

# The Canadian Friend

Volume 104, Number 5

December 2008



**Experience of Spirit in Our Lives**

**Encouraging Faithful Diversity**

**Quaker Roots**

**Reports**

# The Canadian Friend

December 2008, Volume 104, Number 5

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\* Articles, Poetry, Photos and Drawings

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## Editorial:

*Dear Friends,*

*Raised by extreme Fundamentalists, I eventually wearied of those who claim to have the only way to salvation and oneness with God. My work for many decades was surviving those years and sorting out the truth about God and Spirit.*

*Thankfully, Spirit gifted me with saner F/friends and vision. When I was 10 a dear Quaker couple from Iowa came to live with us. At 19, a student in Victoria, I was introduced to Fern St. Meeting. And at University in Varsity Christian Fellowship, I discovered that all the other denominations represented, ("headed for sure hell and damnation" according to the minister back home) were keen youth also looking to serve God and know truth. When my grandmother said Gandhi was in need of salvation and Krishnamurti was of the devil, that was the last straw! I quit church.*

*I just knew God had not given European, North American whites, 'The Truth' while all others depended desperately on them to save their souls from eternal damnation! I was fed up and angry with the huge mess 'Christianity' made of the wonderful shining light that was Jesus, individual lives, and the world.*

*Later, my daughter was the catalyst that got me seeking a spiritual community. It had to be one that honoured the planet as our God given home, not a place to trash while waiting for the ultimate call to those heavenly streets paved with gold. It had to address issues of justice. It had to welcome and acknowledge all people created equally by God. I returned to Fern St. Meeting, where I could worship with a Buddhist on one side and a Pagan on the other. No one harangued with doctrine or judged. It was here that Spirit spoke to me. Regardless of creed, colour of skin, religious affiliations, we are all created to celebrate and nurture that of God/Spirit within us.*

*These words by Meister Eckhart (1260-1329) say it perfectly: "The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent and hardworking farmer, it will thrive and grow up into God, whose seed it is; and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature. Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God seeds into God."*

*I hope you will find the discussions within these covers interesting and stimulating. Some may cause you to share an article, art, or poetry for a future issue. Also, I invite you to write letters to the Editor. Please cut out and paste the list of deadline dates for 2009 found on the back cover.*

*Wishing you many Blessings,*

*Sherryll-Jeanne Harris*

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Cover photo of Fern Street Meeting House, Victoria, BC, by Gerald Harris.

# Ministry and Worship

“Obviously, then, all the activities of a meeting, the prayer of worship, the vocal prayer of a gathered meeting, the prayer which sustains and nourishes its cells or prayer groups, family prayer, the ministry of love which expresses itself in counseling, the impact of a meeting on the outside community, all of these should be grounded in the prayer life of the individual. If prayer has not been a reality through the week for at least a core of its members, participants in the Sunday Meeting cannot reach high levels of worship. Vocal prayer flows when the cup is already full before we come to meeting. Activity which is meaningful results from insights gained in prayer. Counseling which is helpful comes from the bringing of divine perspective to human confusion. Prayer, then is a necessity in our lives. It must be at the center of them.”

Helen Hole, 1962  
No. 85 in Faith and Practice,  
(Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1997)

## Experience of Spirit in My Life

*by Kitty Dunn*

At Canadian Yearly Meeting many Friends spoke of the experience of the Spirit in their lives, often emphasizing the joy and clearness associated with it. My most transformational experiences of the Spirit moving have been its movement in the dark and often foggy, scary, and painful places in my life.

I rarely *pray* to a God who answers prayers. When in a moment of desperation I do so, I try to quickly add: “Please ignore me and let Your will be done”, because I feel my understanding of my situation is so limited that I’m aware that the outcome of what I think I want may not be the Right one. More often, if I have invoked the personal God of my childhood, I remember to make two important requests: Show me the Right Way and give me the courage to really ask openheartedly, and then the courage to hear and act on it.

Having said that, I know myself to be a bit stubborn, willful and sometimes blind to a Path that might require some personal sacrifice (or what seems at the time to be a sacrifice). Hence I get stuck in a dilemma often felt as either anxiety, or depression, or both. My experience has been that it is often only in these painful periods that I am truly willing to be led into scary seeming choices, because the depression/anxiety is even more scary and painful than the choice.

Hence I am forced to the conclusion that for me, I am most often spirit led in the dark rather than from the Light. Furthermore, only once that I can recall did making the Right decision put me back into the place of Light. Most often the decision was made, and the climb back into the Light was long and hard, but no longer as scary.



*Moon Rise by Alfred Muma, Powell River, B.C.*

## The Real Work

It may be that when we no longer know what to do  
we have come to our real work,  
and that when we no longer know which way to go  
we have come to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

Wendell Berry

*(Contributed by Diana Mitchell, Peninsula Meeting)*

# Following a Call

by Signy Fridriksson

In 1982 our daughter was born by emergency caesarean. Although I was absolutely delighted with her, I had lingering hurt about her birth, grieving especially that I had not been there to welcome her to this world.

My doctor gave me very negative expectations about any future pregnancies, so when I became pregnant with our son, instead of joy I felt deep dread. As I was struggling with my feelings a friend suggested that we see her doctor for a second opinion. Meeting with him changed our lives. He was completely reassuring. He had had midwifery training and encouraged us to become more involved in the preparation for the birth. Our son, and later our daughter, were born completely without interventions or medication. Their births were positive and empowering experiences.

My healing journey began during my pregnancy with our son. With much to resolve, I became a founding member of Kamloops Caesarean Support Group. Through educating and supporting other parents and lobbying for changes in hospital policy, I was able to put my own hurt into perspective and eventually leave it behind me.

I felt a calling to help others have better birth experiences. But who was I to have a “calling”? I had children and a husband to support. Surely helping them to pursue their dreams was far more important than anything I might think of for myself. So I set aside my dream and let it die.

Fast-forward through twenty-two years to a New Year’s Eve party. We are sharing our hopes and dreams for 2008. I say that I want to have work that makes a difference in people’s lives. Some friends arrive late, and once again, I state I want to have work with heart that makes a difference in people’s lives. One late arrival is a midwife who asks, “Have you ever thought of being a doula (a woman who supports women in birth)?” My surprised response is, “Yeah, I have!”

So I started the first steps on my journey. Initially things fell easily into place. A Birth Companion training session was starting January 10. I attended my first birth on February 18, and a second on April 16. The world seemed to be aligning to allow this new career, but I was still not willing to leap off the cliff. I kept my job, where I felt unsatisfied and unappreciated, because it was safer than taking a risk.

A period of dryness and questioning followed. I went without attending another birth until the end of July. I felt discouraged. Maybe it wasn’t really the path that I was supposed to be on. Even though I still talked about it, and could catch the fire sometimes, in my heart I was allowing the call to be silenced.

The day of reckoning came on September 4. I was working an 8-5 shift with a lunch break from 12-1. At 11:55 I got a phone call – my expectant mother was in labour. I finished up with the customer, and then phoned my supervisor to say I was leaving and wouldn’t be back for the rest of the day. Her response was, “You’ve known about this shift for two weeks. It is up to you to find a replacement. You have to get your priorities straight. I have a business to run.” I asked one of my co-workers if he would phone two people to see if either of them could come in, then ran to attend the birth.

I rode the bus to Meeting for Worship for Business that evening, and a deep calm came over me. I did have to get my priorities straight. The choice was laid out clearly before me. I could follow my calling, or live a lie. The following day I handed in my letter of resignation. I applied for (and received) a Lyman Fund Grant to support the next step on my Spiritual Journey, and registered for three doula workshops to further my career path.

Women who are supported by a doula have shorter labours, use less pain medication, have lower risks of complications, and fewer caesarean and assisted (forceps) births. As well, they exhibit higher self-esteem, spend more time interacting with their babies, are more successful at breast-feeding, assess their relationships with their partners more positively, and have a lower incidence of postpartum depression.

There is a huge amount of hurt in the world. I need to make my contribution by working small, by working to heal individuals, relationships, families and communities. By expressing God’s love through attention to labouring mothers I hope to influence them, their children, their partners, and society as a whole to be more loving.

I have a deep faith in God and in life. I am caring and compassionate. My presence is calming and reassuring. Often when people hear of my career move I am told, “This is perfect for you!” It is true. When we answer a true calling we use our gifts to best advantage.

Listen and hear if there is a call for you.

*Signy Fridriksson, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

# Encouraging Faithful Diversity: the whole banana

by Kirsten Ebsen

As part of my fellowship at Woodbrooke I participated in a number of dynamic workshops. *Encouraging Faithful Diversity: the whole banana* explored the issue of spiritual diversity within a Meeting. The developed world has become increasingly aware that all life is interconnected. No animal, plant, mineral, or human life is an isolated island unto itself (an awareness that aboriginal cultures never lost). This awareness affects how spirituality is viewed in the modern world.

Timothy Peat Ashworth, the graduate Christian Studies Tutor at Woodbrooke, and Alex Wildwood, the 1999 Swarthmore Lecturer, have been engaged in a conversation for the past eight years: a dialogue espousing difference that embraces the paradigm shift we are living through. For Tim, Jesus has always been central to his life. For Alex, Jesus is not important. Some of the questions they have been asking are:

How can I share my spirituality with someone whose faith tradition is not important to me?

What is precious in the Christian tradition that we need to hold on to?

What can we agree is our common core?

What holds our Quaker identity together in the light of this growing diversity?

How can we rediscover the guidance needed in our Meetings when it is not there?

Tim explained that how one understands Christianity depends upon the language in which it is communicated. For example, the Greek text of the New Testament talks about the faith *of* Jesus, while the English text talks about faith *in* Jesus. This tiny preposition has the power to completely alter our contextual understanding.

Until recently our Christian identity would never have been questioned. Today we have Buddhist, Jewish, Non-theist, Humanist, and Pagan Friends, with increasingly diverse personal spiritual practices. We no longer share a common theological language or one well-loved scripture. This raises the questions: What is Spiritual correctness? Are Quakers Christians?

There is a need for Friends to know ourselves temporally as well as infinitely if we want to create a community. We must acknowledge that Christianity has recently shifted its focus away from an imperial orientation, just as many centuries before it had changed from resurrection-centered to crucifixion-centered. Quaker focus has also shifted.

Early Friends had a very powerful experience of the Spirit, and subsequently saw it reflected in the Scriptures. This was central to their faith, but only lasted for a few years before it was reined in by corporate discernment. Early Friends' mission was to challenge apostasy and return Christianity to its true roots. 'Quakers arose historically precisely at the point at which the Medieval Age, based predominantly on a biblical world view, made the transition to the modern world view and the associated rise of science.'

Out of the spirituality revolution of the 1960s, liberal Quakers found themselves in between the Christian tradition on one side, and an amalgam of non-Christian traditions on the other. This contemporary spiritual movement envisions no separation between body, mind and spirit. It strives for a masculine/feminine balance, and experiential spirituality is again at the fore. The phrase 'supermarket spirituality' is an unfortunate term designed to denigrate this new-found freedom.

In past ages, each culture developed its own spiritual discipline over thousands of years. The inner light that Quakers focus on is organic and inherent in nature. Friends call it the "light of Christ", "the seed", "the inward light" and "that of God in everyone". The word *faith* has now become a verb and *compassion* holds it all together.

Friends should no longer claim that one side (traditional Christianity) or the other (contemporary spirituality) is the only right way. The Quaker way is to engage with this spiritual revolution and act as a bridge spanning the diversity. This bridge is what Tim and Alex call "*the whole banana*". It is spirit-led, taking real differences seriously, and is not a woolly response.

We are learning how important diversity is, and that it holds the fabric of life together. As Friends, we must discover new life in our own diversity in order to re-engage in a radical way with the world at large. This requires that we engage on both ends of the spectrum, moving beyond conventional Christianity. The new paradigm will determine how we do faithing (faith as a verb).

The three tenets of liberal Quakerism state that: a) faith must be rooted in experience; b) faith must be relevant to the age; and c) Quaker faith is open to new light (Ben Pink Dandelion). Pluralist Quakerism today is a faith in transition.

Alex Wildwood spent three years preparing for his Woodbrooke Lecture in 1999 and found that there is a lack of honesty in Quaker communication, which he put down to the fear of pushing buttons. Neither Christians nor Universalists want to be seen as inflicting discomfort on Quakers of the other persuasion.

What do Quakers mean by “Christian”, since our Christianity does not include doctrines? Have we really begun our work on “Unity in Diversity”, or are we simply muddling through?

At one stage during the workshop we broke into small groups and discussed problems that hinder the spiritual growth of Meetings. As Quakers we have confused niceness with non-violence, leading to the denial of differences, and a lack of communication and coherence within Meetings. Early Friends were held together by the conviction experience. What is holding us together today?

We are living in a time of major transition and are in for difficult years ahead. This requires special tools to cope. Friends have those tools in the practice of engagement with spirit-led diversity. As a guided community, we are called to make sacrifices and to leave our comfort zones. Tim reminded us that rightness of faith is not assured since revelation is ongoing. Because he had lost his certainty, Christ asked on the cross, “Why has thou forsaken me?” Some questions we should be asking ourselves today are:

Is salvation still around the corner?

Is humanity still fallen?

What is sin?

What is evil?

We have already entered a new era in which spiritual, not religious, has become the norm. This doesn't mean that we can close the door to our Christian tradition. It is what our faith was founded upon, even though we've now moved on. Universalism should never exclude Christianity, nor denigrate those who find richness in it. This brings us back to the question: what is precious in the Christian tradition that we need to hold on to? We really need to know ourselves both temporally and infinitely if we want to build community.

This article briefly summarizes an evolving

dialogue now growing across the U.K. Doug Gwyn (Woodbrooke Journal, Winter 2001) writes that since the “...beginning of Quakerism among Seekers of the 1650s . . . Friends have always been engaged in this conversation.” My hope is that Tim Ashworth and Alex Wildwood may come to Canada and introduce us to ‘ground rules’ for this conversation. Let's begin the conversation here: a conversation always loving, and often uncomfortable, within our own unique Canadian experience, so we may prepare ourselves for the future without fear holding us back. Their book on this subject will be published in early 2009.

*Kirsten Ebsen, Vancouver Monthly Meeting,  
(2008 Eva Koch Fellow at Woodbrook)*

## Is My Soul Asleep?

*by Antonio Machado*

Is my soul asleep?  
Have those beehives that work  
In the night stopped? And the water-  
Wheel of thought, is it  
Going around now, cups  
Empty, carrying only shadows?

No, my soul is not asleep.  
It is awake, wide awake.  
It neither sleeps nor dreams, but  
watches,  
Its eyes wide open  
Far-off things, and listens  
At the shores of the great silence.

*(Contributed by Kirsten Ebsen)*

# Quakers talk about Christian Roots

by Beverly Shepard

At Canadian Yearly Meeting in Camrose, Alberta, August 2008 Friends gathered twice as a Special Interest Group (SIG) to discuss the fact, meaning, and relevance of the Christian roots of our faith. A very large group gathered for the first discussion, a somewhat smaller one for the second. We acknowledged at the beginning that our backgrounds vary hugely. Canadian Quakers are a highly diverse group theologically, including some Friends who don't even relate to the word "theology". This may seem so obvious as to be unworthy of comment, but in fact we also realized that in most situations most Quakers are not comfortable talking about our differences. In particular, some of us are disinclined to discuss with each other anything that has "Christ" or even "Jesus" in its name, aware of how far apart the views may be in any given group of Friends. As the Consultation and Renewal Working Group's (CnR) report puts it: "...we tend not to engage with our diversity. We keep our points of view to ourselves, because we fear unpleasant or hurtful responses when we share....".

Why are we so uncomfortable with these topics? Why did the CnR group find "that tension between Christian and non-Christian Friends has created difficulties in many local Meetings and that the Christians are the ones leaving?" Those who attended the Christian Roots SIG were eager to seek answers to these questions. We came together ready to "...listen in tongues...listen to where words come from... and... sense the feelings under the words". Although we recognized too that there is "a way of communicating and learning that has nothing to do with words", we had of necessity to share our thoughts and feelings by means of words, and we did this with tenderness, honesty, and joy.

One Friend said that this was one of the most open listening sessions she's ever experienced among Friends about what we believe. It was exactly what the CnR group was hoping Friends would do. How can we move that experience out of this SIG, so that other Friends can do the same? Another said that *everything* that Friends said in the first SIG session spoke to his condition!

And what was it that we said and shared and heard? We recognized a huge diversity - in belief in (or not in)

God, Jesus, Jesus as Christ, religion, and more - but a good deal of common ground as well. We began to feel that much of what we may view as conflict is appearance and not reality. For one thing terminology is a problem. Words seem at best insufficient and at worst deceptive to some of us when speaking and hearing about the numinous. What makes us all Quakers is *unsaid*. Having stated this problem in a variety of ways, and realized that it pervades many of our conversations as Friends and among Friends, we nonetheless attempted to accept the inadequacies of our language and carry on, doing our best.

To start, we asked ourselves: is the "debate" about whether we are Christians, or even Christian-based, too polarized? Some see importance in calling ourselves a Christian denomination. Others, damaged by a so-called Christian upbringing want to reject all that and more besides. In between are most of us, who are not especially comfortable with calling ourselves "Christians", particularly because of the public perception of those who do so in a public way (which is often also an aggressive way) but recognize the value of the teachings of Jesus. Is it possible that, by affirming the history and heritage we have, we can better adhere to the methods by which Jesus and others, for instance George Fox, lived their lives? Would we benefit from preserving a distinction between "a religion about Christ" and "the spirituality of Jesus"?

Some young adult Friends feel that they don't want to be associated with the history of the Christian Church, but they have nothing to put in its place. One said, "It doesn't matter what words you say, but teach us *something!*" We don't do much teaching of a "Quaker faith" because we're afraid of being *creedal*. We insist we aren't creedal, and for good reason. The old spoken creeds of the traditional Christian denominations are all about the birth and death of Christ, and omit His teachings altogether. Some creeds in fact seem almost contrary to them. Yet we do have beliefs. A few years ago a young woman was interviewing a number of Friends for a film documentary she was making on Quakers. When she asked me a question about our beliefs I began with the standard Quaker disclaimer: "Now, you understand I'm not speaking for Friends in general here, just for myself, but...". She began to laugh and told me, "I've interviewed a lot of Quakers by now and every time I ask about beliefs you all say that, and then you all go ahead and tell me the same things!" We should be doing this ourselves, not waiting for an interviewer to draw this out of us.



Yes, it's true that some of us regard the Judeo-Christian scriptures as a high authority and others obey only the promptings of the Spirit in direct personal experience, but doesn't "Quakerism" recognize that we have several sources of authority, from scripture through Quaker writings of others, to personal experience? Can we possibly agree on this and go from there?

We disagreed a lot, with sincerity, joy, and acceptance. One Friend called him/herself a disciple of Christ without being a Christian; another said s/he may be best described as a "Christian heretic". A Friend said s/he may not be "a Christian" but is "aware of Christ present", while another immediately asserted that "Christ-presentness" is not part of *his/her* experience. This same Friend "doesn't object to Jesus-talk" but needs a distinction made and care taken about what is *said* and what is *implied*. Although one Friend said that s/he's happy with the variety amongst Quakers - s/he does not look for an exclusive religion and in fact celebrates the differences. Others asked why we can't *identify* our middle ground, the place where we all meet, and define what we mean by "our Christian roots" more clearly. While one Friend identified a "terrible anxiety" among some Friends that we are losing our Christian roots, another said, having no particular relationship to Jesus, s/he sometimes felt his/her beliefs threatened and him/herself in danger of being ignored by other Friends. It was clear that we need to listen with tenderness to those damaged by some form of Christianity, or those who simply come sincerely from quite a different faith tradition. In the group, we practised this tender listening. We had agreed, by attending the SIG, to do this. It wasn't hard. It's something that is possible for all of us to do throughout Yearly Meeting, in our home Meetings and our regional gatherings. All it takes is the recognition that this is what we're going to do and the love and acceptance to do it tenderly. It's important to find a balance between using words easily, without tension and fear, and remaining sensitive and mindful. This balance is readily found in an atmosphere of learning and acceptance.

We like to think and to say that Quakerism is not a religious convention; it's a way of life. That is, the *whole* of our lives can be part of our spiritual experience. How can we expect to be able to convey such a personal religion with standardized or codified language? One Friend said, "We use different words to describe the experience of God, and there *shouldn't* be a prescribed set of words. It should be the experience,

not the words that matters. We can all come to the same place and recognize the commonality of our experience without being required to use [or not use] particular words."

One Friend termed the famous sentence from George Fox's sermon on Firbank Fell - "Christ has come to teach His people Himself" as "a most beautiful Universalist statement". Another said this very sentence is 'scary' to others. The truth behind both these attitudes toward one of the founding statements of our faith is that we need to go behind the words, not just of Fox but of other early Quaker writers whose terminology may seem foreign to us, to a new place of understanding. What do those traditional Quaker sayings really say to us? They were the distillation for those first Friends of what Christ was teaching His people. Never mind the language - what did they mean? What did Christ teach His people? This body of instruction - the peace testimony, that of God within, continuing revelation, equality, and all the rest - this is what we can hold to, and this is what we can affirm to others and teach to our own young people. This is what makes us Quakers, whether or not we're "Christians" and whatever sort of Christian or not-Christian we may be.

Friends in the group seemed relieved, delighted, even moved to be in circumstances in which talk of Christianity was not only permitted, but encouraged and even in a sense required for this particular SIG. The sharing was deep and meaningful and the responses thoughtful. The whole experience was full of spiritual riches. This is something we could all do any time of year. As one Friend asked, "What's your story? Don't tell me so that I need a glossary, just tell me why you are where you are." Let's get started! We owe it to our kids, as well as to ourselves.

*Beverly Shepard, Hamilton Monthly Meeting*



# Christ-Present vs Christianity

by Jon Karsemeyer

“You can go to theological seminary and study about religion. You can learn the history of the Christian Church. You can know all about the Synoptic problems of the Gospels and have your own theories about Q and the J, E, D, and P document of the Hexateuch. You can know all the literature about the authorship of the Johanne epistles, whether the author was John the beloved disciple or another of the same name. You can know all about the history of Quakerism, you can know the disputes behind the Nicene Creed and the Constantinopolitan Creed... the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. You can know church symbolism and the meaning of the feasts and fasts of the church. You can know all this, and much more. But unless you *know God*, immediately, every day communing with Him, rejoicing in Him, exalting in Him, opening your life in joyful obedience toward Him and feeling Him speaking to you and guiding you into ever fully loving obedience to Him, you aren't fit to be a minister. There is so much that is wonderful about books. But he who relies for his sermons upon book stuff *about* religion, and is not at the same time enjoying immediately and experiencing vitally fresh illumination of God, is not a real minister, even if he has a degree in theology from Oxford or Cambridge. Second hand sermons aren't real sermons. Only first hand preaching counts.” (Thomas Kelly, 1939)

***Christ has come to teach his people himself.***  
(George Fox)

Friends are friends in the unity of all faithful in spirit and in truth, not just with other Friends, but as Fox put it, “...walking cheerfully over the earth answering that of God in *everyone*”. Not just Christians, or seekers, or just non-Christians. Not just a particular, separate, regional, linguistic, religious, cultural, racial, gender, or political preference, but “everyone.” That's what Jesus did, Buddha, Nanak, Fox. That's what Gandhi did. That's what Martin Luther King did. That's what Friends do. Friends being faithful in spirit and in truth are not confined, defined, conditioned, bound, or determined by the creeds, forms, rituals, traditions, Scriptures, culture, or history of Christianity.

We acknowledge, honour, respect, and affirm them, to the extent of their validity in pointing to the unconditional love and liberating truth of Christ's

Presence in our own experience, and as we may come personally to know in the experience of others. But first we are friends of Truth and children of the Light. This is the basis of our silent waiting worship in the Presence of God, and the foundation and discipline of our ministry to the whole world; in faith, in unconditional Love, in the liberating Truth, in sorrow and suffering, as well as joy and delight.

This is why Canadian Yearly Meeting and others, reject the Richmond Declaration. It makes a false idol of Holy Scripture by assigning ultimate authority to it. Many Christians do this, not just FUM. The highest authority rests with God, in God, by God -- as we each come to know personally through the experience of the amazing grace of God, the holy spirit, and the presence of the Eternal Christ.

Friends reject the errors and excesses of the Christian churches of Rome, of England, Germany, Scotland, or anywhere else, and every creed, as worldly political inventions and unacceptable corruptions of the plain truth and unconditional love of the gospel and example of Christ-Jesus. Friends reject the notion that Christ can have the power to *forgive* our sins, yet is powerless to free us *from* sin. Early Friends were emphatic that in Christ (not in orthodox Christianity, but in *Christ*) we are restored to “...the condition of Adam before the fall”, that is, free of sin. In his *Journal*, Fox spoke of his intense experience of being restored to Paradise, and the whole world taking on “a new smell”.

Friends experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as a vivid and present reality. They were spiritually reborn and raised up to a new, mythic, mystical, timeless life prompted by love and truth. The compelling spiritual intensity of the experience of that vision, and state of conscious spiritual being sustained them as it did the first followers of Jesus, through every trial and test, every joy and sorrow; through every victory and defeat, every birth and death, every breath and heartbeat.

Hundreds of Friends died in prisons at the hands of Christians, but Quaker faith grew as a distinct, compelling force for good, religious tolerance, mercy, and freedom in the world. While others fought demonic wars in the name of their religion, and too many still do, Friends rejected outward fighting, weapons, and war, and the affectations of classism, hierarchy, sexism, hat honours, and tithing.

**We reject the swearing of oaths in court, the professions, or assumption of public office, as contrary to Scripture, as well as an implicit**

**confession of otherwise lying. We reject the notion of the power of sin and effect of human weakness and addiction, as being greater than the power or will of the Divine to free us unconditionally, in spirit and in truth; we reject the creeds, rituals, pomp, idols, icons, images, vestments, racism, titles, salaried religious careerism, popes, steeple-houses, political authoritarianism, formulaic preaching, pride, and exclusivity of all the churches. We reject all these as faithless, immoral, worldly affectations.**

But such righteous rejections are unsustainable without the direct experience, power, and vision of Christ-present in our worship as a living, ongoing reality, not just a belief or notion. That spirit and truth preceded Quakerism and Christianity, and will remain to the end of time.

The harm in professing to be Christian lies with the lamentable known history of Christianity, *not with Christ-Jesus*. The history of Christianity is one merged with the Roman Empire. It is a violent, bloody history of willful error, excess, suppression, politics, pathology, witch-hunting, torture, murder, and war. Christianity separates and severs. It brings not peace but a sword. Christ is the Prince of Peace. Christ redeems, restores, and unites. Christianity is a religious culture and cultural tradition. Christ is a transcendent holy presence we may know personally, here and now, in whole-hearted devotion. Christianity (and Quakerism) is an historic faith-culture and an ongoing human phenomenon. Christ is a presence we may know as the prompting of love and truth in our hearts, and the saving grace of the power of spiritual transformation.

Christ is kindness. Call yourself whatever you will. When you are kind you are channeling Christ-present. When you are kind you are, like Jesus, a friend in spirit and in truth. Let's be friends. Let's not hesitate to love, serve, and tenderly and faithfully answer that of God in everyone, including our Christian f/Friends and opponents.

***Love all. Serve all.*** (Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

(Thanks to my co-facilitator Beverly Shepard, who's idea it was to have the Special Interest Group: *Christian Roots: Common Ground or Grounds for Division*, at CYM. This was in response to the discussion of diversity, and acknowledged our "Christian roots" as recommended in the Conclusions and Recommendations from The Consultation and Renewal Working Group. This SIG was well received)

*Jon Karsmeyer, Toronto Monthly Meeting*

## Solar Being

Sun-born from silence to delight  
in being  
and song, in sight and flight,  
some dream or seem to search  
or lurch on paths from church  
to church, amid stone temples  
for that silent spirit, still...  
within.

Son-born of the spirit of  
truth-in-being  
and love and all that's right  
conquering night and death  
through surrender to the dove  
of peace beyond understanding  
and faith that moves mountains  
of fear and doubt, and none can live  
without.

Unborn or torn from wombs of war and  
violence that knows no peace, or love, or  
truth, or silence...  
restlessly always becoming, never being  
still, never quite arriving, ever being born  
and dying, trying all the ways except the  
one that is so near, so near... (*No, closer!*)  
It is here.

Closer than breath and blood, always  
present since before the rainbow and  
The Flood,  
it is the flawless perfect jewel,  
"Om mani padme hum!"  
the impossibility of abundance  
every place we stand, the holy  
ground of being  
more radiant than any  
day or night-sky star.

*Jon Karsmeyer, Toronto Monthly Meeting*

# Report from CYM's Representative to Friends United Meeting

General Board Meeting  
Richmond, Indiana  
October 8-11, 2008

Dear Friends, I have just returned from the first General Board Meeting (GBM) of the 2008-2011 triennium. I saw many hopeful signs there.

On orientation day the nine Richmond Indiana staff members presented a skit showing a typical workday. They followed this with their monthly business meeting, while we looked on. From the devotional sharing time, to personal and workload updates, to deciding where and when to have the staff Christmas party, they exhibited fondness and respect for one another. It was a pleasure to see their interactions.

During the roll call of the General Board members, I introduced myself, saying that I am serving on the Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) Ad Hoc Committee, which is looking at our relationship with Friends United Meeting (FUM). This had been a major item of business at our Yearly Meeting in August, however, I had not been able to attend. Sylvia Graves, General Secretary of FUM, commented that not only was I absent from CYM, no FUM visitors were there either. She made a commitment to attend CYM in 2009 and I encouraged everyone else to attend.

The first order of business on Thursday was to affirm Kelly Kellum, a pastor in North Carolina YM, as Clerk of the General Board, and Cliff Loesch, from Great Plains YM, as Assistant Clerk. They came across as gentle and patient in their approach to Quaker business. A good working relationship is developing between them and the new Recording, Clerk Carol Holmes, from New York Yearly Meeting.

I had served on the Executive Committee for the past triennium. When asked if I would serve again, I said that I could only meet during the time of the General Board meetings and could not attend extraordinary meetings. Instead, two new at-large members were chosen for the Executive Committee: Mary Lord, from Baltimore YM, and Bob Secord from the Western Association of the Religious Society of

Friends. Both have views compatible with CYM. I believe they will represent our interests well.

CYM has had a challenged relationship with FUM, mostly due to differences in our theologies, the FUM employment policy, and the affirmation of Richmond Declaration of Faith as a faith statement for FUM.

The Clerk of CYM had written to FUM General Board about our concerns over the affirmation of the Richmond Declaration of Faith, without input from all member Yearly Meetings. Neither the new Clerk nor Assistant Clerk of FUM had been on the previous board, so they sought me out for more background and to check with me about their proposed response. I was impressed with their sensitivity. CYM will be getting a letter explaining that this is an historical document and as such is important in FUM, and that there is no expectation that all member Yearly Meetings need to affirm it.

In my experience the tone at this GBM was more open and less contentious than at previous times. FUM has undertaken a strategic plan and one of the recommendations of the Identity Group was to hold informal discussions on Friends' approaches to faith. I attended the one on the Richmond Declaration of Faith. It was well moderated by Doug Shoemaker from Indiana YM. He began by saying that he was one of those who had pushed to have the Richmond Declaration affirmed in Kenya in February 2007. He now feels that the adoption may have been hasty. After giving us time to read through the document he asked for our responses to it. The first three people spoke about how it fully reflected their faith. The next speaker (from New England YM) spoke about how she is a Trinitarian and feels FUM talks about Jesus Christ to the exclusion of God and the Holy Spirit, and FGC talks about God and the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of Jesus Christ. She needs both to be whole. The next speaker was from Western YM, one of the most conservative Yearly Meetings. He said the Richmond Declaration reflected his faith and he is glad to claim it, but please don't beat him over the head with it! This really opened up the discussion. Many liberal Friends admitted feeling that way and suspected that the Richmond Declaration was being used to try to separate the sheep from the goats. I said we in FUM have different vocabularies, and because of that, I feel some individuals negate the faith of more liberal Friends. Having the opportunity to speak openly was healing for all involved. I felt that Friends listened well and the aura of defensiveness lifted.

As many of you are aware Canadian Yearly Meeting is affiliated with both Friends General Conference (FGC) and FUM. Four other yearly meetings also have dual affiliation – New York YM, New England YM, Baltimore YM, and Southeastern YM. FUM’s employment policy, stating that “intimate sexual behavior should be confined to traditional marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman” has caused great concern for all of these Yearly Meetings, and has been an ongoing point of contention within the board between those who support the wording and those who object to it. The personnel manual was on the agenda to be reviewed at this GB meeting. As he began his report from the Executive Committee, the Assistant Clerk remarked on the open space in the middle of the room, suggesting it must be for the elephant. After the laughter died down, he presented the revised manual indicating that it has only ever been in draft form and the board has never affirmed it. To meet labour law, the organization is in need of an official personnel manual. The Executive Committee recommended approving the manual with the paragraph on sexual ethics highlighted with the statement: “The General Board is not in unity about the following sections. We continue to prayerfully explore these issues.” Sending it for legal review would follow. Representatives from liberal YMs were planning to insist that the contentious passages be removed altogether, however, before the debate really started, one of the new reps from Baltimore YM spoke. She is a labour lawyer and she didn’t see the point in approving something, then having to approve it again once the legal review had taken place. Following her recommendation, we affirmed that FUM staff is working under the terms of the current draft, which will be submitted to attorneys with expertise in Indiana labour law, equal employment opportunity law, law governing faith-based organizations, etc. In an amazing turn of events, everyone is awaiting the legal review and the wrangling has ceased. (At least temporarily.)

FUM is an organization that demonstrates our faith and practice, through its mission projects with churches, schools, orphanages, and hospitals in Belize, Cuba, Jamaica, Kenya, Uganda and Palestine. Initially, I was very skeptical about missions, assuming that they were used to force-feed a foreign religion, undermine existing faiths, and create dependency among vulnerable people. Instead, I have been impressed with the respectful attitude of those working in the missions, and the positive impact these projects have as

Quaker values are taught and lived. One example was the Friends’ Pastors Conference held in late January in the midst of the post-election violence in Kenya. The pastors looked at instances of peace-building and non-violence, formed Friends Church Peace Teams, and held many successful forums to aid in reconciliation among those affected. Another example is Belize Friends Boys School, which provides education to street children in Belize City and offers opportunities that would otherwise be completely out of reach. For more information about FUM and its missions, check their website (<http://www.fum.org>).

The missions are always in need of financial support and I will make a plug for one need. FUM is the only Quaker organization that has US government approval to take US funds to Cuba. These can only be monies specifically donated for Cuba and cannot be taken from any other funds. The wait for this annual approval is often long and the approved amounts are disappointingly little, but following Hurricane Ike the approval came swiftly and the allowance was much more generous. Friends in Cuba were hit very hard. They had completed building and repairing all their Meeting Houses, and were starting construction on a three storey Yearly Meeting centre, including three apartments for retiring pastors. The hurricane did major damage to most of the Meeting Houses, and destroyed the home of one of the retiring couples. The US government approved \$75,000 for repairs. FUM already has \$25,000 which FUM staff member Terri Johns will be taking early in December. The other money will go with the FUM work team in late January. If you feel moved to donate to Cuban Friends please send your donation to CYM with the subject line “FUM – Cuba project”. Other donations to FUM can be directed through the CYM office as well.

In Friendship,

*Signy Fridriksson,  
Ottawa Monthly  
Meeting*



# A Saint, His Chickens, and a Miracle

by Robert Nunn

Shortly after my beloved wife Janet died of multiple myeloma in the fall of 2006, I received an e-mail from a friend in Montreal. She apologized for not getting back to me sooner with her condolences, explaining that she had just returned from walking on the Camino - the famous pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. It struck me like a revelation that this was what I should do: walk, stop at every church and cathedral that was open, and give thanks for the life of Janet.

I began to prepare in earnest with the help and encouragement of friends who had walked the Camino. I read numerous books loaned to me, and came to the decision that I would walk for about four weeks, beginning part way along at the town of Santo Domingo de la Calzada. I chose it as my starting point out of loving memories of my wife, who had filled our house with chickens - ceramic chickens, metalwork chickens, straw chickens. So, beginning my walk at the cathedral with its famous pair of live chickens felt like just the right thing to do.

I arrived in Santo Domingo de la Calzada on April 30, 2007. I headed straight for the cathedral and found the always-open side door, which allows one to view the chickens at all hours in their glorious cage. The very moment I poked my head in the door the rooster crowed lustily. A good omen. I spent two nights in the town before setting off on foot and what I received from my stay there was so much more than the mere sight of the Saint's chickens, that if my pilgrimage had begun and ended there, it would have sufficed.

In the cathedral on May 1 I saw a woman take lilacs down into the crypt which holds Santo Domingo's tomb. When I went down I saw she had laid the flowers on the tomb and she and several other women were standing in front of it praying. After a while they walked around the tomb, passing a 13th century sculpture of the Saint at the rear of the crypt. Then they repeated the ritual several times. Finally as each finished she would touch the hand of the Saint, then the tomb, then make a final bow and leave.

An English-speaking guide explained that from May 1st to the 12th the anniversary of the Saint's death, local people pray and walk around the tomb twelve times. This medieval Saint gets his full name from all the work he did for the sake of pilgrims, helping them on their journey by building a causeway (*calzada*) a bridge, a hospital, and a church.

Then I learned of the miracle of the chickens. A young German pilgrim was hanged for a crime for which he was innocent, but the Saint preserved his life on the gallows. When his parents rushed to the magistrate to tell him their son was alive he scoffed "He's no more alive than these roast chickens on my table", at which time the chickens came to life and danced and sang. Hence for about seven centuries chickens have lived in the cathedral in memory of the miracle.

The sculpture of the Saint shows him standing with his staff in his left hand. With his right hand he is holding the hand of a man who is kneeling on one knee at his feet. Over the shoulder of the man is a heavy chain ending in a manacle. The Saint is portrayed at the moment he is about to raise the man to his feet. It was explained to me that the saint had great compassion for the criminals who were sentenced to walk the Camino as punishment. I was deeply moved by the sculpture and the ritual I observed. When I was alone in the crypt I walked around it and touched the Saint's upraised hand, and the tomb, and thought, "He's a kind man, he would hold my hand too if I asked him". So I did. I felt that he would say, "Yes, I will hold your hand, and I will raise you to your feet, and you will be free of your chains, and then you and I have a bridge to build."

That evening I attended the 8 p.m. Mass. The cathedral was packed. The priest spoke of the famous miracles in a humorous and affectionate way. I understood him to say "The tales of miracles testify to the reverence in which the Saint is held, but it's not for nothing he is called the Saint of the Causeway rather than the Saint of the Chickens. The real miracle is that he inspired so many to work with him to help pilgrims on their way."

At the end of the mass everybody crowded to the altar and kissed icons of the Saint held up by the priests. Then they gathered around the gorgeous mausoleum, which stands directly over the crypt and features a polychrome statue of the Saint with a rooster and hen at his feet, and sang a rousing song which they finished off with a great joyful shout.

The cathedral was the first place along the Camino where I gave thanks for the life of my wife. I set out on foot on May 2 carrying with me a completely unexpected blessing - a miracle - a gift from Santo Domingo de la Calzada - a sense that there was a future, there was work for me to do; my life would go on.

Although I grieved for my wife the whole way to Santiago, and still grieve, I picture the Saint holding my hand and I say to myself in the words of Samuel Beckett, "I can't go on, I'll go on".

*Robert Nunn, Pelham Executive Meeting*

## Lane Changes

*by Gina Bennett*

It's no accident that we often use the analogy of a journey to describe our spiritual development. Probably most can remember a starting point, however vague, and some sort of linear progression from our first awareness of the Spirit, to wherever we are now. Journeys are full of turns, twists, rough patches and detours besides the merciful but less interesting straight stretches.

Yogi Berra once said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." In terms of spiritual journeys, it seems that's what I've done. I've been a Quaker all my adult life, and now, suddenly I'm a Catholic. At least that's how it looks to friends, family, and people with whom I've had spiritual connections for years. But of course the switch is not sudden at all. My somewhat altered religious identity is not an abrupt exit, nor a 180 degree turn on the spiritual highway, but rather the acknowledgement of a slow drift into a parallel lane. For years I have been a Quaker with Catholic leanings. Now I am a Catholic with Quaker leanings. I haven't left the Religious Society of Friends, although I have dropped my formal membership and requested attender status for the time being. My views on birth control, homosexual unions, the role of women in the church, even abortion, haven't really changed.

So why the switch in formal church affiliation? Part of the reason has to do with geography. When my family moved to Cranbrook, BC, we found ourselves a long way from everywhere else, including a 3.5 hour drive from the nearest Quaker meeting. With a full-

time job, two kids at home and a husband with failing health, I found it very difficult to take one entire day out of the weekend to travel to Meeting. People say a lot about the Catholic church but one thing you must admit: it's big. There is a Catholic church somewhere nearby, even in the smallest towns in Canada. Cranbrook has not one but two Catholic churches. A friend of mine was going and one was close.

But proximity is not the whole reason. I discovered that the Catholic church is wide in other ways too: you can find an incredible diversity of beliefs and practices coexisting under the Catholic umbrella. I was initially drawn to a group whose focus was on peace and development issues, a natural magnet for a Quaker. Later I joined a discussion group whose views are liberal and at times even radical. I discovered that just because the Pope says something doesn't mean that every Catholic (including every priest) believes or supports that opinion.

Still, people have wondered how I could drift from a faith practice as unstructured as Quaker worship, to one as structured as Catholicism. The fact is, a lot of that structure is on the surface; underneath, both Quakerism and Catholicism have a strong mystical tradition and both promote a deep personal relationship with Spirit. At first I found it difficult to relate to the rote and ritual of the Catholic Mass but as I started to understand what the various aspects mean or could mean, I found that they supported rather than detracted from my spiritual experience. I found support for my essentially theist spiritual orientation. I also found areas for challenge and growth in the Christian tradition, that I hadn't fully appreciated before.

Somebody else, not Yogi Berra, said that faith is not so much about looking for some big light down the road, but about following the candlelight at your feet. I had thought I was following one particular spiritual pathway but it seems that while shuffling along by candlelight, I have been moving in unexpected directions. It's not so surprising really: the territory of the Spirit is huge and despite all the labels we assign to religious identity, unmarked.

*Gina Bennett, Argenta Monthly Meeting*

# Yearning

by Michael Phillips

Late one night in the summer of 1955 I was traveling from San Francisco to Los Angeles in a car full of members of the Labor Youth League. As we cruised down a valley north of LA into warm air, full of summer night smells, I was filled with a mysterious wash of feeling. I spoke of it to a companion in terms of nostalgia. “Nostalgic for what?” I wondered. “Nothing in the past, just a sort of generalized nostalgia. A feeling at once sweet and sad.” I suppose that some combination of companionship, dislocation, sleepy silence, mind empty of preoccupations or urgencies, opened in my life a passage for this nostalgia.

Such a feeling was not unknown to me, but I had never before isolated and named it. The word yearning came to me years later, after I had returned to Seattle, to university, met and married Lynne, and my father had given me a book titled *Mysticism* or *The Mystics*, something like that.

I should mention that my father was a philosophy professor, a materialist, a rationalist, an atheist, and a Marxist. So was I, for that matter, but I yearned. He had mentioned mysticism before. Not really very often, but more than once, and with some inner intensity. In particular, he would sometimes refer to William James’ book, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, while describing himself as a “sick soul”. When he said those two words, his voice would go hoarse, as it always did when he brought himself to speak the unspeakable. The hoarseness would intrude when he used bad words, especially in the presence of women or children, or when he spoke of the particularities of his own neuroses. That was the hoarseness with which he spoke of mysticism and the mystical experience. So. It was important. It was emotionally moving. It evoked deep resonances in his life. Why? What did this mean? I took note, and read the book.

It was a simple basic introduction to the subject, though all new to me. It made the point that humans everywhere and at all times had been subject to an unmistakably common experience of knowing the unity of all being, and that the experience was unmistakable, transformative, real, and satisfying. And I yearned.

For years thereafter, while living a complicated life in Berkeley, I continued to revisit that yearning.

Friends introduced us to Sri Eknath Easwaran who in turn introduced us to meditation and the thought that there was a basic practicality, an ordinariness, to the life of the spirit, accessible to anyone. So, in the ‘60s, we began attending Easwaran’s lecture-meditations, and I began reading the great mystics. I read *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *St. John of the Cross*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *The Imitation of Christ*, the huge volumes of the life of Ramakrishna and his teachings. I also read Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Timothy Leary, books about Zen Buddhism, and so on, all the then-current canon of the Beat generation. And then two years of weekly psychotherapy brought the realization, among others, that we tend to become our preoccupations.

In 1965 I decided to take a week long hike by myself in the High Sierras. I rather dramatized it as a solitary quest adventure, feeling secretly embarrassed by the knowledge that I didn’t have the wisdom or focus to engage in such a Serious Venture. I was only going for a walk in the mountains. Yet I really did wish for a solitary, mystical realization of my place in the universe. The contrast between my yearning and my capacity for deep insight was disheartening. Just who did I think I was, anyway?

Early in the afternoon of my first day I approached a steep climb – a switchback rising from 8,000 to 10,000 feet in just a couple of miles up an exposed talus slope under a hot summer sun.

Somewhere around 9,000 feet I developed a blinding headache complete with nausea. I had no appetite for lunch and retched and retched and produced little spatters of bitter bile. I lay down on the trail, the only flat place, and suffered. I waited for my discomfort to wane. The sun beat down... the dust and stones were warm on my face . . . my head pounded . . . my mind drifted. Eventually I began to feel a little better and sat up to take stock. I wasn’t dizzy. I was only a little nauseated. My headache was no longer blinding. But I wasn’t ready yet to resume walking.

I looked around. There was a view of wooded ridges with bony spines, deep creek canyons, the distant plain. The sun was too bright and I lowered my eyes. Right there in front of me, growing out of the bare stony talus, was a small clump of flowers. Lacy leaves trembled in the faint breeze, clear sky blue flowers nodded. I couldn’t quite take it in – my interior life was nearly quelled – sick and miserable, just hanging on to



simple persistence – while immediately before me was this pure example of surging, buoyant, unpretentious, joyous, persevering, surviving life. I had no personal defenses left. The flood of wonder and joy unmanned me. I was released.

I dug a note pad and pen out of my pack and sketched the flowers as a gesture of gratitude, humility, and devotion. I got up, hoisted my pack, and climbed the rest of the way to the pass, to be greeted by the staggering display of the whole northern High Sierras. As I stood on the ridge a humming bird whirred past me over the pass, west to east. Astonishing!

For six days I walked and camped by lakes and streams, along ridges, through meadows and woods, all the while slightly nauseated, slightly headachy, with no appetite for anything but soda crackers and lemon drops; delighting in the beauty of the mountains in every tremendous vista and in every tiny detail.

On the morning of my last day I walked out of the high country by a different pass. After a while, as I was descending into the trees at around 9,000 feet I noticed that the air felt and tasted different – sort of creamy. And I was hungry. I was really hungry. Starving! I stopped where I was by a creek, took out my stove and cooked up a whole two-servings packet of freeze-dried beef stew and ate it, followed by dried apricots and chocolate, and a quart of water.

The walking got a lot easier after that. My mind livened up a bit. I decided that while I'd gotten no quest vision and hadn't been all that comfortable, still it was a good trip. I had, after all, fallen hopelessly in love with a clump of blue flowers. But, boy, was I looking forward to sleeping in a bed and above all to getting clean! I stank.

Swinging down into the woods along the creek I got to thinking about how dirty I was. Sweaty and pissy and greasy and dusty and muddy – I was surrounded by a cloud of smelly vapours. All this stuff is coming off me, out of me, into the world. And yes I'm breathing in and out, drinking water and pissing, eating and shitting. It's really not at all obvious where I, myself, begin and end. I'm more like a cloud than a discrete object. You could say I'm really nothing more than a sort of vortex cruising down the hill, humming to itself, stuff coming in and going out all the time.

Not a very spiritual image, I guess. But undoubtedly an image of a kind of unity with the whole universe. I loved it. I laughed and remained cheerful for days

after I got back to Berkeley and Lynne and my friends and my work, thinking of myself as a gassy cloud.

The yearning grew and grew, and finally one day I realized that the yearning brought its own realization. It was at the time (1967/68) when we were more and more seriously considering dropping out and seeking a new life. Our friend Marguerite took me aside to question me closely just what was going on with us. She couldn't make out what we were doing sitting at Easwaran's feet, and talking about a search for a spiritual community, and all that stuff. When I tried to explain it to her I heard myself saying, ". . . and I want more than anything, with all my heart, to know God". And I wept, and that somehow revealed to me that yearning prefigures hope and joy, that god would meet me half way, more than half way, that opening my heart was enough for it to be filled. It was only a glimpse, but sufficient.

What is one to do: Believe? Trust? Is even my way holy? Why not?

Why not. The mystery of the unity of all being must necessarily transcend the capacities of our little minds, Horatio. Show a little humility. The way open to us to know God is through our yearning, not through either our telescopes or our theology. And what is revealed to us there, while indubitable, is characteristically human, is the human perception of, and participation in divinity. Each aspect, creation, element, cross-section, whatever, of reality yearns its way into being, characteristically. Like all Being, any being is ultimate, and its yearning for the divine is characteristic of its kind. Frogs and stones, saints and stars sing their particular praises of God exactly as well as I do. There is no opening to the divine that is unworthy of it.

Even my way is holy.



*Michael Phillips  
Victoria Meeting*

*Photo by John Scull*

# What We Learn to See

*by Joseph Fasciani*

Do you see how slowly, how very carefully  
this whole immensity has been fashioned? Nothing  
has been discarded, all have been included, none forgotten  
or despised, raised up or lowered to be one above or below another.

We were given eyes to see with, to see it all entire.  
Although double-eyed, our great blessing is sight fused  
to a single outlook and perception of depth, for discernment.  
And what have we seen fit to see? What visions are taught to us?

As for me, I still keep and prize what was revealed to me  
in my eighteenth year: three times the Ruler of the universe  
tore away the delusion I'd lived as daily life, all that I had  
known and thought was world.

Then I was shown there is but One  
existence and being. What we see as many is only the wrinkling  
in the fabric, the play of light and dark over the seamless making  
of God's cloth, a weaving without beginning, without end.

Light was radiant over all: words ceased, for none were needed.  
To *be* was to *know* all was of a piece. God, star, rock, man,  
bird, blood, everything an infinite revealing of the only Existence  
that Is.

I *was*, true, but there was no me, and no time to keep,  
for all is kept within eternity. Timeless, infinite peace,  
peaceful without rest. This is no mystery when you know it.  
Change is constant, yet essence stays at centre: radiant  
exultation of Being, an ever-continuous Creation!

Three times this gift was given to me, to make it mine  
for all my days.

It has not returned to overwhelm me since,  
but I wait upon it. Until then, what I have carries me along  
and sustains me: to know what life is, and what it isn't;  
instructs me to know the way and to walk in it; when to turn  
to the left, or to the right, and when to turn away.

*Joseph Fasciani, Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting*

# Growing The Blessed Community

(New committee seeks financial gifts to feed our spiritual roots)

*by Carol Dixon and Wesley Glebe*

For those who attend Canadian Yearly Meeting there are strong feelings of connectedness to each other and a sense of engagement in a vital process that nurtures our spiritual lives. One Friend describes “the amazing/humbling spirit-led decision-making that happens”. It is a vital connection for Canadian Friends, younger and older, giving us a deep sense of who and what we are.

But many are not able to attend Yearly Meeting and don't have these experiences. To help all Canadian Friends become more familiar with the basic tenets of our faith, two new part-time positions will be created with the goal of re-energizing both young and seasoned Canadian Quakers on their spiritual journeys.

It is very important to remember that this will require NEW funds, which must be over and above what each of us already give to Canadian Quaker organizations. The amount needed will be approximately \$65,000 per year in new funds. This translates to 542 people contributing \$10 a month or \$4.65 per month/per Canadian Quaker.

A small committee has been nominated to engage Canadian Friends in the process of raising these funds. We are proposing to contact each Monthly Meeting and Worship Group across the country to inform them of the project and invite their support.

We realize that the ability to give is broad within our Meetings. We hope that each Friend will consider what they can give. We think that there are some who may be willing to make large donations of perhaps \$1,000 per year, or more, to make this work possible.

This is an exciting point in the spiritual life of Canadian Quakers as we move forward with the spirit-led discernment from the recent consultation and renewal process. What can you or your Meeting do? Have a special monthly collection? Have a special event to raise the funds? We would love to learn what you are doing or hear your ideas.

The members of the new committee are:

Wesley Glebe                      Edmonton  
Carol Dixon                        Ottawa  
(A third member to be announced)

Overview of the new positions:

a] **Quaker Education Program Coordinator** will develop a comprehensive resource base for use by Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups, and individuals, and coordinate a visitation program, where experienced and knowledgeable Friends visit Meetings and Worship Groups to increase Friends understanding of Quaker faith and practice. Visitors may talk to Friends about the organization of Canadian Yearly Meeting, our practice of corporate discernment, or approaches to conflict in Meeting.

b] **Youth Secretary** (part-time) to be a central resource and a support for the spiritual vitality and faith journeys of Young Friends and Young Adult Friends; bridge the gaps in the CYFYM community, and develop and expand outreach programs to isolated YF/YAFs, as well as members outside the CYFYM community, such as NeeKauNis attendees. Will also facilitate communication between Young Friends and Adult Friends

*Carol Dixon, Ottawa Monthly Meeting*

*Wesley Glebe, Edmonton Monthly Meeting*

*We published a call for pen pals some issues ago. The results have brought happiness to f/Friends who are not able to come to Meetings. At this time of year many people are isolated for various reasons. If you would like to pen pal and in this way share friendship, please contact Diana Mitchell, who is keeping the list as well as facilitating the pen pal network. Please indicate if you or the person you are thinking of would prefer e-mail or snail mail. We are including f/Friends in any part of the world, and asking Canadian Friends who would like to participate to contact Diana Mitchell of Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting at: [drhelp@telus.net](mailto:drhelp@telus.net) Or call 250-881-8203. Or post to 926 Falaise Crescent, Victoria, BC, V8Y 1A3*

# My Experience at CYM and the New Youth Secretary Position

by Amie Trofymow

My experience at Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) is always a blast. Seeing my fellow Quaker friends is always exhilarating. Being able to talk about what's really important in this world with people who fully support and believe in the same solutions, or who add to them is so rewarding. I love being with the Young Friends. I truly connect with them, and it's nice to know that Young Friends actually exist! This year, the teen coordinator was Meredith Egan. She was amazing. There truly is no one who knows how to deal with us teens in a cool, 'chill' way as she does.

She really worked on things with us and kept us interested throughout the whole week. The agenda was truly intriguing. Every morning we would settle for an hour of Meeting for Worship. After worship we usually had a guest speaker followed by discussion. We got to know a lot more about the Jamaica project and various others. Also, each day held a purpose and a Testimony. We learned the five Testimonies which most Quakers live by. SPICE: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality. Everything was entertaining from just hanging out, watching Quaker-based movies, tie dying, and even our long business meetings! This year the teen program covered a lot.

We also talked about a new Youth Secretary Position and its purpose. Young friends worked exceedingly hard developing this job description. We had frequent discussions in our business meetings and during regular conversation. We pushed and strove for what we felt we needed for our YF/YAF community. We came up with the following points that we most desire from this position.

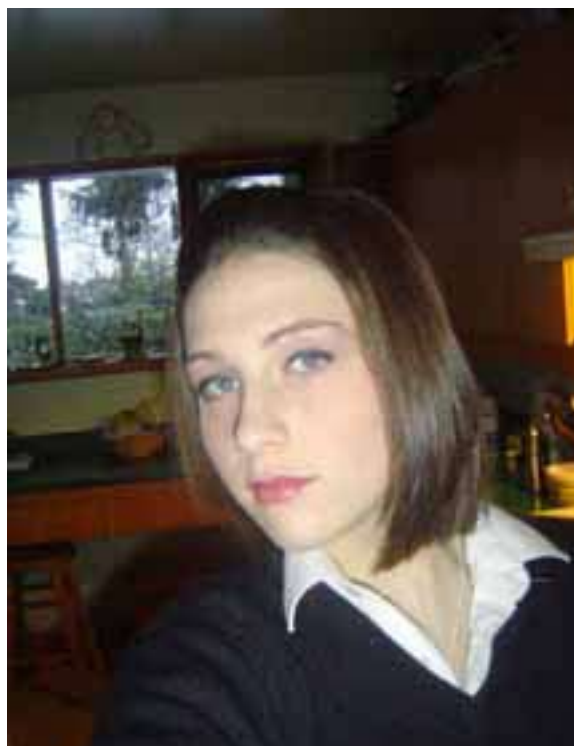
The Youth Secretary:

- may be either Quaker or non-Quaker,
- must be knowledgeable about Quaker history
- must attend Meetings for Worship and CYM
- will be a contact for each of us and will keep us all connected
- will facilitate increased communication and sharing of information.
- will increase our knowledge of other YF's/YAF's

- has the capacity to strengthen our youth network using the YF's web [www.quakeryouth.org](http://www.quakeryouth.org), or <http://www.yf.quaker.ca/>, and Skype for conference calls
- will visit Meetings with YFs and YF gatherings across Canada
- will plan more youth gatherings and arrange inter-visitations
- will arrange planned events for these gatherings
- will act as an inter-generational liaison.
- will help produce a frequent 'Sporadical' (YAF journal)
- will work to keep our concerns active
- will develop a 'sister' relationship with Australia or Guatemala in the spirit of 'Pontes d'Amor'
- will arrange Service projects with CFSC.

All in all, this CYM was amazing. I want all the people who attended and even the people who would have liked to attend but had other priorities, to know that I fully acknowledge and applaud everyone. Thanks to everyone for making me feel like I belong with Friends. I know that I have the support that I need. I have received it in the past and look forward to seeing what's next!

*Amie Trofymow, Victoria Fern St. Meeting*



# Program Committee's Quest for an Ontario Site

*by Carol Bradley*

Following Yearly Meeting in 2005, our first year in Camrose, Programme Committee began a search for a new Ontario site. The private school at Montebello (Sedbergh) had severe drawbacks: a very steep site, a small major meeting room, increasing costs, and distance from a local Meeting. Ontario Quakers did not consider Winnipeg to be a 'central' site, and since the majority of Canadian Quakers are in Ontario, we felt we owed it to them to determine if there was an adequate site for CYM in the southern part of the province. Too, we were a little weary of being asked why we couldn't go back to Pickering College!

The search took over two years and by the end of the first year we were realizing that there was likely no perfect site. In a report to Representative Meeting we advised that generally universities and colleges did not allow tenting or a Food Coop, and also they were beyond CYM's budget. Succinctly stating our needs we asked the Association of Private Schools to put the following notice in its newsletter.

"A national religious body (Quakers) is short-listing possible sites for its annual meeting in southern Ontario, the second or third full week of August, 2009. Require hall capable of seating 200-220, at least 10 break-out rooms, cafeteria service, within 1.5 hours of national airport. About one-third of estimated 220 attendees need to set up sleeping tents, with access to washrooms. About one-half of attendees need to be able to cook and eat co-operatively in an outdoor kitchen (we provide all equipment, including three-sink dishwashing system, propane stoves, and refrigeration units, if not available from site). If hosting this meeting is of interest to your facility, please address questions or expressions of interest to..."

We received no response. Meanwhile Ontario Quakers came forward with many ideas, all of which we followed up, and in fact locating the Kemptville site is thanks to Sylvia Powers of Ottawa Monthly Meeting. We thank all the others, particularly those who contacted site managers for the basic information on our behalf, because this was a major effort for our small Committee.

Knowing perfection was beyond our grasp at this time we thought 'outside the box' of our site criteria. We considered renting a large marquee tent and chairs for a major meeting space, or using motels in nearby towns for extra 'roofed' accommodation, or having all meals prepared in a co-operative fashion by Quakers, augmented by some professional help. This last idea was very popular, but the sites where it might have applied had other limitations.

In 2006 and 2007 our fall Programme Committee meetings were held in Toronto (particular thanks to Toronto Monthly Meeting) and we spent a day each time inspecting sites as a whole Committee. In addition the Clerk, the Office Administrator, and several other knowledgeable Friends inspected other sites. A total of twelve sites were inspected including Scout and YMCA Camps, religious retreat centres, major universities and Camp NeeKauNis. Pickering College had already said it was not only full during our preferred weeks but would no longer permit tenting or Food Co-op.

We learned that it was going to be a matter of choosing the least number of disadvantages. In other words which of the lacks in our site criteria could be the most manageable? Several sites were fairly close to suitable but were not available in 2009, and several sites were very appealing because of their attractiveness or location, but simply lacked good enough facilities. We are hoping that one or two may begin to upgrade facilities in the not-too-distant future. It was interesting that many facilities are adequate for meetings of 150 persons and might have worked for our typical registration in other parts of the country but would not for Ontario where we have historically had larger numbers. We concluded that generally schools and colleges in southern Ontario are outside the price range to which Quakers are accustomed, and due to local demand for conference space, this is not surprising. Many facilities operate their own programs in August, or have regular customers.

In October 2007, with less than two years to go before CYM 2009 we called a halt to the search and the Committee came prayerfully to the conclusion that booking the University of Guelph campus in Kemptville, south of Ottawa, even though the Food Co-op could not operate for that year, was the right thing to do. We advised Representative Meeting and began to consider how CYM 2009 might be most manageable for those who need the Food Co-op for reasons of affordability or sensitivities. The solutions

will not be perfect, any more than any of the sites we found were; however we hope that outreach and community-building benefits to Quakers in Ontario will be fully utilized and compensate for the difficulties.

In October 2008 we will spend a full day as a Committee working with site management. There will be glitches in August 2009. These are expected during our first year on a site but we are confident that the pleasant rural area and the welcoming flat campus will compensate. Having just observed how much better it was to be at Augustana University for a repeat visit we are hoping that Quakers will be agreeable to using the Kemptville campus for at least two visits, unless of course conditions unforeseen at this time make it extremely difficult in 2009.

We will continue to keep a watching brief on some of the other sites we located, but cannot put Committee efforts into further site investigations at this time. There are other priorities with which the Committee now needs to move forward. CYM has approved the starting of a four-year rotation: Central East, Central West, East, and then West. This means Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg for 2010, King's-Edgehill School in Nova Scotia for 2011, and assumes Augustana University in Camrose again in 2012. Please note that our dates for 2009 are August 14 to 22, and in 2010 are August 13 to 21.

The sites contacted, in no particular order, except that the first twelve were inspected, are: Crieff Hills, Geneva Park, Woodland Trails, Marguerite Centre, University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, Mt. Mary University, Camp Sumac, St. Paul's University, Blue Springs Camp, Camp NeeKauNis, Pearce Williams; Brock University, Mohawk College, Conestoga College, Loyalist University, McMaster University, Georgian College, Appleby, Brescia, Mt. Carmel, Trent, Seneca College, Cedar Glen Centre, Redeemer, and Pickering College.

*Caarol Bradley, Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting*



## These things I have Learned

*by Diana Mitchell*

As a child, from time to time I attended Fern Street Meeting with mother, grandfather or both. I recall in one of these first visits being startled when a man stood to speak, and puzzled when no one spoke in response. Over many Meetings for Worship of course I learned the ropes. Occasionally I was captivated by some of the ministry, and also surprised by the fact that sometimes I myself was moved to speak.

Is it not a wonderful thing, to feel genuinely moved by the Spirit to speak? Ministry filled with sincerity brings goose bumps to my skin, and often great comfort to my soul. Occasionally it disturbs, irritates, provokes, gentles, humbles. It seldom seems empty of value.

Strangely, for me there are occasions when I am aware that someone is ministering however I find myself only vaguely aware of what is spoken, so deeply held in some other space am I. Yet, while standing in the dining room one day I *heard* the voice of a Friend from whom I had been separated in Meeting as if by a door, but now her voice was clear in my head. What a surprise! Some part of my being *had* taken in her words. The power we have to *know* at different levels is astonishing.

These things I have learned about Spirit-led Quaker ministry:

- it is an upwelling that defies suppression;
- it can be surprising,
- and often rewarding;
- it is the stuff that stitches our Quaker community and life together.

*Diana Mitchell, Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting*

# We celebrate the life and work of Muriel Duckworth

Veteran peace and social justice activist, Muriel Duckworth, celebrated her 100th birthday November 2, at the Cohn Auditorium in Halifax. A fund raising concert launched the Oxfam Canada Jack and Muriel Duckworth Fund for Active Global Citizenship.

To honour the occasion and the inspiring leadership both she and her husband have given to thousands of Canadians, 100 voices rose in song. The Fund especially supports youth and women who are exercising their rights to be heard in order to create peaceful states and communities. For more information about the Oxfam Canada Jack and Muriel Duckworth Fund visit ([www.oxfam.ca](http://www.oxfam.ca)) or call 1-800-466-9326.

The Oxfam website hails Muriel as "...Canada's most enduring champion of peace, the environment and women's rights. She is best known as a founder and president of the national *Voice of Women*, the first women's peace organization in Canada. As an exemplary active citizen, she gained notoriety for withholding the portion of her income tax that went to military spending, and for being the first woman in Nova Scotia to run for political office at the provincial and federal levels. (She holds)... honorary degrees from 10 universities, the Order of Canada, the Persons Award and the Pearson Peace medal."



photograph by Janet Munson  
Courtesy Oxfam Canada

## Around the Family

**Pelham Half Yearly Meeting** met Oct. 19th in the former Norwich Meetinghouse (now a museum center), to enjoy a day of worship, business, food and fellowship. Pelham Executive Meeting (St. Catherines) hosted the well attended Meeting. The opportunity to meet new F/friends, was enhanced by sharing our spiritual roots and ties with earlier searchers for Truth. Janet Ross spoke on religious cultural history, which stimulated small group discussion. It was a most effective time, as diverse as the individuals, and yet revealed many common strands. We rejoiced in the lovely fall day, and in the experience of the Light of Truth among us.

The 100 Mile Harvest Dinner at Yarmouth Meetinghouse in Sparta, Ontario, raised funds to support the peace related workshops Mary Edgar has been setting up in Uganda. Organic dishes from vegetable casseroles and warm homemade bread to pies, were features of the banquet. Diners said they had never tasted better food while raising funds. Mary will use some of the money for organic farming workshops for Ugandan women. The ripples continue.

The Open Doors in Ontario continued at the Friends Burying Ground and Orchard Hill Farm October 18th. Over 250 visited the organic Suffolk-horse-powered farm, which supplied over 170 shares in the CSA garden this summer. The timber frame strawbale apprentices' bunkhouse which was being plastered with clay from the farm, was of great interest to the visitors. All the building materials came from the farm, now worked by the 6th generation since Quakers settled in Yarmouth township. Others have opened their doors at Yonge Street, Pickering College, Uxbridge, and Norwich in previous years. It is excellent outreach for Quakers today. Interest is keen.

**Montreal Monthly Meeting** is starting a Wednesday evening worship sharing group at the home of Shirley Steele. For further information contact Caroline Perry. [carolinebparry@gmail.com](mailto:carolinebparry@gmail.com)

## **Around the Family continued:**

**St. Lawrence Valley Monthly Meeting** Pat Mueller reports that the Prison Worship Group at Gouverneur Correctional Facility, Gouverneur, NY (GCF) is going really well. Bill Mueller, Dick Lunt, Russ Nelson and I visit two at a time on the first and third Sunday each month. The prison staff has been very cooperative and the prison Chaplain, Reverend Getman, is encouraging. We have the use of a small room in the activities building. The room is fairly quiet except for the occasional loudspeaker announcement. The two men reported that they are hesitant to encourage others to attend. Because the Meeting is so precious to them they want to be sure that anyone who attends takes it seriously. I do plan to talk to Reverend Getman about others who might benefit from the Meeting.

We ordered books for their library. They don't have much personal space but are able to have more books to read if donated directly to the prison library. We meet for an hour and a half, which gives us time for worship and discussion. Both men whom we visit became affiliated with Friends many years ago at another NY prison. Andre has been attending Meetings in prison for 15 years. I don't recall how long Edwin has been attending Friends Meetings. Currently there are four members of our Meeting doing this ministry. In order to be approved for entering the prison we had to fill out applications for a volunteer position, get a TB test, be interviewed, get a background check and have orientation and ID cards issued. It is rewarding for all of us who are participating in this ministry.

Steve Fick, of **Ottawa Monthly Meeting**, wrote that on the weekend of September 26-28, 2008, the Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Section of the Americas, (Lower Great Lakes Region) hosted a gathering at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre

The gathering was organized by our FWCC representative, Virginia Dawson (Yonge Street MM), and a committee of Friends from Yonge Street Half Yearly Meeting. The theme was "Being a Peace Church - Old Testimonies, New Times in the 21st century."

The weekend was rich in opportunities to worship, to ask ourselves about how we grow as agents of peacemaking, and to share fellowship and fun. For many, the highlights of the weekend were two presentations - one given by Jane Orion Smith of Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting and Janet Ross of Atlanta Friends Meeting, which looked at the theme from the perspective of Quaker history and the Bible. The second was about militarism and creating a culture of peace given by Murray Thomson of Ottawa Monthly Meeting

About sixty Friends attended, including a number of Young Adult Friends and two Friends from the Toronto Hispanic Friends Church. Unfortunately, only about a half-dozen Friends attended from outside Canada. Their presence, nonetheless, deeply enriched the weekend, and they in turn spoke with appreciation and affection about the chance to be hosted by Canadian Friends.

### **Fern Street Meeting House Victoria**

We are looking forward to having Jennifer Preston, Programme Coordinator for Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee of CFSC, attend our Soup and Stories event following Meeting for Worship Nov.30. She will relate the perils and excitement of working at the United Nations to bring about the passage of the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was approved 144 to 4 with Canada voting against it. Jennifer and her/our allies are now working to implement the Declaration in Canada. Members of Saanich Peninsula MM are invited. We hope for a large turn out of F/friends.

*Do you give sufficient time to sharing with others in the Meeting...your understanding of worship, of service, and of commitment to the Society's witness?*

*Advices and Queries # 20*



## African Summer Workcamps 2009

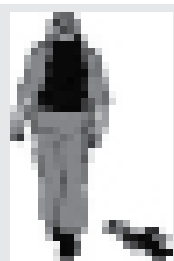
The African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams is sponsoring intergenerational workcamps in Burundi, Kenya, and Rwanda. Two-day Orientation begins June 21 near Washington DC. Workcamps end July 25. Workcampers assist with building or rebuilding clinics, schools and peace centers - no skills needed. Open to all ages. Learn more at <http://www.aglionline.org> or contact Dawn Rubbert [dawn@aglionline.org](mailto:dawn@aglionline.org).

If you have ecumenical/interfaith interests please join Canadian Friends' ecumenical list:

<http://lists.quaker.ca/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/cym-ecumenical>

Along with topics such as relations among churches, multi faith resources, pastoral cooperation, and justice concerns, one of my strong interests is eco-ecumenism. A lively eco-theology discussion might be rejuvenated. Meet you there!

Bill Curry, Prairie Meeting



## War Resisters Campaign Update

Our friends Jeremy Hinzman, Nga Nguyen, and Liam received a stay of their deportation order. (Megan, of course, is a Canadian citizen.) Jeremy's case will be heard at a later date. Two more war resisters have been ordered deported and other war resisters await further court cases. Such cases are expensive and funds are needed. Donations (not tax-receipted) can be made out to:

War Resisters Support Campaign, Box 13, 427 Bloor St. West, Toronto M5S 1X7.

# Quaker Book Service



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### Phone orders cannot be accepted.

The following title has been added to our stock. For a complete listing of QBS books, see our 2008-2009 Quaker Book Service Catalogue, which was included in the July 2008 edition of The Canadian Friend and is also available on the CYM website, [www.quaker.ca/qbs](http://www.quaker.ca/qbs).

*No Shame, No Fear* by Ann Turnbull,  
Candlewick Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

A love story novel, beautifully told, for young and old, now in a paperback edition for the first time, tells of the romance of a Quaker girl and a young member of the establishment as they face the stresses of the 17th century in England. (Forged in the Fire is the later sequel). (293 pp; \$12.50)

# Advanced Inclusive Leadership Training

A Friendly Youth-filled Experience  
Summer 2007, Cedar, B.C.

by Janet Lehde

I was excited! Finally. I could attend the Advanced Inclusive Leadership Training (AILT), facilitated by Linda Hill (member of Duncan WG) and her team of *guides* from the Cowichan Valley Intercultural Society (Duncan, BC.) Timing and the generous support by Friends, at Mid-Island Allowed Meeting (Nanaimo) and Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting, brought it all together for me to attend. I remember arriving alone and somewhat anxious at the Tamagawa University campus (just south of Nanaimo). A young teen welcomed me warmly and enthusiastically took complete charge of getting me settled into my dorm room. This fantastic welcome set the tone for building trust and openness together over our five days of living together on site.

On reflecting on the AILT, the first thing that stands out for me was our daily *Heart to Heart* sharing group. This was a wonderful intimate way to build a mini-community; we shared experiences from our lives and those during the AILT, as well as our hopes and insights. That inter-generational group created space where individuals could be heard and would listen to each other respectfully with heart. This was the one sure thing I looked forward to each day. Having several teens in our group felt very energetic and positive. Now that my son is an adult, being more in the loop of teen culture was wonderfully special for me. During that time I made a lovely one-to-one connection with one of the teens. Learning her story and watching her moving forward and blossoming in her leadership was an extraordinary honour.

During the five days of the AILT, there were a variety of activities for our whole group as well as smaller workshops. I particularly enjoyed *Anti-Discrimination First Aid*. We viewed a youth-produced film, learned the 'First Aid' steps, role-played and had discussions. I felt bolstered by the young people guiding us older people in this new set of skills. I gained awareness of the importance of my voice and my witness in dealing with discrimination. I learned that I could invite people to put a stop to behaviours that are hurtful. The

First Aid helped me with problem-solving and gave me more tools to respond to discriminatory comments that are homophobic, ageist, sexist, racist and otherwise hurtful. As a result I gained more courage in voicing my integrity regarding discriminatory comments and behaviors. I have continued to use these skills and I feel more and more comfortable with the 'discomfort' of speaking up for others and myself.

A more whimsical event that I loved was the Meditation Walk. Participants were invited at the time of pre-registration to bring a quote with a significant meaning. The quotes were attached to trees and bushes along a path to the lake. This was a non-scheduled activity that we could enjoy at our leisure. Since the training was very busy and social, reflecting on the quotes was a welcome way to relax.

As an artist I thoroughly enjoyed a crafty afternoon—Identity Art. I appreciated people adding to what I created that is representative of my life journey and me. This was fun, social, and symbolic for my introspective discovery. We had a display of our art in the entry hall for everyone's enjoyment. The timing of this activity was important as it followed the several days we'd been building a safe and lovely, nurturing atmosphere, and creating our common goal of a shared culture of peace.

The Gift Giving and Exchange Ceremony was exceedingly moving. Everyone brought a gift which they displayed. Near the end of the AILT we gathered and wandered around the big hall giving our gifts to others; exchanging 3 times. My gift was *Poems From the Journey*, a collection of Quaker poetry edited by Margaret Slavin and illustrated with my drawings, along with one of my poems, for the completed work. The person who received the pamphlet was ecstatic, encouraged in her own poetry writing, and I happily inscribed it for her. My own gift was a tropical island that was made from a tree fungus, lichen, and shells. Soon after the AILT I was moving to make my home in Alert Bay, on small Cormorant Island, so that gift was symbolically significant to me. A special and tender part of Gift Giving was when Wedlidi Speck, a First Nations elder (originally from Alert Bay) gave an Indian name to one of the non-native women participants. Witnessing this was spiritually uplifting for many of us. The Gift Giving closure to our time together was a metaphor for life. That ceremony was deeply inspiring, richly spiritual, touching, and emotional for many of us.

To end our time together we had a Talent Show.

One of the training team guides and I created the 'Church Ladies' singing Amazing Grace. We had great fun together with wigs and shawls and the enjoyment of belting out this tender and powerful song. The evening included many talented and fun offerings. The 'Racist Pillows' were very dramatic as the teens presented their dialogue and then burst out of their 'pillows'. Drama is such a visceral and visual medium that the teens made a great impact on those gathered. Their presentation greatly impressed and inspired many of us.

On further reflecting back to the Advance Inclusive Leadership Training I have a sense that some things were either disappointing or incomplete for me. Initially I had a young teen roommate. When she needed to be closer to her young friends downstairs I was disappointed, since I'd been looking forward to sharing the week with a roommate.

Over the days of the training I connected with a First Nations woman my age and we talked about native issues and concerns. We also shared our personal lives and developed a lovely connection. I was surprised when I realized she had to leave a day early. I had understood that we were all with the event for the duration. Her leaving left a hole in our community.

At the end of the training I missed an opportunity to take home an Action Plan. I had gone to the basic information session first and then came upon action planning. It was too late for me to explore and catch up with the activity. I felt that it would actually have been the place for me. I came away wishing I had been in that group from the beginning. The Action Plan was built on the ALIT training and was a means to implement inclusive leadership experiences and skills in one's home community.

Over all, the Advanced Inclusive Leadership Training was very well planned and facilitated and each participant received a certificate and the *Manual For Inclusive Travel Guides* from the Cowichan Intercultural Society—Youth Projects. The facilitation team guides were fantastically prepared and committed to the success of our shared AILT. AND the food at Tamagawa was fantastic; the facility, on several rural lakeside acres, was quiet and the site staff were friendly and welcoming to our group. A young family with healthy and happy young kids was a lot of fun too. I loved having the children with us at meals and the feeling of family they gave us. I noticed that many of the young people were very focused in their lives. I

feel grateful for this and secure in knowing that they are making the commitment to learn skills to be our future community leaders.

It was impressive that people attended despite difficult issues in their lives, such as the death of a child; the break-up of a relationship. I witnessed one person's story. He was able to be very vulnerable and showed courage moving towards his healing journey. We shared some deep and personal conversations.

I wish participants could keep in touch through a website discussion group or some other means to continue our community now that we are dispersed. I live geographically distant from all the participants and face-to-face communication is challenging for me.

I have made a rich connection with the AILT and I'm looking at being a team guide (facilitator) at a future Leadership Adventure. I thoroughly enjoyed my inter-generational, inter-cultural experience, and was stretched personally during our time together. I watch for future invitations for summer events with the AILT.

*With thanks to Linda and her guides and everyone who attended, Janet Lehde, Friendly Seeker,*

*Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting*



Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?

Advices and Queries # 32

Editor: Sherryll-Jeanne Harris  
Editorial Support: Gerald Harris, Diana Mitchell, Judith Monroe, Michael Phillips

**Please Note:** You the reader create this journal. Your submissions and suggestions for themes that resonate with you are necessary for *The Canadian Friend* to thrive. **Do not delay!** Send articles, poems, and thoughts today. [cf-editor@quaker.ca](mailto:cf-editor@quaker.ca)

**Themes & deadlines for upcoming issues**

Future Themes: **Varied Quaker Thoughts on Community**

**Exploring Issues of Justice**

**Quaker Testimonies**

Due date for March	January	12/09
Due date for May	March	9/09
Due date for Summer	May	11/09
Due date for Fall	September	4/09
Due date for December	October	12/09

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