

Sojourn to Pendle Hill
Ruth Jeffery-MacLean

**Streams of Living Water: Renewing the Contemplative Tradition through
Meditation and Plainsong**
A weekend with Cynthia Bourgeault and Paulette Meier

At the outset of this report I want to express my profound gratitude to the Education and Outreach Committee of Canadian Yearly Meeting for the grant which enabled me to attend at Pendle Hill. Without that gracious assistance and additional support from Yonge Street Monthly Meeting, this part of my spiritual journey would remain untraveled.

In conjunction with my Quaker faith I have been practicing Christian Meditation with an ecumenical group for many years. This method of practicing silent worship is not unlike the more widely known practice of Centreing Prayer. Once I began my association with World Community of Christian Meditators I was exposed to the teachings of the Desert Mothers and Fathers, and my heart was opened to the Eastern path of the teachings of Christ. The sayings of the Desert Mothers and Fathers have exercised my heart over the years.

My spiritual seeking has also led me to the work of Father Richard Rohr who started the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico. Through Father Rohr and hearty conversation with Friend Gini Smith I found my way to the work of Cynthia Bourgeault. Frequently combining their knowledge, Bourgeault and Rohr are well known teachers of the Wisdom School of Christianity which follows the path of those disciples who carried the teachings of the New Testament to the East and maintained what I will call a clearer path toward living in the way that Christ was opening to us. It is a path unfettered by hierarchy, money and politics; a path which stands peacefully with the major religions of our world. Dare I say, it was a similar path that George Fox was seeking and found when he proclaimed, "Christ has come to teach his people himself, by his power and spirit in their hearts."

When I heard about the Streams of Living Waters weekend I recognized the road marker on my path and was most anxious to participate. Cynthia Bourgeault is an Anglican Priest whose spiritual formation began as a child attending Quaker schools. The early exposure to daily silent worship formed in her a path which she would never abandon. From her base camp at the Contemplative Society in Vancouver she travels the world carrying the idea of a change in western Christian thought emphasizing a call summed in the words of William Blake, "that we may learn to bear the beams of love."

Paulette Meier was a welcome compliment to the teachings during the weekend at Pendle Hill. She is no stranger to Friends from Canadian Yearly Meeting and I had met her during sojourns to Stillwater Meeting in Barnesville, Ohio. Paulette's use of plainsong to convey early Quaker teachings speaks to many in a similar way that Gregorian chant speaks to some. In addition to her music though, Paulette's very candid sharing of her

own spiritual journey augmented Cynthia's talks and generated very rich and helpful discussion in a diverse group of about 50 people.

I have said we were a diverse group and by that I mean we included several faith denominations and apart from the very young, all age groups were represented. I am particularly gratified by the very deep insight of what Quakers would call Young Adult Friends. The discernment of the younger participants was so very welcome and informing.

I have heard about Pendle Hill for approximately 20 years and this was my first opportunity to know hospitality the like of which I have not experienced in another place. Without exception every person employed in that facility makes it their personal mission to serve the guest with gladness. The grounds are very beautiful with specimen trees and a vast garden to supply many of the needs of the kitchen. The walking trails make for delicious exercise. There are cozy nooks and crannies just begging you to bring your tea and a book. The delicious and nourishing meals catered to all dietary lifestyles. The dining room was open to all and by that I mean that in the sharing of our meals we were breaking bread with people who may be enjoying a personal retreat or with someone attending one of the 3 other conferences going on simultaneously or someone who lived locally and recognized a great opportunity to be had. We were given a wonderful venue to open our hearts to welcome and be welcomed.

Please allow me to repeat my thanks to E&O for the gift of this experience and for the dedicated work you're doing to expand our faith journeys

To Friends at Yonge Street Monthly Meeting, you are all a gift to me. I cherish the journey we make together.

“There is meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveller.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer