. However, many other denominations, including some of the largest, still don’t allow female pastors. This controversy harkens back to Eve in Genesis, and the epistles of the apostle Paul in early Christian history, whose cryptic words have been deliberately interpreted misogynistically for millennia. Such exclusion is a crime against humanity: it’s a crime that half of the population are deprived of church leadership, but it’s also a crime that churches are—with few exceptions—deprived of women’s vision and skills in leadership.

After I became a Quaker in 1985, I learned about Margaret Fell and her landmark pamphlet *Women's Speaking*



Justified. Fell (1614–1702) wrote and published her essay in 1666 while imprisoned in Lancaster Castle, with a postscript added in 1667. Fell’s writing can be placed into the later period of Early Modern English (roughly 1500–1700), that is, the two centuries from the Tudor period to the restoration of King Charles II. Early Modern English was a time of great linguistic change and innovation due to the rise and spread of printing, literacy, and publication. Some Early Modern English writers can be read easily (I’m looking at you, Isaac Pennington), but other writers, including George Fox at times, can be understood only with considerable effort. (Interested readers can find the original text of Fell’s pamphlet by searching online.)

For me, *Women's Speaking Justified* falls on the difficult side of the range, so I was pleased to hear that Paul Anderson, a well-known Quaker historian and theologian, had published a translation into Modern English. When I compared the translation to the original, I saw that the main problem is how wordy Fell’s sentences are. To modern readers like me, her convoluted syntax and semantics are hard to parse, and that makes her careful logical argumentation hard to follow. Anderson’s translation faithfully preserves the tone, word choice, and meaning of Fell’s original while making her perceptive thoughts and feminist intentions clear. Here’s the

first sentence in the original pamphlet:

Whereas it hath been an Objection in the minds of many, and several times hath been objected by the Clergy, or Ministers, and others, against Womens speaking in the Church; and so consequently may be taken, that they are condemned for meddling in the things of God; the ground of which Objection, is taken from the Apostles words, which he Writ in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, chap. 14. vers. 34, 35. And also what he writ to *Timothy* in the first Epistle; chap. 2. vers. 11, 12. But how far they wrong the Apostle’s intentions in these Scriptures, we shall shew clearly when we come to them in their course and order.

Anderson presents the following translation:

Whereas women’s speaking in churches has been objected to by many—including clergy, ministers, and others—condemning them for ‘meddling in the things of God’ (based on 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12), they are wrong in misunderstanding the Apostle’s intentions.

There is real artistry in translation, and Anderson meets the challenges with respect and care. A tiny quibble might be that Fell’s original introductory sentence seems bolder and more “in your face” than Anderson’s translation. The rest of the pamphlet is clearer, more similar to the many letters she wrote as she organized the early Quaker movement, and Anderson lets Fell’s personality shine through the prose, faithfully conveying her intelligent, courageous, and resourceful style of writing.

Anderson also helpfully separates out the Bible passages from Fell’s words and adds explanatory information in additional essays, footnotes, and in the text itself. Compare the final sentence of each

version of the pamphlet, where I highlighted in italics the clarifying material in Anderson's slightly longer translation.

Fell wrote: "Christ Jesus, who goes on Conquering, and to Conquer; who kills and slays with the Sword, which is the Words of his Mouth; the Lamb and the Saints shall have the Victory, the true Speakers of Men and Women over the false Speaker."

Anderson translates: "*And in the end*, Christ Jesus, who goes on conquering, slays with the Sword of his mouth, *continues to speak through his Saints, which include women's speaking, as well as men's*. Thus, the Lamb and the Saints shall have the victory: the true speakers of men and women over the false speakers *of the world*."

In making her case, Fell's arguments are subtle and nuanced. She didn't have the benefit of more recent biblical scholarship that questions the authorship of the epistles to Timothy, making "clobber texts" like 1 Tim. 2:11–12 disputed and weaker. The verses "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" may have been inserted later by male writers with ulterior motives.

Unfortunately, these days, women still face both institutional and individual censure and censoring in their faith communities, and for the same "biblical" reasons that women faced in Fell's day. That deplorable fact makes Paul Anderson's new translation an extremely important contribution for everyone inside and outside the Quaker community. For readers interested in Quaker history, feminist theology, or the literature of dissent, Anderson's *Women's Speaking Justified* in Modern English is an excellent entry point.

It also invites an easier encounter with Fell's words. Read together, her seventeenth-century text and Anderson's modern rendering illuminate one another: one preserving her authentic voice, the other revealing the force and precision that an antique style of writing can hide. The art of

translation is to make an original work comprehensible; an excellent translation keeps the original text forceful and engaging. Anderson does exactly that in this pamphlet.

Barbara Birch is a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting in Emeryville, Calif., and a board member at Ben Lomond Quaker Center outside Santa Cruz, Calif.

Author of Lectio Divina: Revelation and Prophecy (Quaker Quicks), Barbara facilitates online lectio divina programs and publishes her musings at yourwifey51.medium.com.

The Seed Is in All: A Journey through the Quaker World

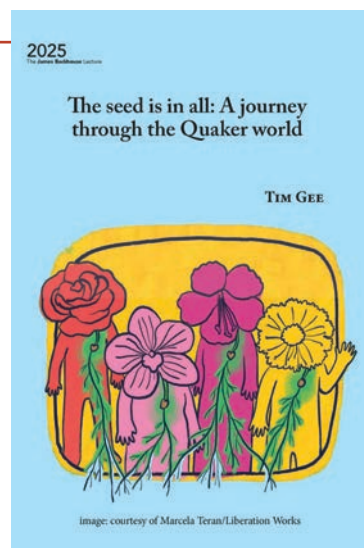
By Tim Gee. James Backhouse Lectures, 2025. 64 pages. \$13/pamphlet; \$7/eBook.

Reviewed by Harvey Gillman

The role of Australia Yearly Meeting's annual Backhouse Lecture is to offer fresh insight and to be a source of inspiration. In this Tim Gee, the general secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation, has fulfilled his brief.

The lecture is a call to Friends to explore together our rich diversity and hence to offer a vision to the many seekers who are "sensing a profound inward spirituality but [are] searching for a community to help them interpret it." It is a summons both to inward exploration and an outward task. At the same time, Gee reflects on his own evolution from the British Liberal quiet tradition of Friends to a recognition of the gifts of Friends worldwide. As well as the Quaker tradition of his childhood, he now recognizes and values the role of vocal prayer and song among African Friends. He has indeed written songs for the *World Quaker Songbook* and adds some of them to the text of the lecture.

The Seed Is in All is an optimistic journey through the Quaker world, but at the same time, Gee acknowledges difference and possible conflict among diverse Quaker cultures. The two issues to which he refers and which



exemplify these differences are the role of the Bible (and of Christianity) and the acceptance or not of same-sex relationships. I write the word "optimistic" because Gee—as a man devoted to the pursuit of peace and a belief in the Light within all people—believes that the issues may be, if not resolved, at least not remain a source of conflict among Friends. Interestingly, he does not deal with these matters from a theological perspective as much as from one of culture and geography, as well as from differing interpretations of Quaker tradition.

How much we can disentangle culture from theology is not quite touched upon. I personally often wonder how many of us have a tendency to let our own needs and prejudices influence how we interpret the promptings of love and truth. The question of discernment is largely implicit in this lecture but underpins much of what Gee is exploring.

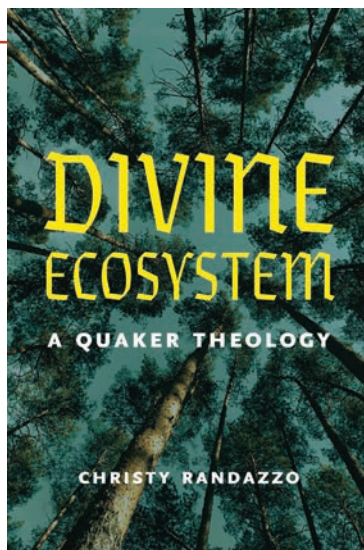
One of the unexpected references was to the Epistle of James, which Gee considers to have had a great influence on early Friends. I had not considered this before, but it is significant that this letter places stress on the practical consequences of Christian faith: "faith without deeds is dead" and "I will show you my faith by my deeds." It is an epistle that has made several mainstream Christian theologians uneasy, including Martin Luther. It points however to the heart of the Quaker

tradition. In this way, Gee is indeed bridging the gap between a biblical faith and a social activism, which are marks of the worldwide Quaker movement.

In the section “Some Predictions,” Gee points out: firstly, that Global North Quakerism will be influenced by the growth of Global South Quakerism; secondly, that there will be a blurring of Quaker traditions through online connections; thirdly, that English will no longer be the default language; and fourthly, that Liberal Quakerism will “pass.” He does not discuss these predictions in detail—it is a lecture not a book—but it would have been good to have had more indications of what they might mean. As at a good lecture, you want to stay behind and engage in a leisurely conversation with the speaker. Perhaps these points could form the basis of discussion at local meetings and churches. They would also make a fascinating basis for dialogue between the different branches of the Quaker world.

I came away from the lecture musing on the comments of a Burundian Friend who told Gee that, “when you become a Quaker, your life gets better.” At the end of the lecture, Gee passes this question on to his listeners and readers: “Is *your* life better for being a Quaker?” Now that is a challenge. I would add: Is the world a better place for having Quakers in it?

Harvey Gillman was outreach secretary for Britain Yearly Meeting for 18 years. He has traveled widely amongst Friends both at home and abroad, exploring the Quaker way and reflecting on issues of spirituality, outreach, inclusivity, language, and hospitality, both in his writings and in workshops and retreats. His most recent publication is an anthology of poems titled Epiphanies.



Divine Ecosystem: A Quaker Theology

By Christy Randazzo. Fortress Press, 2025. 320 pages. \$47/paperback; \$43.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Pamela Haines

Divine Ecosystem alerts us right from the start to the creativity of the author’s mind. The table of contents, sprinkled with the names of watersheds, is organized by ecological and theological pairs: Climate/Story; Bodies/Experience; Leaves/Interpretation; Flowers/Testimony; Fruits/Doctrine; Seeds/Hope. It turns out that the watersheds—mostly located in the Eastern United States, from the Chesapeake Bay down to the Alabama River—are where different parts of the book were written, a delightful way of grounding the text in place.

The purpose of this book, writes Quaker theologian, professor, and author Christy Randazzo, is to offer “one way of imagining a new world, a new state of being in the world.” This new way, according to Randazzo, is urgently needed in order “to heal the broken narratives of empire, power, and individual self-interest.”

Divine Ecosystem is both a personal exploration and theology, deeply rooted in Quakerism; informed by extensive scholarship; and full of history, current events, people, and connections. Water, trees, fungi, and electron clouds all have their place. Bayard Rustin, Elise

Boulding, and Rufus Jones join early Quakers and other non-Quaker theologians in the text. Early Quakers’ enmeshment with the chattel slavery system is compared to our current enmeshment with the fossil fuel system.

Beginning with experience and ecosystems, rather than with the Bible or tradition, readers are offered a fresh take on theology. I loved how the section on leaves explores photosynthesis. Transforming light into the energy that life depends on gives new meaning to Friends’ practice of turning toward the Light as the ultimate source of power for our lives. Considering the beauty of flowers and the plainness of our meetinghouses, we are invited to reflect on how—when less distracted by surface ornament—we can more easily experience the beauty of light. Before leaving the flowers, we are reminded of how the pollen from Martin Luther King Jr.’s testimony fertilized the world with the life-affirming truth of his life.

As a non-theologian, I found many parts that were dense, where I had no experience to which the ideas could attach, especially in the chapter Fruits/Doctrine. But the final reflections in Seeds/Hope were deeply affirming. I loved Randazzo’s commitment to hope as theirs to claim, and the understanding that “[b]uilding community is our task, and hope is the main resource God has provided for us to fulfill it. . . . The church isn’t a place; it’s hope itself.”

I would recommend this book to Friends who are hungry for a long, deep, and serious exploration of theology, with a Quaker guide who is rooted in place, widely read, endlessly curious, creative in making fresh connections, and fearlessly their own self.

Pamela Haines, a member of Central Philadelphia (Pa.) Meeting, is passionate about the earth, relationships, integrity, paying attention, and repair of all kinds. She is the author of Money and Soul, three Pendle Hill pamphlets, and three volumes each of essays and poetry; her blog and podcast can be found at pamelahaines.substack.com.

Light for the Way: Seeking Simplicity, Connection, and Repair in a Broken World

By *Sojourners* magazine, edited by Rose Marie Berger. Broadleaf Books, 2026. 336 pages. \$28.99/hardcover; \$18.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Diane Randall

“Light for the Way” could be the title of a Quaker book of writings to accompany and encourage contemplatives and activists in our world today. This *Light for the Way*, however, is the title of a new and timely anthology of devotional reading and inspiration from the editorial team at *Sojourners*. While many may be familiar with *Sojourners* the magazine, I came to know *Sojourners* as a social justice advocacy organization during my time at Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL); both organizations are based in Washington, D.C., and work together on many of the same issues. For over 50 years, *Sojourners* has been a leading interfaith organization for progressive Christians who understand the call to justice from a spiritual basis.

Selecting from the depth of interviews and essays published by *Sojourners* magazine over the past 50 years, the editors of this collection have included wisdom from people whose names are well-known. Interviews with Thomas Keating, Kathleen Norris, Wendell Berry, and Cynthia Bourgeault, and essays by Bill McKibben, Daniel Berrigan, and Margaret Atwood grabbed my attention, although every essay offers a source of contemplation. The book divides the essays into six categories: contemplative practices, rest and sabbath, simplified life, spiritual thriving and paradox, creatureliness, and communal resilience. Here are a few essay titles that I found compelling: “Rest Is Holy, Not a Reward for the Productive”; “How to Be Alone”; “The Howard Thurman Question That Changed My Faith”;



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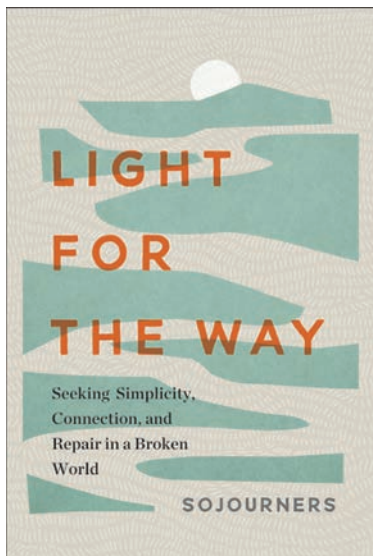
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and “When Your Nation Is Stuck in a Spiritual Desert.”

“Led Out in Joy,” the title of the section on communal resilience, gives perspective from writers who question Christianity as a singular spirituality, offering stories of how a person’s culture—their ancestors, the natural world, the essential traditions of a life—can create a more fulsome community, often blended with Christian beliefs. I appreciated the contributions from Chris La Tray, a Métis storyteller; Néstor Medina, a Pentecostal pastor; and Mihee Kim-Kort, a queer Presbyterian pastor, who all shared stories about their own spiritual lives flourishing within their community. Kim-Kort ends her essay reflecting on a tattoo she got of Isaiah 55:12: “For you shall go *out in joy*, and be led back in peace.”

It’s right there in the middle of my back, and I like to imagine it is perhaps a spot where the hand of the Holy Spirit might nudge me forward. She keeps me going, reminding me of the goodness of this strange life, this stunning world.

When I worked at FCNL, I often felt nudged by the Holy Spirit, often when we collaborated with Sojourners in advocating for peace and justice. It was inspiring to stand together with Rev. Adam Taylor and his predecessor Rev. Jim Wallis, who was

a founder of Sojourners, as we spoke for immigration justice, healthcare, and food assistance programs. The collaboration between FCNL and Sojourners and with many other faith-based organizations and religious denominations is an important voice to members of Congress.

That last essay I listed above, “When Your Nation Is Stuck in a Spiritual Desert,” was written by Taylor, president of Sojourners and an ordained Baptist minister, and offers this wisdom for readers: “Contemplation grounds and sustains faith-inspired activism.” In his role, Taylor recognizes the challenges that Christian leaders and activists face: “we must constantly resist the dangers of self-righteousness, absolutism, and, at worst, demonizing and hating our opponents and enemies, which has become all too common in American politics.” Today, as we see white Christian nationalism promoted throughout the United States, it is essential that people of faith who understand religious freedom in this country know that the freedom to practice our religions and to speak truth from our spiritual grounding is essential to the hope of creating a beloved community.

The voices and words in *Light for the Way* impart valuable messages of wisdom and inspiration. I recommend this compelling collection for Friends and all people of faith to stay grounded, strong, and hopeful in life in the Spirit in a world that can be violent and unjust. It serves as proof that fortifying ourselves through community, contemplation, and collective action does provide light for the way.

Diane Randall is a member of Friends Meeting of Washington (D.C.). Diane served as general secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation from 2011–2021. Friends faith and practice as manifested in worship and through public ministry provide her with a continuous source of hope.

Minds in Transit

By Joan Slonczewski. Caezic SF & Fantasy, 2025. 300 pages. \$24.99/ paperback; \$9.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Rob Pierson

Microbes are on Joan Slonczewski’s mind. That’s not surprising. As a Quaker microbiology professor at Kenyon College, they have written not just a textbook on the topic but also four decades of science fiction novels where they get to leave their lab and design alternate biologies on the microbic and planetary scales.

In their latest novel, *Minds in Transit*, Slonczewski takes us back to the worlds of their Elysium series, which began in 1986 with the award-winning *A Door Into Ocean* and which we last visited in their 2000 novel, *Brain Plague*. That latter novel introduced the protagonist, Chrysoberyl (Chrys), and the complex jumble of characters who live around and within her—in particular the million or so sentient microbes that populate the lining of her brain.

These talkative microbes (their internal chatter takes up part of every chapter) live thousands of times faster than their human host. To the microbes, Chrys is a god on whose mercy they depend and in whom—to use the apostle Paul’s words—“[they] live and move and have [their] being” (Acts 17:28). The society of a million microbe minds inspire Chrys’s controversial art; design buildings that grow on land and sea; and, in their spare time, solve problems in quantum networking. Thanks to the microbes, Chrys has risen, literally, from life in the underworld beneath her city to the skylit wealth, influence, and troubles of a ruling class that has political and social challenges on interplanetary scales.

This latest novel picks up where *Brain Plague* left off but piles on new complexities—everything from underground “cancers” infesting the roots of the city to an intelligent transit system fixated on Robert’s



Rules of Order. A multi-planetary, multicultural stew of species from earlier novels reappear along with a bewildering array of sentient machines serving as everything from houses to doctors or roaming the underworld in gangs that, along with bad microbes, are up to no good.

The novel raises questions about what it means to be a person. Chrys's self-configuring house not only manages Chrys's artistic accounts but takes pride in cooking gourmet meals for residents and the unhoused. Is it a person? (And, one wonders, does it share that of God?) What about all those microbes building neighborhoods across Chrys's brain? What about the disembodied planetary communication network that suddenly shows signs of "unhappiness"?

(Unhappiness indicates advanced sentience, say the microbes. And, ironically, happiness is the one thing the microbes can't give their god/host because tampering with pleasure centers in the brain leads to the god's addiction, enslavement, and demise!)

Interplanetary communication networks jammed full of so many sentient persons/things compound the challenge of being "online" with everything everywhere at all times. Even Slonczewski's first book, the Quakers-in-space novel *Still Forms on Foxfield*, written in 1980 before the advent of the Internet, foresaw these issues. And their latest novels present a dizzying array of "retinal windows" vying for attention, literally

in the eye of the beholder, right at the optic nerve.

Slonczewski's novels seem to say: if you think things are complex now, just wait! While their early novels highlighted nontraditional, often lesbian, relationships, this latest novel propels us into societies where humans (the rich at least) choose their bodies and genders at will and where loving relationships may arise among all genders, species, and sentient machines. (Would we marry a sentient machine under care of our meeting?) In addition to navigating personal relationships, Chrys faces crises and moral choices both outside and within herself as she deals with inequity in the city and the politics of the "Fold" of connected planets, all while attempting to be a merciful god to the often troublesome microbes within her own body.

So, who should read *Minds in Transit*? Multiple Friends who started to read with me gave up trying to unravel the tangle of characters and threads. Others loved the questions raised. I'd note that this is less a novel with a simple story arc than a window on a moving train that looks out onto worlds in progress.

This book is for you if you are a Slonczewski fan who enjoyed their prior Elysium series, especially *Brain Plague*. If you are new to this author's work but intrigued by the microbial themes, try *Brain Plague* first. Or, for an even easier less microbial entry, start way back with *A Door Into Ocean*.

Yes, Joan Slonczewski has microbes on their mind. And they're willing to share them with you! Slonczewski's four decades of science fiction open doors to worlds where technology and ecology merge and where sentient microscopic beings might just be the death of us, or our salvation.

Rob Pierson is a member of Albuquerque (N.M.) Meeting, a graduate of Earlham School of Religion, and a fan of science fiction. Sadly, he lacks intelligent microbes, but he has done his best without them as an aerospace systems engineer.

Sky Responds to Our Holler

By Zenaida Peterson. *Game Over Books*, 2025. 64 pages. \$18/paperback.

Reviewed by Catherine Wald

I don't want to be beautiful /
I want to be listened to
—from "Everytime I Have
Butterflies I Am Self Conscious but
What If I Just Flew Away"

This is the voice of a self-described "Black southern Quaker mystic," a nonbinary poet who is active in the queer and poetry communities. I'm a White northeastern Quaker woman who may or may not be a mystic, who has limited involvement in the queer community, and this Friend speaks my mind. I, too, want to be known for who I am, not how I present myself to the world. Don't we all?

These poems speak frankly about sex, gender, racism, injustice, and the enforcement of social norms. I admire Peterson's courage, outspokenness, and openness to adventure: in sexuality, in nature, in spirit, in language, and in living in the present.

In the opening prose poem, "In the North Georgia Mountains," the poet describes a camping adventure with friends, telling ghost stories and being blasted by a thunderstorm. It strikes them as a spiritual experience. "Are the gods not calling our names in all this dark and damp? Weren't we meant to be this alive? . . . Isn't living in the way the sky responds to our holler with more thunder?"

An important theme in the book is family relationships: how they are and how they might be. The poem "July 2021: A Weekend with My Dad He Probably Doesn't Remember" describes an intimate conversation that may or may not have happened, in which the father and child talk frankly about gender and identity—theirs and his—and then settle down to watch TV, the longest time the two have spent together since the narrator was in high school. The poet feels heard. "Before we go to

bed he knocks on my door and
whispers, / ‘congratulations on your
nonbinary-ness.’”

In another, “If I Became the
Daughter they Expected Me To Be,”
they imagine themselves living with a
doctor husband in a house they keep
clean, with a job and wanting a baby.
They hate their body and never show
emotion. “I smile. / I am happy. / I am
a good girl / . . . / I am empty.”

In “My Pronouns are Black,” they
struggle to come to terms with their
mother, “who don’t wanna hear /
’bout the things white people taught
me anymore.”

I tell her, “white people didn’t
teach me
how to be Black,
how to overcome,
how to gender, mama,
my body taught me that,
our ancestors taught me that.
You, you taught me that,
I watched you.”

Prayer and spiritual experience are
important concerns in the book. In
four separate “How to Pray” poems
scattered throughout the book,
Peterson explores the meaning and
practice of prayer, and how it intersects
with daily life, including life under the
inequalities of capitalism, where, as
“How to Pray (step two)” attests, prayer
seems to favor those “who have the
capacity to imagine a better world / . . .
[and] design it through resistance”:

buying less and creating more
talking about how no
one needs a billion of anything
except maybe molecules of
clean air
drops of water
kisses on their forehead over
multiple lifetimes

This poet insists on the importance
of mystery: “To pray is not to fear
God / it is to fear a life without
unexplainable things” (from “How to
Pray (step three)”).

If there is stubbornness and rage in
this book, there is also optimism. The



poet looks hopefully to the future, not
with naïveté but based on the power
they have experienced while building
community and flaunting stereotypes.
They affirm, “It is not that we invented
ourselves / but put up windows where
there used to be / cement . . .”

Peterson is an alum of the
Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS)
program in the Boston, Mass. house
(2016–2017). They have stayed
connected with QVS since their
service year in various roles and
are now the director of equity and
empowerment and the Boston
coordinator. In 2020, they served
as artist-in-residence at Philadelphia
Yearly Meeting’s annual sessions.

This is Peterson’s first poetry
collection. As the founding director of
Feminine Empowerment Movement
Slam, they are experienced in coaching
teams that have ranked in the top
ten in national poetry slams and also
winning awards themselves. You can
hear the voice of the slam poet in
these poems: the attention to sonics,
surprising ideas, and turns of phrase.

In the end, it seems, it’s all about
authenticity. In “My God Body,” when
the poet’s mother complains that
her child’s bra strap is showing, they
respond, “it doesn’t matter what I
look like.”

God knows me
like this.
God knows me
back open,

chest open,
naked,
and loves my blasphemy.

*Catherine Wald lives in New York
City and worships at Morningside
(N.Y.) Meeting.*

In Brief

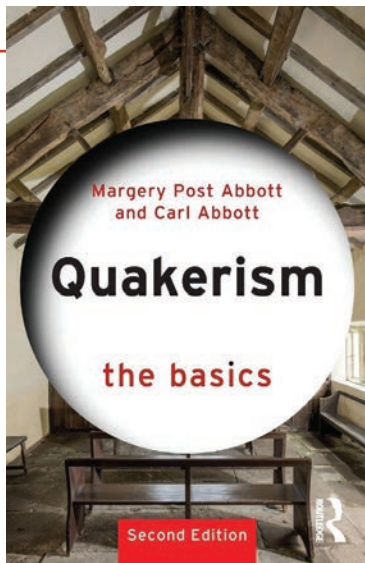
Quakerism: The Basics (Second Edition)

*By Margery Post Abbott and Carl
Abbott. Routledge, 2025. 240 pages.
\$28.99/paperback or eBook.*

This book is about more than the
basics. It is a thoroughly readable
tour through Quakerism in all of its
diversity from 1652 to 2025. Margery
Post Abbott and Carl Abbott bring
the experience of active and engaged
Quakers, the discipline of scholarly
historians, and gentle attention to that
of God in the varieties of Quakers,
Quaker beliefs, and Quaker processes.

The first edition of *Quakerism: The
Basics*, published in 2021, gives a broad
overview of Quaker history, Quaker
worship and practice, and Quaker
action. It encompasses the range of
Quaker practice from unprogrammed
Quakerism, programmed Quakerism,
and Evangelical Quakerism
worldwide. The stunning lesson for
unprogrammed Friends is that we
are strikingly in the minority among
Quakers worldwide, that our numbers
are stable or declining, and that
we tend to be older. Programmed
Quakerism and particularly
Evangelical Quakerism is flourishing
and growing around the world. Both
they and we can credibly claim to be
the descendants of George Fox and
early Friends.

In this second edition, the
authors substantially rethought and
reorganized chapter 6, “Ministry,
Mission, and Testimony.” There is a
deeper dive into how Quakers fell
short in their approach to slavery
and their relationships with Native
Americans, while still noting their
positive actions. There is new material



about Friends as active participants in electoral politics. Friends testimonies are important throughout Quakerism; Evangelical Friends understand testimonies as evidence of the work of Christ in their hearts while Liberal Friends are likely to say the same thing in less religious language. The earlier edition had an appendix on Quakers in fiction; it is joined in the new edition with an appendix on Quakers on screen, including movies and television.

I thought of myself as well-informed about my fellow Quakers, but I now feel so enriched by this thorough and generous volume.

—Reviewed by Patricia McBee,
a member of Newtown (Pa.) Meeting
and a longtime writer and teacher on
Quaker process and spiritual practice

Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania

Edited by Jane E. Calvert. Mercer University Press, 2026. 120 pages. \$20/paperback.

Like many Quaker adherents, John Dickinson (1732–1808) was a suite of contradictions. He appreciated pacifism, but supported the American Revolution. He believed in radical equality and individual liberty, but opposed the Declaration of Independence—which arguably was what the Revolution was all about. The son of a half-hearted Quaker, he became an abolitionist and freed



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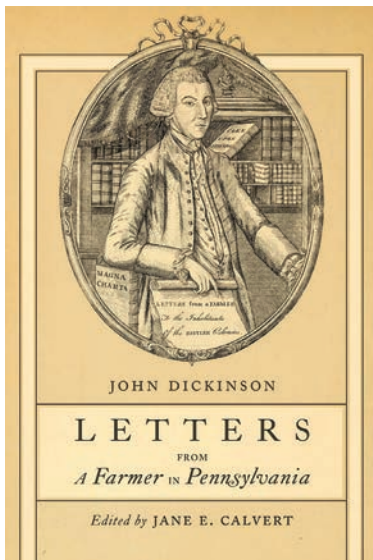
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the people his father had enslaved.

All this and more is well documented in Jane E. Calvert's preface and introduction to this annotated edition of *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. The letters were written, sometimes under a pseudonym, by Dickinson, a Philadelphia lawyer, gentleman farmer in northern Delaware, and political theoretician who has gotten too little credit for formulating what it meant to be an American and not a British subject in a string of distant, ununited colonies. Dickinson, for example, popularized the critical "united we stand, divided we fall" mantra. And it was he who proposed that the U.S. legislature consist of two houses, one based on population and one on equal representation from every state.

The dozen letters, plainly worded treatises penned in 1767 and 1768, make engaging reading; Dickinson believed he would be more widely credible in a farmer's voice than a lawyer's. But it is Calvert's prefatory essays that stand out. Displaying a solid understanding of 1760s colonial Quakerism, she delves extensively into how much Dickinson, while not an observant Friend, was influenced by Friendly positions such as peaceful conflict resolution and advocacy of civil disobedience. His Quaker-infused *Letters* in turn greatly influenced those who have been more mythologized as creators of this unlikely nation. Thus

the relatively unheralded importance of Quakers in the shaping of America comes through.

But perhaps most important, Calvert weaves in a powerful comparison of the political situation then with that of today, with the threat of authoritarianism brooding over the land. We learn that speaking truth to power is not new, nor has it gone out of style.

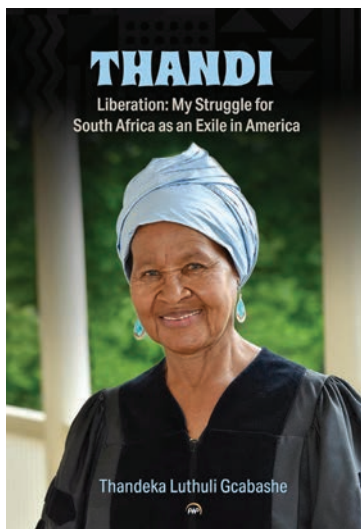
—Reviewed by Neal Burdick,
a member of St. Lawrence Valley
Meeting in Potsdam, N.Y.; an attendee
at Burlington (Vt.) Meeting; and a
freelance writer and editor

Thandi, Liberation: My Struggle for South Africa as an Exile in America

By Thandeka Luthuli Gcabashe. *Africa World Press*, 2024. 238 pages. \$29.95/ paperback.

This memoir begins with a concise history of twentieth-century South Africa. It briefly traces the development of the African National Congress and the passing of national segregation laws that were modeled after the Jim Crow system in the United States. It documents massacres of anti-apartheid protestors, such as the slaying of 176 demonstrators who participated in the Soweto Uprising in 1976, and discusses the international boycott of South Africa.

The author, who has used the name



Thandi since she was young, writes of her father, the late Albert Luthuli, chief of her hometown of Grootville, president-general of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1952 to 1967, and recipient of the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his nonviolent approach in the anti-apartheid movement. Gcabashe's childhood home was full of company: mostly Africans, including Nelson Mandela. White visitors came to the house in violation of laws requiring them to get special permits to visit Black residential areas, despite the presence of numerous informants who could have betrayed them to the authorities.

In 1960, the apartheid government banned the ANC along with most other anti-apartheid groups. In 1970, Thandi and her husband, Thulani Gcabashe, along with their four children, moved to the United States. The South African government intelligence service had learned that ANC youth meetings were being held in the Gcabashe family's apartment and they feared imprisonment. The couple became friends with Coretta Scott King, CEO of the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, Ga., and widow of Martin Luther King Jr., and she became one of the family's immigration sponsors.

Thandi was hired in 1981 by American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to direct the Southern African Program for the southeastern region. Based in Atlanta, she organized the 1980s boycott of Coca-Cola to persuade the Atlanta-based company to divest from South Africa. The book includes an appendix listing highlights of AFSC's involvement with Southern Africa beginning in the late 1950s.

Friends looking for an accessible introduction to the international struggle against apartheid in South Africa will find this book a welcome addition to their libraries.

—Reviewed by Sharlee DiMenichi,
staff writer at Friends Journal
and a member of Lehigh Valley Meeting
in Bethlehem, Pa.

How Can I Keep from Singing?

continued from page 8

transitions to worshipful singing where we sing out of the silence until the rise of meeting.

We've learned that singing or worship sharing is powerful and welcoming worship. As such, we devote a real portion of our serious worship time to these practices and incorporate them into our regular meeting for worship schedule, so more people can experience and be inspired by them. Currently, our first Sunday of the month is devoted to worship sharing and the fourth Sunday to worshipful singing.

We have found worship-fluid meetings greatly benefit from keeping things "serious." Creating, sharing, and enforcing (okay, elderring) guidelines for all forms of worship is a key. Friends are likely familiar with guidelines for worship sharing, and we recite them at each Worship Sharing Sunday. (One of my favorites is, worship sharing works best paired with worship listening.)

These different forms of guided worship have brought a new and more diverse set of people into our meetinghouse. In our experience, guided worship creates a wider door to welcome seekers and newcomers. It offers different forms of worship that welcome more voices and provide different pathways for connection to the Divine.

Moreover, I find guided worship can serve, in part, as a training ground for ministry. In particular, worship sharing with well-crafted queries explicitly invites individuals to speak and allows them to focus on their own spiritual and life experiences.

Overall, this tends to set a less-threatening bar to clear for one to

speak in worship. It's an opportunity to share in meeting without the whole "God spoke to me and told me to share our conversation with y'all!" requirement. This, in turn, seems to encourage different and new voices to be heard, and provides those souls an opportunity to develop their ministerial voice and sense of Spirit. In that way, worship sharing can help strengthen the quality and depth of vocal ministry across the full spectrum of worship formats, including our traditional open worship form.

Singing Sunday, too, brings in a wider range of voices and is at the heart of our monthly intergenerational meeting. Kids like to sing—especially kids' songs. Our own loosely collated songbook includes songs for, and suggested by, children in our community. They even wrote a new "Simple Gifts" verse for singing in meeting.

In our experience, our worship-fluid meeting has welcomed a wider diversity of souls to Quaker worship and given them a broader set of ways to practice our Quaker faith and connect with Spirit and faithfulness. Breaking out of worship duality has brought more engagement and joy into our meetinghouse to the benefit of all. It is much in keeping with the Rumi lyrics to one of our favorite Singing Sunday songs and rounds:

Come, come, whoever you are!
Wanderers, worshipers, lovers of
leaving.
Ours is no caravan of despair.
Come, yet again, come. ■

Experiments in Silent Worship

continued from page 12

sense and taste of spiritual things." Ignatius wrote this over 100 years before George Fox's birth, but I'm convinced Fox would find spiritual companionship in Ignatius's words: ideas inform, but interior experiences of the heart can change us, even transform us.

It's important to see how often in gospel stories that Jesus slips away from the crowds and his disciples to spend silent time alone in the mountains. It was an opportunity for Jesus to be alone with silence, to reach into the living heart of silence for consolation and for peaceful resolve. In a sense, it was a chance for Jesus to practice the Examen: assess if his activities are in line with his mission. In the mornings, he returns to the human community ready to keep teaching, telling stories, and healing.

Let me close with a final example. The most intimate moment of my 30-day retreat came toward the end when I found that words failed me, and I spent time instead leafing through art books depicting scenes from Christ's life. I came across a picture of Jesus, towel around his waist, washing his disciples' feet. I began to "sense and taste" the startling inner realization that Christians worship a God who washes feet.

I feel that interior sense just as powerfully 30 years later. In that image, silence and service embrace: a fitting summary of all my experiments. It's letting silence grab us, startle us, really, that seems to enliven and cast light on the paths of all spiritual traditions. ■

What Can We Say?

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anoints us as individuals when we rise to speak in meeting; and that anoints us as gathered bodies in covered meetings for worship—in theory, at least.

I call this Spirit the “spirit of the christ, little c,” the spirit of God’s *anointing*. The Greek word *christos* means “anointed.” To folks in his hometown synagogue, Jesus proclaimed himself anointed—“christ-ed”—by God’s Spirit, according to Luke 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me [he has christ-ed me] to bring good news to the poor,” he declared (New Revised Standard Version), quoting Isaiah 61:1.

I believe that we share, both personally and collectively, Jesus’s experience of anointing in the Spirit, however we name it. As Jesus pointed to God’s Spirit as having anointed him in that passage in Luke, we can also feel anointed in our hearts and in our gathered meetings. Something extraordinary and beautiful is going on there. There is a presence in our midst when we are gathered. Some trans-personal, transcendental something is bringing us into unity and joy. But in my experience so far, it isn’t necessarily wearing a name tag.

Is the presence Jesus Christ, as he promised in Matthew 18:20 (from which we get the term “gathered meeting”): “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (King James Version)? Or is it the Spirit that he pointed to in his own experience? Or are they now the same Spirit? The full nature of this anointing Spirit remains a holy Mystery, at least to me, real though it is.

Many would say that it doesn’t matter what you call it. Why bother to give it a name? My answer is that it might help. Having a center, having a focus, could foster our gathering in the Spirit. I find that it anchors my faith and my practice. It provides me with a center of gravity. So I call it the spirit of the christ, the spirit of God’s anointing, following Jesus’s example. I give myself a focus that honors that mystery, its reality, and our tradition all at once.

We “believe” because we have experienced direct personal and direct collective communion with a real and transformative Mystery. We share that experience with Jesus and his disciples, with George Fox and early Friends, and with Friends and meetings through the centuries and across the world.

We bring that experience and the faith it generates into our personal spiritual lives and to our meetings for worship, into our service to the Spirit, and to our walking in the world. And we all share enough of the essentials of this faith to call ourselves “Friends.”

I believe that the clearer we are about these essentials, the deeper will be our fellowship in the Spirit, the more often we will be covered by that Spirit, and the more effective we will be in our care for each other and in our witness to the world. Our message is this: the Source behind our beliefs may be a Mystery, and we may give it different names, but it is real! We know it is real because we have experienced it ourselves. □

Child Safeguarding in Quaker Spaces

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was publicly discussed and defined, according to Hanas.

If, for example, a student is meeting alone with a teacher, the head of school is obligated to approach the adult to express concern about the meetings, according to Hanas.

The Catholic Church has produced a set of videos as part of a training to help viewers understand what grooming looks like, Seitel noted. Such an understanding can help adults protect young people from harm. Seitel repeatedly reported to the then head of school her concern about Asturizaga meeting with an individual student privately but is not aware of a response to her reports.

“I never knew that children had been sexually touched,” Seitel said of the abuse at FCS.

Abuse can make it difficult for survivors to remember what happened due to the mental manipulation involved in grooming, and can leave children with a permanent sense that they were not properly watched over, according to Seitel. In addition to the devastation to victims, grooming and abuse cause problems in the school community at large as the culture becomes sick, according to Seitel.

Child protection policies have evolved, as have ideas on best practices for responding to allegations of abuse. Hanas noted that the National Association of Independent Schools formed a task force to advise school administrators and other staff how to respond to allegations of abuse.

The task force began work in 2016 and produced a publication offering guidance on preventing and responding to sexual misconduct.

Some of the advice regarding risk reduction includes paying attention to physical space and making sure that students who are meeting with one adult are always in a direct line of sight of other adults, Hanas noted.

Other best practices include training all employees in mandated reporting, according to Andrew Wright, youth and children's ministries coordinator for Durham (N.C.) Meeting. Mandated reporting is a legal requirement for adults to report to authorities any suspicions that children are being abused. Wright noted that in North Carolina, every adult is a mandated reporter.

One key piece of advice is to observe the rule of three, which means that there is never an adult alone with a child, according to Kristin Simmons, youth engagement coordinator for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

The rule of three applies even in virtual meetings; adults should never be alone with children even when meeting online. The chat function should be disabled for the children and youth, according to Simmons. In virtual meetings, screen share should be disabled; a waiting room should be used; and the host should join meetings first.

Responding to an accusation of abuse would involve first ensuring that the child making the allegation was safe from continued harm, according to Wright. Additional steps include but are not limited to contacting social services, forming an ad hoc committee to guide the response, and consulting an attorney

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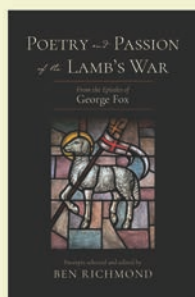
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And never heed the raging waves of the sea, . . .
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Child Safeguarding in Quaker Spaces

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to make sure the meeting is doing everything required to protect the alleged victim.

Across locations, child protection policies have some similar components, including requirements about checking volunteers' and employees' criminal records as well as advice about ensuring that a child is not alone with an individual adult. Most people working with children in Australia Yearly Meeting are volunteers who must have official cards showing they have passed a police record check and are allowed to work with vulnerable people, according to Lorraine Thomson, a member of Quakers Australia Child Safety Committee. The cards are issued after a police check.

Thomson explained that Quakers in Australia also have an additional "approved child carer" process that people must go through who are seeking to work with children. As part of the approved carer process, those who work with children answer questions about relevant experience and their motivations for applying for the position. Each prospective worker must provide references, who are then interviewed. At Quaker events involving children, there must be at least one person who has undergone the additional child carer process.

One purpose of Ireland Yearly Meeting's child safeguarding policy is to comply with the law in both jurisdictions: Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, according to Sheilagh Reaper-Reynolds, clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting Education Committee.

The policy was drafted in consultation with the four quarterly

meetings in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Some people on the committee that drafted the policy were parents, but the convenors did not go out of their way to invite parents to serve on the committee.

Expressing the Quaker belief that there is that of God in everyone, including children, was an important part of the policy, Reaper-Reynolds noted.

All leaders working with children—for instance, in First-day school or summer camp—have to be vetted by the police, Reaper-Reynolds explained. They must also submit two references: one Quaker and one non-Quaker. Even people who are not alone with young people, such as cooks who work at children's camps, must go through the vetting process.

One-time speakers who give presentations to young Friends are not required to be vetted by the police, but they are never left alone with the children, Reaper-Reynolds noted.

Ireland has had several child abuse scandals involving churches and schools that have raised public awareness of the need for child abuse prevention policies. Friends did not express resistance to adopting the policy, according to Reaper-Reynolds.

Ackworth School's child safeguarding policy allows the school to meet its statutory responsibility as well as live up to its ethics and values, according to Martyn Beer, head of school. Ackworth is a Quaker day and boarding school in West Yorkshire, United Kingdom.

The 67-page policy includes annual updates that reflect new government mandates, Beer explained. The school has to undergo an inspection each year to evaluate whether their policy complies with the law. Visitors to the school must also undergo screening,

according to Beer. There is a core safeguarder as well as 15 designated safeguarding leads, members of staff who undergo in-depth training about child abuse and share their knowledge with the rest of the school employees.

School leaders have a resource to check potential criminal histories of anyone applying for employment, according to Beer. The nationwide Disclosure and Barring Service keeps records of convictions, including those that have been expunged, according to its website.

Given that Quakerism is a faith in which yearly meetings, quarterly meetings, and monthly meetings are all responsible for some decision making, sometimes it is unclear who should be in charge of developing a child safeguarding policy, according to Simmons, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Writing and publicizing child protection and response policies can prepare Friends at Quaker schools, yearly meetings, and monthly meetings to reduce the risk of child abuse and respond to any allegations reported. Friends should view child protection as a community-wide responsibility, Simmons explained.

"We want to set people up to be safe and successful," Simmons said.

If you or someone you know are having suicidal feelings or are in crisis, you can call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 in the United States to be connected to a trained counselor. Services are available in English and Spanish. ■

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Distracted from economic equality

Capitalism is supposed to be an economic system with checks and balances, like democracy, and we expect these two different systems to interact (“Quakers and Capitalism,” *Quakers Today* season 6, episode 3). We also expect our markets to be regulated to prevent the worst behaviors of the market mechanism. That’s what I was raised to believe. There are many variations of capitalism: the Nordic Model, Rhine Capitalism, Keynesian Economics, and the New Deal. These versions of capitalism are usually paired with social democracy. The big problem in recent decades is our neglect of those checks and balances. We’ve been distracted from the issues of economic equality, not to mention global warming and pollution, by demagoguery on other issues.

Tom Louderback
Louisville, Ky.

Inspired by Fox’s epistles

Thanks to Ron Hogan for another good *Look to the Light* message, “To What Will I Compare This Generation?” (*Quaker.org*, June 29). If I may, on a related note, I just discovered an English Quaker site, Experiment with Light (*experiment-with-light.org.uk*), with an incredible meditation process based on George Fox’s sermons, which I already tried and must say it’s incredibly wonderful.

The meditation “Mediation on the individual” by Klaus Huber (August 2000) in particular is the one I used, since it’s based on Fox’s own words. I am going to email them to see what sermon in particular that’s based on, but this quote from Epistle 46 from 1653 is related:

Ye have all one eye, which is the light; one fire, which consumes all which the light discovers to be evil; and one spirit, which baptizes all into the one body, where there is no confusion, but pureness and oneness.

Therefore all Friends, mind the oneness, and that which keeps you in the oneness and unity, it is that which keeps you out of the world; and this one light leads you out of darkness into the everlasting day, where ye see the church of God.

Stan Young

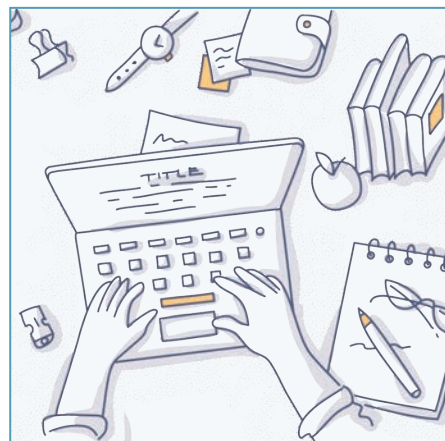
Be examples upon the earth

Steven Dale Davison’s “Nurturing Spiritual Gifts and Concerns” (*FJ* June-July) speaks my heart, my devotion to the spiritual guide within! I couldn’t agree more completely. We need to step up to recognition and attendance to our wise elders without fear or trepidation. A little group of us has tended to move without the guidance of Spirit. Why? They’ve answered, “because we had no one else to serve.” That is not a reason from Spirit. It’s from a source that I personally never wish from which to draw or drink! God help us here, to see the light and be examples upon the earth of light and love. Then, and only then, walk cheerfully upon our earth!

Marcia V. Ormsby
Annapolis, Md.

Correction

We inadvertently swapped some of the photo captions for Melinda Wenner Bradley’s “How Do You Feel the Light Inside You?” (*FJ* June-July). On page 16, the photo on the left shows the Faith & Play story “Images of God” shared at West Chester (Pa.) Friends School and was taken by Nancy Hiro; the top right photo shows the Faith & Play story “Prayer and Friends Meeting for Worship” and was taken by Melinda Wenner Bradley; the bottom right photo comes from the Faith & Play story “Loves’s Way” and is also by Melinda Wenner Bradley. On page 17, the photo at the bottom shows the Faith & Play story “Gifts” being shared at Quaker House, Chautauqua Institution in New York.



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Deaths

Fink—*A.M. Fink*, 93, on April 6, 2026, at home in Ames, Iowa. A.M. was born on December 15, 1932, in his German Russian grandparents' home in Delmont, S.D. The youngest in a deeply religious family, he got to sit on his father's lap as his father read from the German Bible every morning. In this intimate time he learned to read German script before dealing with English in a one-room school at age six. Being unsuited to farming because of allergies, A.M. attended Wartburg College, a trusted German Lutheran institution in distant Iowa. His parents paid his tuition, but he had a medley of odd jobs for pocket money at Wartburg. Mopping the gymnasium floor, he taught himself to balance a mop on his chin. Slotting mail in student mailboxes, he inserted original poetry along with the mail. Setting up chairs and staying for concerts, he fell in love with classical music.

Although the Fink family was nested in a German-speaking enclave in South Dakota, there was an ambient measure of anti-German sentiment that the family tended to ignore—until the county's Selective Service drafted A.M. during his junior year at Wartburg. Never one to rage at the world, A.M. took advantage of his exposure to different kinds of people and places while in the U.S. Army, learning how to survey and using his leaves to explore the surroundings. He was a more mature and centered student when he returned to graduate from Wartburg in 1956 and enter Iowa State University as a graduate student in mathematics. While never friendless, he was more of a nerd than a mixer, completing the Iowa State doctorate degree in three years.

In 1967, A.M. returned to the Iowa State Mathematics Department after a detour through New Jersey, Virginia, and Nebraska, where he had met Deborah Walters. He and Deborah married in 1966. A.M. devoted most of his career to mathematical analysis, differential equations, inequalities, and almost periodic functions. His vita lists four books and 106 other publications. While maintaining his center of gravity at Iowa State, he took leaves for visiting positions, research stints, and conferences across the United States and around the world. Toward the end of active scholarship, he turned to game theory. His article "You Don't Have to Settle for Less Than the Biggest Piece of Pie" describes fair and envy-free property division, a procedure he presented in seminars for judges, mediators, and lawyers.

Always a profoundly spiritual person, A.M. shifted readily into Quakerism after marriage, resonating with Rufus Jones's memory of having been "sprinkled from morning till night with the dew of religion." He served stints as clerk and treasurer of Ames (Iowa) Meeting. Nationally he served on boards of Friends World Committee for Consultation and Friends Publishing Corporation (2009–2018), publisher of *Friends Journal*. With Deborah, he

attended Iowa and national gatherings of American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Friends General Conference. He was a stalwart of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). In his final, intense months Deborah read to him, *Turning Toward the Victim* by Thomas Gates settling into their hearts in the end.

A.M. is survived by his wife, Deborah Fink; two children, George Finklang (Julie Finklang) and Philip Fink; and two grandchildren.

Hollingshead—*Jennifer "Jenny" Polge Hollingshead*, 96, on November 9, 2025, at Pennswood Village retirement community in Newtown, Pa. Jenny was born on March 15, 1929, to Ernest and Joan Polge at Innisfree, the family home in Jordans, England. A lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends, she often spoke fondly of her carefree childhood—cycling through the village at will, exploring the gardens, and adventuring with her beloved younger sister, Rosalind, while their parents tended the farm. Known in childhood as "Jinks," she was an active and curious girl who delighted in finding secret hiding places, especially among the branches of the great deodar cedar that anchored the garden.

In 1948, while studying nursing and living at Woodbrooke, a Quaker college in Birmingham, UK, Jenny met Irving Hollingshead Jr., who was there for a semester following his alternative service in Finland. In 1949, at age 20, Jenny crossed the Atlantic alone to join Irving in the United States. They married on February 10, 1950, at Moorestown (N.J.) Meeting.

Jenny and Irving made their first home in Rancocas, N.J., where they ran a small farm, raised four children, and pursued higher education in the evenings. Jenny earned her bachelor's degree and teaching certificate from Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa., and began her career as an educator.

The family's life expanded in 1966 when they moved to Nairobi, Kenya, for two years through a USAID program. There, Irving taught at the University of East Africa, while Jenny taught in local schools. Their time in Kenya was filled with exploration, community, and unforgettable adventures: being chased by elephants in game parks, snorkeling in the Indian Ocean, and working alongside women on textile projects.

Upon returning to the United States, the family settled in Boyertown, Pa. Irving taught at Kutztown State College, and Jenny built a distinguished career in education, completing a master's degree in reading education from Kutztown. She became the coordinator and supervisor of the Title I (later Chapter 1) program for the Boyertown School District, where she advocated fiercely for teachers and students alike, ensuring that those who needed academic support received thoughtful, well-resourced help.

Jenny's life was grounded in her faith and animated by a deep commitment to peace and justice—values shaped in part by her

experiences as a child during the Blitz. She was an active member of Friends meetings in Rancocas, N.J.; Reading, Pa.; Unami Meeting in Pennsburg, Pa.; and Newtown, Pa., where she taught First-day school and served on committees for ministry, social justice, and community care.

Jenny loved traveling and forming connections across cultures. She and Irving participated in the Odessa-to-Kyiv Peace Walk in 1988, forging lifelong friendships with people from Russia, Lithuania, and Kyrgyzstan. She and her sister Rosalind later fulfilled childhood dreams of shared adventure through travels to Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan. From 2004–2005, Jenny and Irving served as the resident couple at Honolulu (Hawaii) Meeting, widening yet again the circle of people whose lives they touched.

Jenny was predeceased by her husband, Irving Hollingshead Jr., in 2015; a sister, Lois Jenkins; and a brother, Christopher Polge.

She is survived by four children, Lynne Rosansky (Victor), Jennifer Hollingshead, Chris Hollingshead (Kathie), and Debby Hollingshead (Ruth); nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one sister, Rosalind Gwatkin (Frank); and numerous nieces and nephews.

Lucas—*Catharine Maner Lucas*, 86, on October 10, 2025, peacefully, after a stroke and a subsequent fall, at Friends House retirement community in Santa Rosa, Calif. Catharine was born on September 7, 1939, to John Paul Lucas Jr. and Maria Garlington Martin Lucas in Seneca, S.C. She was the second of six children and spent her earliest years in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Catharine was raised as a Methodist. At the age of 16, she attended an American Friends Service Committee workcamp in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The only Southerner, Catharine was intrigued by the liberal ideas of the other campers.

In 1957, Catharine graduated from Myers Park High School in Charlotte, N.C., then enrolled at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, majoring in philosophy. In 1961, Catharine graduated from Bryn Mawr with honors, then attended graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. She changed her academic focus from philosophy to music, studying classical piano. Catharine began attending Berkeley (Calif.) Meeting.

Catharine felt socially pressured to "partner up." She married a gentle folk dancer, and on August 12, 1964, their son, Steven, was born. Shortly thereafter, the couple divorced.

Catharine married Scott Keech. In the early 1970s, the family moved to England and later the Netherlands, where Catharine taught English at the American School in The Hague. In 1976, she returned to enter the doctorate program in the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley. She joined the staff of the Bay Area Writing Project.

At the Asilomar English Teachers Conference in 1978, Catharine met and fell in

love with Mary Ellen McNelly (“Mem”). She and Scott dissolved their marriage. Catharine and Steven moved in with Mem. Soon after completing her doctorate in English, Catharine was hired by San Francisco State University, where she taught from 1982 until 2005. She designed a master of arts program in English composition.

After actively participating in Berkeley Meeting for 20 years, Catharine became a member in 1981 at the age of 42. As a member of the Marriage and Personal Ties Committee, she restarted the Oral History Project. She was an active member of the Nominating and Final Affairs Committees, and of many clearness committees. Catharine served as an elder for many.

In the mid-1980s, Catharine and Mem applied to be married under the care of Berkeley Meeting. After a difficult and sometimes contentious process that continued for more than two years, the meeting approved their request. On January 9, 1988, Catharine and Mem became the first same-sex couple to be married under the care of Berkeley Meeting, nearly three decades before the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision recognizing a constitutional right to marriage equality. With this event as a precedent, Berkeley Meeting approved subsequent same-sex marriage requests without difficulty.

Soon after their marriage, Mem (who changed her name to Anna Page Lucas) became ill. She died of cancer in 2005.

By late 2011, Catharine had become deeply connected to the Berkeley Zen Center. She requested release from her membership in Berkeley Meeting. The meeting released her from membership on February 12, 2012.

Catharine moved into Friends House Santa Rosa in 2018. She actively participated in the Friends House community, implementing extensive improvements to the library as clerk of the Library Committee. She organized poetry nights and invited guest poets to come to Friends House to share their works.

Catharine’s poems and short prose pieces were published during her lifetime. Just prior to her death, she completed her (unpublished) autobiographical novel, *Five Summers of Maner Louise*.

Catharine is survived by her son, Steven Keech.

Strong—*William Strong*, 95, on December 28, 2025, with his family by his side, at Pennswood Village retirement community in Newtown, Pa. Bill was born on April 5, 1930, to Tasie Shaak Strong and Theodore Strong in St. Louis, Mo. He grew up in Chatham, N.J. While at college at Yale University, Bill participated in a summer-long Students in Government Seminar, where he met Nancy Gruner. A few years later in New York City, Bill and Nancy began dating. Soon after marriage, they moved near Columbia University, both getting master’s degrees while working there. Attracted to a faith practiced seven days a week, they attended the new Morningside

Heights Meeting and became members.

After their daughter, Laura, was born, Bill and Nancy signed up for a Church World Service program of food distribution. This led to three years in Peru, Costa Rica, and Chile. Their son, Tom, was born in Peru. Following these travels, Bill and Nancy led a workshop near Mexico City with the Mexican Friends Service Committee. His experiences in Peru led Bill to pursue a career in family planning work. After a stay at Pendle Hill study center outside Philadelphia, Pa., they returned to New York, where Bill worked in family planning at World Education, a nonprofit that improves the education, social, and economic security of people worldwide. This led to a move to Boston, Mass., and his most meaningful job as associate director of The Pathfinder Fund, which promotes contraception and population control around the world. Bill traveled to 20 countries with the goal of making family planning available to all. In his final year in Boston, Bill left the Pathfinder Fund to become executive director of Massachusetts Planned Parenthood.

When the family moved to Newtown, Pa., Bill became curious about the for-profit world, and found a job as a trust officer at a bank in Trenton, N.J. After four years there, he decided to work for peace fulltime. Bill headed the War Tax Concerns Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting which included an effort to get the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)-sponsored Peace Tax Fund bill through Congress. Bill was a longtime member of Newtown (Pa.) Meeting.

Bill’s volunteer activities included work with local Quaker meetings, AFSC, Koinonia, Yale Alumni Fund, and Habitat for Humanity. He served on the boards at Preterm, several Planned Parenthoods, and HiTOPS, among others. In his late 60s, Bill’s volunteer work at the Bucks County Community College Library blossomed into a new career in book repair. Over the years, Bill repaired 13,000 books as a volunteer there and at the Princeton Public Library, as well as 100 paid book repairs. Bill delighted in meeting people and hearing their stories of cherished family books.

Bill took five trips to Cuba spanning five decades, including a two-month trip in 1969 cutting sugar cane with the Venceremos Brigade. In the following years, Bill gave talks on Cuba at many Quaker meetings.

Bill was predeceased by his wife of 67 years, Nancy Strong, who died in 2024.

He is survived by two children, Laura Strong (Eric) and Tom Strong (Pura); and four grandchildren.

Tickle—*Donald Ray Tickle*, 89, on September 18, 2025, in Greensboro, N.C. Don was born on May 5, 1936, to Posie and Alma Newman Tickle of the Red Brush community in Surry County, N.C. His education and training at White Plains High School, John Wesley Bible College, and Guilford College helped prepare Don for a life of service. On November 28, 1957, he married Patricia “Ann” Cockerham.

Don was a recorded minister in North Carolina Yearly Meeting beginning in 1980. He had a heart for those unfortunate or facing hardships. Don’s life exemplified living out of faith in the entire breadth of one’s life. He served God not only by serving various meetings in North Carolina as a pastor, but through his professional life serving the marginalized and vulnerable. He worked with the Community Action Program in Stokes County and managed a group home for intellectually disabled and at-risk youth. He taught at Alamance Community College for more than 25 years, teaching those with special needs. He taught everything from academic skills to independent living skills, demonstrating his love and acceptance of his students. It is for that love and acceptance that his students remember him.

Don and Ann served as a pastoral couple in approximately 12 different Quaker meetings in North Carolina, the first of which was when they were in their early 20s at Rocky River Meeting in Siler City. Their longest service was at Hunting Creek Meeting in Yadkinville.

The couple came to New Garden Meeting in 2002, late in Don’s professional life. He brought the occasional prepared message, but it was when he rose to speak out of the silence that the meeting was blessed with his clarity of vision, nurtured by his experience, and grounded in his humor. He loved to sing during meetings for worship. Worship was enhanced not only by the gift of his music, but by his evident joy in sharing that gift.

In his failing years, New Garden sought to minister to Don, but that effort did not approach the gift of his presence and his participation in meeting.

In addition to his parents, Don was predeceased by his siblings, Barbara White, Billy Tickle, and Joyce Williams. He was survived by his wife of more than 67 years, Ann Tickle, who died three months later.

Don is survived by two children, Jeff Tickle and Tamela Tickle; one grandchild; one step-grandchild; and one great-grandchild.

Tickle—*Patricia “Ann” Cockerham Tickle*, 83, on December 17, 2025, in Greensboro, N.C. Ann was born on April 4, 1942, to Bernice and Roy Cockerham in Mount Airy, N.C. At a young age, Ann met her best friend and the love of her life, Donald Ray Tickle. They married on November 28, 1957. She was a devoted wife and mother to their two children, Jeffrey and Tamela. While supporting Don’s calling into the ministry, Ann pursued her education, earning her GED from Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, N.C., and completing advanced coursework in business and secretarial studies.

In 1988, Ann began a distinguished career at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Friday Center for Continuing Education. Her warmth and kindness were officially recognized with the “Sunshine Award,” a testament to the positive impact she had on her colleagues. She retired from UNC Chapel Hill

in 2014 and settled in the Greensboro area.

Ann came out of retirement to work for the accounting office at UNC Greensboro. True to her nature, she quickly formed lifelong bonds with her coworkers, leaving a lasting impression of support and kindness.

Ann and Don served as a pastoral couple for approximately 12 different Quaker meetings in North Carolina, the first of which was when they were in their early 20s at Rocky River Meeting in Siler City. Their longest service was at Hunting Creek Meeting in Yadkinville. Ann and Don came to New Garden Meeting in 2002. Ann organized vacation bible school classes, helped regularly in the nursery, and volunteered wherever needed. Her quiet efforts to support each congregation were steadfast.

Ann's greatest pleasure was spending time with her family. Ann was fondly known as the "Rock 'n' Roll Granny" for her love of attending concerts with her husband. She was a devoted fan, passionately cheering for her beloved Tar Heels. At home, she was famous for making the best chicken and dumplings, a staple at family gatherings. Most importantly, Ann was a champion for others. She celebrated every accomplishment of her family and friends, no matter how small, with pride and encouragement.

Ann was predeceased by her husband of more than 67 years, Donald Ray Tickle, who died three months earlier.

She is survived by two children, Jeff Tickle and Tamela Tickle; one grandchild; one step-grandchild; and one great-grandchild.

Wenner—*D. Richard "Dick" Wenner*, 98, on December 18, 2025, peacefully, at the Wenner family farm in Stillwater, Pa. Born on that farm on June 14, 1927, Dick was the youngest child of William C. Wenner Sr. and Mary Leona Seesholtz. His parents met in church, and the family, including siblings Gertude, Harriet, William Jr., and Dorothy, attended St. James Church (United Church of Christ). Dick attended Zaners School, a one-room schoolhouse, where he skipped two elementary grades, before graduating from Bloomsburg High School. He entered the U.S. Navy Reserve as an officer in training toward the end of World War II and attended Swarthmore College on a Navy scholarship before completing his bachelor's degree at the University of Pennsylvania, where he also earned a master's in governmental administration at the Fels Institute of Government.

Dick's professional career focused on service to communities, especially rural communities. His first job was as borough manager of Clarks Summit, Pa. He later became deputy secretary for agriculture for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In that role, he built a reputation for being a change agent. Dick later joined the Office of Economic Opportunity with Sargent Shriver in Washington, D.C. He became a voice advocating for those experiencing rural poverty and was an advisor to Senator Robert F. Kennedy on this issue. In 1967, during his work as executive director of the National Association for Community Development, he

was interviewed on an episode of CBS Radio's *Capitol Cloakroom*.

Throughout his career, Dick worked with progressive political figures, including civil rights activists Marian Wright Edelman, a lawyer and advocate for children's rights who founded the Children's Defense Fund; and Morris Milgram, a pioneer of integrated housing. Dick was the administrator who organized the historic Senate trip to Mississippi in 1967 that was part of a subcommittee's examination of the War on Poverty programs. Dick's work in the next decades continued to focus on issues of poverty, housing, and immigrant rights, until he retired as the executive director of the Fund for an Open Society, a nonprofit housing organization in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1993.

Seeking a peace church, Dick, his wife, Shirley, and their daughters Amanda and Melinda found a home in the Quaker faith. In the late 1970s, the family participated in the founding of Greenwood Friends School after they had joined Millville (Pa.) Meeting. Dick's commitment to education led him to serve Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on the Education Standing Committee and also on the General Committee (Board of Trustees) of Westtown School. Lifelong generational dedication to education and service to communities is one of Dick's legacies. During his lifetime he was a volunteer for libraries, prison visitation, the unhoused, and forest conservation. A weekly vigil for peace that he started continues to this day in Bloomsburg, Pa.

Dick was predeceased by his wife of 48 years, Shirley Lockwood Wenner, in 2016.

He is survived by five children, David Wenner, William Wenner (Bobbi), Elizabeth Sizer, Melinda Wenner Bradley (Matthew), and Amanda Wenner; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Zopf—*Paul Edward Zopf Jr.*, 94, on October 9, 2025, after a brief illness, in Greensboro, N.C. Paul was born on July 9, 1931, the first son of Paul E. Zopf Sr. and Hilda E. (Russell) Zopf in Bridgeport, Conn. Paul graduated from Warren Harding High School in 1949 and earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture and botany from the University of Connecticut and a master's and doctorate degree from the University of Florida in 1955.

Paul married Evelyn Montgomery Zopf in 1956. The couple moved to Greensboro, where Paul joined the faculty of Guilford College's Sociology and Anthropology Department in 1959. Their son, Eric Paul Zopf, was born in 1962. Paul joined New Garden Meeting in Greensboro in 1968, where, among other things, he was a longtime member of the Brotherhood Class.

Paul was a gentle, quiet man and a scholar who supported his students. He rose through the academic ranks at Guilford, eventually becoming a full professor and was awarded the Charles A. Dana Professor title. He served as chair of the department for 13 years, as well as a transitional associate academic dean. In 1978,

he received the college's Teaching Excellence Award. He retired in 1993, when he was named chief marshal of Guilford College. He was a productive researcher and writer, authoring or coauthoring 14 books.

Quaker values informed much of Paul's research, writing, and community service. He believed in equality and justice for all. He was a consultant to the Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women, to which he contributed a comprehensive demographic profile of women in the city and another profile of the income and poverty of the city's women. He believed that social science without social action falls short of its potential and that social action without social science is often misguided and ineffective. He was reinforced in this belief by his membership in several professional societies, including the American Sociological Association, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, the Southern Sociological Society, and the Population Reference Bureau.

Paul was a skilled woodworker whose home is filled with his furniture (Hepplewhite and Queen Anne), restorations, and architectural detail, much of it created with his father's hand tools out of wood discarded from Guilford College's remodeled buildings. He was an avid organic gardener, born of his farm background, whose flowers and vegetables grew next to his home for all to enjoy. He raised and preserved large amounts of food each summer. He also loved working and playing with words and delivered many one-line jokes.

One of Paul's most appreciated gifts was his ministry of letter writing. The many cards he mailed included hand-written notes of encouragement, celebration, sympathy, remembrances, and much affection over the 65 years he enhanced the Guilford, New Garden Meeting, and wider Greensboro communities.

Paul was predeceased by his wife of 60 years, Evelyn Zopf, in 2016; his brother, Robert Zopf; as well as his parents and his immigrant maternal grandparents, Henry and Wilhelmina Russell.

He is survived by his son, Eric Paul Zopf (Carol Baird); one sister, Evelyn Zopf Hahner; one sister-in-law, Maxine Zopf; and four nieces and nephews.

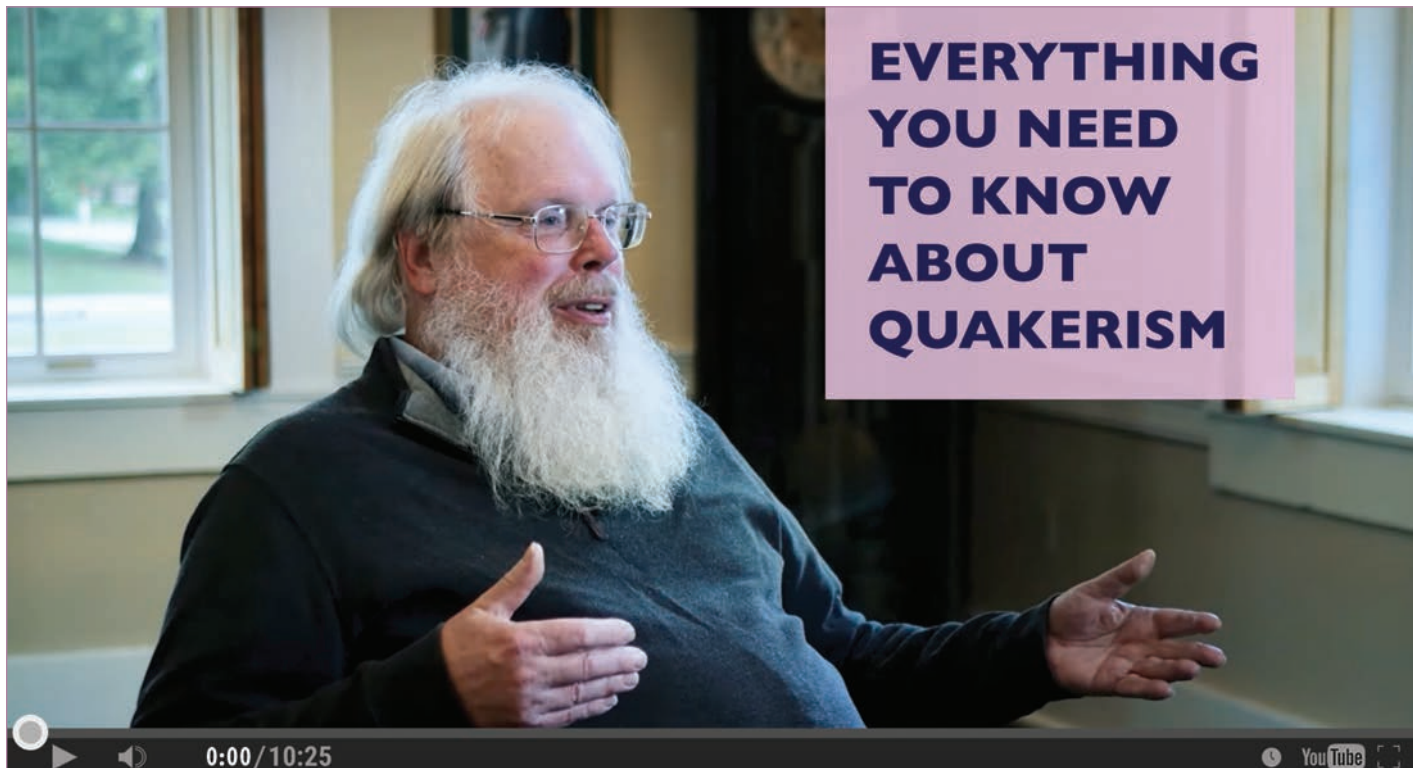
Correction: The milestone for Edwin Everett Hinshaw on pages 56–57 of the June-July 2026 issue misidentified the location of Williamsburg Meeting where Ed was a minister for one year after college. He was a minister at Williamsburg Meeting in Indiana, not the one in Virginia.

Submit notices of births, adoptions, marriages/unions, and deaths of Friends at our website (friendsjournal.org/milestones), by email to milestones@friendsjournal.org, or mail to 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. There is no charge for *Friends Journal* milestone listings.

Where did Quakers come from? What do they believe? And how did they get associated with oats? These are the sorts of questions Friends get asked on a regular basis. So we sat down with Steve Angell, a professor at Earlham School of Religion, and got some solid answers.

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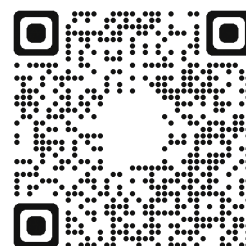
In a free-ranging conversation, Steve tells us about the Quaker view of sacrament as “a life well lived,” a model of simplicity, and loving action toward others. “For Quakers, doctrine is not just what you believe, but what you actually do,” he explains. “Quakers are constantly thinking about the practical effects of how God is not only working within them, but working within the world.”

Watch this video at QuakerSpeak.com

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