The forces of life are stronger than death. This is our faith.
Among Friends: The Oneness of Our Spirit

Small book entitled Friends in the Americas (available through the Friends World Committee for Consultation in Philadelphia) provides an extremely useful glimpse of the many meetings and groups which make up the Religious Society of Friends in our section of the world. The book was edited by Francis B. Hall, who served for many years as director of Quaker Hill Conference Center in Richmond, Indiana.

In the introduction, Francis Hall wrote: “Quakerism in the Western Hemisphere is a vigorous spiritual reality—diverse, yes, but with common historical roots, with major practices and testimonies the same, and with a growing potentiality of realizing its oneness in the Spirit.”

It is with this “oneness of Spirit” in mind that the three major Quaker magazines cooperate this month in the publication of a series of articles. You may recall that a similar cooperative venture occurred one year ago when the three editors selected a group of articles on the common theme of prayer. In the present issue of the JOURNAL, Jack Willcuts, editor of the Evangelical Friend, has contributed an article on discernment. Quaker Life has submitted a piece by Benny Mevey on Divine guidance. The JOURNAL has selected an article on hope by Doug Hostetter and a brief prayer by Robert Muller. This same set of articles will appear as well in the April issues of the Evangelical Friend and Quaker Life.

As I began the planning for this issue, and thought about the differences which exist among this religious body called Quakers, I was interested to look at recent membership figures prepared by the FWCC. Total Quaker membership in 1983 in the United States was 113,140 (and membership worldwide is 200,261). The largest yearly meeting is North Carolina (13,724), the smallest is Missouri Valley Friends Conference (100). Of the three major groupings of yearly meetings, Friends United Meeting membership is 61,425, Friends General Conference is 32,967, and Evangelical Friends Alliance is 26,526. An additional seven yearly meetings totaling 6,189 members are unaffiliated.

I recognize that there are wide differences between us: pastoral/nonpastoral, rural/urban, large meetings/small worship groups, liberal/conservative . . . the list could be much longer. Yet I sense that there is a growing desire among us to find the common ground, the oneness of our Spirit. And for this I am grateful. I look forward in future issues of the magazine to sharing occasional articles from the many areas of Quaker life and thought.

May I call attention as well to our combined advertisement on page 22. I hope individuals and meetings will consider subscribing to all three of the major U.S. Quaker publications.

Vinton Deming

April 1, 1984
The Miracle of Forgiveness

Coming to Know What We Do
by Dorothea Blom

The miracle of forgiveness—what a meditation theme! Of one thing I am certain: this is one of the most liberating human experiences, and I often ponder the hows and whys, trying to grasp its nature as I experience it. Again and again I try to see its implications in myself and in others.

A great big joke was played on us growing up; we were instilled with the assumption that we ought to be kind and forgive others—as if others necessarily wanted to be forgiven. Can you imagine a soldier checking out the Crucifixion and reporting back to Pilate: “You’ll be glad to know, your highness, that Jesus of Nazareth forgave us before he died”?

Is it harder to want forgiveness than to forgive? Is it possible to do one without the other, including self-forgiveness? Or are all these possible only as one total happening? In the King James Version we read the Lord’s Prayer as: “Forgive... as we forgive,” seemingly a simultaneous act. Our cultural addiction for seeing everything as cause and effect often leads us to read this as “being good” by forgiving, and as a reward we will be forgiven.

Once upon a time I created for myself a dramatic variation of the Pilate story, based on the assumption that Pilate fails to wash his hands of the Crucifixion as he intended to. After Jesus is led away and the crowd disperses, Pilate sits brooding over the sequence of events, remembering the way Jesus of Nazareth looked at him. Those penetrating eyes... even now they haunt him. Are they still, from somewhere, looking deep into him, searching, searching? Or is he, Pilate, from a newly discovered depth of being, trying to find those eyes, wanting them back? Did this Jesus catch a glimpse of the Divine, even in him, Pilate? The brooding man catches his breath at the thought, and a cry escapes him: “O my God! What have I done? I knew not what I was doing! My God, oh my God, if a miracle is possible, forgive me... forgive me!”

The shock of coming to know what he did gathers him into one unified self, one seamless fabric. Pilate needs no message of forgiveness relayed from a cross. Floods of mercy engulf him at the same time that there arises within him a fountain of compassion for himself and others. In one event he is forgiven for a lifelong accumulation of wounding others even as he is released into forgiving others (and life itself) for an assortment of hurts over the years. Forgive and being forgiven become one.

God bombards us with insights: when we catch hold of one, after a moment of enchantment, we may shrug our shoulders and say: “It’s too good to be true. Now I must get back to reality”—egocentricity speaking, very clever as it pretends to be practical necessity. In truth, it’s only defending its territory. Suppose, one day, we feel depleted and consumed. Maybe we see, in a flash, that resentments and anger are literally eating us up, feeding on the gift of life, our life force. Suddenly we feel sick and tired of our inner taste and flavor, our inner climate. Call it inner pollution, if you like. We may even be aware of the chemical effects on the physical body that is drifting toward chronic disorders. “Sick and tired” is no longer a metaphor.

We feel helpless enough to cry out for help. That gives God a chance: helplessness is room for help, the first of the Beatitudes. Ego, good in itself, moves over, making room for Something more central.

Then we discover an unfamiliar inner
Quakers rightly emphasize “that of God in every person” but they need to face up to that of evil in every person, or else they cannot find God in the evildoer.

climate in spite of ourselves. We know now that we had been inflicting suffering on ourselves. Inevitable steps backward can be a very devil of a temptation, calling forth an inner voice that says, “All is lost,” or “What’s the use?” (Egocentricity speaking again.) Lucky are those who have a mantra or prayer phrase to carry around and fondle with fingers of spirit, and who have discovered one or more spiritual relatives in the book world to nourish and feed the soul each day. Also, images are powerful help in quick and repeated recall. A favorite for me is seeing myself throwing myself, piece by piece, into a bonfire. (“It burns me up!”) In another I see me throwing hunks of myself to hungry hyenas or jackals. (“It eats me up!”) Indeed it does! Trite sayings become so because they are truly expressive of human experience—what something feels like.

Why is the miracle of forgiveness so hard to come by? Hard even to want, whether in personal relationships, or in our relation to life as a whole?

Two obstacles stand in the way. First, there is always “realistic” justification for resentment, both personal and general. Someone hurts, and someone has caused that hurt—presumably intentionally, although often this is not so. Secondly, egocentricity tends to hold on to the hurts, resentments, and angers as if they were prized possessions. Egocentricity can luxuriate in nursing wounds and find satisfaction in self-pity, habitual anger (expressed or contained). These strong emotions are intensely alive. Something in us can assume that if we give up this feeling, this aliveness, nothing would be left. (If we merely deny our own negative emotions, even to ourselves, we may feel dead, oppressed, or as if life were passing us by. It seems first we have to feel that particular emotion.)

Being ready to let go of all that blocks the miracle of forgiveness has been called “readiness to give up useless suffering.” Readiness is the key. Then we can learn the difference between useless suffering and honest mourning. Useless suffering is repetitive and consuming: the subject matter may change but the tune over the years can be compared to a needle stuck in a groove. Lucky am I when I come to recognize a repetitive pattern, even the recurring phrases of inner talk over years or decades. Honest mourning is neither repetitive nor consuming. It mourns the wounds life has inflicted on me at the same time that it mourns the hurts I have inflicted on others, intentionally or not. It is the second of the Beatitudes, a life line affecting the human predicament of hurting and being hurt—a way of re-joining the human race on a new level.

Hardest of all for some of us is forgiving irreparable injustices caused by human insensibility. This can be symbolized by “the massacre of the innocents” as it continues into our own time. A powerful image for this is the often-reproduced photo of a child trying to run away from the napalm flames enveloping her. Can one forgive that? Can one forgive God for the kind of world where that can happen? In younger years I sometimes had to approach God, saying: “From Thy cosmic vantage point, Thou hast advantage over me, but from where I stand on earth, I wonder how to forgive Thee.” (That can be called “honest to God.”) For some of us, even this may be, if we let it, a part of the process leading to forgiving and being forgiven.

Evil in this world we cannot deny—it’s all too real. Martin Buber says: “Serve God with the evil impulse.” If we serve God with all we are, the evil impulse cannot take over. It can only add energy. There is evil in each of us: we must be aware of it in ourselves and take responsibility for it, not be over-impressed and guilt-ridden by it.

Reginald Reynolds, an English Quaker I once studied with, said Quakers rightly emphasize “that of God in every person” but they need to face up to that of evil in every person, or else they cannot find God in the evildoer.

Quakers must include the evil impulse and the energy it contains even in themselves, or it may be closed out of the chapel of the heart, and then what mischief it can get into! Yes, I must be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove, even in relation to myself. How else can I avoid projecting my own capacity for evil onto others—“needing an enemy”? The most global disease of our time is “needing an enemy.”

Maybe I’ll never understand “the massacre of the innocents” in its thousand variations. But this I know: I shall not alleviate suffering for one person by chronic anger and endless smoldering resentment. Nor can I save the world. Instead, I must mourn this global disease and explore to find my particular part in my period of history.

Back in the 1960s when I was teaching at Pendle Hill summer school, Richard Stenhouse, a black minister, was dean of studies. He told me something I never forgot: “The only way I manage to carry on is to forgive every day—forgive myself, my family, and the world.” The need for forgiveness accumulates fast, and only in this way can we keep up with it.

The Christ, from the Cross, prays, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.” We assume the persecutors do not hear that prayer, but the two thieves hear. One thief awakens to the “I am” within him, the same “I am” that thrives in the Christ, and that thief joins the transformation process called Resurrection. The other thief “would rather die” than give up self-justification: this thief feels wronged by life, abused, maybe even a noble martyr, and he cannot forgive or be forgiven.

Those two thieves can represent two sides of ourselves, on either side of the Divine center, one available to the miracle of forgiveness, and the other that “would rather die.” A pendulum swings from life-choosing to death-choosing. Being available for the miracle of forgiveness chooses life. Who was it who said, “God forgives those who forgive themselves”?

And so the forgiveness prayer still reaches me from the Cross and I can respond: “Yes, Ever Present God, help me know what I do.” William Blake responds: “And so throughout eternity / I forgive you, you forgive me. . . .”
Faith and Hope in a Dark Hour

by Doug Hostetter

Doug Hostetter is executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee's regional office in New England. He is the author of numerous articles and is co-author of the book Anatomy of an Undeclared War. Doug is on the board of the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section and is a member of the Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Bobbie Smolow, have a son, Seth, age 1½.

In reflecting on the sources of personal strength and renewal during this difficult period of world history, I have drawn heavily from my own life experiences—my Mennonite upbringing, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the three years I spent working for the Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam during the war.

One of the most important sources of strength is a community of shared vision. This is a group of people who share the vision of the new world that they are trying to create. Within their community, they commit themselves to put into practice the ethics and values of the world they are trying to build. In the New Testament, Christ talks about the concept of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom was not a future utopia or some earthly empire but rather the community of his followers living out the ethics and community of his teaching. The Mennonite community in which I grew up saw itself as an embodiment of this kingdom, which entailed a commitment to living the radical teachings of Christ within the community. For example, fire and life insurance were considered to be indications of a lack of faith in God and a lack of trust in the community. When the house of one of my neighbors burned down, it was considered a community responsibility to rebuild it.

The Year of Jubilee in the Old Testament is a similar concept, which included not only the people of the community, but also the land itself. Every seven years, the fields were to be allowed to lie fallow to recuperate and replenish themselves; every 50 years, all slaves were to be freed, all debts were to be canceled, and all land was to be returned to its original owner—a redistribution of unequal wealth.

In South Vietnam during the late 1960s, the National Liberation Front functioned as a secular community of vision in which a strikingly similar vision was actually being lived out on an impressive scale. In the liberated zones, where the NLF was in control, they tried to practice the ideals of the society which they hoped eventually to create in the whole country. Even during the war, in the village of Ky Phu, just seven miles from the village where I lived, the NLF sponsored universal free education and medical care, encouraged adult literacy classes and maternity centers, and returned the land to the people who were farming it.

A second source of strength is an admission of our own needs. We have often interpreted the great commandment “Love your neighbor as you love yourself” as speaking only about actions that affect other people, forgetting about ourselves. Many of those who are working to build a better world are subject to this malady. We often look upon ourselves as finely tuned machines for the service of others. We maintain these machines mainly by developing the mind through the reading of journals and books about social problems, and by attending study groups and committee
meetings. And then we are surprised when we burn out or wither and die spiritually. To love your neighbor as yourself means that you need to care about the full score of human needs, both for others and for yourself. It means recognizing your spiritual, psychological, and cultural needs; nurturing art, reflection, beauty, poetry, and celebration. In the Mennonite community, this is often done through a hymn sing, while in Vietnam it was accomplished through the reading or writing of poetry or the production of woodcut prints.

Another source of strength which helps us survive and remain hopeful is humor. We need to learn to laugh at ourselves, at life, and at the world around us. This doesn't mean that we should live frivolously but it does mean that we need to be able to laugh and dance in all circumstances.

One of the benefits of humor is that it protects us from taking ourselves too seriously. We must learn not to internalize guilt for a history that we don't control. There is a Hasidic tale of a prophet who continually went into the city to preach against its evils. Each week he entered the city to decry injustice and exploitation, and each week the city continued its oppressive way of life. His friends begged him to cease his apparently useless efforts, but the prophet responded, "In the last resort, I do this so that I do not become as they are." He knew that he did not have the power to change the city's evils, but his very recognition of his limitations enabled him to continue his witness. We must accept responsibility for our own actions but not for the course of history.

As strange as it may seem, coming to terms with death is a real source of life and renewal. Christ taught that those who seek to save their life will actually lose it, while those who are willing to lose their life will ultimately save it. Practically speaking, saving your life would be more than a full-time job in today's world. If you aren't killed by cancer or a heart attack, there is the chemical industry which is poisoning our food, water, and air; if you escape that, you could be killed in a robbery, or run over by a drunken driver; if all else fails, the nuclear holocaust can pick up all of the stragglers. There is no escape, and if you are going to live a healthy life, you will have to come to terms with your own death.

How to face death is a historic problem of the human race, and every religion and culture has developed ways of dealing with it. Christianity has its belief
in Heaven; Hinduism and Buddhism have reincarnation; in many Eastern cultures, the individual life is placed in a larger framework such as the extended family. In a 19th-century Vietnamese epic poem, "The Tale of Kieu" by Nguyen Du, the heroine offers her life to keep her father out of prison and her family out of disgrace. When asked why, she replies, "What does it matter if a leaf falls from a branch, as long as the tree remains sturdy?"

After the second or third mortar attack on the village where I worked in Vietnam, two of my American co-workers decided to leave, and I was faced with a difficult question. Was my work meaningful and important enough to me that I was willing to give my life in the effort if that was required? When I faced that possibility and decided that I could not abandon such significant work, only then was I able to live a full life, free from fear, even in the middle of a war.

The final question is, where do I find a source of energy and hope for the long and difficult struggle against the current tide of history—against Reaganomics, nuclear proliferation, racism, repression? Buried deep within the human subconscious there is a very profound belief in the ultimate triumph of justice. I can only describe it with the religious term, faith. This faith is part of the very essence of humanity. It is found in all religions, mythologies, and even secular cultures. The 15th-century Vietnamese poet and leader Nguyen Trai expressed it this way:

I am not afraid of a rough or dangerous path;
Though advanced in years, I have an iron will.
Righteousness sweeps away dense clouds,

Calmness can level a mountain.
We act according to Heaven's law;
Our course will triumph in the end.

For almost 3,500 years, Jews have been celebrating Passover, commemorating the deliverance of the weak from the strong, the impossible conquering the possible. A weak and impoverished group of slaves successfully overthrew their militarily superior owners and fled to create a new nation.

The Easter season is similar in the Christian tradition. I never fully understood the power of this faith until I went to Chile four years ago. I attended a memorial mass in the village of Lonquen for a group of peasant organizers who had been slaughtered by police five years before, and whose bodies had just been found and identified. People from all over Chile came for the mass, including relatives of the thousands of people who had disappeared without a trace after the Pinochet coup in 1973. In the most powerful sermon I have ever heard preached, Father Christian Prect affirmed the faith of his tattered and powerless congregation: "As with the prophets, we cry for the suffering of God's people. But we are Christians; we believe in the Resurrection! Truth will defeat deception, and justice will overcome oppression. The forces of life are stronger than death. This is our faith."

A Prayer
by Robert Muller

God, I do not know who You are, but I am in exultant joy before the magnificence of Your creation.

O God, I do not know why You gave me life, but I thank You with every fiber of my heart for having lit up in me the divine spark of light in the vast, incomprehensible universe.

O God, I know that I come from You, that I am part of You, that I will return to You, and that there will be no end to my rebirth in the eternal stream of Your splendid creation.

O God, I do not know why You created light and darkness, happiness and despair, good and evil, love and hatred, creation and destruction, matter and void, and allowed us to choose constantly between the two, but I know that it is my duty and joy to throw down my gauntlet for light, brightness, compassion, goodness, happiness, truthfulness, life, beauty, and love.

O God, only You know the meaning of all there is in the heavens and on earth. Why don't You return again to tell us once more what our lives and destiny should truly be?

O God, I cannot define You, I cannot see You, I cannot perceive You, I cannot understand You, I cannot embrace You, but I can most definitely feel You, love You, and know that You are.

Please, O God, have pity on us and allow us to become at long last a warless, weaponless, hungryless, horrorless, just, kind, truthful, thankful, loving, and happy planet.

O God, help me to show through my life that this is the Planet of God. Please.
How does one discern who has the gift of discernment? With the present preoccupation of many with the spiritual gifts, the one less frequently mentioned is the gift of discernment.

In all the writings of Friends, today and in Quaker history, it is not a prominent subject. Amos Kenworthy comes to mind, the Friend who a generation or two ago was respected in perceiving the motives and hidden actions of others. But he hardly serves as an adequate model for us now.

Thumbing through some of George Fox's writings the word *discernment* is not found as often as his many references to "openings in the Lord," which led him into prophetic preaching and courageous obedience.

One of the clearest definitions of discernment comes from Heb. 5:14. It is particularly specific in the Amplified translation. The writer has been talking about weak and mature Christians, the "milk" and "meat" comparison:

But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose senses and mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate and distinguish between what is morally good and noble and what is evil and contrary either to divine or human law.

Paul, in his familiar teachings about gifts in 1 Corinthians, goes down the list...
DISCERNING DISCERNMENT

and toward the end says, "The gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose; to another [is given] the ability to discern and distinguish between the [utterance of true] spirits [and false ones] . . . " (1 Cor. 12:10, Amplified translation). This seems to place the "gift of discernment" into the range of mature, discriminating abilities on the part of spirit-filled followers. This may be why such characteristics are given in our Friends Discipline as desirable traits or capacities for those regarded as elders, "mature members with quick discernment and tender sympathy."

Without getting into the whole subject of spiritual gifts, about which much is being written today, or even over hair-splitting definitions of how a sense of ("quick"?!) discernment differs from other gifts, it is surely safe to closely equate it with the many "openings" described in the journals of George Fox. "As I was walking in a field on a First-day morning, the Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ." Another time he wrote, "I had great openings concerning the things written in the Revelations," and later,

And one day . . . I was taken up in the love of God, so that I could not but admire the greatness of his love. And while I was in that condition it was opened unto me by the eternal Light and power, and I therein saw clearly that all was done and to be done in and by Christ, and how he conquers and destroys this tempter, the Devil and all his works, and is atop of him . . . And the Lord opened me that I saw through all these troubles and temptations.

More than once Fox had "great openings":

And the Lord answered [me] that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions . . . I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

How fine if we might be so close to God to discern His Light "through all these troubles and temptations" and with an ability to "speak to all conditions." The gift of discernment is more than spiritual guidance, although that is certainly a part of it. It is more than an introspective spiritual search for God's leadings about our lives, what occupation we choose, what schools to attend, whom to marry, or even where to find a parking spot. It is even more than the reliable and essential resources of Bible study and the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. Regular and reverent dependence on the Scripture and the Spirit is required of every disciple, but where no biblical principle or word is found, or no specific command is given, the believer is free and responsible to choose his or her own course of action. Yet, all those choices may be influenced wisely through the exercise of spiritual discernment as a kind of soul reflex action. This often comes out of waiting, silence, or a sensitive drawing near to God. It may come from the counsel of a friend, or from devotional reading . . . or from a strange inner knowing.

God, who knows all, doesn't "give advice" like we are used to getting from others, nor does silence in itself provide many answers. It is quite hard to be sure about our discernings. One significant thing matters: it is well to double-check our insights with the discrimination of others. "There is wisdom in many counselors" (Prov. 11:14). While Hebrews, chapter four, mentions the importance of training and practice, even in discernment, we still realize discernment is not a religious technique to be acquired. It is a gift. It is part of a relationship with God that allows communications and guidance to be a natural thing. Because of this, one is cautious about even suggesting any "how-to's" in either seeking or exercise of such a gift. The whole idea can unfortunately deteriorate into a supposed sort of magic which comes too close to describing those who reach celebrity status in their reported prayer and healing skills.

Philip Yancey in a helpful article in Eternity magazine, September 1983, wisely warns against what many have done in trying to "manipulate the deities so that they perform our wishes," adding, "religion is when we subject ourselves to the will of the deities." So there are no shortcuts or genie bottles, rather, discernment comes from a committed relationship between a Christian and the Lord. But this is really a norm for each of us which may or may not bring about a noticeable or regular awareness of a discerning "gift."

The notion that a display of discernment is always a bizarre, sudden, or impulsive thing is furthest from the fact. As an example let me share one of the very few times such a thing happened to my own life. On a Sunday morning, driving to church, I was praying. Unaccountably I felt very burdened for our son who, at that time, was serving as a relief worker in a children's hospital in Vietnam during the war. So strong was the impression, and so emotionally felt, I stopped the car for a few minutes to pray for him and his safety. Months later I learned that on that day and at that precise hour (given the time changes) he was actually leaving the Phnom Penh airport in Cambodia, when the plane was suddenly under enemy fire. While the plane was damaged, they emerged safely. Coincidental? Perhaps, but when one is in prayer, the sense of discernment is more natural than the expectation of some spectacular vision or intrusion unrelated to a sense of close relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is interested in the detailed conduct of our daily lives, as well as our loved ones. So discernment springs out of our longing for Christ-like living rather than seeking a gift that might be fascinating to use!

It has been said that the devil moves people on sudden impulse but that God always gives us time for consideration, the application of tests, and the growth of convictions. Such growth of convictions, not a club to use on ourselves or others, is a loving expression of God's interest in our lives. So whenever seized with a sudden impulse to do something odd and to do it quickly, we may be quite sure that this impression is not the gift of discernment. A part of the spiritual maturity of those qualified to serve as elders, pastors, or in discerning roles in the church, and all of life, is the
ability to discriminatingly screen these kinds of impulses.

Writing on this general subject, Everett Cattell once suggested five ways to test possible leadings of the Lord:

- **Is the impression scriptural?** Any impression which is not consistent with the Scriptures did not originate with God.
- **Is it right?** God never requires immoral acts.
- **Is it providential?** Do circumstances converge soon, or later, to confirm the possibility of accomplishing the concern coming to us? For instance, resigning one's job to live "by faith," even to enter some ministry or mission, without any door opening to make it reasonable, may lack spiritual maturity.
- **Is it corroborated by trusted and Spirit-led friends?** Arrogant or shocking individualism is not a Christian or a courageous thing. It dishonors God and hurts ourselves and often many others.
- **Does the impression become an ever more weighty conviction?** In giving these five points, Everett Cattell insists this is the heart of the matter. "The voice of God is in a conviction which grows with the passing of time and becomes inescapable and compelling." In spiritual maturing, we become more and more sensitive to the Spirit's gentle pressure upon our hearts that prompts us, checks us, and gives us clarity and help.

It helps me to think of God's leadings as a pressure rather than a voice in my soul.

Discernment does not have to be dramatic to be real. In his book, *The Spirit of Holiness*, a practical paragraph on this point is given by Everett Cattell:

> No man can tell another when he is a glutton, but the Holy Spirit will. No man can tell another when his sensitiveness is becoming self-centered to the point of enmity against God, but the Holy Spirit always does. One may be confused in his own thinking as to when religious zeal becomes envy, when the encouraging words of others are being accepted by an inordinate love of praise, when righteous anger gives way to an ugly temper, but into that confusion will come, if we listen, the "still small voice," that gentle pressure of the Spirit in tones of convictions: "This is the way, walk ye in it." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God."

The mechanics or process of discernment is actually a very common sense experience. It is possible for both an individual and the entire church to find a sense of discernment. This is more likely than a single, special, unrelated, off-thewall kind of spiritual leading. All spiritual gifts must be spiritually discerned, and the exercise of that discernment may be mostly what discernment means—recognizing and encouraging whatever gifts others may have. To neglect this is a great loss to those who need such encouragement, and a loss to the meeting when those gifts are not used.

How is this done? Well, simply by being observant. By being attentive, alert, and even expecting God to call some of our young people, to give a message, a gift of healing, of exhortation, of teaching to those whom we know in church, this is good preparation for discerning them. Such gifts as these, and all the others, are manifest when they "ring true," are characterized by the power of the Lord, with authority. Are they seen as more than the ordinary, accompanied with consistent, holy living, joy, fulfillment, effectiveness?

It is appropriate, perhaps necessary, to be so in tune with the Spirit and eager to encourage another that we will find ourselves saying: "I believe you may have a gift of prayer, or of ministry, or of teaching. Have you sensed God's call or leading in this way? Would you pray with me about this possibility?" This is exercising a gift of discernment. Another side of this, perhaps more difficult, is to be discerning enough to confront, or correct. Friends once did this, perhaps without adequate discernment. But have we drifted too far from such concerns and obedience?

Barnabas was, along with his many other gifts, a discerning disciple. He was generous, trusting, supportive, courageous, cooperative, an "encourager of the brethren." This took a discerning heart. Discerning hearts are less noticed but equally as important as brilliant minds.

F or me to write what I know about God's guidance may be too much like having a third grader write, "What I know about life." It is evident that there is so much more to learn even though both the third grader and I may be quite amazed at what we've experienced thus far.

From the time I first committed my life to Christ it became obvious to me that it was extremely important to find out what God wanted me to do. As a boy in 4-H and Future Farmers of America, I learned to pray about choices regarding projects, purchases, and contests. In a rural Friends meeting in southwest Missouri, I sought God's guidance in choosing material for prayer meeting and Christian Endeavor. I believe God showed me which colleges to attend and which girl to marry. (Earlene's "yes" was a boon to my

A principal in the Wichita Public Schools for 28 years, Benny Mevey is currently principal at the Colvin School/Community Center, a cooperative venture between the city of Wichita and the public schools. Members of University (Kans.) Friends, he and his wife, Earlene Mevey, are the parents of two grown children and have two grandchildren.
believing that God wanted to provide really good things in my life!) Praying about where to live in my pre-dorm days at Friends University and where to seek employment led to decisions that created friendships and "open doors" which assure me now, more than 30 years later, that God was with me.

The assurance that God cares about the decisions I make developed in those teen years. When Keith Parker at Friends University gave me a list of ten businesses that were seeking employees in 1950, I went to the first and knew I didn't want to work there. I liked the second place, but they were not interesed in me. At the third stop it was obvious that neither the prospective employer nor the prospective employee was impressed with the other. It then occurred to me that God knew my past, present, and future and also knew the details regarding each business on the list. I asked God to show me where I should go next. I was immediately drawn to the last name, even though my lack of mechanical interest would normally have caused me to avoid a "wholesale hardware jobbers" establishment. God knew that the location, the pay, and the fellowship with those good Christian business people were right for me. God knew it was a job I'd enjoy until I finished the preparation for my chosen field, education.

Sometimes God used others to guide me, such as the weekend Friends University President Arthur Watson asked if I had ever considered elementary education. With my limited knowledge of that field, I considered the suggestions ludicrous. The idea didn't go away, however, and its appeal increased. After three degrees and 30 challenging and satisfying years in elementary education, I again have the positive assurance that "the Lord was with me."

My respect for the absolute importance of a Christian's obedience to God was well established when in 1967 I first heard John Loren Sandford speak on "How to Listen to God." A new world of God-given opportunity opened to me. I soon asked the Kumjoius Class at University Friends Meeting to join me in listing all the ways God had made His will known to us. Three couples (Methodist, Christian, and Quaker) went on a 24-hour retreat to share answers to the question, "How does God speak?" Our combined list of 27 ways convinced us that we had only begun.

Earlene and I have found increased joy as Christians by exploring with others the questions: In what ways does God let you know His will? How does God speak to you? God's teaching in this area took on new meaning for me when, while seeking guidance on a Saturday evening (October 1982) about what I considered two equally acceptable topics for the college Sunday school class, I had a vision. (It looked like a dream, but I was awake.) In the vision, I was seeing, as if it were on a large screen, a river flowing toward me. Rivers of life, of love, and of joy have positive connotations for me, so I watched with high interest. The flow of water, however, became torrential, filling the "screen," and I called out from deep inside myself, "You could drown in this." The vision had ended, but I was so startled both with its sense of importance and my total inability to bring meaning from it that I sought out Earlene in the kitchen to see if she could join me for a walk. After an hour and a half we returned with no further illumination, and I searched the concordance, concluding that "rivers"
At times God's guidance is sure and we proceed with certainty. At other times we are equally dedicated to seeking God's will but we take each step with something less than 20/20 vision.

The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

Again, I was absolutely convinced God was speaking to me and He still had my attention!

On Friday, six days after the vision, as I was preparing for the day I saw that from my ankle to my knee was a bright pink elliptical-shaped marking that looked as if I had been severely burned. My doctor suggested tests for lupus, which, would indeed have been "deep water." Although lupus was ruled out, later tests and a biopsy brought a diagnosis with the explanation, "incurable but not terminal." The vision occurred 16 months ago, and I now know a bit more about "rivers of difficulty." With symptoms still present, I know even more about what effect such occurrences can have on one's focus. It has kept me looking to Jesus, thanking him, praising him, and watching for what is next. There's a new appreciation for:

* When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
  My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply,
  The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
  Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

I am grateful that God had already taught me to hear His voice, before the "deep waters."

Earlene and I still explore with groups the question: How do you seek God's guidance? How do you listen to God? We share some of what we've learned and then end by asking what we have learned about obedience to God. My own list is quite lengthy, but here is some of what I have learned:

- Listening to God has made my life richer and has developed a positive assurance that God loves me, hears my request for guidance, recognizes it as consent for Him to intervene in my life, and uses an amazing variety of ways to answer my prayers.
- At times God's guidance is sure and we proceed with certainty. At other times we are equally dedicated to seeking God's will but take each step with something less than 20/20 vision with which to see God's way. Yet, looking back, we can see God's leading as surely as when we knew God was clearly showing us the way.
- A part of me wants most of all to be obedient to God, seeing this as my highest priority in life. On the other hand, I see little in my life that disproves the statement, "The world has yet to see a life totally given to God."
- Hannah Whitall Smith's words are "truth" for me: "If there is any reserve of will upon any point, it becomes almost impossible to find out the mind of God in reference to that point."
- I am fascinated with the reality that God works through our desires. "It is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose!" (Phil. 2:13). When we are willing to do any of the alternatives, we can ask Him to increase our desire to do what He wants us to do. When He works His will through us, we are doing what we want to do with a desire that comes from deep within us. This may be a little scary if you are one who thinks God usually calls us to do what we really don't want to do.
- I am grateful for Jesus' words in John 10:27, "My sheep recognize my voice . . . " He assures us that our relationship to Jesus Christ produces an ability to know our Shepherd's voice.
- There may be some areas where God really doesn't care much regarding the choices we make, but I prefer to err on the side of bringing to Him matters that are too trivial rather than risk withholding from Him areas in which He really does want to direct and guide.
- Although I'm grateful for all God has shown me, there is so much I have not learned or do not consistently practice. I recognize my dependence upon Him for change in this area.
- Obedience may lead me through times which are uncomfortable. Some kinds of growth are painful. Growth may mean dying out to some part of my life, and death is often difficult.
- God's guidance may come in flashes of inspiration with a sense of God's presence and direction but be followed by "dark stretches" when I wonder whether I know how to listen to God at all! A helpful quotation is, "Don't doubt in the dark, what God has re-
Letter to God

by Jennifer Haines

Dear God,

I'm troubled about something, and hope you can help me understand. It's anger. I seem to have been surrounded by a lot of it lately. I try to keep telling myself that it's a natural human emotion, and always better expressed than suppressed, but it still hurts me a lot, no matter toward whom it's directed. And I can't believe that it has any place in your kingdom.

A few weeks ago I was sitting in court to support a friend. He'd carried his prayer for peace onto the property at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant near Denver, Colorado, and was appearing before the same judge that I and others have faced for similar witnesses in the past. So the judge's lecture about how we all have to work within the law was familiar to all of us, and I'm as tired of it as anyone. It ignores all the issues that are important to us and makes us feel as if we aren't being heard, as if we're knocking our heads against a brick wall. But, really, it's hardly surprising that a judge continues to believe in the legal system, and I have to assume that the miracle of conversion is always possible, that you never give up on anyone.

So it was much easier for me to receive the judge's attitude than that of my friends. They were angry, not primarily at the system we're confronting or at their own frustrating inability to make a perceptible change in it, but at the judge. I know it's because I identify with them as fellow peacemakers that I'm upset about their (which I experience as our) response to the people we're hoping to see converted. I understand our humanness. I try to forgive our intolerance. But I want us to be the very best models of you that we can possibly be, so it's really important to me to understand where anger fits in. Am I way off base in feeling so uncomfortable with it? Am I wrong in thinking that it doesn't belong in your kingdom?

I know that the Bible overflows with references to the wrath of God. We describe you as being angry at sin and oppression and at the refusal to repent, and there are plenty of references, even in the New Testament, to judgment and to punishment.

But the best understanding I can come to about anger is that it's an expression of helplessness, of being out of control, of our limitedness as human beings. What makes us angry is not the injustice itself but our powerlessness to prevent or to right it. I think of a child who does something wrong, and we correct him or her gently and lovingly. It's only when our correction doesn't work, when we can't make the child change according to our desire, that we get angry. In the same way, injustice is a challenge to us, and we work against it with great good will, until at some point we feel personally thwarted. Then we become

Jennifer Haines, once a member, has had long association with the Society of Friends. She runs a house of prayer and retreat in inner-city Denver, Colo.

It's really important to me to understand where anger fits in. Am I way off base in feeling so uncomfortable with it?
angry. We might be angry at something immediate, at ourselves or another person or an event or situation; or we might be angry in a global kind of way, at the universe or some powerful overarching system or at "fate" or you.

I've known an emotion akin to that global anger, which is a global helplessness. I feel like a caged bird beating its wings uselessly against forces too strong for it. It's a very infantile feeling. I can identify with what psychologists talk about as the rage infants feel when the world, on which they're utterly dependent, fails to be perfectly nurturing, fails to satisfy their desires. Of course, there isn't a thing they can do about it. And I think it must be an exactly parallel feeling that drives us, as adults, to anger. When we're unable to do what we've chosen and attempted to do, we experience again that infantile helplessness. But such absolute lack of control is usually too scary to acknowledge or to continue feeling, so we've learned to externalize it as anger. Anger against even ourselves is less frightening. And more often we project our feelings further away, onto another person or situation.

If all this is true, if anger is an expression of our limitedness, then you, God, can't possibly ever get angry. All our descriptions of you as angry must reflect our limited conception of you and our best attempt to describe you in terms of emotions we know. And all our insistence on your being a God of judgment and punishment may well reflect our own desire to judge and punish, to take revenge, which we know we shouldn't do and which we try faithfully to leave to you. But vengeance is so hard for us to let go of that we still attribute it to you.

In contrast, your word to us is forgiveness. You tell us over and over again that you have forgiven us and we must forgive each other. I've been reflecting on the well-known Gospel passage where Peter asks how many times he should forgive the brother who sins against him, and Jesus says, "Seventy times seven." (That's Matthew's version. Luke's version says seven times in a day.) What hit me was what an incredibly powerful word that is. How many of us have ever forgiven the same person seven separate wrongs in a day? Or added up to 490 the sins we've forgiven someone? Of course the numbers aren't important. I've always understood the passage to mean that we should never stop forgiving. But the numbers help me to conceptualize the message. I'm sure most of us manage somehow to stop associating with a per-
Pain identifies with both the victim and the oppressor. It yearns for wholeness, for freedom from sin and sorrow. It is the other face of love.

son long before we’ve done all the forgiving Jesus commands.

God, if you don’t get angry, what do you feel in response to injustice? Maybe you don’t have feelings like ours, but if you do, the one that seems to me to be consistent with your nature is pain. I’ve been told, and it makes sense to me, that pain and anger are alternate responses to a wrong; one is internalized and the other externalized. Pain identifies with both the victim and the oppressor. It yearns for wholeness, for freedom from sin and sorrow. It’s the other face of love.

The sin of a loved one, whether it affects me directly or not, hurts me because I love that one, because I long for that one’s perfection, in union with you, which is all joy. And you, God, love everyone. You must feel that kind of pain when any of us falls short in any way. You’re not angry at us. You know we’re limited and fallible. But you also know we can always do better, and that’s the desire of your heart. It hurts you to see us being less than we can be.

And yet it’s precisely because you choose to love us totally and without reservation that you’re willing to suffer any kind of pain on our behalf, even when we inflict it directly on you.

It’s not hard to see why our love is so much less than yours. We’re afraid of pain. We’ve been taught by our culture that it’s bad, something to be avoided. It may be even harder to be present to than helplessness, and I know for myself that pain drives me to helplessness. So it’s natural for us unconsciously to choose the easier way, not to strive for the love, which leads to pain, and to respond instead in anger.

But you’re trying to teach us otherwise. Nothing is so utterly fundamental to all of your life and teaching as love, love for you, for ourselves, for each other, for our “enemies,” for absolutely everyone. As Paul says, “All the commandments . . . are summed up in this single command: you must love your neighbor as yourself?” (Rom. 13:9). And Jesus has made it very clear who our neighbor is (Luke 10:29–37).

You tell us not to be deterred in our love, our following of you, by hardships, pain, or even death. And you show us the ultimate expression of love, the willingness to suffer all pain and death at the hands of the very people you’re loving, in Jesus’ death on the Cross. As Paul again says, “. . . what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners” (Rom. 5:8).

And that’s exactly what you’re calling us to go out into the world to do, for every one of our “neighbors,” for Roman centurions and judges and tax collectors and world leaders preparing for war, as well as for all the hurting victims of injustice. As our love grows up toward the stature of yours, may we get beyond anger to pain and redemption.

Of course, we’re still human. We’re not suddenly going to stop getting angry just because we want to. And it doesn’t do anyone any good for us to deny our anger. We need to acknowledge it and resolve it, directly, with respect to each situation. But it seems to me that the ultimate way to get beyond it is through you. Our limitedness is relieved by your unlimitedness. Our imperfect love is strengthened by your perfect love. As we give ourselves to you, we gradually lose the self-centeredness that makes us feel personally attacked, and the temptation to despair in the face of global injustice that arises from our helplessness. You aren’t helpless, and you never ask us to do more than we can. If we are doing our very best to be faithful, we can be content and leave the rest to you.
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DOWN THE STREET

I am not a Jew.
Not one of the few.
I am not a black man
Nor a reservation Indian.
Holy or otherwise, I am not from India
And I speak no Vietnamese
or Khmer.

I was not at Dachau, Belsen, Auschwitz;
I did not die in a crematorium.
I have never been forced to sit
At the back of the bus,
Never been told where not
To eat or drink or stay.
The police have never maced or shot
at me,
And I have always been free
To pursue my freedom.
The cavalry never took my land,
Massacred my wife and children
And impressed me into a walk
to Oklahoma,
Handing me a home that will never
be a home .
I have not starved with ten million
Others, hope kindled only
by the presence
Of a man bound in white linen.
I have never been bombed north
of the DMZ,
Or been napalmed south of the DMZ,
And I am not missing in Kampuchea.
Yet, my skin is of Dachau,
Belsen, Auschwitz.
For every death tallied yesterday
The numbers have left burning scars.
For every death tallied today,
The scars blister and burst.
So it is that from here on out
I will be the bus driver and you may sit
Anywhere you damn well please,
Whoever you are.
No guns, no tear gas in my bus,
my friends,
Just bring along the real you
And a traveling bag full of compassion.

Shorn brave, bring your peace bonnet
And share what was once your land
With me and my Family.
No hoax, no march—this is your home
And your children’s home.
Ten million starving souls I cannot save:
I can only grieve . . . only follow
in the steps
Of those who would do better.
I’ll begin down the street,
Around the corner.
So it is that one more slain youth, 
Breathless forever, forever a youth, 
Is unacceptable to me.

One more eyelid, kissed, 
Closed over an unseeing eye 
Knowing not why, 
Expecting not death, 
Is unpardonable to me.

The first spadeful plinking 
atop the pine box 
Sounds no different than the last spadeful; 
It is the moments between the two sounds 
We remember; 
When a life ends and its memory begins.

Look—still another silent chest . . . 
I must leave now. 
A linen swathed shadow gestures 
And I must renew the healing process 
Down the street. 
Around the corner.

—Richard Olsen

Richard Olsen, a member of the Unitarian Universalist church, lives in Corpus Christi, Tex.
As both Friend and political scientist, I was intrigued by Newton Garver's letter in which he raised queries about Friends' experience in politics (Friends Journal, December 15, 1983). His queries raise a number of issues that are especially important in this election year. Chief among those issues is the question of why Friends are not more active in electoral politics, why we do not have more Quakers in public office.

Let's begin with Garver's first query, "What is the experience of Friends in politics?" As he rightly notes, Friends are very interested in politics. Our concerns run the gamut of the major social and political questions of the day, from war to poverty, from racism to individual liberty. It is equally clear that Friends are also active in politics. The presence of the Friends Committee on National Legislation on Capitol Hill, and the other legislative witnesses in various state capitals, attests to our high degree of both interest and activity. Large numbers of Friends talk politics, support candidates for office, contribute money to candidates, parties, and causes of all sorts. Many participate directly in community action organizations, in various forms of political protest, and in other forms of pressure and grassroots politics.

Despite this above average level of interest and activity, Friends do not appear to be very prominent in electoral and party politics. Few Quakers have made it to high-ranking national office—Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon being the most obvious examples. And it is perhaps more difficult to think of Quakers who have political careers at the state level. Clearly, this absence of Friends from major public office needs to be explained. At the very least we need to explore the careers and lives of those few who have entered the political arena in the last century of U.S. history. Perhaps we can gather clues as to our proper political role from our Quaker predecessors.

Garver's second query is, "Do Friends share the widespread view of political institutions as hopelessly corrupt?" The brief answer is that Friends seem no more or no less cynical than most people. Public opinion research has shown that all major U.S. institutions (education, the mass media, business, labor unions, etc.) have suffered from a loss of public confidence and satisfaction in recent years. Government and politicians have especially suffered from this phenomenon. And just as among the mass public, among Friends there are a few who have adopted a conspiracy view of politics—a view that attributes decisive influence and power to, for example, the CIA, the National Security Agency, or the Tri-lateral Commission.

Still, Friends do not seem to regard the political system as corrupt. Most Friends see some wisdom and efficacy in writing letters or visiting public officials to voice their concerns. The Quakers I have met have confidence in the electoral machinery; they vote regularly and think voting can make a difference. While we often disagree with the policies created by our local, state, and federal governments, we have not become alienated from the political system as a whole. Bad policies are viewed as the result of the individual in office; replace that individual at the next election or (failing that) appeal to that person's conscience and better nature, and governmental policy will change for the better. On the whole, then, Friends share the middle-class view of politics as an arena for their concern and participation. We feel we can have influence over the policymaking process. We support the political system even though its performance may not live up to our standards, for we are confident that its policies can be influenced in our direction.

Finally, we have the queries: "Are Friends clear on when to work for compromise and when to stand on principle? Are compromise and 'the art of the possible' held in appropriate esteem by Friends?" By and large, I have found Quakers to faithfully practice the pre-eminent political art of compromise and conciliation. Meetings for business often take on such a character. And as Friends move into the world of work or of other organizations, I have discovered them to be very concerned that all points of view are heard and accorded equal respect. Again, the lobbying efforts of the FCNL and its counterparts at the state level indicate that a willingness to compromise is no stranger to Friends.

So why aren't more Friends involved in electoral and party politics? Why aren't more Friends serving in public office? Garver's queries point to several possible obstacles to participation in electoral politics or government service.

Leonard Williams teaches political science at Manchester College in Indiana, which is affiliated with the Church of the Brethren. He is a member of North Columbus (Ohio) Friends Meeting.
He suggests that Friends may not be involved in the political arena because we are apathetic, alienated from the political system, or because we are too principled or dogmatic in our political views. My answers to these queries suggest that none of these barriers to political participation exist for Friends. Nor is it the case that other traditional barriers pose serious problems for Quakers wishing to engage in politics as a career. The educational, cultural, and fiscal advantages of the middle class are ours to share. Thus, there seem to be no insurmountable structural obstacles to Friends' greater political participation.

What explanation can we give, then, for our low visibility in electoral politics? Several explanations can be offered. First, we are simply too satisfied with the status quo to bother with running for office. Now, before too many of us engage in a round of denials, let me clarify the point. In part, this explanation paraphrases what I said earlier about our confidence in the system and our ability to influence it—what political scientists call "political efficacy." But I also have in mind the notion that further political activity on our part would be superfluous, that we are already influential. This is the notion of virtual representation, the idea that there are people in the government who advocate our viewpoint (i.e., Senators Kennedy and Hatfield) even though they are not our formal representatives. If there are officials who speak for us on our major concerns, then why should a Friend run for office against an incumbent or someone with a good deal more clout—all too likely a losing proposition?

A second explanation relies on a tradition of thought rooted in remarks made by James Madison in The Federalist (No. 10). Madison felt that one of the hallmarks of the society he desired would be the presence of a diversity of interests that would help control conflict. People would have one interest as a member of the working class, but that interest would not always prevail since a given individual might ally with members of the middle or upper classes on grounds of race or religion or region or some other factor. Political scientists today call this phenomenon "cross-cutting cleavages." Thus, Friends neither get involved in electoral politics nor are elected to public office because we are not a cohesive enough voting bloc. There seems to be no peculiarly
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Friendly political viewpoint. We have no common electoral program, nor do we have the numbers to be able to bargain for a plank in one. The very diversity we cherish as Friends mitigates our potential for political influence.

One other explanation for our lack of participation is rooted in the pattern of our political concerns. Friends’ approach to politics has traditionally been issue-oriented. Note Edward Burrough’s statement printed in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice: “We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other . . . but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom.” While this is a much needed dose of principle, such an attitude keeps us out of the common paths to political power. The standard career pattern in U.S. politics is to start at the level of local party or governmental office and work one’s way to state and national offices. Yet our preference for issue-oriented politics is suited to the national political arena, not to the pragmatic and nonideological politics of U.S. localities. In other words, our concerns all too often lead us to focus only at the top of the political pyramid. Thus, we seem to lack the interest in pursuing the typical career path in U.S. politics and perhaps wish to start at the top if at all. And, of course, there is very little room at the top for those who have not paid their dues in one way or another.

Of these suggested explanations, it is difficult to select one as the most viable or appropriate. All appear to be quite convincing. Nevertheless, I feel the first two do not present any overriding obstacles. We can, like other groups, overcome our diversity of interests and agree upon some political goals and values. (Witness the FCNL’s statements of policy over the years.) And we are not so influential or so represented that we cannot use more help in achieving those goals and realizing those values. Ultimately, then, I think the main obstacle to our participation in politics is the focus of our concerns. I do not believe we suddenly should abandon a desire for world peace and begin to worry about property taxes, but we should try to pursue both concerns in order to gain the political experience and power necessary to make a difference with either.

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**The Meaning of Membership**

Alfred K. LaMotte’s article, “I Am a Quaker; I Am Not a Member of the Society of Friends” (FJ 2/15), evoked great response from journal readers. Letters have been shortened to include as many as possible. —Ed.

**So Who Is a Quaker?**

Alfred K. LaMotte’s uncertainty as to what a Quaker is is shared by Friends and non-Friends alike. We are not particularly good at explaining ourselves and he provides a good opportunity for us to try.

We Friends agree that we should come to meeting for worship with “hearts and minds prepared for worship,” not hoping that other people’s messages will lift us up, but knowing that the Inward Teacher will be there for us. The physician’s graphic description of the gruesome effects of nuclear fallout on the human physiology may have deeply touched another worshiper who needed to feel a kindred soul to share her grief and concern.

The deep place where words come from is not always named “God” by Friends. If we could do that naming more easily, share our experiences of that overwhelming Love and Power more widely, and be more articulate about the reasons for our work for peace and justice and why we march in the demonstrations, we would spread our message better and be less confusing to ourselves and others. The fact that we don’t do it well doesn’t make us less sincere or truth centered.

So who is a Quaker? Certainly those who listen carefully to the Inward Guide who leads us toward carrying out the testimonies of Friends in this troubled world. And certainly those who show up at every demonstration for “a good cause” with a troubled conscience that may be overwhelmed by love and joy at being truly led.

That’s what I think, but I need advice too.

Barbara Taylor Snipes
Morrisville, Pa.

**George Fox Clones?**

Surely, surely, you do not mean that all of us, to be real Quakers, must be cloned in the image of George Fox?

And surely, you do not mean that members of the Society of Friends had to

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go out looking for political issues in order to qualify for membership in monthly meetings?

I'm not even clear whether you meant to imply that members of the Society of Friends all live in such a world of "distasteful and unsavory" lives that you really believe that in a Friends meeting you can find none whose lives shine "with the power and joy of the Spirit."

My anxiety is not that of Matt. 6:31: "What shall we eat? . . . What shall we wear?" I'm anxious over continuing to live as a citizen of a free democracy in which I share responsibility for human suffering, present and future, some of which could be assuaged if I exercised my democratic freedoms effectively.

I'm glad you are a Quaker. We need more of you both inside and outside of our meetings. I hope you'll see your way to coming in.

Robert M. Myers
Leverett, Mass.

Quaker in Name

As to membership in the Society of Friends, we remember that at its beginning there were no formal membership requirements—Quakers were known by association and persecuted accordingly. Persecution drew the early Quakers together. We no longer have that reason for solidarity. Now we have many good friends, regular attenders, who work with us closely in true fellowship. Their reasons for non-membership vary, from feelings that they could not fully accept Quaker pacifism to a reluctance in giving up old church affiliations. To all these the Wider Quaker Fellowship offers a place. But if one calls himself a Quaker, wishes to be known as a Quaker, thinks of himself or herself as a Quaker, should not the full responsibilities of membership be accepted, including the responsibility for failures?

Margaret N. Morrison
West Hartford, Conn.

Labor Together in Love

Alfred LaMotte has articulated his position well, and I take to heart his request to hear what other Friends think of his concern.

I have felt not only the frustration of dealing with anxiety-ridden, negative Friends but of being one. I thought that activism was the answer, until I realized that my activism (as Merton predicts) bordered on a form of violence in itself. And yet I had placed myself within the context of the Religious Society of Friends in an effort to defuse the anxiety by grappling with the dangers facing our planet. Almost unknowingly, I had placed myself within God's hands as a lump of cold, unyielding clay. With time, God's hands warmed and made me pliable and openings began to occur. Not the least of these has concerned a return to the Christ expressed in the God/Personhood of Jesus. I did find Friends who understand. I appreciate their understanding, but accept it as a gift more than as a right.

I fear, Friend, that you are what I call "othering" rather than "mothering" those Friends who desperately need connection with the Spirit, or shall we say the Principle of which Woolman speaks as available to every person in every day and age. To the pain which they now so obviously suffer shall we add our self-righteous condemnation of their condition?

It may be that agnostics, atheists, and "Quakers who care nothing for God" attend and even join meetings. But God cares for them, no more and no less than for those who acknowledge Him. Our task is to enable them somehow to experience the encouragement and comfort that this entails.

Do not reject these other Friends. Do not allow them to reject you. We have much to redeem in each other. But it takes courage, it takes time, it takes commitment to labor together in love.

Judy Horton
Austin, Tex.

Growth Is What's Going On

In response to Alfred LaMotte: it is probable that "what's going on" is spiritual growth in individual human beings. Some of us have not yet learned to discard our anxieties and fears but have grown to the point of being concerned about other human beings.

The genius of Quakerism is in a loving acceptance that we are all on a spiritual journey and at various points of the journey. Each of us is valued as a child of God (or a unique human being, if you prefer) by others in the meeting for worship. If there is difficulty with that concept, perhaps membership in the Society should be delayed.

Marion Blaetz
Pemberton, N.J.

Teased by Quakerism

I am not a Quaker but am teased by Quakerism and have been for many years. I worked in the 1940s with the American Friends Service Committee and am a member of the Wider Quaker Fellowship.

I have not become a member of the Society of Friends for two reasons, one practical, one theological. The practical reason is simply that I do not live in a geographic location where there is a Friends meeting. In the area of theology, I ask if the Quakers have done the intellectual and theological work to give the child of our scientific and technological era a solid and reasoned ground for affiliation. We know, as LaMotte affirms, that the early Quakers were pietists but that their pietism pushed...
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Do social activism, or have they joined the activism? The Christian prophet who has been most helpful in enlightening and chastening this writer about the role of the Christian in society has been Reinhold Niebuhr. His Christian realism, does, it seems to me, give a "reasoned, theological ground" for social activism, and it renews old and worn out phraseology. Niebuhr says that the Christian realism has learned from the ancient tradition, from history, from life, from contemporary thinkers that "love is the law of life and that the contemplation of this law and the living of this law not only can give us personal peace and fulfillment but will impel us to work for justice for our fellow humans. This not only communicates much more than the admonition to open one's life to the "living person of the Lord Christ" but it renders it impossible for the realist to retreat to personal piety, no matter how satisfying.

Larry A. Jackson
Greenwood, S.C.

Concern Appreciated

Thank you for Alfred K. LaMotte's article. He states the case very clearly and correctly, and I find agreement with what he is endeavoring to say.

It is my hope that FRIENDS JOURNAL in the future will carry similar articles with such a positive concern.

Mahlon L. Macy
Badciff, Tex.

Best Things We Can Do

LaMotte's criticisms have some validity. There are some Quakers who are in "constant despair over the doom of the world" and who are passing on to their children a sense of distrust and anxiety. However, the negative attitudes of some do not automatically justify LaMotte's mystical yearnings.

Concern for the world and involvement in economic and political affairs can also spring from an understanding of our potential and a positive belief in our ability to fulfill that potential. We know that the best things we can do are those that sustain and enhance human life. Let us work at these things during our lifetime, motivated by the simple knowledge that we are capable of improving the human condition and that there is no reason not to do so.

I would also make two other observations. First, I believe that the freedoms which the early Quakers suffered and died for are the natural birthright of every human being living on this planet. They are not granted by this or any other government. They go with being human. The fact that some governments take freedoms away from their people does not mean that those freedoms stem from government. Second, I would not criticize those who have joined the Society primarily because they are pacifists. Although many longtime Quakers don't realize it, the Peace Testimony is very likely the single most distinguishing mark of Quaker belief, at least from the viewpoint of nonmembers.

Anthony F. Speciati
Malvern, Pa.

Unfair to Social Activists

I am in agreement with much of what Friend LaMotte writes about how, for early Quakers, social concerns were the overflow of spiritual faith. Friends should not live in anxiety and fear and distrust but act in joy and hope, grounded in our faith.

However, I think LaMotte is being unfair to many Friends who are social activists, "so obsessed with political causes that they have no time for that ultimate concern of Christ in the soul, which they regard as 'selfish' or 'escapist.' " He believes such Friends are "motivated by anger and anxiety rather than the indwelling joy of Christ."

How does he know what motivates them? How does he know that these Friends have not been led to fervent activism and service precisely in response to the leadings of the Spirit? I must confess to being a Friend who, although not bitter, does not trust the government and who is ashamed for many of its policies. If this Friend is concerned that many Friends worship their troubled consciences rather than God, he may want to consider also how many in the United States similarly worship 'their' government, one which dominates the world and stifles freedom here and abroad.

Sabrina Sigal Falls

To Catch a Common Glimpse

When I came across Alfred LaMotte's article, my first thought was: That Friend speaks my mind. I readily admit that often, when I attend a big city meeting, my reaction to some of the messages I hear there has been similar to that of Friend LaMotte. There was indeed a lot of anger and anxiety behind some of those messages and not much Light, and perhaps George Fox would not have approved.

But then I got to wondering how much we really know about early Friends. Sure, we have heard about Fox and Penn, but were all Quakers of their day like them, or were some perhaps just a little angry and anxious? And are we perhaps too hard on ourselves when we hold ourselves up against Fox and Penn? Are we indeed trying to live up to a myth? Rather than start another little Quaker inquisition, we would perhaps do better, whether we have been able to accept Jesus or not, to just give of our substance, be active on committees, and worship our Creator in a balanced spirit, so that out of seeking and working together we may catch a common glimpse of the Light.

Ralph M. Blankfield
Frostburg, Md.

Causes Still Seek Us

As a Friend who has always found Quaker "political activism" an admirable attempt to practice Christ's love in daily life, I was both depressed and angered by Alfred LaMotte's article.

In the first place, LaMotte's suggestion that political activism is somehow the very antithesis of spirituality finds no confirmation in either my own experience or my reading of Quaker history. Of 17th-century Friends he writes: "They did not go seeking political causes: political causes came seeking them because they were persecuted by a state church."

How can one not see that political causes are still coming today and seeking us out? We do not live under a state church, it is true, but basically the situation has not changed. Whoever pays taxes to the federal government is very much involved in politics, whether he or she likes it or not.

Alfred LaMotte does make one valid point: he is right when he says that Friends must not allow themselves to become so "anxious" about the seemingly inevitable doom of the world that they lose the "power and joy of the Spirit." He is right to encourage Friends not to become "woebegone defeatists."

But he is wrong when he suggests that we should turn away from the world, cease to be overwhelmed by its cares, and take up residence on "heavenly soil" far beyond the realms of ordinary human activity. I find myself agreeing with those who call LaMotte's brand of Quakerism "escapist."

George Bridges
Urbana, Ill.

Waiting to Be Perfect

I was stimulated by Alfred LaMotte's article. I, too, am often made weary, and sometimes anxious, by the concerns and activities of Friends. So I sympathize with Alfred and his wife. But I certainly can't be satisfied to wait for my soul to be comfortable and perfect before I act, and join my meeting in actions. Alfred asked for advice. The best I can give is to quote William Penn, who wrote in No Cross, No Crown (1682): "True godliness don't turn men [and women] out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick."

So, Alfred, if our meeting's endeavors can excite us, perhaps you can stay a Quaker and join into membership. It's more exciting than anxiety creating.

Eric W. Johnson
Books in Brief

Tales and Verses. By Margaret Olga Hoare. Ebor Press, York, England, 1982. 171 pages. $10/paperback. These 29 stories, poems, and songs for children and others are “about happiness and hope and attaining our heart’s desire.” Most have happy endings, and appeal to the best in all of us.

Correction: Bayard Rustin is incorrectly identified in the photograph with “Peace Brigades: Trying Again” (F/2/15). He is standing ninth from the right.

April


8—Haverford Peace Fair, 12:30-5:30 p.m., Haverford College campus. Features workshops, children’s programs, and companionable browsing among exhibits. Sponsored by local churches, Friends meetings, and synagogues, with many other organizations participating. Speakers include Stephen G. Cary, chairperson of AFSC.

18-22—Southeastern Yearly Meeting, United Methodist Youth Camp, Leesburg, Fla. Write Connie LaMont, Rte. 3, Box 108F, Gainesville, FL 32606.

19-22—South Central Yearly Meeting, Camp Mountain View, Jacksonville, Tex. Write Yvonne Boeger, 3701 Garnet St., Houston, TX 77005.


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April 1, 1984 FRIENDS JOURNAL
Membership is a handy, pocket-sized overview of Quaker history and practice. The chapters on membership will be helpful to those thinking of joining the Society and to new Friends. Quaker Meetings for Discussion is the first of a series of occasional papers being issued by Powell House. Its 62 pages are full of good ideas for efficient, Quakerly meetings for discussion or learning, useful for clerks and attenders. There are many lists: suggestions for spiritual reading, thoughts on music, materials on early and present-day Friends, suggestions for vocal ministry, Queries, and ideas for meetings, from discussions of the ecumenical movement to environmental problems and the future of Friends. Every clerk of every meeting will find useful, Friendly ideas here.

Books and Publications

Wider Quaker Fellowship, a program of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Quaker-oriented literature sent 3 times/year to persons throughout the world who, without leaving their own churches, wish to be in touch with Quakerism as a spiritual movement. Also serves Friends cut off by distance from their meetings.

Faith and Practice of a Christian Community: The Testimony of the Friends of Truth. $2 from Friends of Truth, 1506 Bruce Road, Oreland, PA 19075.

Who's Involved With Hunger. 1982. Descriptions of 400 U.S., federal, and private advocacy or informational agencies with publications on poverty, development, and food systems in the U.S. and Third World. Most widely used "guide in the field." $8 from World Hunger Education Service, 1317 Q St. NW, Washington, DC 20055.

Early Quaker Marriages in New Jersey, by George Haines, and catalogue of 2,000 other genealogies. Send $6.50 to Higginson Genealogical, 14 Farty Square, Salem, MA 01970. Catalogue only, $2.

Kate's Farm: "Beautifully edited and printed" quarterly filled with unique and informative articles on past, present, future Kate's Farm. Send $1 for sample copy: Box 339, Corta Madera, CA 94925.

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Friends Journal seeks an assistant editor, for opening in May, ideally, should be a Friend, or familiar with Friends and their concerns, have editorial and production skills, be prepared to work closely with editor-manager and other staff in publishing the magazine. Salary according to qualifications. Please send resume to Editor-Manager, FRIENDS JOURNAL, by May 1.

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**TORONTO** — First-day worship, 9:30 a.m., 469-7046.

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### Resources

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CAREFREE—Unprogrammed worship, Sundays, 10:30 a.m. Phone: 457-6542.

CHICAGO—57th St. Worship 10:30 a.m. 5815 Woodlawn Ave. Phone: 261-3803. Meeting follows, 10:30 a.m.

CHICAGO—Chicago Monthly Meeting, 1074 S. Artesian Ave. Phone numbers: 445-0490 or 232-7745. Worship 11 a.m.

CHICAGO—Northside (unprogrammed). Worship 10:30 a.m. Onogen, Ashley clerk. Phone: 433-2761.

DECALB—Worship 10:30 a.m. Agnita Wythe, clerk. Phone 877-2914 or 422-9116 for meeting location.


DOWNERS GROVE—West Suburban Chicago Worship and First-day school 10:30 a.m., 5710 Lombard Ave. (3 blocks west of Balcom, 1 block south of Maple). Phone: 749-2785.

EVANSTON—Worship 10:30 a.m. 1010 Greenleaf, 864-8511.

LAKE FOREST—Worship 10:30 a.m. at meetinghouse, 4750 Old Elm and Ridge Rd. Mail box 95, Lake Forest 60045. Phone: 435-7846 or 945-1747.

MCHenry COUNTY—Worship 10:30 a.m. 1st and 3rd Sundays. (919) 385-8512.

MICHIGAN CITY—Unprogrammed worship 11 a.m., first-day school 16th Meetinghouse 2 miles south, 1 mile east of Mchenbb. Phone: (815) 882-2214.

OAK PARK—Worship 10:30 a.m. Hephzibah House, 948 Orland Blvd. Phone: 265-3958.

PARK FOREST—Thorn Creek Meeting, 10:30 Sundays. Child care and Sunday School. Call 748-0548 for location.

PEORIA—GALESBURG—Meeting in homes every Sunday. Phone: 243-9406 (Peoria) or 262-5268 (Galesburg).

QUINCY—Friends Hill Meeting, unprogrammed worship, 10 a.m. Clerk: Iris Bell 223-9022 or 222-0704 for location.

ROCKFORD—Meeting for worship, 10:30 a.m., Fridee House, 329 N. Aon St. (616) 965-7739.

SPRINGFIELD—Meeting in Friends’ homes, unprogrammed. 10 a.m. Co-clerks: Jeanne Thomas and John Arnold, (217) 788-1063.

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN—Meeting for worship, 11 a.m., 714 W. Green St., Urbana, Ill. Phone: (217) 338-5653 or 344-5340.

INDIANA

BLOOMINGTON—Meeting for worship 10:15 a.m., Moors Creek Meeting. Phone: 417-343-3375.

COLUMBUS—Unprogrammed worship Sundays 9:30 a.m. Call Bill Diat, 342-3725 or Jill Boderick, 372-2388.

FORT WAYNE—Maple Grove Meeting, unprogrammed worship, Sundays, 10 a.m. Phone Julia Dunn, clerk (219) 493-3372.

Goshen—Community Meeting, 10:30 a.m. 201 W. Richmond; between I-70, US 40; I-70 exit Wilbur Wright Rd., 11½ mi. S., 1 mi. W. Unprogrammed worship, 9:30, discussion, 10:30, 478-4218.


PLAINFIELD—Unprogrammed worship 8:30 a.m. Meeting for study and discussion, 9:30. Meeting for worship 10:40 a.m. 106 S. East St. at the corner of U.S. 40 and East St. Thomas Newlin, clerk; Keith Kirk, pastoral minister. (317) 383-9340.

RICHMOND—Clear Creek Meeting, Stout Memorial Meetinghouse, Earlham College. Unprogrammed worship, 9:15 a.m. Steve Burnich, 962-9221.

SOUTH BEND—Worship 10:30 a.m., Badin Hall, Notre Dame, 232-5729, 232-8572.

VALPARAISO—Meeting for worship 10:45 a.m., First Methodist Church of Valparaiso, Rm. 106B, 103 Franklin St.

WEST LAFAYETTE—Worship 10 a.m., 176 E. Stadium Ave.
KANSAS

LAWRENCE—Gread Friends Meeting, Unprogrammed worship 10 a.m. 1146 Oregon. Phone: (918) 749-1360.

TOPEKA—Unprogrammed worship 4 p.m., followed by discussion. Phone: (913) 273-3519, 478-3383, or 236-6001.

WICHITA—University Friends Meeting, 1840 University Ave. Unprogrammed meeting, 8:30 a.m.; Sunday school 9:30 a.m.; meeting, 10:45 a.m.; Don Mallonee, clerk. Minister: Rev. J. Toothaker.

KENTUCKY

BEREA—Meeting 10 a.m. Berea College, 966-8250.

LEXINGTON—Meeting, 3:30 p.m. for information call 223-7411.

LOUISVILLE—Meeting for worship, 10:30 a.m. 2050 Bon Air Ave., 40205. Phone: 452-6812.

LOUISIANA

BATON ROUGE—Unprogrammed meeting for worship, 10:30 a.m. at 546 Bienville St. (a.m. 11:30), 583-9646.

FAIRMONT—Meeting at 11 a.m. 1359 Andrews Ave., 708-2134.

NEW ORLEANS—Worship, 10 a.m. 5333 Camp St., 529-1541.

NEW YORK

ALBANY—Meeting, 10 a.m. 555 State St., 431-6169.

BUFFALO—Meeting, 10 a.m. 855 Main St., 884-1650.

BUFFALO UNIV. MEETING—Meeting 4 p.m. at 10:30 a.m. 11 a.m. 100 Main St. (a.m. 11:30); 585-2606.

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### NEW YORK
- **ALBANY**—Meeting for worship and First-day school, 11 a.m. 727 Madison Ave. Phone: 485-6904.
- **ALFRED**—Meeting for worship 9:15 a.m. at The Gothic, corner Main St. and Route 150. Phone: (607) 589-5336. Requests must be processed through Ruth Stewart, 46 Grant Ave., Auburn, NY 13021. Phone: (315) 253-6559.
- **BROOKLYN**—Adult discussion 10 a.m., meeting for worship Sunday, at 11 a.m. (child care provided) at 110 Schenemoer St. For information call (212) 777-8866 (Mon.-Fri. 9-5). Mailing address: Box 730, Brooklyn, NY 11207.
- **BUFFALO**—Worship 11:00 a.m., 72 N. Parade (near science museum); and 7 p.m. at Center Hamburg. Call 992-0643.
- **FREDONIA**—Unprogrammed meeting 11:00 a.m. Call (716) 392-9001.
- **FLUSHING**—Meeting for worship, 10:30 a.m. Sun., 72 N. Dutchess Co., 1/2 mile E. Taconic Pkwy. (914) 266-3020.
- **GREENVILLE**—Worship, 10:15 a.m., 3rd Sunday of month. Phone: (518) 629-3366.
- **HARRISBURG**—Meeting for worship, (child care provided) at 110 Schenemoer St. For information call (212) 777-8866 (Mon.-Fri. 9-5). Mailing address: Box 730, Brooklyn, NY 11207.
- **ROCHESTER**—Meeting, 1st and 3rd Sundays, 10:30 a.m. Phone: (716) 433-6204.

### NORTH CAROLINA
- **ASHVILLE**—Meeting for worship, 10:00 a.m. Phone: Philip Neal, 289-0934.
- **BEAUFORT**—Worship group: 726-7019, 728-5279.
- **CELO**—Meeting for worship 10:30 a.m. Yancey County, off Rt. 80 on Arthur Morgan School Rd. 675-6936.
- **CHAPEL HILL**—Meeting for worship 11 a.m. Clerk: Nicky Brown. Phone: 967-6010.
- **CHARLOTTE**—Unprogrammed meeting for worship and First-day school, 10 a.m. and child care, 11 a.m. Phone: (918) 327-3022.
- **DURHAM**—Unprogrammed meeting 10:15 a.m., First-day school 10:45 a.m. Alexander Ave. Contact Alice Kingston. (918) 485-6652.
- **GREENSBORO**—Friends Meeting House, 323-3912.
- **GREENSBORO CENTER**—Friends Meeting, 325 E. NC 62. Bible school 10 a.m. worship 11 a.m. Phone: 496-2214.
- **GREENSBOURG**—Meeting for worship, 10:15 a.m., 2nd Sunday of month. Phone: 429-5960.
- **GREENVILLE**—Worship group, 752-0787, 752-9438.
- **GUILFORD**—New Garden Friends Meeting. Unprogrammed meeting 9:45 a.m., church school 9:45 a.m., meeting for worship 11 a.m. E. Daryl Kent, clerk, and David W. Bills, pastor, Phone: 752-0787.
- **HUNTSVILLE**—Meeting for worship 10:00 a.m. Phone: 533-3912.
- **INDIANAPOLIS**—Friends Meeting, 325 E. NC 62. Bible school 10 a.m. worship 11 a.m. Phone: 496-2214.
- **JOHNSTOWN**—Meeting for worship 10:00 a.m., 915 Towanda St. (Schenley Sch.) (518) 745-4535.
- **KENT**—Meeting for worship and First-day school, 10 a.m. except summer. Worship 11:00 a.m.
- **KENT**—Meeting for worship and First-day school, 10 a.m. Phone: Benjamin, 289-0934.
- **LAKEVILLE**—Meeting for worship, 11 a.m. Phone: 822-6213.
- **LINDEN**—Meeting for worship 10:00 a.m., 4716 N. Euclid Ave. (518) 822-6213.
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In Nicaragua: Helping A People Build A New Future

In the new nation of Nicaragua, everyone works, from the small girl who carries her family wash on her head, to the grandmother who instructs a class in the basics of health maintenance. The new government has put a high priority on the delivering of health services to the urban and rural poor. AFSC is supporting the education of health care workers, so that free health services are available to all.

Another priority has been achieving literacy. In just four years Nicaragua has managed to reduce illiteracy from 51% to 12%. New schools are being built to provide education to all children for the first time. By providing school supplies, crayons, papers, toys for the youngest children, rulers and erasers, AFSC is supporting the drive for education for all.

Nicaragua’s efforts to rebuild go on against a backdrop of economic and military disruption from dissidents supported by the U.S. We couple our work in Nicaragua with an appeal to the American people to bring an end to this harassment.

We Need Your Help Today!

To: AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

☐ Please accept my contribution for the Central America Assistance Fund.
☐ Please send me more information.

Name
Address
City_________ State______ Zip_________